# Ex-Australian foreign minister voices concern about unconditional support for Israel and the US

**Mike Head**
**14 April 2014**

Bob Carr, who was foreign minister in Australia's previous Labor government from March 2012 to last September, has published diaries highlighting his reservations with Labor's unconditional support for Israeli policy, and pointing to wider concerns about Canberra's "too-desperate" embrace of Washington.

In *The Diary of a Foreign Minister*, released last week, Carr accused former Prime Minister Julia Gillard of appearing to subcontract her government's foreign policy to wealthy donors in the "pro-Israel lobby."

His remarks provoked a storm of criticism from media commentators, Zionist organisations and prominent figures within the Labor Party. Labor MP Michael Danby, a life-long defender of Zionism, flatly denied that pro-Israeli groups wielded undue influence and branded Carr as "bigoted" for even suggesting it.

The furore has centred on 2012 diary entries by Carr that relate to his opposition to a decision taken by Gillard, without consulting him, that Australia would join the US and Israel to vote "no" to a resolution before the UN General Assembly to grant Palestine non-member observer status.

Carr's diary notes confirm media accounts at the time that he defeated Gillard in cabinet on the issue. Nine ministers opposed her, forcing Gillard to back down and announce that Australia would abstain on the UN vote.

"Our stance on the Middle East is shameful, in lock-step with the Likud, designed to feed the worst instincts of Israel and encourage it to self-destruct, placing us with the Marshall Islands and Canada and rejecting the entire Arab world and the Palestinians," Carr wrote in November 2012. In an October 2012 entry, he noted: "This is a battle I've got to win with the prime minister because of the influence on her from the Melbourne-based pro-Israeli lobby."

Carr has a long record of support of Israel. His criticisms were purely tactical, reflecting concerns that the right-wing Likud government could undercut the capacity of the US and its allies to intervene, diplomatically and militarily, in the Middle East. Carr was among the most outspoken figures internationally for a stepped up US-NATO intervention against the Assad government (see: "Australian foreign minister suggests 'assassination' of Syrian leaders").

Carr ascribed Gillard's stance to Labor's reliance on fundraising by the "Jewish community"—the explanation that Gillard offered Carr. But Gillard's unquestioning commitment to the Zionist state was closely related to her unwavering support for Washington, which finances and arms Israel as a bulwark for its own geo-strategic interests in the Middle East.

Support for Israel was an important touchstone for Gillard in her rise to power. As documented in US diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks, she embraced the Zionist state as a means of making clear to Washington that she would be a safe pair of hands as Labor leader. In June 2009, as part of her bid for US approval, she led a group of Australian politicians, including the Liberals Christopher Pyne and Peter Costello, in Jerusalem at the first Australia-Israel Leadership Forum.

Gillard was installed as prime minister in mid-2010 as the result of a backroom coup against Kevin Rudd, orchestrated, as WikiLeaks cables later documented, by a handful of factional heavyweights who were "protected sources" of the US embassy. Rudd's efforts to ease growing tensions between the US and China cut across the Obama administration's confrontational "pivot to Asia" aimed at undermining Beijing diplomatically and encircling China militarily.

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On becoming prime minister, Gillard immediately gave her full support for the "pivot," which President Obama formally announced in the Australian parliament in November 2011. As part of Obama's visit, Gillard agreed to the basing of US marines in Darwin and stepped-up access to Australia for US warships and aircraft. Those commitments have been maintained, and extended, by the current Liberal-National government of Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

Carr, however, was one of a number of figures, including former prime ministers Malcolm Fraser and Paul Keating, who voiced concerns that this unconditional alignment could jeopardise Australian economic relations with China, and ultimately embroil the country in war.

In November 2011, Carr blogged: "The more thoughtful American policy would be to accept a growing Chinese role in the Pacific and to negotiate the terms and conditions that surround it … It is patently in this country's national interest to see in the Pacific a peaceful accommodation between the US and China … As for American military on Australian soil, they should never be permanently here. That would reduce Australia to a mere Okinawa … A treaty partner we are, unapologetically, not an aircraft carrier."

Carr removed these blog posts upon his appointment, and publicly adhered to the government's policy, but his criticisms have been restated in the diary. In one entry, he wrote that as foreign minister he stuck to "our liturgy" of describing the US alliance as a "cornerstone," but:

"I would like to make us a little less craven, to correct the tilt away from China and the too-desperate embrace of the US, symbolised in last year's announcement of a rotating marine presence in Darwin and Obama's criticism of China in our parliament. I would like to capture some of the instincts of this of Paul Keating, Malcolm Fraser and even [former Liberal foreign minister] Alexander Downer; and I value the words of [former Labor foreign minister] Gareth Evans—that we should not approach the Americans 'happy to lie on our backs like puppy dogs with four paws waving and pink tummies exposed.'"

Carr also wrote that he was worried about the US capacity to be "driven by anxiety and paranoia into producing a Cold War with China, studded with incidents at sea." He referred to the US record of "walking breezily" into two "unnecessary" and "bankrupting" wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Carr is certainly no opponent of US imperialism, nor of the Australian ruling elite's post-World War II military and strategic alliance with Washington. In fact, American diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks last year revealed that he has been a US intelligence source inside the Labor Party for nearly four decades (see: "Australian foreign minister outed as long-time US informant").

Rather, Carr reflects the concerns of elements within the corporate and political establishment, both in Australia and the US, about the potentially disastrous consequences—for the US and its allies—of a confrontation with China. Among these is former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger who has warned of the dangers of a war with China, and instead advocates cultivating relations with sections of the Beijing regime. Kissinger was centrally involved in engineering the rapprochement between the US and China that was sealed by the 1972 meeting between US President Richard Nixon and Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

In his diary, Carr described Kissinger as "my favourite world-historical figure." He recounted a 2012 dinner that Kissinger hosted in his Manhattan apartment to celebrate Carr's appointment as foreign minister. Those in attendance included Rupert Murdoch, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the Indian UN Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, the head of Alcoa, Klaus Kleinfeld, and Susan Rice, Obama's ambassador to the UN.

In these elite circles, some of whom have substantial profit-making operations in China, there is fear that Obama's provocative "pivot" against China will cut across their interests and the prospect of reaching an accommodation, on America's terms, with the Chinese capitalist class.

As it made clear in Rudd's removal, however, the Obama administration will not countenance any compromise in its drive to counter China and assert unchallenged US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. Carr's decision to include his criticisms of Australia's Israeli and US policies in his diary points to ongoing concerns in Australian ruling circles about the dangers posed by Obama's reckless policies.

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