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The recent Land Forces 21 expo held at the Brisbane Convention Centre in June this year is a very potent example of the creeping militarization of Australian society. The congratulatory tone of AMDA Foundation Limited, the organisers of the expo, in their post-expo media blurb speaks volumes regarding the support and cooperation given to this event by the various federal and state governments which actually act as buying and selling agents for the various contributing defence (aka armaments) industries.

"LAND FORCES 2021 attracted 12,766 attendances from industry, government and defence over its three days, with 718 companies participating and 26 conferences, symposia and seminars. Feedback from the very first day showed that the Australian defence industry was excited to be back to face-to-face engagement and renewing business relationships in person following the constraints of COVID-19.

AMDA Foundation is grateful for the support of the Minister for Defence Industry, Melissa Price, and Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Rick Burr, for their personal commitment to the event and their extensive engagement with industry in the exhibition halls. Indeed, the strength of support from the Department of Defence was evident and the participation by all State and Territory Governments demonstrated the national importance of Australia's defence industry. We are especially appreciative of the support of the Queensland Government as the event's principal sponsor."

A small mention was made of pesky protestors:

"Although protestors attempted to interrupt the event, they failed to prevent it from going ahead as planned and from being an important platform in advancing Australia's industrial and defence capability. The protestors' noisy antics and offensive conduct failed to deter industry from conducting one of the largest single industry engagement events anywhere in the world since the onset of the COVID pandemic. This is hardly surprising, as resilience is the hallmark of Australia's defence industry."

The report finished with a rousing salvo of:

"LAND FORCES 2021 fulfilled its goal of being a platform for engagement in the national interest, and planning is already underway for the next event. The strength of the Australian defence industry is crucial to the security of the nation."

Many Australians would no doubt agree with the expo's importance and see the protestors as part of the looney left. This outcome is the direct result of policies and actions put in place over the last thirty years, starting with the changing narrative given to the commemoration of Anzac Day in schools. Prior to the nineties, Anzac Day ceremonies in schools gradually became more and more perfunctory occasions of a solemn nature, often more focussed on the importance of peace than on the glories of war. Whilst Australia had been involved in many military and peace-keeping operations in the years up to nineties, few of these were glorified; certainly not the Vietnam War and many other military engagements were completely deleted from the memories of most Australians eg., the Malaysian emergency or the Indonesian Confrontation, through the changes made to the social studies/history curriculum in most states. Whilst, the history curriculum may have continued to have units of work devoted to Australia's military engagement with the world, it also tended to not focus significantly on this option. Eventually, history, the subject, would almost disappear from the curriculum taught in many high school around Australia as a result of PM Howard's condemnation of the 'black armband view of history'. With many young people knowing very little about any history (ours or anyone else's) and definitely lacking any critical thinking skills (most ably taught through the study of history), the scene was set for the implementation of a major propaganda exercise (with \$600 million expended on commemorations for the Centenary of World War 1 from 2014-18)to remake the Anzac legend into a useful marketing platform for the militarization of Australia.

The first Gulf War (1991) was the first experience of real warfare (albeit relayed by TV) for most young Australians, and this war also coincided with two major world changing forces: the introduction of Neo-Liberal economic policies throughout the world and the political dissolution of the Soviet Union. Reagan's and Thatcher's economic policies espousing the superiority of capitalism and "shared" western democratic values gave the Howard government (and the Keating Labor government to some extent before it) plenty of scope to dismantle the so-called welfare state by downsizing and privatising state owned enterprises and institutions (hospitals, universities, schools, TAFE etc.,) and introduce Australians to the ethos of individualism (look after yourself) and at the same time, win the vote of those who would benefit from these policies: the business community both big and small and the middle class who were offered both 'choice' and monetary incentives. When governments choose to benefit certain groups over others, there will be winners and losers, terms which are now fully embedded in our everyday language. The first Gulf War provided what appeared to be a winner, the USA, and a loser, Iraq. The extremely short time-span of the war gave the impression that the USA with its military might and 'so-called' superior Western values would and could easily rout any military force that attempted to disrupt the new world order where America (the US) was now the sole leader of the world. This background, together with the remaking of the Anzac legend helped Howard to normalise the growing militarization of Australia.

