

PIBCI - Monthly Perspective

June 2023

War Agenda

Summary

When did Australia hand over its sovereignty to foreign interests? Why are we being groomed for the next war?

The irony of last month's G7 meeting in Hiroshima, Japan seems to have been lost on the world's richest western leaders. By the end of 1945, an estimated 140,000 people in Hiroshima had died from the US nuclear bombing of the city, with thousands more to suffer from leukemia, cancer, or other horrific side effects from radiation. The impact of war on the citizens in Hiroshima was overshadowed by G7 leaders keen to speak about the need to prop up arms deliveries for the current proxy war being waged in Ukraine. Despite the G7 meeting being held in the symbolic location of Hiroshima that prides itself on promoting peace to the world, the G7 leaders could not subdue the urge to talk up escalating the proxy war rather than promoting peace and dialogue.

Unfortunately, the talk of war is not new. For over a decade, our political leaders have been ratcheting up the rhetoric against China. This has been amplified by the daily beat of war drums across the corporate owned and government-controlled media. Whether it makes the daily headlines or punctuates the spaces in between celebrity news and sensationalisation, the incessant hyping-up of the next conflict is clearly on the agenda. Meanwhile, the major political parties have demonstrated a blatant neglect for Australia's sovereignty as foreign interests have been permitted to steer our nation's course toward conflict. Have we not learned from the horrific consequences of two nuclear attacks on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Are we not awakening to the gruesome reality of the mounting death and destruction in the prolonged proxy war being waged in Ukraine? Isn't it time to stand up for our sovereignty and take control of our future by ensuring that conflict is employed as the option of last resort and not the first?

War pigs - paving the way to conflict

Scott Morrison's term in politics is due to come to an end. Morrison has been in politics since 2007, serving as prime minister for close to four years. The news that the former prime minister will be leaving politics would normally create some headlines based on the ramifications it will have for the seat of Cook. However, the fact that the former PM will be taking up a new role as a lobbyist for the US think tank raises some uncomfortable questions. Morrison's new role will place him on the payroll for the Centre for a New American Security (CeNAS). CeNAS is financed by weapons manufacturers such as Raytheon Technologies, BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin and large oil and gas corporations BP, Chevron, Exxon, and the US Department for Defence.

Under the Morrison-led LNP government, Australia switched the purchase of French submarines and pledged to buy US nuclear submarines costing the Australian tax payer \$386 billion, which has since been locked-in by the ALP. Under the Morrison-led coalition government, Australia was signed up to join AUKUS, an alliance with the UK and USA, both nations in serious decline, both of which have a bloody track record of waging war across the globe. Furthermore, the Morrison-led LNP facilitated the militarisation of northern Australia, with the arrival of US B-52 strategic nuclear bombers and US troop rotations. Under Morrison's prime ministership, Australia has purchased its way to enter the ring to take on nuclear armed China, with the USA acting as coach.

Reading between the lines, one could not miss the almost seamless alignment between former PM Morrison's pro US, pro fossil fuel industry and anti-China stance, and his pending role as a lobbyist for CeNAS that is financed by corporations who have vested interests in profiting from war and burning fossil fuels.

Setting the war agenda

Over the past decade, key chess pieces have been put into place for Australia's role in the next conflict. Signing up to AUKUS, the nuclear submarine purchase, green lighting US troop rotations and the stationing of B-52 bombers in northern Australia highlight Australia's new defence posturing. Australia's

military strategy has now been officiated with the recent release of the declassified version of the 2023 Defence Strategic Review (DSR). The DSR maps out Australia's path to the next conflict. Without public consultation or debate, the war agenda has been carefully crafted behind the scenes with the support of foreign nationals. It has become apparent that "dozens of retired US military figures have been granted approval to work for Australia since 2012." This statement simply means that retired US military figures who were once on the US government payroll are now paid by corporations and/or foreign governments to advance the interests of the US war machine. Like our politicians who step into the revolving door of politics and corporations, these retired US military figures rotate from government to arms industry jobs and on to think tanks where they get interviewed by the mainstream media pushing the line to double down on nations who do not tow the US line. What is clear is that the Australian taxpayer has been paying the wages for these 'consultants' to set the national defence agenda.

