

This short submission raises the idea that one of the consequences of the Australia/US military alliance is that the associated military and industrial infrastructural links associated with the military alliance are also accompanied by the import of US media structures that create emotional and conceptual links with the US. Whilst more intangible than armed troops, media products also occupy minds. These US media and cultural links ultimately dis-embed the community from their local social interactions and embeds them in a fictional culture.

Like all cultural speculation there is a lack of easily accessible data to back up claims like the above, but there is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that this is a neglected aspect of social research. Perhaps the most symbolic of these observations is the fact that so many Australians phone 911 (the US emergency number) in times of emergency that Telstra has an automatic diversion to 000. (1)

The reinvigoration of military links with the USA that occurred under the Howard government saw associated economic links culminating in the The Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) which came into effect on 1 January 2005. Of particular significance to my argument was the relaxing of tariffs on US media content and the reduction under AUSFTA of Government quotas mandating broadcasters to air Australian content. The Australia Film Finance Corporation observed in the run up to the AUSFTA that as the world's leading audio-visual producer the US believed it had much to gain by eroding regulation measures in other countries and was prepared to use the free trade negotiations with Australia to win precedents that could be further used in negotiations with more lucrative global markets. (2)

AUSFTA has to be seen in partnership with US military hegemony over Australia and the beginnings of a slow erosion of the capacity of Australian to generate its own cultural policy. In effect US military and cultural hegemony are partners in ensuring US long term ambitions for their information economy where the US creates restrictions for intellectual property rights but increasingly "liberalises" the markets for trading them in its client states.

While the Australian Broadcasting Services Act requires all commercial free-to-air television licensees to annually broadcast 55% Australian programming, subscription services (which are largely US based) are only required to invest at least 10 per cent of the channel's total program expenditure on new Australian drama. Expenditure on 'new' content can include spend on script development, acquisitions, investment, pre-production or production. These processes do not guarantee the production of media.

The Government has asked streaming services operating in Australia to voluntarily report on their level of investment in Australian content to the Australian Communications and Media Authority from 1 January 2021. Most recent figures suggest less than 2% of Netflix's current streaming is Australian in manufacture. (3)

Cultural hegemony is part of the parcel of military hegemony. As long as Australia is tied to the US military alliance and what that entails, it will struggle to have an authentic cultural voice of its own. This is increasingly understood by the broader Australian community as a threat to their identity, perhaps in a way that the military alliance, which is more discreet and less talked about currently isn't. (4)

1. (<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/brisbane/programs/drive/why-calling-911-diverts-you-to-000/13156730>)

2. Film Finance Corporation (2003) Submission to

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

3. Lobato, Ramon; Scarlata, Alexa (15 October 2018). Local film and television content makes up just 1.6% of Netflix's Australian content. *The Conversation*.

4. <https://greensmps.org.au/articles/two-thirds-australians-support-local-content-laws-streaming-services-new-poll-shows>