

What are the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the US-Alliance? What are the alternatives?

Let's have a peoples-led national conversation about the US-Australia Alliance, including the social, political, military and defence, economic and environmental impacts.

I thank IPAN for conducting this inquiry, for their commitment to an Independent and Peaceful Australia and for stimulating public conversation about how to work towards it. Peace and cooperation at all levels are desperately needed right now as the world struggles with the Covid 19 pandemic and the urgency of taking strong action on the Climate emergency detailed in the Aug 2021 *IPCC report.

This prompts the underlying question 'what makes for peace and security?'. Australia's colonial past has left this nation feeling dependent and seeking the support of more powerful 'Friends'. Rather than 'growing up' to be an independent nation, the reverse is happening. Our alliance with America has led to stationing of US Marines in Darwin and increasing access to other military facilities as well as the key surveillance/communication role played by Pine Gap in all US conflicts and wars. The US alliance has led Australia to fight in offensive, destructive overseas wars in countries and situations which did not threaten Australia. It is time to ask whether war and domination can ever lead to a peaceful world.

The preeminent question facing humanity is 'How can the human race continue to share this planet which now faces two major threats, the Climate emergency and threat of modern weaponry completely annihilating all life on earth'.

Both these threats have been the focus of recent encyclicals written to 'all peoples' by Pope Francis.

- the pressing need to protect and preserve the environment of earth as a liveable planet now and for future generations,
- and the need to care for each other, especially the poor and the marginalised, each person is valuable **2015 *Laudato Si – on Care for our Common Home*

The two concerns are very closely interlinked and fundamental to all aspects of this peoples' inquiry.

In 2020 Pope Francis issued another letter, ****Fratelli Tutti, on fraternity and social friendship* which expanded his vision of how humanity could live together in peace and justice. These two documents provide a vision for humanity to work towards.

My original thoughts about the US alliance were simply 'how can we extract ourselves from it?'. However, I have another more positive suggestion to make: Divert our support and funding from a military alliance to a 'working for peace, justice and equality alliance'. We can become peace pioneers! Our alliance with the US could pivot to developing a strong understanding of what makes for peace and a 'movement' for peace. We could engage with the rest of the world in a 'peace entrepreneurial' way rather than developing military interoperability, alliances or weapons manufacture and export. We can work together to foster and develop international cooperation rather than exacerbate international friction and conflict by exerting national dominance, military power and war to further our own interests.

Recently the US has pivoted to our Pacific region with a focus on containing China. During a ****July 28th webinar by the Australia Institute - *Feeling the Heat* a different angle was explored: it seems reasonable that China recognises the need to protect and serve its people who are suffering health effects of pollution from the use of fossil fuels and the disruptions of climate change causing internal refugees etc. Given the recent move to take strong climate action by the Biden Government, Australia and America could be working together to support China in the transition away from fossil fuels rather than using diplomacy to support mining exports and exacerbating tensions. Alas, Australian foreign policy over the last 30 years has slowed down climate action around the world as it pursued economic prosperity via our dominant fossil fuel industries. Australia's selfish 'Gas led Covid recovery' plan negates the last decade of carbon reduction and flies in the face of the recent IPCC report which says no more fossil fuel expansion.

A peace agenda both in domestic and foreign policy presents enormous challenges but is also full of creative opportunities. For too long, power and violence have brought so called peace and prosperity only to a small proportion of the world whilst plundering the land, resources and wealth of the rest of humanity resulting in a world of 'haves and the have-nots'. Accumulation of huge wealth creates and survives on domination. In turn it depends on increased military support and expenditure of money which could be used to alleviate poverty and dispossession creating a happier, more equal and peaceful society. In Australia we stole the land from First Nations peoples who have lived here sustainably for over 50,000 years. There is so much we can learn from them. The time has come to change the focus from domination and control to work together and listen to their wisdom.

As a nation and throughout the world the time is right for a complete change of mindset. Creative, cooperative and innovative rethinking are key to a new way of being. Experimentation, research and focus on working together are essential.

