

Phillip Atkinson.

I don't want Australia to be a defacto State of the USA. I don't want my children or grandchildren growing up in the belief that they are "exceptional" and that everyone else is the "bad guy". I don't want them in awe of a country that has been at war for most of the last 200 years, that has the world's largest armed forces, a largely ignorant population and an inability to see a different viewpoint.

An Australia that has educated its citizens to the maximum possible extent is always going to prosper over a country where public education is either slashed, or private education subsidised where no subsidisation is warranted. An Australia that can see competing viewpoints on a subject and then make clear and correct choices is always going to be better than a country that simply follows the USA like a well-trained dog.

We are fortunate to live in the southern hemisphere of this fragile planet, almost alone in the arms of several oceans, an island continent unique in the world. Contrast that with the northern hemisphere, which bears the majority of the world's population, together with its polluting industries and society.

We have become, of late, just another American base for either spying on our neighbours, or as a platform from which we could attack them. Our neighbours recognise this and it makes them nervous, thus forcing them to take steps they might not otherwise take. This in turn breeds more suspicion, with an arms race being the logical outcome, as we're seeing today with China.

The media has been replete with articles on the Chinese "threat" (where no threat exists or can be demonstrated to exist) and even on the evils of the North Korean regime, with its latest round of missile testing. Neither China nor North Korea are threats to Australia, yet both see the USA as threatening them and with good

reason, surrounding their two countries with almost 800 military bases world-wide.

China is not only Australia's largest trading partner - it is also the USA's. China also holds around 6% of all issued US Treasury Bonds (Around 66% are held by US entities). China is hardly likely to start a war with the USA, especially regarding Taiwan.

The situation with North Korea is even less threatening. The North Koreans want a formal end to the Korean War and have repeatedly asked the US and its allies for a formal end to hostilities. This has always been refused to date, but it's the North Koreans accused of being warmongers. The North has also requested that US/allied military exercises not take place in close proximity to the North/South border, but year after year, the exercises do exactly that. The North has also requested that the US remove its 28,000 military forces from South Korea. The US has refused. Under these circumstances, it's hardly surprising that the North takes the view that the US wishes to be able to invade at will?

I would much prefer a neutral Australia.