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## **Submission to the IPAN People's Inquiry into the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US wars and the US alliance, relating particularly to foreign policy, defence and political and democratic rights.**

### ***Foreign Policy***

Australia's security should have the objective of defence of Australia, whilst also aiming to contribute to peace in the region and globally. Our dependence on America does not guarantee the defence of Australia, nor does it contribute to peace regionally or globally. The opposite is in fact the case – if we have any enemies, they are largely courtesy of our alliance and subservience to the US. Malcolm Fraser recognised and warned about this in his book 'Dangerous Allies' but the current government and opposition do not recognise it.

The greatest existential threat today is that of global climate disruption which, if its catastrophic impacts are to be mitigated or avoided, requires major resources of all countries to be directed to addressing it, not creating more emissions through military activities and the devastation resulting from conflicts. The planet cannot afford to keep spending scarce resources on the military. We must focus on urgently reducing carbon emissions and reducing carbon in the atmosphere.

The conduct of hostilities has changed enormously in recent decades with incidents of terrorism and cyber warfare now common. Added to these hostile acts, is the ever-present threat of nuclear war, either through deliberate acts or by 'accident,' and with nuclear weapons now being far more destructive than those used against Japan, a nuclear winter would bring catastrophe to the planet. Australia, as the host to US communication bases, is a 'soft target, which could be used to send a message to the US without attacking them directly. Tokyo was not a target in the second world war in the same way that New York or Washington may not be a target of first choice if a belligerent wanted to bring the US to the negotiation table.

Throughout Australia's history we have placed our trust in having a strong protector – firstly Britain and since the Second World War, the USA. This strategy has, ever since the end of WW2, taken us into wars – Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria - none of which can be said to have made the world a safer or more peaceful place.

These wars have killed millions of people, injured very many more and destroyed the environment on which they were fought. Innumerable wild creatures have been decimated and vegetation, especially in Vietnam, destroyed for decades. This senseless destruction and causing of misery cannot be justified, especially in the wars Australia has been involved in since WW2, which have had no bearing on the defence of Australia. Australia was involved for one reason – to gain and keep favour with the US.

None of these wars can be said to have benefitted the people in that country. The opposite is true. Imagine if, instead of waging war, the funds used by the military were used instead to provide better education, healthcare and cultural exchanges between nations. I believe that even regimes, such as the Taliban, would find it hard to remain so authoritarian if that had been the case. The funds, eg, for education, could be tied to policies of social equity so that the funds would only be available if both males and females had access to it.

Australia has unfortunately become so entwined with the US military, with our involvement in their wars, the US bases on Australian soil, and in recent years US marines based in Darwin, that it won't be easy to get free from that entanglement. How do we do that?

### ***First steps to independence***

The first step in having a more independent foreign policy, I see, is having a change of government to a more progressive one, which has strong climate policies, social policies which encourage equality, a better

education system, support for a stronger ABC and media with more diverse voices, stronger anti-corruption institutions and reduced influence of companies, for example arms manufacturers, and support for diplomacy, peace building and foreign aid for our neighbours. Along with these changes, war powers reform is essential, which prevents the executive government, or even just the Prime Minister, committing our military to conflict zones overseas. We cannot hope to get closer to independence, and combat the inevitable and strong pushback, without these changes being consolidated.

If we could achieve such a government – which would probably be a Labor government with Greens and independents in balance of power – a more informed, progressive community could be built and a strategy of moving to a more independent foreign policy, with armed neutrality or non-alignment as possible options, should be able to become part of the foreign policy discussion. I don't see this as a rapid transition, but hopefully, if gradual gains can be consolidated we can change Australia to a peace-loving, humane country.

As part of this strategy we need to identify campaigns which can hopefully link climate disruption and the military, for example emphasizing that the military are huge emitters of greenhouse gases and emphasizing that the planet can't afford the resources going to, and the emissions from the military.

### *Foreign Policy vision*

If we are looking forward to a vision of what an independent foreign policy would look like, neutrality or non-alignment may come closest to achieving the defence of Australia as well as contributing to peace regionally and globally. Currently 19 countries are listed as neutral countries and 120 are members of the non-aligned movement.

Given that we have no real enemies, as indicated in the 2016 Defence White paper, we could feel secure in the aim of refocussing our defence strategies and platforms. We may not need so many submarines and could focus more on air defence and ground forces which could also assist with disaster relief in the region. However, it may not mean that we could spend less on defence.

As a non-aligned or neutral country, we would be less likely to draw the ire of countries as we currently do in following the US with its disastrous foreign policies, and our international reputation would likely be greatly enhanced. We may also have greater influence in opposing any expansionist moves by China through diplomatic channels, if we were not perceived to be doing the US's bidding.

If we were to become non-aligned, as are our neighbours Indonesia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Singapore, we would hopefully improve relations with these and other countries.

