

Prof Peter Alan Stanley

I make this statement because I consider the AUKUS deal undesirable, indeed dangerous, for Australia and for the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region. The manner of it being reached - in secret and in haste - is also contrary to the values of Australia's democracy. If the idea has merit (which I doubt), then it should have been discussed by the Parliament and the public so that agreement was reached before the deal was struck.

I am an historian of Australia's military history. Although employed by a university, I make this submission as an individual.

Since 1901, Australia has become involved in a dozen overseas conflicts; all of them as part of either the British empire and commonwealth or as part of the American alliance. While some of those conflicts concerned Australia's interests directly, most did not. While there were explicable historical reasons for Australia's participation in most conflicts, I believe that the era when Australia was committed to war because of its subservience to other nations should have ended. In the future, if Australia is to be an independent nation, it must retain the right to decide whether to go to war, and not be committed in advance because of an entangling alliance. In that all of its wars hitherto have been in association with either or both Britain and the United States, it makes little sense to me that we should once again be bound to those nations' decisions. The American wars which Australia has embarked since 1962 especially should enjoin caution. Under the American alliance, Australia has been involved a series of failed, unnecessary conflicts which have not served its interests. That blind obedience should be challenged and at least debated widely. The AUKUS agreement seems to me to be a dangerous, open-ended commitment to join a UK-US alliance regardless of the merits of its actions. This to me seems to abrogate responsibility for national security. I believe that the decision over whether should join this alliance should be deferred pending wide-ranging debate, lest Australia repeat in the next century the errors of the last.