

Evgenia Zhang

Exploring the case for an independent and peaceful Australia. What are the costs and consequences of Australian involvement in US-led wars and the US alliance? What are the alternatives?

Who controls the media, controls the minds of the masses... A historical outline of why Australia engaged in endless wars, how a controlled media narrative needs to change and what can be done about it

This proposal is for the general category as there does not seem to be a media one. It is imperative everyone must be well informed about who owns and controls the Australian media and the proposals stated in a White Paper published in 2019 which are needed to create an independent and peaceful Australia in the future.

I strongly argue that whoever controls the narrative, controls the minds of the masses. Australia's media has a history of censorship and controlled by the few, consequently creating narrow-mindedness amongst those who do not read alternative sources, the more dangerous of which were the government's unexamined unilateral support for illegal occupations and illegal forceful removals of leaders of other sovereign countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. According to the recent Press Freedom in Australia, White Paper, 2019, "90% of Australians and 85% of Australian journalists think the state of press freedom in Australia deteriorated in the last decade."

Wikileaks has pointed out that the goal of Western governments is to create and facilitate monopolised media censorship and to pursue mass surveillance, increased police powers and impose draconian laws. These curtailing of people's civil liberties; freedom of expressions, freedom of speech hide behind the guise called 'national security'.

The current anti China sentiment in Australia is another media frenzy hype created by Australian mainstream media. The following engagement by Australia in military exercises in far Northern Queensland and the South China Sea are examples of a government being the United States' lapdog, fuelled by the media. I argue that these actions by the Australian government has not made the nation richer or more prosperous; quite the opposite. Australia's largest regional trading partner China has become the latest target for mainstream media mistrust, lies and misinformation, as China now is being portrayed as not a good economic partner, but as a threat to long-term national security, therefore Australia should be wary of China. Whilst media smears about China is not new, the White House under the Trump administration intensified it along with Murdoch media. This false and uncalled for narrative is being forcefully pushed by the mainstream media.

People around the world know China has relatively been a 'quiet country'. First they can see its rise as a superpower without firing a single shot. We cannot say this about the West, one needs to look at the 'legacy' of the British Empire and US invasions. Inasmuch as there are China policies - internal or external in which the West disapproves of, they

haven't invaded any country. Australia's mainstream media ought to be varied and seek the truth for the sake of peace around the region and the world.

Since the unfair dismissal of former democratically elected Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam in 1975, Australia has been blindingly following the US and the United Kingdom for its political agenda. “We are grateful to the Washington Post, The New York Times, Time Magazine and other great publications whose directors have attended our meetings and respected their promises of discretion for almost forty years. It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world if we had been subjected to the lights of publicity during those years. But, the world is now more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a world government. The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national auto-determination practiced in past centuries.” David Rockefeller in 1991.

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During World War I, journalist and soldier Keith Murdoch blew the whistle at Gallipoli in 1915. He exposed the truth of what was really happening to the Australian and New Zealand troops at the height of British military censorship. Australia as

a young nation, provided all the men and military equipment it could muster to the British Empire. Keith Murdoch exposed how troops were being shot at by the Turks when fellow Australians back home were being kept in the dark. He wrote to the Australian government to inform then Prime Minister Andrew Fischer to pull Australian troops from Gallipoli. This letter was intercepted by the British intelligence. He never saw the letter again nor did Fischer receive it. He pursued the matter by publishing the letter known as the Gallipoli letter which saved thousands of lives. Australians were shocked to learn the horrible truth. Murdoch senior later bought stakes in Australian newspapers. Since World War II, America has invaded or attempted to overthrow more than 60 countries.

Julian Assange tells the world, “You have to start with the truth. The truth is the only way that we can get anywhere. Because any decision-making that is based upon a lie or ignorance can’t lead to a good conclusion”. This wisdom from Australian publisher and founder of the revolutionary Wikileaks cannot be more relevant in an age of mass surveillance of civilians, profound human rights breaches, and increased police powers etc all occurring in a so-called Western liberal democracy. Paraphrasing veteran investigative journalist and filmmaker, John Pilger: “Assange did what no other journalist could do, he forced us in the West to look in the mirror....” Assange who has an increased support from activists all over the world, is a victim of mainstream media smears. In order for the world to take note of the power of Western mainstream media, Julian Assange continues to be incarcerated in Britain’s Belmarsh Prison, a

place where serious criminals are incarcerated, the equivalent of Guantanamo Bay. This was all for writing the truth; to expose US military war crimes, to write and talk about torture of innocent people at US military black sites, to write about environmental damage by corporations and Big Pharmaceuticals.