Prior to Covid-19, for most of the twenty-first century, many young Australians saw a trip or pilgrimage to Gallipoli, in Turkey as a rite of passage. This was a result of the remaking of the Anzac story, turning a terrible and bloody defeat of our invading forces into a glorious and honourable sacrifice story where brave, young ANZAC soldiers saved Australia from the 'enemy' (the Turks/the Germans/whatever). Schools, children's book authors, TV documentary makers and journalists (both print and TV) together with the tourism industry and the Federal Government collaborated to change the narrative of the Anzac story from one of bravery and self sacrifice for your country to one of the importance and priority of a well resourced defence force that must assist the USA whenever called upon and was essential for our survival in a hostile world, especially after the 9/11 attack in New York. Despite hundreds of thousands of Australians protesting our entry into the Iraq War in 2003, a decision based on the lie that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, Howard sent Australian troops to Iraq to assist the USA led coalition. Since that time, Australians have become victims of lies, secrecy and manipulation as our government (of both parties), without our consent, endeavours to pursue the goal of an enlarged military presence in the Asian Pacific region.

The results of this increased militarization by stealth have impacts on multiple areas of Australian life. Neo-liberal small government policy tends to reduce the money spent on public health and education and social housing which in turn tends to impact people living in lower socio-economic areas far more dramatically than people who live in more affluent areas because the safety net becomes much less reliable as the budget reduces and sometimes eliminates resources in these areas. Consequently, public schools tend to become less efficient in their delivery of a decent education, partially because of reduced funding and partially because of the reduction of middle class students in public schools, as a result of many leaving the public system and enrolling in private schools (either religious or independent) which are both massively funded by the Federal Government. This funding is delivered as a way to give middle class parents a 'choice' when it comes to education. The same thinking applies to private health even though Australia has a fairly good universal free health scheme. Social housing in Australia is massively underfunded and consequently we have a housing shortage that is beginning to impact even people who have always voted for the Coalition.

At the same time as public funding for people's fundamental needs has decreased we have had absurd increases in spending on weapons for future defence needs. What we also see is that lower socio-economic areas have become recruitment grounds for the army and navy aided by outrageous advertisements in cinemas and on TV and probably also on social media. Advertisements that make joining the army or navy look like one is going on a Club Med adventure or Kontiki tour.

Unfortunately, many youth, both male and female, see joining one of the services as their only way out of difficult circumstances since there are no other jobs available for them, considering their background, their limited education and their lack of contacts or connections. Of course, the services may help some young people find their feet, but judging from the recent establishment of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans Suicide, it would appear that our servicemen and women are not treated in the manner we would expect and that class and racism are still prevalent in the very hierarchical system of the armed forces, often with dire consequences.

Militarization of a society is not always overt and violent. In our case, it has been subtle, ongoing and covert. It should also be noted that this submission is not calling for the disbanding of the armed forces. Australia needs a defence force that is well equipped and ready to defend its sovereignty. However, the following examples show clearly just how far Australia has wandered from this necessary goal over the past couple of decades, partially as a result of our commitment to the ANZUS Treaty and partially as a result of the neo-liberal economic agenda which places profit over people. Also, unfortunately some politicians are not averse to placing their own welfare above the people they are meant to serve and have made deals with armament companies that should never have been made (usually to gain plum jobs after leaving politics; a federal ICAC would help to eliminate this corrupt practice).

This list below briefly documents where our governments (both Coalition and Labor) have taken us and what the results of some of those actions are:

