

By Tom Marwick

IPAN Public Inquiry

Economic costs of War or preparedness for war

Globally we are spending \$1.9 Trillion on our militaries, in a world where one in ten people live on less than \$1.90 per day, two in three people live on less than \$10 per day and 85% live on less than \$30 per day. Besides the lack of income most of these people lack basic services like access to clean water, waste and waste water disposal and treatment, medical care and education.

Our wars not only divert resources from delivering these much needed services, they typically damage or completely destroy the infrastructure of the nation under attack, sending them into an accelerating spiral of poverty and an existence which is less than dignified.

That \$1.9 Trillion could be better spent.

The human cost of war.

Without any doubt, the most compelling reason to oppose war is the human cost. Australia has been engaged in many wars. There have been many Australians killed in these wars, and many more returned home damaged, either physically wounded or psychologically wounded to the extent that they are not able to fully participate in society, drug abuse, domestic violence and ultimately suicide. These are also casualties of war.

The casualties of Australian and allied armed forces is very small in comparison to the trail of death and destruction that was left in the wake of these wars.

Since 1945 Australians have participated in wars;

The Korean War; we went to protect the government of the dictator Syngman Rhee. Approximately 4 million were killed and immense environmental damage with the total destruction of the country's infrastructure.

The Vietnam War, we went to protect the government South Vietnam. 3 million were killed, napalm was used on civilian villages and burnt people alive. Agent orange caused enormous environmental destruction.

In the Middle East Wars, have killed millions and between 27 and 45 million have been displaced, they become refugees looking for a safe haven. The 'coalition of the willing' that invaded Iraq, Australia, UK and USA all have draconian immigration policies. Anyone arriving uninvited to our country seeking asylum is sent to indefinite arbitrary detention. This is in violation of international law.

It is also important to note that most of the casualties in war are civilians (in the most recent wars an estimated 90%). Military personnel are also killed but those prosecuting war are rarely punished (eg John Howard, George Bush, Tony Blair). Daniel Hail, a US military person was recently convicted of espionage for revealing that the US drone assassination program kills nine untargeted individuals for

each target killed. Even the targeted casualties are extrajudicial killings assigned to death by a few with no judicial oversight.

Environmental Cost of War

All wars cost environmentally, bombs not only kill people but also every living animal within the blast region leaving bomb craters disfiguring the landscape, that is the bombs that exploded. War zones are left with unexploded ordinances, particularly from cluster munitions and land mines making the war zones dangerous environments for decades to come.

We saw in Vietnam the environmental destruction from the use of Agent Orange. The use of Agent Orange has caused the collapse of entire ecosystems and residues still remain 26 years later causing health problems for people who live in the region.

In Afghanistan we saw the deforestation of large areas land by people in search of heating fuel.

We saw in Iraq the use of depleted radioactive uranium which will remain radioactive for as far into the future that we are reasonably for see. An estimated 340t of depleted uranium was used.

The existence of the world as we know it is currently being threatened by climate change, military operations are enormous sources of CO2 emissions. Governments around the world are promising to be carbon neutral by year 2050. These promises were made by politicians, this makes these promises hardly believable already but to exclude emissions from the war machine make the promise worthless and provides countries the opportunity to hide carbon emissions under the veil of military. It has been estimated that 20 Billion litres of petroleum fuel are used annually by the US military alone, these carbon emissions are more than total emissions of many small countries.

Recently the IPCC released a report that classified the environmental problem as being a “code red” situation. A major war could produce the tipping point to take the environmental problem past the point of no return. If that war turned nuclear then perhaps the dooms day clock would strike the hour.

The China Threat

Most Australians do not have an appreciation of life in China and will believe whatever the media publishes about it. The media is incessantly publishing stories defaming China as an evil state hell bent on taking over the world and dominating the entire world’s population. There is no strong evidence that this is actually true and there is plenty of evidence to suggest otherwise but this evidence is rarely published in the main stream media.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) are leaders in publishing anti China propaganda, this is published uncritically without checking the validity of claims. It is important to note that in all the criticisms of China’s alleged human rights abuses published by ASPI they are completely silent on the largest human rights crisis on the planet, that being in Yemen. That great human suffering is caused by aggressive wars staged by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emeritus with backing and support by USA and Britain and using arms supplied by most western countries including Australia. ASPI is also silent on human rights violations in Israeli occupied Palestine, India occupied Kashmir and extreme state sponsored or at least tolerated violence in Colombia and Honduras. These are only a few

examples of human rights which ASPI and main stream media completely ignore while castigating China.

It is important to note that ASPI is funded by western allied nations who class China as a threat and by weapons manufacturers whose very existence is dependent on war and the threat of war.

The criticisms of China are only providing excuses to attack. It is what Noam Chomsky describes as manufacturing consent to go to war, the reason propelling the western allied to war with China is that China has an economy which is developing to the extent where they cannot be dominated by the western dominated financial system and they can trade with nations who under unilateral sanctions and refuse to be dominated and controlled by the western alliance.

The beating of the drums of war against China is only the most recent example of manufacturing consent. As Julian Assange noted wars are started by lies and misrepresentations of the truth. To even threaten war is an admission of a failure of diplomacy and a clear lack of will to avoid war.

