

THE BLUE-PRINT FOR AUSTRALIAN PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEW COLD WAR

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Two recent statements from leading US and Australian defence officials reveal how preparations for the new Cold War are well under-way. There has been little ambiguity, nothing has been left to idle speculation or imagination about the nature of the military planning, or the likely outcomes; the far-right have provided a blue-print of their aims.

It is important, therefore, to compare examples from the previous Cold War to establish likely patterns of government action and covert double agendas designed primarily to strengthen traditional class and state power structures.

In early February the head of the US Strategic Command, Admiral Charles Richard, stated that nuclear war with either China or the Russian Federation had become 'a very real possibility'. (1) The Strategic Command is the military centre for nuclear strike capabilities and defence. References were also given to the previous Cold War.

Richard drew attention to the rise of China which was on 'a trajectory to become a strategic peer of the US'. (2) China, with its rapid economic advancement, is now well-placed to dislodge the US as the largest economy in the world over the next decade. Its investment in advanced military capability has also challenged traditional US hegemonic positions in the Indo-Pacific region.

The statement also highlighted the recent escalation of diplomatic tensions in the region between the US and China. It has had serious implications for Australia: the Defence Strategic Update last year referred to 'Australia's security environment is increasingly characterised by grey-zone competition . . . which fell . . . short of acts of war'. (3) The recent statement from the US Strategic Command, however, included reference to a further likely escalation of diplomatic tensions with reference to 'a regional crisis with Russia or China could escalate quickly to a conflict involving nuclear weapons'. (4)

The statement was subsequently reinforced by a similar media release from Jim Molan, a NSW Liberal Senator with a long military resume, who stated we must 'acknowledge the prospect of a major war in the Indo-Pacific is a terrifying but realistic possibility'. (5) He then stated 'civil defence must come back onto the agenda', following a long description of

problems arising with definitions of national interest and state governments having different approaches to security strategies. (6)

Molan has also made similar statement elsewhere, including a recent 7 News broadcast where he stated the escalation of the present trade war with China 'could soon escalate to military conflict ... war with China is much more likely than currently recognised ... prepare for the worst case scenario'. (7)

The statements carry a distinct ring from the previous Cold War, where continual military assessments about the balance of forces between the west and former Soviet Union included diplomatic brinkmanship and civil defence provision. The latter, however, tended to be used as a convenient cover for strengthening traditional class and state structures against the perceived threat of the 'enemy within' and wholesale spying upon those regarded as opposition figures.

It is, therefore, important to consider examples from the previous Cold War; they have already been placed onto right-wing political agendas for present and future use.

The previous Cold War was a western response to perceived challenge from the east; a meeting of the NATO Confederation of Reserve Officers in London, August 1948, for example, decided to revive civil defence facilities in Western Europe following their demise at the end of the Second World War. It marked the establishment of the NATO Secret Armies. (8) At the London meeting it was, furthermore, noted by a British representative that 'it is not the case of training a force to be kept in reserve doing nothing while waiting for a war that might never take place. It has a function during civil emergencies'. (9)

In Australia the shadowy links between State Emergency Services and military civil defence provision has continued to reside in a grey area of blurred dividing lines, for obvious reasons. The present COVID-19 pandemic has been used for the widespread curtailing of civil liberties, for good reason, although might be used at a later date for political repression. The further addition of private security companies has also made demarcation problematic due to their size and involvement in almost every aspect of everyday life

The role of such organisations in localised intelligence collection and its subsequent use has been well-documented elsewhere:

viewers of BBC 1 War School in the UK in January 1980, were able to watch trainee senior military officers at the Camberley Staff College acting out planning for dealing with internal subversion. Colonels were shown caricaturing four types of internal enemies within. They included trade unionists, Whitehall 'moles', urban guerillas and Scottish Nationalists. (10) No differentiation was given between legal industrial relations activity of trade unions and urban guerilla warfare, or internal spies who might leak sensitive documents to adversaries or the mass media. The fact Scottish Nationalists were also regarded as a threat to the Realm is evidence, in itself, of a military exercise based on twaddle and fantasy.

But where did the intelligence information come from about the four categories of subversives? Other historical examples provide a suitable answer:

the BBC program coincided with the disbanding of the South Australian Special Branch which had amassed 3,000 separate dossiers and a 40,000 index card system on a large proportion of South Australians, which, then consisted of only 1,250,000 people. The files concerned included sensitive information about all ALP politicians, most prominent trade-union officials, prominent clergy in the peace movement, members of Women's groups, gay people, and those associated with civil liberties campaigning. (11) In fact, anyone who challenged the existing order and the dominance of the South Australia Liberal Party and their supporters in the business community were considered a threat and entered onto filing systems for future reference, if, and when, required. It is also important to note many of those targeted were from minority groupings in South Australia and therefore useful for the far-right to use as scapegoats with strategies of tension.

