



Independent & Peaceful Australia

Background Sheet 7: Foreign Policy

People's Inquiry: Exploring the Case for an Independent and Peaceful Australia

What are the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the US-alliance?

Strategic Dependence

In *Dangerous Allies* (2014) Malcolm Fraser declared: "Australia has always been a dependent nation. We were a child of the British Empire and were brought up to believe that the Empire would protect us, should we ever need it. This was the beginning of a policy of strategic dependence, a policy that made sense from Australia's colonial beginnings until the end of the Cold War. For the entirety of our history, Australia has been reliant on 'great and powerful friends' for our sense of national security and for direction in our foreign policy priorities. I call this strategic dependence".

From colonial times, Australia expected the British navy to defend the continent against Britain's enemies. Australians considered it their duty to the Empire to fight in British wars, as an "insurance policy" for future British protection. Australia enthusiastically

took part in British colonial wars in Sudan, New Zealand, South Africa and China, and provided troops to fight with the British in Europe and the Middle East, in WW1 and in WW2. British protection spectacularly failed when Japan expelled the British from Singapore in 1942, proving that Australia could no longer rely on the British navy for its defence. With the Japanese advancing towards Australia, Prime Minister Curtin recalled Australia's troops from Europe and the Middle East to defend Australia and looked towards the United States for protection as our new "great and powerful friend".

The ANZUS Treaty

In the years following WW2, Australia and New Zealand began pressing the United States for a formal security guarantee. The two nations felt threatened by the possibility of a resurgent Japan and the spread of communism in East Asia. The collapse of British power in the region added to their sense of vulnerability. The United States was



reluctant, offering instead an informal guarantee of protection.

But the perceived need to strengthen the West against communism grew with the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and the 1950-1953 Korean War. Additionally, the United States wanted to gain Australian and New Zealand approval for a 'soft peace' with Japan. The treaty allayed antipodean fears that such a peace would allow Japan to threaten them again.

The resulting treaty was concluded at San Francisco on 1 September 1951 and entered into force on 29 April 1952. The treaty bound the signatories to recognise that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of them would endanger the peace and safety of the others. It stated: "The Parties will consult together whenever in the opinion of any of them the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened in the Pacific". The three nations also pledged to maintain and develop individual and collective capabilities to resist attack.

Even though the Treaty contained no guarantee that the U.S. would defend Australia or New Zealand, no obligation for them to do the same, and no geographical

application beyond the "Pacific area", it came to be credited as the bedrock of Australia's security. And so a new period of strategic dependence began, but this time it was on the United States.

Just as dependence on Britain for defence required Australia to show allegiance to Britain by fighting in British wars, so from 1950 on, Australia joined in a series of American wars and for the same reason, as "down payments" on a "national security policy" to ensure protection. Examples follow below.



Korean War

From 1950 to 1953 Australia was involved in a United Nations force led by the United States to drive North Korean forces led by the Korean Communist Party from southern Korea into northern Korea past the 38th

Parallel which represented an interim partition between North and South Korea. The United States was intent on pursuing the North Korean army to the border with China. Concerned about a possible attack on China, a Chinese volunteer army joined the North Korean forces and forced the United States-led forces back to the 38th Parallel. An amnesty was declared in 1953 and remains to this day.

An uneasy peace has been broken by periodic hostilities between North and South. The United States maintains an armed presence in South Korea to the present time. In the war, At no stage did the North Korean military forces present a military threat to Australia or the United States. Australia suffered 339 dead, and 1200 wounded. It is estimated that over 3 million Koreans died in this war and U.S. carpet bombing reduced most buildings in North Korea to rubble and when there were no other targets, they bombed the dams and rice paddies.



Vietnam War

The US military build-up in the 1965-1975 period reached a maximum of half a million soldiers in Vietnam. The Menzies government organised a written request from the government of South Korea for Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, beginning with a small commitment of 30 military advisors in 1962, followed by troop commitments in 1965. These increased over the following decade to a peak of 7,672 Australian personnel. Politically Menzies "justified" the commitment by claiming it would stop the spread of communism south towards Australia.

Known as the domino theory, it proposed that "One country falls to communism and then the next, then the next and it will then be on our doorsteps". The Australian government refused to recognise that the war in Vietnam was a civil war, in which nationalists sought to liberate the whole country from foreign interference and win its independence. At no stage did the North Vietnamese military forces present a military threat to Australia or the United States.

Australia deployed over 60,000 servicemen and women to the conflict in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975. During this operational commitment, 521 Australians lost their lives. Many more were wounded physically and mentally and some were



affected by agent orange, a toxin sprayed on Vietnamese countryside by the U.S. military, and fathered deformed babies back in Australia. The Vietnamese toll in lives lost is numbered around one million including those burnt alive by napalm dropped from U.S. aircraft, plus deformed children whose genes have been mutilated by the toxic chemicals such as agent orange.

