

Main reasons for why different groups within australia supported or opposed austr...

[History](#)



As World War 2 ended and the Cold War began, communism began to expand from Russia into South-East Asia. China and North Korea became communist and communism continued to spread south as Vietnam became independent from the French after the battle of Dien Bien Phu resulting in the country being split at the 17th parallel into communist North and non-communist South. The United States entered the war to stop the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia, as they feared that Communist forces would gain control of Vietnam.

Australia being an ally of the US and for certain other reason entered the war. However, different groups within Australia either supported or opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War for several reasons. The main group supporting Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War was of course the Liberal Party led by Robert Menzies. This was mainly because of the SEATO and ANZUS treaties, which provided for collective defensive action to be taken in the event of an attack, in this case, to the United States in Vietnam.

The threat of communism also triggered the "Domino Theory" which was depicted in News-Weekly on the 21st July 1954 as the communist snake swallowing the rabbit representing Vietnam, and with one of the following rabbits being Australia. The theory implied that if one land in a region came under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect and therefore communism in Vietnam posted a huge threat to Australia and so the Liberals chose to act on it as way of forward defense.

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The Liberal Party, Democratic Labor Party, the press (excluding “The Australian”) and even the Catholic Church initially supported Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. The common reason these parties had was their underlying fear of communism. The Democratic Labor Party was a right-wing faction that split from the Labor Party due to ideological differences after the Petrov Affair. This right-wing faction had a very large catholic membership and was very anti-communist.

Consequently, the Democratic Labor Party opposed any ALP policies and thus, was a major supporter of the Vietnam War. In 1965, the bulk of outspoken Catholics stood strongly behind Menzies and Australia’s involvement in the war. For quite a few years, South Vietnam was seen as a Catholic democracy, and the last democratic country in Indochina. So when it was announced that Australia would send troops to South Vietnam, several Catholics saw this decision as a movement to ‘protect’ South Vietnam from communism.

The Labor Party was one of the major groups that opposed Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. They saw it as a civil war and an attempt to nationalise the country instead of the expansion of communism and therefore should not get involved. The Labor Party did not agree with conscription and also questioned whether increased military action in Vietnam would be successful and was labeled by the leader of the Labor Party as an “unwinnable war”.

The Labor Party's different views on the Vietnam War were a key issue for why they opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Other groups within Australia that opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War included the Trade Unions, the protestant church, universities, The Australian and various anti-war organizations such as Save Our Sons. Trade unionists believed the Australian government was sacrificing the lives of Australian troops to ensure that America would boost the economy by spending more money in Australia.

Unlike the Catholic Church, the Protestant churches were divided over the issue of Vietnam, as some Anglican clergy believed that Christians should always be the peacemakers, while others condemned the idea of peace at any price. The universities opposed the war because they considered that Australia was following the United States blindly, that it was not our war and they also didn't like the idea of young men being forced into war and innocent women, elders and children being killed due to the war.

The cartoon in The Australian on the 14th June 1965 shows their views on the Vietnam War depicting Menzies pointing out the communist shadow moving towards our shores even though the "shadow" is being created by the US bombings as its light is shining upon "the communist threat and therefore implying that we are fueling the expansion of communism by getting involved in Vietnam. The Save Our Sons was founded by a group of mothers as a direct response to conscription and therefore opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War divided the nation into those who supported or opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. The Liberal Party along with the DLP, the newspapers and the Catholic Church were in support of the war while the Labor Party along with the Trade Unions, the protestant church, universities, The Australian and various anti-war organizations such as Save Our Sons were opposing the war. The "Domino Theory", conscription and different views of what the Vietnam War was all about were the main reasons for why different groups within Australia supported or opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.