

## The Costs and Consequences of the Australia-U.S. Alliance

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Australia's history has been one of ongoing dependence and the surrender of control to foreign power, first to the British Empire and now to the United States. While both of these empires have developed the talents of people who were intellectually rich and enlightened they were both built on destructive violence and the merciless slaughter and oppression of other societies. Neither of these empires has been compatible with the ideals and values of human civilisation. Born into this dependence Australia as a nation is like a youth fallen into bad company. It's time to grow up.

The world is in great peril and it is clear, clearer than it has ever been that it is the same tendency to belligerent control and destructive violence that has driven the development of Empires (both East and West) that lies at the root of our peril.

My contention here is that Australia has the potential to contribute substantially to the global change in direction that humanity must make and is essential to our survival as a species and perhaps also that of our planet. The realisation of that potential depends utterly on Australia making this critical choice to embrace independence, to stand up and lead with courage and humility, to play our nation's part in helping the world to a better way of living harmoniously on this planet.

The choice for Australians is clear: either to follow the U.S. on the path of aggression and violence, a party to the 'Coalition of the Killing' as the empire provokes and demonises those nations that refuse to submit or to decide for itself, intelligently and independently as a nation what the world needs now and stand up courageously and assertively to express a willingness to contribute. It is Australia's time to either set an example and search for a better way or surrender control yet again and coalesce.

The US is deeply committed to confrontation with China. While Chinese Communism and American Democracy are deeply opposed both are far from satisfactory and while there are innumerable potential grounds for dispute and conflict we all need to recognise that these two nations each represent Civilisations that have developed over thousands of years; indeed, Chinese Civilisation pre-dates that of the West by over 4,000 years and there are yet other notions of Civilisation that contribute to the overall achievement and potential future of humanity. What humanity needs now is not a collision but a collaboration of Civilisations and Australia has the opportunity to influence that choice. Stand up. Show courage. Be independent.

My essential point has been made above. What I have to say going on, outlines an historical perspective on what I see and sometimes disparage as Australia's sycophantic grovelling to empire. It contrasts with more enlightened values of the alternative side of the nation's dual character. I also hope to illustrate what I see as a foolish tendency to coalesce in bad influence due to what is essentially a lack of national self-esteem, something Australians need to overcome, carefully and without lunging forward into hubris, if humility is to be preserved.

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The initial colonisation of Australia with the arrival of the First Fleet was a government enterprise with over a thousand convicts who were essentially slave labour. It was very different from the arrival of the Mayflower in North America, which preceded it by 168 years and was a pilgrimage of free citizens motivated by religious ideology. While the First Fleet had the support of the British government and could expect further support and supplies the Pilgrims had no further connection with their homeland and had to be self-reliant; they suffered in consequence. It could be argued that these different beginnings may account at least in part for the very different characters of these two nations and their people. Americans celebrate Thanksgiving and Independence Day, Australians celebrate Australia Day (with widespread misgiving) and Anzac Day. Americans see their constitution and their military might as the foundation of their nation's security, Australians look to the monarchy and the ANZUS treaty. Americans are supremely confident in their flag their exceptionalism and their sense of being Number One, Australians remain ambivalent about their independence, their flag and their ability to defend their nation.

Australian ambivalence is deeply connected with a lack of national self-confidence and self-esteem and almost certainly also stems from the nation's beginnings. A thousand men and women rejected by their society as failures and discharged as sewage to a remote, uncivilised world to serve as a work-force indentured to a small group of free settlers empowered to dominate them in their task of establishing a new settlement. The free settlers potentially outnumbered and without support until the next fleet arrives, were alone in an unknown and potentially inhospitable environment, perpetually insecure in their grip on the social order.

And so the nation began. A two-strata society in which those who had the upper hand and the support of the motherland struggled for over 150 years to emulate the social order they had come from and establish themselves as a pseudo-aristocracy. Although support of the motherland continued, more free settlers came and more convicts were dispatched, there were persistent shortages of labour and of eligible women, which undermined the upper hand. Neither side ever being confident in its position, the unity of the nation depended on maintaining a reverence for the connection with mother England and the ever-hopeful pseudo-aristocracy worked hard to instil and maintain it among the population. As late as the 1960s young school-children stood in morning assemblies chanting "*I am an Australian, I honour my country*" before commencing to sing "*God Save the Queen*". It was surely this early brainwashing that enabled an insecure elite with an often-demonstrated fragile hold on power (Ned Kelly, The Eureka Stockade) to send many thousands of men far more substantial than themselves, off to die in wars on the other side of the world.

But then came the transition to the new empire. From the settled days of the Menzies era, that self-assured if unrefined, Dickensian aristocrat and professional groveler, Australia's pseudo-aristocracy fumbled its way through a series of inept Prime Ministers all dedicated to the single task of ingratiating themselves with power in the new world order. Yet despite boundless military and economic deference to the new masters and the dispatch of yet more thousands more troops to die in the wars of the empire, the days of the transplanted aristocracy were at an end and the lower orders were on the march. Along came Whitlam.

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Australian history is a history of the victors, desperate to hide the greatness of Whitlam but if ever truth becomes the conventional wisdom then all Australians will know and understand that in his three short years of office Whitlam achieved revolutionary change for the better in Australian society. So much was it so that the new masters of our pseudo-aristocracy realised that they had been complaisant and urgently came to their rescue with a gentle coup.

