

Submission: US Alliance a high price to pay
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There are two aspects to examine when considering the cost of Australia's military alliance with the USA; the political cost, and the value for money in terms of defending Australia. On both aspects the Australian people are being cheated.

The political cost

Both Liberal and Labor are fixated on the idea that the US will defend Australia if we are attacked. Because the US used Australia as a convenient land base in World War 11, the parliamentary parties see this as a guarantee of future protection.

They invoke the ANZUS Treaty as binding insurance, however this agreement only provides for "consultation" in the event of attack, rather than automatic military assistance. Indeed, the US has repeatedly stated that they reserve the right to take military action only when "... the interests of the USA... " are threatened.

Both Liberal and Labor hope to get around this inconvenient fact by ingratiating themselves to US governments by endorsing and regurgitating almost every US foreign policy position and action. Subsequently, Australian forces have followed US commands into Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria and are training pro-US repressive regimes in Indonesia and the Philippines. None of these countries has ever threatened Australia.

Nor was any of these invasions debated or decided by the elected politicians. The decision to commit Australian forces to war is made solely by the Prime Minister and "ticked off" by the Governor-General.

The Australian people are even further removed from the process, excluded from any debate and left to demonstrate in the street if they object to yet another "American War".

If defending "freedom and democracy" is the criteria, what about our neighbours in West Papua, Myanmar, and the Philippines?!

This subservient endorsement of US foreign policy has resulted in Australian governments surrendering political independence to the power-brokers in the US State Department, the Pentagon and the multinational weapons corporations.

When Trump launched his attack on China over the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, Australian political leaders eagerly conducted the chorus. China's response was to disrupt and freeze out important Australian exports such as coal, barley, wine and seafood. Ironically, China is now importing some of these products from the USA! Ouch!

When the US sent warships into the South China Sea, prowling along China's coast and shipping lanes, Australia again eagerly joined in, even though no commercial shipping has been denied "freedom of navigation", even now.

When US president Biden announced the 11th September as the final withdrawal date for US forces from the losing war in Afghanistan, Australia quickly agreed to the same day. New Zealand, a country with more respect for its independence, had already started to withdraw.

Confrontation in the South China Sea has added an extremely dangerous dimension to Australia's situation. Australian ships and personnel are under direct US command. Some Australian Navy and Airforce members are integrated into US Navy battle groups and airbases.

In the event of a serious conflict, regardless of how it starts or who starts it, Australian forces will automatically be involved. If China chooses to escalate the conflict, the Pine Gap spy-base near Alice Springs would be a prime target, along with Robertson Barracks in Darwin, where US Marines are stationed. Other possible targets would be the Harold E. Holt Communications Base near Exmouth in Western Australia and even the Lavarack Barracks in Townsville.

By underwriting US military adventurism, successive Australian governments have betrayed Australia's sovereignty and exposed the country to the danger of devastating attack.

Loss of sovereignty and independence is too high a price to pay, let alone endangering the population. Australia should avoid being dragged into a conflict between the US and China, competing imperialist powers trying to assert their hegemony on the rest of the world.

Value for money?

As far as the defence of Australia goes, what are we getting?

Much of the expensive military hardware has been decided upon on the basis of it being readily "interoperative" with US equipment and training.

Communications systems and equipment, aircraft such as the F35 stealth fighter, drones, ships, missiles, torpedoes, tanks, small arms and a whole lot more have been purchased on the premise (or promise?) that they will be at the disposal of US war planners.

As well, the government has invested in providing additional infrastructure and extended runways at Tindal Air Base near Katherine, to accommodate gigantic US B1, B2 and B52 bombers and store reserves of fuel, equipment and weapons.

Australian officers regularly attend training courses in the US, getting familiar with US military procedures and absorbing US political policies.

In effect, the Australian military forces have been re-made into an auxiliary force for US foreign policy rather than their core role and responsibility of defence of Australia.

If defence of Australia is the objective, then it stands to reason that a whole new approach is necessary.

For example, defence of the main population and industrial centres in the cities and regional towns should be a priority, requiring perhaps a domestic anti-missile, anti-aircraft system.

Rather than the present course of purchasing a handful of super-long-range ships and submarines that can spend months at sea half-way across the world, Australia could well be better defended by a fleet of fast frigates and coastal-based submarines.

Such a defence force would threaten and provoke no-one, and earn respect for Australia's contribution to a more peaceful world. Ultimately, Australia's best defence is rejection of the so-called US Alliance and vigorous support for all disarmament initiatives and an independent foreign policy which respects and assists countries in our region.