Subsequent revelations about three serious attempts in the UK to overthrow Labour governments in 1968, 1974 and 1979, and to replace them with administrations focussed upon right-wing definitions of 'national unity', show how committed the right-wing is to limited democratic systems. (12) The plans never materialised as those concerned came to rely upon the Thatcher administrations to do their necessary work.

It is, therefore, interesting to note the Cold War position adopted by Molan in his recent statement stressing the need for a national security strategy for contemporary Australia which included existing government in conjunction with the 'broader business sector and community'. (13) No reference was given to trade-unions, indicating they were not considered worthwhile in the vision of those in control of the strategy. But then, why would those who seek to strengthen class and state power want to include people with a wealth of experience of organising the working class to campaign for higher pay and better terms and conditions of employment? Their interests are, quite clearly, diametrically opposed to each other.

Molan and his cronies, however, have a penchant for advocating 'national interest', 'national unity' and 'national security' when it suits their interest, which are essentially those of the business-classes:

it is interesting to note, therefore, in the same paragraph that Molan addressed the need for civil defence, reference was provided for 'the need for an office of national security ... sitting outside government ... to ... coordinate all levels of government'. (14) No reference was provided about the democratic traditions of Australia and the history of struggle against tyranny and injustice; it leaves little to the imagination about what is going on inside the present coalition government in Canberra and the defence department and their vision of a future Australia. And what it means for the working class.

Studies of the history of Australia by those who identify with the likes of Molan and his Liberal cronies differs from those on the receiving end of exploitation and injustice; progressive studies of the historical process reveal how those who seek to strengthen class and state power also, invariably, pursue double-agendas.

Examples from contemporary Australian history which are important to note include when retired Brigadier Ted Serong became a patron of the so-called Ausi Freedom Scouts, an unofficial militia network linked to the main defence forces and 'against subversion from

within and against invasion from the countries of the north', in the 1980s. (15) Serong was noted in his biography as having personal problems being 'unable to retire from the world of intelligence', leaving little to the imagination about one of the primary functions of the Ausi Freedom Scouts. (16) But that was not all; behind the scenes, pulling string over their puppets lay the shadowy World Anti-Communist League (WACL), which specialised in unconventional warfare. (17) Serong had a long-time involvement with the WACL. (18)

The Ausi Freedom Scouts, however, soon evolved into a far-right collective which laid the basis for the One Nation Party of Pauline Hanson, a convenient front organisation designed to popularise right-wing agendas and divide Australia on the basis of ethnicity and religion. (19) No doubt, those around Molan have little difficulty identifying with such people; they clearly have a great deal, ideologically and in practice, in common.

It is as if previous Cold War statements have been re-written for a contemporary audience of like-minded people; while the writing style may have changed, the content has remained remarkably similar.

Sensible people should have nothing to do with the proponents of these far-right political stand-points and their direct involvement with the military.

A pre-requisite is an independent foreign policy!

1. Nuclear war real possibility: US chief, The Australian, 5 February 2021.
2. Ibid.
3. We can't combat China's 'grey zone' war while polarised, The Australian, 20 January 2021.
4. Australian, op.cit., 5 February 2021.
5. National security at risk without unity on threat preparation, The Australian, 22 February 2021.
6. Ibid.
7. Liberal Senator Jim Molan fear Australia is on brink of military conflict with China, 7 News, 29 December 2020.
8. See: Daniele Ganser, NATO Secret Armies, (2005), and, Counter Insurgency Operation, US Army Report, (19960709 052), Army Foreign Intelligence Assistance, 1960, Section 116, which has provided details of how the US trained military personnel elsewhere to serve 'US interests' under the cover of the US Aid Mission. Section 117, b., provided detailed information about payments for 'paramilitary personnel', in the service of such missions 'in proportion to

the time devoted to the cause'.

9. NATO and Civil Emergencies,
State Research, (London, 1977), Bulletin No. 1, October 1977, page 9.
10. How the army sees 'subversives',
State Research, (London, 1980), Bulletin No. 16, February-March 1980, page 63.
11. S. Australia: Special Branch Shut Down,
State Research, (London, 1978), Bulletin No. 4, February-March 1978, pp. 58-60.
12. British Coups '68, '74, and '79,
State Research, (London, 1981), Bulletin No. 24, June-July 1981, pp. 136-37.
13. Australian, op.cit., 22 February 2021.
14. Ibid.
15. Ted Serong, Anne Blair, (Victoria, 2002), page 176.
16. Ibid., 194.
17. Ibid., pp. 183-84, and,
Inside the League, Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson, (New York 1986), page 45,
which described the WACL as a 'worldwide network of fascism', where old-guard
war criminals 'meet with, advise, and support the new-guard fascists'.
18. Serong, ibid., pp. 183-84.
19. Ibid., page 190.
