

Nick Deane

The violent nature of the USA

“Why does Australia choose to align itself with the USA?” is a question central to IPAN’s inquiry.

An objective examination of the nature and extent of the USA’s military activities should lead Australians to reflect deeply on this question. The main contention of this submission is that the USA is a nation characterised by excessive violence and aggression. Evidence to support this position is abundant and can be found at national and international levels. What follows is only the very briefest synopsis.

Domestically, violence is found in many movies emanating from Hollywood, in which the subject matter is ‘resolved’ through the violent death of the ‘bad guy’ – and the good guy is good only because he is good at fighting. It is found in the appalling statistics of internal gun violence. <http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>. The number of guns in the American community far exceeds the total human population. The death of George Floyd in 2020; other documented cases of people dying at the hands of the police and the number of mass murders that have been taking place annually, are all indicative of a culture steeped in violence.

On the international stage the USA’s historical record is of greater significance for Australia. The articles and books on the topic are legion. Just a few examples are given here, to serve as illustration of the culture of violence that finds its way into USA foreign and military policy.

In his book “Base Nation”, David Vine takes the reader back to the days of the ‘Wild West’, when the US government developed a strategy of establishing bases (forts) in territory it intended to dominate. It is a strategy that the USA has continued to employ. Once having expanded across the North American continent, the USA began establishing bases in countries that up until that time were not under its dominance. Today, according to Vine, the USA has around 800 military bases on foreign territory. In some cases (Germany and Japan) USA forces have had a continued presence, long after the cessation of hostilities. In Australia’s case, the USA has established a presence in Darwin, on the understanding that they are here for training purposes. The pattern seems to be that, once established, USA bases tend to remain in place indefinitely.

Vine, David “*Base Nation*” Metropolitan Books, 2015
<https://www.basenation.us>

During its short history, the USA has been at war very frequently.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/us-military-actions-and-wars-1775-1994/>

Indeed, one report of recent research claims that war involving the USA has occurred in 225 of the nation’s 243 years of existence since 1776.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/595752-the-us-has-been-at-war-225-out-of-243-years-since-1776>

The war in Vietnam, which went on for many years, caused huge numbers of casualties and environmental damage that is ongoing. It is indicative of the violence the USA is comfortable inflicting on any opponent.

If any was needed, the (illegal) invasion of Iraq in 2003 provides further proof of this. There were an estimated 654,965 excess Iraqi deaths associated with the war in the three years between 2003 and 2006, alone. Significantly, the USA government has made no attempt to calculate civilian deaths due to its military actions in Iraq.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lancet_surveys_of_Iraq_War_casualties

The war led to instability throughout the Middle East; a refugee crisis and the emergence of new terrorist organisations.

The British Chilcott Report into Britain's involvement found that peaceful options had not been exhausted before the 2003 invasion; that the intelligence, upon which the war was based, was flawed, and that any possible threat from Iraq had been exaggerated.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36721645>

Eighteen years after the invasion, Vincent Emanuele has reflected on the war, its impacts and its aftermaths – including the high rate of suicide amongst veterans.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/03/19/the-iraq-war-18-years-later/?fbclid=IwAR0DGxpKNpAIqWJ6eNltyy7UcVj38-MQbNdupnSB0U54cwgdzUjHsVvDiKk>

Bombing campaigns and drone warfare are distinct features of the way the USA chooses to inflict punishment on those it considers enemies, whether in the so-called War on Terror; under the justification of defending US personnel, or through exercising an assumed 'right to protect' selected communities.

Whether attacks come from high-tech missiles, 'traditional' bombs dropped from aircraft, or missiles launched from unmanned drones, the outcome, of high explosive destruction, is the same. This outcome includes the deaths and injuries of civilians, mainly women and children. (The majority of the casualties of modern warfare are, in fact, civilian.)

Young, Marilyn B & Tanaka, Yuki *"Bombing Civilians"*, The New Press, 2010.