At the Lusaka Conference in September 1970, the non-aligned member nations added as aims of the movement the peaceful resolution of disputes and the abstention from the big power military alliances and pacts. Another added aim was opposition to stationing of military bases in foreign countries. The five principles of the non-aligned movement are:

- Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- Mutual non-aggression.
- Mutual non-interference in domestic affairs.
- Equality and mutual benefit.
- Peaceful co-existence.

The purpose of the non-aligned organization was explained in the Havana Declaration of 1979 as to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their

"struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and contain 55% of the world population. Membership is particularly concentrated in countries considered to be developing or part of the Third World, although the non-aligned movement also includes a number of developed nations.

Turning to neutrality, it is not a simple concept or practice. It has arisen historically over centuries during times of wars largely out of the need for maritime nations to protect their shipping and trade when they were not part of a conflict. The form of neutrality, eg armed (Switzerland) or non-armed (Costa Rica), differs significantly between countries, as does non-alignment. Japan is listed as a neutral country, but I would argue that having foreign bases would negate the neutrality of any country.

Armed neutrality has a status with the United Nations, originating from the Fifth Hague Peace Conference Convention 1907 and the Thirteenth Convention on the warfare at sea, and amendments under the 1949 Geneva Convention, (David Martin, in *Armed Neutrality for Australia*, 1984). For neutrality to be 'credible' according to Martin, a country should not conclude treaties which could eventually oblige it to wage war, keep inadequate defence forces and make inadequate defence preparations which could directly or indirectly benefit a country contemplating war, nor control media or not allow them to function with reasonable objectivity, so as to benefit a particular belligerent. Foreign bases would be precluded under neutrality. 'A neutral state may resist by all legitimate means, even with force, attempts to violate its neutrality'. Various other conditions apply, for example, neutrality does not bind citizens, only the state, but recruitment for a belligerent force cannot take place in a neutral country.

If a neutrality policy were declared to the United Nations, we would need to ensure that our defence forces and purchases were directed at ensuring the defence of Australia. Australia is geographically well-placed to be neutral. We have no land borders and any country seeking to invade Australia would need a vastly greater force and secure channels of supply and we would most likely have warning of an intending invasion.

Some people oppose neutrality because they think it means that another country cannot be criticised for human rights abuses, aggression etc. I don't think that is the case – it would be up to each country as to how much it expresses its views on the world stage. But support to another country in a conflict would be precluded. Albert Palazzo of the Australian Army Research Centre gives a positive view of neutrality in his 2021 article, *Why be strong: The Swiss and Australian responses to fear*.

Much more discussion needs to take place on the issues of non-alignment and neutrality.



Non-Aligned Movement logo



Non-aligned Movement logo for the Sth African conference

**Defence**

The Government has in recent years established a \$3.8b loan fund to promote arms manufacturing for export, perhaps to Saudi Arabia, one of the main sources of terrorist philosophy and actions this century. The arms industry has the reputation of being one of the most corrupt industries globally. This aim to become a major arms manufacturer is immoral and should be rejected immediately.

The Defence Estimates committee hearings of May 2018 indicated that the public is not privy to the types of military equipment being exported, nor the countries they go to. When asked why that information was not available, the Defence official responded, "When companies provide us information for the export permit process, that information is often sensitive commercial information that we undertake not to divulge", and confirmed that it is only information regarding the dollar value of the exports and the region, not the country, that is available. So our arms exports are essentially secret, and the Australian public not allowed to know details of what is being supplied to whom. This would not be acceptable under a state of neutrality or non-alignment, nor would supply of military equipment to one side in any conflict, precluding sales to Saudi Arabia, for example.

Australia is tied inextricably to the US with the equipment, weapons and communications systems it uses. Australia is one of the largest purchasers of US planes, weapons etc thereby propping up their military-industrial complex which has caused so much misery and harm around the world for decades. We should aim for a domestic arms and equipment manufacturing industry, which prioritises energy conservation and a defence strategy which confines itself to the actual defence of Australia.

### ***Political and Democratic Rights***

The US has undue influence on our political system through institutions, through the misguided belief that we need their defence 'umbrella' and through the huge investment in many companies, that it has in Australia. Most of our major banks, industrial, mining and tech companies are majority US owned.

The CIA have reportedly been active in Australia, intervening to facilitate or engineer the Whitlam dismissal in 1975. No doubt they keep a close eye on the situation in Australia and intervene as they see necessary to keep the political players of the major parties and organisations on side. It has recently come to notice that Bob Hawke passed information to the CIA over the years 1973-1979 and possibly longer. No doubt others are continuing that role to this day.

In the case of Julian Assange, they are prosecuting an Australian-born publisher for divulging many illegal or immoral activities of the US around the world. This prosecution continues under President Biden today - it should be dropped immediately and the Australian Government should be making all efforts to persuade the US to do that. As a movement we should be expressing our support for Julian and calling for the immediate dropping of the extradition request and prosecution.

### ***Conclusion***

For all of the above reasons we must work towards an independent Australia, which makes every effort to reduce greenhouse emissions and climate disruption, and which contributes positively to democracy and peace around the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views on this important topic.

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