

SUBMISSION TO THE IPAN PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO THE US-AUSTRALIA ALLIANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

I make this submission in my individual capacity, as a concerned Australian and practising Christian, for several reasons, including: ethical and moral concerns; the absence of proper public discussion; the USA's many military missteps; Australia's misallocation of defence expenditure on US-oriented hardware suiting US strategies; and our leaders' failure to learn from history. Taking these in turn:

- a. On ethical and moral grounds, I believe that the only legitimate basis upon which Australia should use military force against another country is in the defence of our own country, strictly defined. Therefore, our expenditure upon defence capability should be based upon an independent, self-reliant, self-funded capacity to design, make, maintain, and operate its own military equipment and to train and maintain its forces accordingly. When we disagree with the actions or policies of another country, we should assertively use peaceful forums to put our views, including the use of diplomacy and economic sanctions, rather than military force or its threat. Australia has entered many military conflicts in lockstep with the USA under the Alliance. Many of these military actions have lacked legitimacy under International Law and many of them have been strategic and military failures, such as Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Since the Second World War, not one of these has been justifiable in defence of Australia: most have been far from our shores.
- b. Over the years I have become dismayed at how little rational and critical discussion has taken place either politically or publicly in Australia about the role our alliance with the USA (- the "Alliance") plays in our policy formulation and proclivity to go to war.
- c. The missteps taken by the USA in their foreign involvements since the Second World War, seeking to use force to achieve their policy aims, for example in Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, have so reduced the credibility of US policymakers that an uncritical alliance with them, such as Australia has displayed, raises real questions about the value of the Alliance. The USA has often misunderstood the cultures of the target countries and misjudged the ability of each to resist its military incursions. The Alliance will be seen by most if not all of our South-East Asian neighbours as unnecessarily aggravating the PRC, rather than being our neighbours' interests. Some have already said as much.
- d. Our Alliance with the USA has biased our defence spending in directions and magnitude that are not in our national interest, particularly if the main legitimate purpose is defensive, rather than offensive. Our spending often seems directed at currying favour with the USA to encourage their support in the future under the Alliance. For example, Australia's past decisions to incur extraordinary expenditures upon French submarines, and upon the Joint Strike Fighters have been misdirected, towards what the US wanted Australia to do, rather than proper strategic objectives for military self-reliance. The Australian government's newly announced policy of

acquiring nuclear submarines, however technologically sophisticated, of either United States or British design, at an extraordinary cost and in low numbers, suggests that their use will be as an adjunct to and wholly in concert with, predominantly US and/or British wider military strategies, principally directed at “containing” the Peoples Republic of China. Such strategies are likely to place Australia at higher risk rather than reducing the risk of aggression. Australia operates under assumption that the USA will provide substantial military support under the Alliance in the face of the many plausible future cases where the USA will not see its direct interests being served. Australia’s inter-operability of its military hardware has been much vaunted by our defence establishment, but it constitutes a strategic weakness for a country wishing to achieve a balanced and self-reliant portfolio of defensive military assets.

- e. As a student of history, I know that the people of a country cannot be bowed by military force alone, in the medium to longer term, where there is a strong will to oust the foreign usurper. History has so many examples, recent ones being Vietnam and Afghanistan. If Australians worked together in a self-reliant way, we could make any attempt by an aggressor to invade, or otherwise usurp our sovereignty, so costly and so fraught as to dissuade that aggressor.

2. THE IMPACTS OF THE ALLIANCE UPON FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

The legitimate interests of First Nations people to the use and proper maintenance of their traditional areas have been given low priority when it has been deemed useful to the Alliance to use these lands for military purposes and manoeuvres under the Alliance. The Alliance partners have regarded their interests as dispensable and unimportant.

This attitude causes hurt and damage to First Nations culture. Any hurt to my aboriginal brothers and sisters causes me hurt, as an Australian of wholly Anglo-Celtic origin, because I believe their culture is a vital and important contributor to modern Australian culture.