Gulf War

Australia was a member of the international coalition led by the United States which contributed military forces to the 1991 Gulf War, also known as Operation Desert Storm. Its ostensible purpose was to punish Iraq for invading Kuwait, pursuant to a resolution of the U.N. Security Council.

More than 1,800 Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel were deployed to the Persian Gulf from August 1990 to September 1991, while contingents from the Royal Australian Navy circulated through the region in support of the sanctions against Iraq until November 2001. Australia's role was minor and its presence short.

Afghanistan War

Australia first committed military personnel to Afghanistan in October 2001 after the 11th September attacks on the World Trade Centre and Washington, in which no Afghan was involved. The claimed objective was to pursue al-Qaeda in retaliation for those attacks, and a subsequent U.N. Security Council resolution legitimised the invasion. Prime Minister John Howard invoked Article IV of the ANZUS Treaty in support of Australia's involvement in the "war on terror"—the only time the Treaty has been invoked.

Australia has been involved from 2001 to the present time together with the United States and other coalition forces fighting not al-Qaeda but the Taliban in Afghanistan, with no end in sight. At its peak, Australia committed 2,000 military personnel to Afghanistan with lesser numbers at various times over the last 17 years.

Fortyone Australian soldiers have been killed and 261 wounded, the majority since October 2007. Another Australian was killed while serving with the British Army.

At no stage in this war in Afghanistan have the Taliban or any other Afghans presented a military threat to Australia or the United States. Many thousands of Afghans have been killed and many have fled the war-torn country as refugees.

President Trump sought to reduce the U.S. military presence, or withdraw it altogether. He was opposed by the Pentagon, the CIA, and much public opinion.

Iraq War

Australia followed the United States into a war on Iraq in 2003 without a U.N. Security Council resolution, and despite huge protests throughout the world and in Australia, with opposition from cross-bench politicians. Iraq posed no military threat to Australia or the United States.

The justification claimed was that Iraq under Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction which could be against U.S. oil allies in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia and against Israel. United Nations weapons inspectors could not find them but the United States, Australia, Britain and others joined in the invasion of Iraq to

remove Saddam Hussain and replace his government with one compliant with the United States.



No weapons of mass destruction were ever found. At its peak, Australia committed 2,000 military personnel to Iraq. No Australian lives were lost but the Iraqis lost hundreds of thousands, with similar numbers becoming refugees and fleeing the war-torn country. Australia's troop presence has been reduced, but several hundred remain in Iraq, despite a resolution of Iraq's parliament calling on all foreign troops to leave.

Syrian War

In mid-September 2015, without any parliamentary debate (then or since) Australia committed itself to yet another war on behalf of the United States.

The Australian War Powers Reform organisation says this about Australia's involvement in the Iraq War: "Australia's decision to join the United States bombing campaign in Syria was mired in deceit, disinformation and obfuscation from the outset."

"When the Australian government announced in August 2015 that they were going to consider the legal ramifications involved before committing to a decision, they omitted two crucial facts

The first fact was that the then Prime Minister Tony Abbott had already solicited an invitation from the Americans to join the bombing campaign".

"The second omitted fact was that the legal opinion had been sought and obtained a year earlier. When asked on

ABC National Radio about the legal basis for Australia's bombing of another country's sovereign territory, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop relied upon Article 51 of the UN Charter and an alleged invitation from the Iraqi government. That Article 51 manifestly does not apply, and that the Iraqi government denied issuing any such invitation (which would have been illegal anyway) seemed to have entirely escaped the attention of the Australian mainstream media."

Australia's military deployment in Syria reportedly ended in 2019, although withdrawal of Special Forces is not confirmed, and RAAF support aircraft remain in the Gulf.



Other Military Agreements

Other military agreements signed with the United States allegedly underpinned by the ANZUS Treaty include the following:

- (i) The Pine Gap Agreement
- (ii) The North West Cape Agreement
- (iii) The Force Posture Agreement


All three Agreements provide the United States with military bases on Australian soil which support their war efforts. The establishment of these bases was not in response to a military threat to Australia and so, as such, are not justified by the ANZUS Treaty but successive governments have claimed they are. They make Australia a target for a country wishing to attack U.S. installations. They also implicate Australia in U.S. war-fighting elsewhere in the world.

Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap

Pine Gap is the commonly used name for a U.S. satellite surveillance base and Australian Earth station approximately 18 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs, Northern

Territory. It is jointly operated by Australia and the United States. Officially, Pine Gap is a collaboration between the Australian Department of Defence and the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. This conceals the real purpose of Pine Gap as a CIA-run spy base which collects signals from US surveillance satellites in geosynchronous orbit over the equator. The communications facility was built and paid for by the United States, beginning operations in 1970 as a NSA operation to monitor missile threats. Now, by means of U.S. military satellites, it acts like a "giant vacuum cleaner" gathering electronic information from a wide area of the earth's surface, including mobile phone conversations and official communications. It provides vital battlefield information to the U.S. military and provides targeting information for U.S. drone attacks in distant countries.

The head of mission is an American and the deputy head an Australian and the 800 staff consist of approximately equal numbers of Australians and Americans, but there is a U.S. military cypher room that is closed to Australians. Knowledge of some of its



activities are closed to Australia. Publicly, Pine Gap is claimed to contribute to the national security of both nations by providing information on terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and military and weapons systems in other countries.

Malcolm Fraser wrote in 2014 that Pine Gap and other US Bases in Australia should be closed, as their presence and operations endangered Australia more than threats from other countries.

North West Cape Communications Base

Sir Garfield Barwick, Australian Minister for External Affairs, negotiated the lease on the U.S. Base at North West Cape in 1963 with US Ambassador William Battle. The station was commissioned as U.S. Naval Communication Station North West Cape on 16 September 1967 at a ceremony with the US Ambassador to Australia Ed Clark and the Prime Minister of Australia Harold Holt, at which peppercorn rent for the base for the first year was paid.

It was renamed Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt in 1968 and is located on the northwest coast of Australia, 6 kilometres north of Exmouth, Western Australia. The town of Exmouth was built at the same time as the communications station to provide support to the base and to house dependent families of US Navy personnel.

The station provides very low frequency (VLF) radio transmission to United States Navy and Royal Australian Navy ships and submarines in the western Pacific Ocean and eastern Indian Ocean. The frequency is 19.8 kHz. With a transmission power of 1 megawatt, it is the most powerful transmission station in the Southern Hemisphere.

The very low frequency, high-powered signals can penetrate sea water and communicate with submarines without them having to surface and give away their position. The United States military can, via this communication base, send the trigger signal to their nuclear armed submarines to launch a nuclear missile.

This makes North West Cape a nuclear



target.

The Force Posture Agreement between the United States and Australian governments

The Force Posture Agreement between the governments of the United States and Australia underpins the annual stationing of up to 2,500 US

Marines in Darwin. The concept was first announced by US President Obama in 2011 in a visit to Australia and was presented as part of a new U.S. military strategy called the “Pivot to Asia”. A clearer explanation of this strategy would be “the relocation of a major part of the US military forces including naval forces to the Asia/Pacific area to confront and contain China”. It was enthusiastically promoted by Defence Minister Kim Beazley and Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

The Agreement was signed in 2014 and operates for 25 years, unless terminated by either side giving a year’s notice. The stationing of U.S. troops in Darwin is a visible expression of the FPA, but it also includes:

- Giving the United States airforce unimpeded access to Australia’s airfields and facilities for their fighters and

bombers as well as seaports for their naval vessels

- Giving access to the United States military and its contractors to “agreed facilities”, and allowing use of them for training, transit, support and related military activities such as refuelling of aircraft, bunkering of vessels, temporary maintenance of vehicle, vessels and aircraft, temporary accommodation of personnel; pre-positioning of communications equipment, supplies, fuel,
- ordinance and materials and deploying forces and materials as the parties may agree.

The FPA has enabled the United States to set up its southern military base for operations in the Asian/Pacific area in Darwin.

The U.S. marines are involved with the ADF in war exercises the largest of which is the Talisman Sabre exercises held every two years on and off the coast of Queensland.



The 2019 Talisman Sabre Exercise involved practising island capture and island-hopping towards an un-named mainland country, clearly China. As such it involved practising for a war with China. Under the FPA the aircraft runway at Tindal, NT is being extended to enable U.S. B1 bombers to land and take off and refuel. These bombers can carry nuclear weapons.

The Australian taxpayer is paying over one billion towards this runway extension.

The cost of implementing the FPA is US \$2-3 billion, with unknown annual costs. Defence Minister Linda Reynolds has persistently refused to indicate what percentage is paid by Australia and has justified her refusal as necessary for national security.

Does the Alliance increase our security?

The U.S.-Australia alliance is often claimed to ensure the security of our country. But is this the case? The US alliance has brought us into many unjust wars against countries which were not our enemies (Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria), and threatens to pull us into the US-planned war against Iran or China, both of which would be illegal, and counter-productive for Australia.

The U.S. military presence in Australia does not protect us, but rather makes us a target for attack for countries which resist US domination. If Australia developed a truly independent foreign policy and resisted dictates from the U.S., our nation would gain, not lose, friends. Our national security and prosperity would be greater, and we could reclaim 'good international citizenship' as a country which rejects illegal wars.

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