

The people of Australia deserve an independent, worldly and balanced approach by our political leaders to issues of foreign policy and military aggression. Pragmatism, strategic realism and sensitivity, not moral judgment and binary analysis, are better guides to appropriate global conduct. Australia's leaders have too often failed to demonstrate the independence of national character on which we pride ourselves. All too frequently, we have slavishly followed the United States into unnecessary or unjustified conflicts, weakening our independence and embarrassing our nation.

History will regard the past 75 years as an exceptional period of wars, invasion and interference instigated by the United States in its own perceived security and economic interests. Most of the interventions have failed in the short term and all have been counterproductive in the long term. They have resulted in the loss of millions upon millions of civilian lives, generated resentment, created instability and almost invariably made a bad situation worse. America's interventions have not made the world a safer or better place; they have not been the actions of a responsible global state.

Australia's leaders should be clear-eyed about the mixed legacy of the United States, wary of the soundness of its judgments and often sceptical of its motivations and interests. We should recognise that America's self interest and its fatal attraction to overreach have themselves hastened the changing world order and its own loss of leadership. Australians are entitled to have their leaders strike a different, more independent note.