3. ECONOMIC EFFECTS.

The expenditures encouraged under the Alliance for Australia to undertake - which focus upon inter-operability and fitting in with US tactical objectives - result in neither substantial development of Australia intellectual property concerning military hardware, nor the vital research and development upon new technologies that would meet Australia’s peculiar needs for ways to defend a large continent with an extraordinarily large coastline and an arid interior like few others.

If Australia is to be self-reliant regarding its defence, it needs to be able to re-supply and maintain its military hardware and software used by its defence forces. This cannot properly be done without extremely good access to the intellectual property embodied in the hardware, as well as the capacity to manufacture it locally. The best access comes from being the substantive designer of the hardware as well as its manufacture.

At present, most of Australia's military hardware is at the end of a long supply chain and would be strategically very vulnerable to a sustained invasion of Australia by an aggressor. This is true across air, sea, and land power.

Australia's efforts at a Defence Industry manufacturing strategy have focussed instead on developing an export-oriented industry, making and marketing conventional weapons - covering only a tiny fraction of the required range of hardware required for self-reliance - to countries overseas with which we have little compatibility in terms of their national objectives and systems of government.

The billions of dollars committed over recent years to big-ticket military expenditures such as the twelve ordered French submarines – now replaced with a smaller number of US or British nuclear submarines - , the Joint Strike Fighters and so on, are a misuse of public resources. They continue a strategy of relying upon foreign manufacturers, who hold closely to the underlying technology, with little or no real technology transfer. They have been spectacularly unsuccessful as acquisitions, with extremely poor delivery and performance. The Defence forces procurement arms have been scandalously inept.

There are many better alternatives for the hundreds of billions of public dollars of announced military expenditures into the future. These include:

- a. Providing better levels of biosecurity for pandemics, invasive species, and diseases, including an Australian capacity to develop and manufacture m-RNA vaccines.
- b. Providing housing for the many Australians who struggle to afford it, including single mothers, First Nations people, and other homeless people in general.
- c. Putting real effort and financial resources into accelerating the inevitable switch from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy.
- d. Developing a group of industries engaged in research and development and manufacturing of self-reliant military technology appropriate for the defence of our exceptionally large continent and coastline. These might include high-technology networks of early-detection devices to guard against plausible possible external aggression or invasion. They might include unmanned aerial and undersea surveillance devices.
- e. Funding the further growth of cultural knowledge and understanding of Australia's near neighbours within academia, within the Department of Foreign affairs and other arms of the Commonwealth Public Service and within our political class, by enhancing their foreign language skills, their knowledge of recent history and current politics. This should be done for Indonesia, China (PRC), Malaysia, Singapore, India, Vietnam, Thailand, PNG, Timor and the Pacific Nations. This would lead to better approaches to negotiations with each country and reduce the likelihood of armed conflict.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL

The war games with which Australian Defence forces have engaged, whether in concert with allies or otherwise, have released volumes of pollutants which have severe environmental effects. These include: the fossil fuels used by the aircraft, military vehicles, and support infrastructure; and the fire-retardant sprays used routinely on military airfields.