Australia remains a divided society, ambivalent and lacking confidence. It is the myopia of both sides in this division that prevents Australians from coming together with a common vision, to understand its place and potential in the world in a way that could deliver the self-assurance necessary to go forward, leading by example to a better future for Australia, its neighbours, the countries with which it has historic connections and the world at large.

Nowhere is that myopia more evident than in the record of the infamous Loans Affair. Some thirty years after the event an article written by David Wroe and published in *The Age*, Melbourne titled [\*How the loans scandal became an affair to remember\*](#) exemplifies the effort to maintain the myopic view and write the false history. Written from the extremely biased and hostile perspective of Treasury head Sir Frederick Wheeler and his colleague, Alan Bailey it celebrates these two and ruthlessly derides and ridicules Whitlam and his Minerals and Energy Minister Rex Connor: *“Wheeler and his “Treasury boys” were on a mission to protect the Whitlam government from itself and, in the process, protect Australia’s finances and global reputation.”* He writes, *“They half succeeded. Australia’s reputation survived; the government did not.”*. In fact, quite the reverse is true. If anything, these “Treasury boys” were treasonously at work to undermine the government and in truth, while all of the US’ ‘allies’ must themselves fawn at the altar of empire their true estimation of Australia’s standing is consistent with the long history of the *zeal* with which Australia’s pseudo-aristocracy does it, at great cost to all those who might think to challenge it or at least grovel with much less deference.

In the victor’s history, as articulated by Wroe, Whitlam and Connor clumsily engaged an agent of questionable character to acquire a \$US4 billion loan of Middle Eastern oil money, did so in ways that were ostensibly of ‘questionable legality’ and almost enabled the agent to “swindle Australia out of \$100 million”. In fact, the agent had the recommendation of a well-respected South Australian businessman who later said *“Much of what has been said about the loans affair is mischievous, short-sighted and politically slanted”*. Yet it is not the absence of anyone who would counter the Wroe narrative that prevents Australians from seeing the truth. It is pure national myopia. This is the Australian disease that has allowed the nation to sing reveries for foreign monarchs, send their sons to bleed for foreign empires for over 200 years and fail to overcome a shocking lack of self-esteem.

In 1973, Arab Oil Producers challenged the established order by banding together as a cartel to raise the price of Oil. Viewed in terms of our present climate crisis this was doing the world a service. More to the point, and what should by now be obvious, they sought to break the cycle of pouring their petro-dollars into the coffers of the masters of empire, to the neglect of their own nations’ long-term future and to widen the scope of their investment.

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In real terms, from their perspective, there could have been no better investment in the world than Australia and they probably knew it. As an island nation with diverse and vast resources and a government more stable than the majority of countries in the world, Australia and its people could have taken a far more confident view of itself as a candidate borrower of a very large portion of that flood of new-found wealth in the Middle East. A more enlightened people might also have been more resistant to the derisive remarks about “borrowing from *Arabs!*”.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the examples of Iraq and Venezuela, where governments challenged this accepted wisdom by nationalising oil resources and using the profits to develop their countries in terms of infrastructure, healthcare, education and the equality of opportunity that comes with social justice (to the wrath of empire) Australia succumbed to the accepted model of Saudi Arabia. In this model, a privileged few own all of the resources and accrue all of the wealth that flows from it, purchases the wherewithal necessary to oppress its own people from the US and pours the remainder back into the US as ‘investment’ or an obscene level of consumerism. The US then uses control of these abundant petro-dollars to seed ‘democracy’, manipulate the world order and deal efficiently with ‘Rogue States’ such as Iraq and Venezuela that fail to comply with the model. Having lived through that time in Australia’s history I feel confident in my belief that a distinct lack of courage was at play here, the courage to defy. It was unbecoming of a nation that sent thousands to fight bravely for high, if misguided ideals.

But there is more to tell of this myopia. There is also a failure to see the importance of ownership and control, especially in relation to assets. When the emissaries of empire say they can “*make your economy scream*”, people who understand ownership and control know that this means we will ease off the throttle, lay off staff, hibernate our factories, defer maintenance and expansion and move funds offshore for as long as it takes to bring your nation to its knees until its government is discredited and thrown out of office. This is how any ‘sovereign democracy’ should work.

### **Rex Connor, Minister for Minerals and Energy and Whitlam, Prime Minister planned to buy back that control with offshore loans.**

For the government of a confident nation, aware of its standing in the world, with the backing of Treasury, with a national media committed to the best interests of the nation and capable of sustaining a national conversation about the merits of borrowing at fixed interest in order to secure ownership and control of the nation’s resources this should have been simple. Intelligent as Australians are, this conversation would readily lead to a marriage of interests of petro-dollars seeking secure investments, be they *Arab* or otherwise, with those of a confident nation, likewise having a vision for its future, which depends for independence on ownership and control of the nation’s resources. The government would send a trusted and capable delegation from Treasury along with members of the ministry to meet and negotiate directly with governments of the Middle East. Yet still today, Australians fail to see what a difference it would have made to Australia’s international standing (its precious financial reputation) and sovereign independence today had Rex Connor been successful in his visionary objective; the barrier is myopia and it afflicts both sides of Australia’s class divide.