<https://thenewpress.com/books/bombing-civilians>

As recently as February 25, 2021, US President Biden ordered a bombing raid in Syrian territory, with the obscure justification that it was in defence of US personnel. (Whose presence on this foreign territory is, in itself, indicative of USA aggression.) In 2017, then President Trump had also authorised a raid in Syria.

These are but isolated instances of an ongoing campaign of drone warfare against perceived 'enemies' of the USA in countries with which the USA is not technically at war. Many are justified on the grounds of being strikes against terrorist targets – but the number of civilian casualties these raids have caused is unacceptable.

A recent report claims that the USA has been dropping 46 bombs per day since 2001. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2288049/us-allies-have-dropped-46-bombs-per-day-on-other-countries-since-2001>

According to another article, Drone Warfare is described as becoming 'normal'.
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jan/19/military-drone-strikes-becoming-normalised-says-report>

This author is far from being alone in characterising the USA as excessively violent.

When he was president, Dwight Eisenhower made the following remarks on April 17, 1953

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”

http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/speeches/ike_chance_for_peace.html

At the end of his presidency, Eisenhower coined the phrase 'military industrial complex', to describe and emphasise the influence that those in the military industries exert within the USA government. On Jan 17, 1961 he said:-

“This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence – economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every Statehouse, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

<https://www.transcend.org/tms/2021/01/eisenhower-farewell-address-17-jan-1961-2/>

The 'disastrous rise of this misplaced power' has manifested itself. It was at its most clear in the invasion of Iraq – a war that may have been chosen by an elite that saw monetary profit in its prosecution. The nexus between the military industry and government is explored comprehensively in “The Shadow World” by Andrew Feinstein.

Feinstein, Andrew *“The Shadow World”*, Penguin Books, 2011.

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Shadow-World-Inside-Global-Trade/dp/125001395X>

Dr Mike McKinley has expressed it in this way:-

“In injuriously brief terms, the United States, by any strict accounting, normally functions as an oligarchy or a plutocracy, depending on the focus; over the last quarter of a century the system manifests itself as an American version conforming to the essential elements of fascism.

Strategically, a close reading of just two documents, National Security Strategy (2017), and Joint Vision 2020 (2000), spell out the non-negotiable objective of “overmatch”/“full spectrum dominance” – which is to say a regime which cannot contemplate strategic parity let alone the legitimate demands of others to contribute to the establishment of the rules of world politics.”

<https://johnmenadue.com/its-time-to-decommission-aspi/>

Professor Stuart Rees, the author of “Cruelty or Humanity”, has drawn attention to the internal violence of the USA:-

“Gun slaughter runs rampant across the United States, but belief in US exceptionalism accompanied by denial that a culture of violence exists discourages diagnosis of the pandemic’s root cause.

The exceptionalism symptom shows a country claiming to be the land of the free and the greatest democracy in the world, while denial shows in blindness to a culture which fosters fatal shootings.”

<https://johnmenadue.com/an-american-culture-of-violence-implications-for-australia/>

Rees, Stuart “*Cruelty or Humanity*”, Bristol University Press, 2020.

In the words of Henry A. Giroux, the USA ‘radiates violence’

<https://johnmenadue.com/america-radiates-violence-challenging-the-politics-of-isolated-incidents/>

The violence of the USA is summarised in words from the Franciscan Order in France. In denouncing US policy in Vietnam in 1965, it describes “a system which nourishes itself by means of war, which orients itself towards war and profits handsomely from it.”

Greene, Felix “*Vietnam! Vietnam!*”, Penguin Books, 1966, Page 152.

However, the final words on the matter were uttered by Martin Luther King on April 4, 1967:-

“... I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government.”

“The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism.”

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/beyond-vietnam>

The question posed at the beginning of this submission cries out for a sensible answer. This author is unable to provide one. Why does Australia choose to allign itself with such a consistently violent, militaristic nation as the USA?

As King foresaw, the image of violence and militarism persists. The USA is, after all and without question, the greatest purveyor of violence the world has ever seen.

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