

Australia has long been an ally of the United States. After World War I and II, where Australia was allied with the US, the ANZUS Treaty codified a commitment to collective security between the US, Australia and New Zealand. Australia and the US also share positive trade relations. Gravitating towards countries with shared heritage and language, similar values, democratic systems of government is by no means problematic and many would say this alliance has benefited Australia.

However, the nature of the relationship between the United States and Australia, and the US-Australia alliance, is less of a partnership in achieving common foreign policy and defence goals, and more a case of Australia following the lead of the US time and time again — from a simple remark, or policy position on an emerging issue through to committing our troops to war. It is evident the relationship based on this alliance has influenced Australia's thinking and choices with regard to defence and foreign policy matters. This submission draws attention to the decisions to enter wars, as in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, the influence of the alliance in this and the associated costs; human, political and financial. History shows Australia entering into wars waged by the US time and time again and could likely do so again in the future.

The alliance also hinders Australia's ability to assert a truly independent foreign policy, and forge relationships truly in our own way, particularly in our region and as a middle power, through following US positions. To offer one example, the dispute over the Spratley Islands in the South China Sea is of concern to Australia, as a flashpoint for potential conflict and destabilisation in our region. If Australia maintained friendship with the US, but still diverged on its stance concerning such an issue, Australia could have been in a position to be a middle-power mediator, and use its diplomatic power to have positive influence in the region, and grow our relationships with our neighbours. Under the current US-Australia alliance, Australia is failing to deliver a truly independent foreign and defence policy which inhibits our ability to be a moral leader on different foreign policy and international defence issues as well as to truly develop and maximise policy for our own national interest and developing our place in the global arena on our own terms.