Murdoch senior's time of journalism changed when his son Rupert took charge. Rupert Murdoch owns 70% of Australia's media outlets. His media empire can produce and disseminate any misinformation due to his power and influence. We can go back to Gough Whitlam's short lived prime ministership. He was smeared and his downfall was engineered by Rupert Murdoch's media with the help of US' own biased platform, also owned by Murdoch. Gough Whitlam was removed despite his policies were to benefit the Australian people, and his actions were for Australian interests.

Whilst 2% of Australia's federal budget is spent on wars and military exercises, the government, the intelligence agencies and the corporate media such as News Corp have been controlling the narrative and continue to smear any country who is 'culturally and politically different from us' as a potential enemy. It appears that a country which antagonises the West, simply must exist, so Murdoch's media empire continues spinning.

The 2019 raids of News Corp journalist Annika Smethurst by the Australian Federal Police shows the massive power of spy

agencies who might be uncomfortable and inconvenienced on hearing truths.

Australia knows about the current media smears against other countries. This July the UK's Times crime and security editor posted the title: "MI5 wants you to look out for Russian and Chinese spies." Author and editor of DeClassified UK Mark Curtis calls the media system a "large psychological operation." These kind of media innuendos do not help in building a better world.

Thanks to former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's successful petition into a Royal Commission into Murdoch owned media, Australia has become more aware how elections are influenced. Fox News until now still supports that Trump won the 2020 election.

Australia can end this one sided media, it can end its single media ownership, improve media freedoms and give investigative journalism a greater platform for widespread public access so more people can donate and support, consequently avoid getting involved in future wars. Moreover Australia can break from the US military alliance. This is achievable by using the Alliance for Journalist Freedom, Press Freedom of Australia's group's policies namely:

- 1) "Positive media freedom: Introduce a Media Freedom Act that positively enshrines the principle of freedom of press. This can be implemented by using Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which support the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

2) National Security: Address press freedom concerns in national security legislation by implementing a balance between national security legislation between public accountability of government and operational secrecy for national security agencies. Such balance should recognise the fundamental importance of national security and the protection of certain Commonwealth activities and the identities of certain Commonwealth employees, whilst providing a basis for journalists to investigate and report on government wrongdoing.

3) Confidentiality: Protect journalists' confidential data where that data is gathered and held for legitimate journalistic work. Where confidential data is accessed due to national security concerns, the basis for doing so must be able to be objectively tested.

4) Shield Laws: Enhance and harmonise the shield laws available under State, Territory and Commonwealth Evidence Acts to cover legitimate journalistic work in a uniform way.

5) Whistleblowers: Enhance whistleblower protections so that:

- All disclosures made in the public interest by whistleblowers to journalists are protected, regardless of any steps by the organisations subject of the disclosures to address its misconduct; and
- The concept of 'disclosable conduct' is abolished as a requirement for public sector disclosures.

6) Defamation and the Public Interest: Introduce a succinct and clearly set-out public interest defence to claims of defamation.

7) Transparency around Suppression Orders: Establish greater transparency in the issuing and recording of suppression orders.”

Muriel Matters once said: “We cannot have peace until we make peace more important than it has ever been in the past. There is no such thing as an “outbreak” of war. War was thought for, worked for and lived for. We can never get a state of harmony on earth until we prepare for it, work for it, live for it... and dream of it.”

The disturbing footage of Collateral Murder, posted by Wikileaks more than a decade ago, informed the world that a war crime was committed by Australia's main ally. American forces were caught on camera laughing as they deliberately shot down innocent Iraqi civilians, including children and two Reuters journalists. Peoples around the world know who the real war mongers are.

Australia needs independent and investigative media sources to be widespread to access true information. Living in the Digital Age has produced both benefits and pitfalls but more of the former. Empowered citizens can use this knowledge to educate and inform others around them so they can make better decisions in their day to day lives, their communities and for the nation. Australia must cut alliances with countries whose aims are not for Australia's security and interests.

Having an investigative and independent media that holds government, public services and financial bodies to account will create a free, peaceful and prosperous Australia.

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This proposal is mainly focused on the media category as it is imperative everyone must be well informed about who owns and controls the Australian media and the proposals stated in a White Paper published in 2019 which are needed to create an independent and peaceful Australia in the future.

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