The time has come to focus on, provide funding for and say YES

- yes to a change of mindset
- yes to peace and nonviolence education
- yes to developing and living daily a culture of peace
- yes to expanding and deepening our understanding of security
- yes to developing an unarmed civilian peace corps for disaster support
- yes to increasing international cooperation
- yes to urgent action to preserve a safe climate
- yes to centrality of care for the earth and environmental diversity
- yes to urgently developing a sustainable lifestyle
- yes to supporting poorer nations and sharing our wealth via increased aid programs
- yes to creative, cooperative and lifegiving foreign policy
- yes to prioritisation and increased funding for diplomacy
- yes to funding development of peaceful alternatives to violent resolution of conflict
- yes to recognition that peace requires just as much courage and mateship as war
- yes to developing a department of peace rather than a defence department which is focused on war and the military mindset
- yes to recognition of the value of all life

Peace begins and is maintained within each human heart. This is our challenge.

It is time to shift away from

- violence in all its forms: individual, domestic, family, group, national and international violence
- the idea that peace is weakness and passivity
- war and preparations for war
- militarism and military forces
- joining the arms race
- manufacture of weapons and equipment for war
- a culture of fear, division and retaliation
- war games
- greed and selfish plundering of earth's resources

Education and modelling are fundamental to developing an independent and peaceful mindset necessary for an Independent and Peaceful Australia. This is a difficult path which needs a great deal of discernment and development. Peace education begins from birth and grows in families, communities, states, countries, internationally. However, governments can set the agenda, they can prioritise peace and nonviolence education at all levels. This is not impossible e.g. Costa Rica has instituted a department of Peace and no longer has armed forces. Imagine the number of social and climate protection programs which could be provided with the funds no longer expended on the military! As well as halting the huge climate pollution created by the military.

The military training, practise, exercises and war contribute large amounts of climate destroying gasses and other toxic side emissions which pollute the earth and atmosphere. War desecrates land, people, homes, infrastructure, agriculture, environment and the natural world. Climate change is here, now, increasing droughts, fires, storms, floods, damage, destruction and devastation. Droughts and inundation in many parts of the world lead to shortages of resources and ensuing conflict. All these things need our urgent attention if an habitable earth is to be maintained. Money spent preparing for war is money wasted.

Alas, rather than working out ways we can stem climate change and share the earths resources equitably, the richer and stronger nations are conducting an accelerating arms race, reigniting and encouraging a cold war. In an intentional pursuit of expanding fossil fuel exports Australia is leading the world in the wrong direction and drawing international condemnation. Hopefully the US alliance may now be helpful in persuading Australia that the climate emergency and climate science are real and need urgent action.

Cooperative action not a military build up is essential. The military exacerbate the situation. We have always had wars and bully tactics and this has not led to peace and security for all, but power and domination by the wealthiest and most powerful few as they seek to protect their own wealth and self interests.

IPAN is seeking an Independent and Peaceful Australia. Australia's focus on the US alliance, expecting the powerful military of the USA to protect Australia if needed, has failed to provide security. The overseas wars Australia has been led into by the USA have not threatened Australia. Furthermore, these wars caused untold suffering and destruction with millions of refugees forced to

flee their homelands and often causing conflicts within receiving countries trying to find ways to accommodate so many refugees.

The US 'pivot' to the Pacific and its focus on China has been accompanied by increasing military build-up and expansion of US bases in Pacific and Island nations and increased involvement in military facilities in Australia in addition to US Marines stationed in Darwin. The US military build-up, military exercises/war games, expansion of Pine Gap's intelligence role, and growing interoperability of weaponry and personnel, rather than protecting, make Australia more vulnerable to attack in the event of war by focusing the conflict down here in the Pacific and away from and thus protecting America. Dependence on American weaponry and equipment makes Australia dependent the US for supply and spare parts etc. taking away independence. Australia is becoming a south pacific state of the USA. Joint facilities, military equipment and personnel should be rapidly scaled down and removed.

A Peace Culture is urgently needed for the whole world but there are powerful interests funding and forcing a War culture upon us. Our enemies are not countries but corporations who benefit from culture war and fossil fuels. They perpetrate fear and division to further their domination and power. Nations are not only allowing but supporting this. We need to pivot to combatting them not each other. Time to work on development of international peace.

* https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf

** https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

*** https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

**** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YS_BVBBWWB0