There are problems regarding China that need addressing but sailing war ships in contested waters in the South China Sea is clear provocation and it does nothing to resolve the problem which can only have a diplomatic solution. The same can be said about Taiwan, everything that we are doing there is a provocation to try to get an aggressive response from China. The UN Security Council in 1971 declared that there is one government in China and that government is the Peoples Republic of China in Beijing. The demands for succession are internal problems to be addressed by diplomatic means. Just as the succession movements of Catalonia and Okinawa are issues to be resolved within Spain and Japan, they receive no support from western media or US sponsored regime change instructions like the National Endowment for Democracy. The same is true for Hong Kong.

It is important to note that if the succession movements are successful in Xinzhang, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the South China Sea is occupied, this will give the western allies opportunity to set up military bases in these locations and blockade all trade through these regions. Is this what we are attempting? Is this what China is resisting?

What would happen if we allow China to have a significant influence in world political and economic affairs? White faces have had the major influence in world political, economic and social affairs for over 500 years now. The political, social and economic system has served us well, most of us that are white, living in mostly white nations but it has abjectly failed two thirds of the world's population, most of whom live in mostly black or brown majority nations. Coincidentally these nations are also where the bombs fall.

Any military interventions will lead to an enormous human, economic and environmental catastrophe and it is not in the interest of the people in the region or the interest of the people of any nation to prosecute this war. The only potential winners could be weapons industry and military contractors. In this case every one could lose.

Reasons for war

Reasons to go to war are often presented to the population as some humanitarian intervention, typically to liberate a people from a repressive regime, for example, the NATO invasion of Libya to liberate the oppressed people from a dictator. The NATO bombing campaign on the most

prosperous country in North Africa left in its wake a country with its infrastructure destroyed, competing and warring factions in a frantic bid to grasp power, refugees flooding into Europe, death disease and open slave markets in the city.

Sometimes the reason to go to war is to present the target nation as a threat to our peace, stability and prosperity, the very clear example of this was the military intervention in Iraq when we, without evidence, accused the regime of possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), weapons inspectors found no evidence of WMDs but “Operation Shock and Awe” did terrorise the population of Bagdad did kill many, mostly civilians, did destroy the infrastructure of the city including water supplies, hospitals, schools, power supplies. It is not clear when the ongoing occupation and military killing in Iraq ended or if indeed it has ended. US President Bush announced the war’s end and the withdrawal of troops, President Obama twice announced the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and now President Biden has recently announced the withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

The reasons that we go to war have nothing to do with human rights or protecting our security, we go to war to dominate and control the national resources and geo-strategic positions on the globe. It is not incidental that the wars in the Middle East occurred in nations that have large petroleum resources. Britain went to war so it could maintain its occupation of The Falkland Islands, hardly economically significant.

War does not bring any benefit to the people of nations that are bombed. War delivers major benefits to arms suppliers and military contractors.

Media

The media is a major player in bringing a nation to war, as Julian Assange pointed out, people do not like war, if a nation is sent to war without the necessary propaganda, the government will receive a backlash from the people. (not a literal quote).

The main stream media is not independent and can be relied on to push government narrative to support the calls for war. During the course of war the main stream media do not bring to the populace the atrocities of war but cajole us to believing that our participation in the war is conducted from a high moral stance on our side and the invaded nation do everything unethical. Aiding this narrative is the secrecy obligations of all those involved in or observing the war.

In Australia David McBride is currently be perused by the courts for bring to the public atrocities committed by Australian troops in the theatre of war. In the US Daniel Hail has been prosecuted for divulging the realities of the drone war program, Chelsea Manning spent 7 years under torture for leaking documents to WikiLeaks that details clear evidence war crimes committed by US troops in war theatres of Iraq and Afghanistan. In Britain Julian Assange has been arbitrarily detained for over 10 years for publishing the documents leaked by Manning and is threatened with 175 years jail. Because of the secretive nature of whistleblower and publisher prosecution it is very possible that there other cases that we may never know about. What is for sure however is that governments go to extreme lengths to prevent the public from understanding the true horrors of war. If we truly understood the horrors that we inflict on civilians of other nations we would never tolerate the actions of our governments.

Recommendations

1. War powers reform.

War is the most egregious form of violence and the decision to commit our nation to war cannot be left to one or a few. The default position must be to not go to war, the decision to go to war needs to involve all the elected members of parliament and the bar must be set high, 2/3 majority.

2. Secure the release of Julian Assange.

The main stream media cannot be trusted to deliver accurate and unbiased information, we need Julian Assange and WikiLeaks to give us information

3. Sign the ICAN treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

The doomsday clock is ready to strike the hour, we must reset the clock and set an example to other nations.

4. Classify ASPI as a foreign interference organisation.

ASPI is financed by nations of the western alliance and by the weapons industry, they cannot be trusted to give unbiased information that will temper our government's desire to go to war.

5. Shut down our weapons industry.

The USA economy is highly reliant on its war industries and peace would cause enormous damage to the US economy. We cannot let Australia become dependent on war

6. Have military pollution included in each nation's contribution to global climate change

Without this all nations climate pledges to carbon neutrality are meaningless.

We invaded, we killed millions, we destroyed everything useful, we left.