1. Since the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001, Australia has followed the USA into several wars, invading countries that were not our enemies (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria) and in the process killing millions of people, ruining large sections of these countries and completely destabilizing the Middle East. Today, as I write this submission, the Taliban has marched into Kabul and taken back control of Afghanistan - what was our government thinking when it involved itself (and us) in the "war on terror"?
2. In 2007, the Howard government used army personnel to provide logistics and surveillance in the implementation of the NT Emergency Response, later called the Intervention or Invasion by Aboriginal people affected by this action. It might be noted that this action is still in force (minus army personnel) but living and social conditions in most communities have deteriorated since that time along with Aboriginal self-sufficiency and control of their own lands and destiny. Some of the policies trialed in NT Aboriginal communities have now been extended to other low income areas with high unemployment in other parts of Australia (cashless welfare card).
3. The creation of "fortress Australia" to stop legal asylum seekers from entering Australia is one of the most chilling episodes in the militarization of our country. Up until the 1980s, border control focussed mainly on customs officers searching for contraband substances. However, with the increase in wars and political instability in many countries within our region, asylum seekers have now become the main target of government surveillance and control. In 2015, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison established the Australian Border Force which is a multi agency task force working in direct collaboration with the Australian Defence Force. ABF personnel wear uniforms and use a ranking system similar to the armed services and are armed with Personal Defence Equipment (PDE). ABF personnel are also recruited from many of the same areas where the ADF finds it lower ranking personnel. At the same time, asylum seekers have been demonised as criminals and terrorists and many have been jailed without trial in off-shore detention centres for years, all with the consent and approval of many Australians.
4. The constant wars have also spawned a "war on terrorism/terrorists" similar to the "war on Communism/communists" during the Cold War, however with many more inroads into our personal freedoms and rights than we saw during the previous era. People of Middle Eastern

background/ancestry or people of colour are particularly targetted in society as being unAustralian and messaging from our Federal Government, despite Australia being a multicultural country, is often inflammatory and plain racist. However, we continue to see 'Muslim terrorists under every bed' while home grown Anglo-Australian terrorists are free to parade in the streets with impunity, along with their guns and death threats.

5. With our involvement in an ever-growing list of wars, our present government is determined to find as many enemy countries as possible. Our present quarrel with China, our major trading partner, is a good case in point. Australia has been suspicious of the Chinese since the Gold Rushes. The "White Australia policy" was implemented mainly because of the fear that Chinese people would flood the country and take the jobs of good, white British men. Our country was built on racist foundations, first through the invasion of Aboriginal Australia, and then through the genocidal practices of dispersal and destruction of Aboriginal culture and society and then through denial of such actions. The Intervention was a modern reiteration of old practices. Once Aboriginal people appeared to have been vanquished, Chinese people took their place in the "fear of others" quest. The fact that many Australians contemplate "going to war" against China as a result of the trade restrictions it has placed on some of our trade exports, shows how deep our fear of China and the Chinese is. The real issue that should be explored is why our Federal government was so hostile towards the Chinese government when diplomacy 101 would have solved any problem before it even started. However at the time, PM Morrison was seeking to win approval from President Trump and we can only thank providence that President Biden won the 2020 US election. The fact remains that our government is not averse to going to war, whenever the US says "jump".

6. Making money from the manufacturing of armaments is big business and the Australian government is very happy to support these money making ventures. It is one thing to provide equipment for the defence of Australia, it is an entirely immoral venture to provide military equipment for other countries to make war. Our federal governments, over the last forty years have basically dismantled most of our both large and small manufacturing industries, leading to unemployment and dependence on other countries (mainly China) and yet at the same time, we have been making and exporting weapons to countries the government believes we should not know about.

7. We now live in a country of "haves" and "have-nots". The "have-nots" are demonised by government as lazy and useless, and terrorised by government programs that limit agency of any kind. Poor education, poor health, inadequate housing, lack of decent jobs create lots of problems and government's only response is to cut funding to any area that may alleviate some of these problems. At the same time, there is plenty of money in the budget every year to expand military and defence spending - an unnecessary extension to the National War Memorial, a new fleet of submarines that won't be delivered for years to come, or a \$20 billion procurement of ballistic and high-speed missile defence equipment between 2025 and 2020 - these expenditures are considered absolutely essential for Australia's future.

The above list is not conclusive but merely tries to give a rough picture of our country in 2021. We have never been truly independent, using Britain first of all as our major protector and then transferring that role to the US after 1945. However, there comes a time when a young country (like any young person) must start thinking about being independent, and hopefully through the climate change crisis, many Australians will start to think about our place in the world and will begin to see that cooperation and diplomacy "trump" belligerence and war when it comes to solving both domestic and international problems. A peaceful and independent Australia is a very worthy goal both for present generations and future ones.