5. MILITARY STRATEGY

- a. There are realistic scenarios of future military threats or conflicts in our region under which our great and mighty ally, the USA, when considered as an ally in the defence of Australia, would present as America Lite.
- b. The USA is grossly over-extended around the world, as it has just recognised in its withdrawal from Afghanistan, and certainly will progressively struggle to afford the geographical extent, complexity and extraordinary costs of its imperial positioning. It has proven over decades since the Second World War that their decision makers, dominated by the professional military/defence voices, and influenced overmuch by lobbyists from the military/industrial complex, are extremely poor at analysing and planning for its many wars, especially the aftermath of each. They have a plethora of highly intelligent, prescient analysts in their academia and in many think-tanks, but not necessarily in the decision-making positions of power. I cannot help thinking of Daniel Ellsberg as an historical example. He was an analyst with the Rand Corporation who eventually became a whistle-blower and released the "Pentagon Papers" concerning the US failures of public policy during the Vietnam Wars. These analysts have not prevented the multiple failures of US foreign military efforts.
- c. Australia should adopt a more mature stance, redesigning its military training, technological configurations, and defence strategies to fit an approach where we preference self-reliance in our defence of our nation. This is based on the reasonable assumption that the USA will not, despite the Alliance, prove the immediate and convenient answer to our defence, given that it may well be drawn simultaneously to give priority to conflicts in other parts of the world, particularly those engaging its NATO allies. This may well be entirely legitimate from a USA perspective.
- d. The implications of this "Abandonment Scenario" need to be considered, and not just by gung-ho members of our own military and the lobbyists encouraging their spending. Australia should include, in the decision process, historians, economists, operations researchers, mathematicians, and other deep thinkers!
- e. A non-"USA-centric" spending pattern for defence may well be vastly different from that recommended by our American ally for their strategic convenience, rather than our needs. One example might be: rather than to spend ridiculous billions on large nuclear submarines yet to be fully specified and designed offshore, we would develop a network of early detection devices. These would go together with very-rapid response capabilities for strictly local use.

- f. Some funds could alternatively be used to develop our own innovative technologies for design and manufacture of a large number of small underwater unmanned vehicles which detect enemy submarines and some other such vehicles which have attack capabilities. A parallel set of aerial technologies could also be developed. They then could provide - at much lower cost - a defensive network for the more strategically important parts of our extraordinarily extensive coast and continent. We need a network that does not rely on the USA for its effectiveness, maintenance, and resupply. We need a posture towards our Asian neighbours and friends and to the PRC specifically, which is not overtly aggressive but palpably defensive.
- g. There are many other implications of strategies which give priority to locally oriented defence and local expertise and manufacture, including backing away from some of the wildly expensive planned future expenditures on foreign designed and made military hardware (nuclear submarines, Joint Strike Force fighters). Not least of these is a mature, in-depth, culturally nuanced understanding of our Asian neighbours and of China. This understanding should arise through a broadly-based and more numerous appointments of people steeped in the language and culture of these other countries, positioned in our diplomatic, defence, public service and commercial/industrial organisations. This "soft defence" through understanding, through communication, and through business inter-dependencies can be more powerful than military posturing, and the use of threats of force.

6. POLITICAL

Australia's government has evolved the apparent convention that the Prime Minister can decide to commit Australia to war. This position should be changed, given the mistakes that have been made in the past by our Prime Ministers. The decision to go to war should at least be based on a Parliamentary decision.

A prime example is the decision by John Howard, when Prime Minister, to commit Australia to the Iraq conflict as part of the Coalition of the Willing quoting the presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). There were no such WMD, as Sir John Chilcot's British Inquiry of July 2016 into the Iraq war concluded. In his careful language, he said: "The judgements about the severity of the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction – WMD – were presented with a certainty that was not justified." Neither has Australia ever held John Howard accountable through holding an Inquiry like the Chilcot one, nor has any move to codify a proper approach by the Australian Government to a decision to take the country to war. This is extremely poor governance.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE

The USA is a fascinating and beautiful country, with fine attributes. I have travelled widely in the USA and have read widely about its history.

The role of the USA in the world is changing and it is moving away from seeking to impose democracy upon other countries. Its appetite to step in to support Australia in any conflict is just not as strong as it once might have been, although its military moves on Japan during the Second World

War was a direct retaliation to Japanese aggression, rather than anything much to do with Australia. It was acting in its own interests.

There are scenarios for the future where if a country were to be aggressive towards Australia, the USA may well not see this situation as directly threatening its interests and may decide not to directly help Australia in a military way. Australia needs to understand this and be prepared to be self-reliant. We should not expect the USA to do otherwise, as the Alliance is quite vague on this point, as I understand it.

We should stay in the Alliance but expect less from it. This is “realpolitik”.

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