Foreign Interests

We know that since 2016, the Australian government has paid almost \$2.5 million employing a US consultant to advise Australia how to reconfigure the navy, as Australia apparently does not have citizens available for this job. Furthermore, a former US navy admiral had served as Australia's deputy navy secretary, a position which needless to say is not normally open to foreigners. The interrelationship between Australian military interests and US citizens is deep and far-reaching. Defence Minister, Richard Marles' comment that the Australian Defence Force is moving "beyond interoperability to interchangeability" seems to apply to both military hardware and personnel across Australia and the United States of America.

In lock-step

As the major political parties have paved the way to lock horns with our largest trading partner, both the corporate owned media and government-controlled media have worked hand-in-hand with the government of the day to pump out anti-China hysteria. Slowly but surely, the Australian public are being groomed for the next military confrontation. The mainstream media has facilitated a constant stream of military pundits espousing the need to build up our military capability and take on China's 'aggression' by supporting the US in its quest to

keep the seas 'free.' Advancing a war footing by so-called 'experts' who benefit from promoting conflict, backed by a government that has hitched Australia to the US military machine is a dynamic that does not serve the interests of a peaceful and progressive Australia. Hence, the role played by the government and the mainstream media has been vital in conditioning the public to prepare for a needless conflict that runs counter to our national security and our interests more broadly.

When did we hand over our sovereignty?

Sovereignty refers to a nation's independence and autonomy from foreign influence. It means that as Australians, we are free to decide for ourselves the kind of government we elect and the policies we implement free from internal and external manipulation. Underpinning sovereignty is our government's ability to independently pursue policies that are in the interests of our nation. However, our past and present governments have closely aligned our foreign policy with that of the USA. This drastic shift has firmly stapled Australia to the US war machine. As a consequence, our military posturing has sent ripples across our region causing consternation amongst our neighbours who pursue an independent foreign policy.

Why has the Australian government pumped out emotive rhetoric about fighting for freedom and democracy, taking on a communist dictatorship, and sticking up for our allies? On what basis was the decision made to 'poke the panda' given that China is our largest trading partner? Clearly, the ratcheting up conflict with China does not serve Australia's interests. The purchase of \$386 billion worth of nuclear submarines is only the beginning of Australia's military shopping list. Billions more have been set aside for foreign arms dealers including \$1.3 billion for approximately 220 Tomahawks cruise missiles, \$558 million for 20 HIMARS launchers and missiles, and a further \$1.47 billion for about 200 LRASMs. While the federal government burns a hole in our budget funding foreign arms companies, our Medicare system is left neglected as bulkbilling is allowed to disappear into the ether.

The Australian taxpayer will foot the bill for the exorbitant military shopping list. As a consequence, essential public services will suffer as the public will be

squeezed to pay billions for the new military toys. Furthermore, the maintenance of sophisticated weaponry including the nuclear-powered submarines will ensure Australia's heightened reliance on the USA to arm and maintain this level of military hardware.

Little has been said about what will truly benefit Australia's national interests. How will a conflict with our largest trading partner serve our national interests? What will be the impact on our economy? Will Australians be involved in fighting a nuclear armed superpower? Is there a likelihood of a nuclear attack? Many vital questions have been ignored by the corporate owned and government-controlled media.

Further questions regarding Australia's shift in our strategic posture from defence to offence have gone unanswered. Why has the federal government purchased nuclear attack submarines? Why did we not purchase more conventional submarines for the defence of Australia's borders? Is the US bringing nuclear weapons into Australia? The lack of straight talk by our elected officials highlights the weakened state of Australia's sovereignty, which has been in decline whilst in the hands of the major political parties over the past decade.

The little discussed Force Posture Agreement of 2014 that was signed off by Canberra is a legal instrument that stipulates that "any US assets, anything it develops as a base, anything that it equips as a base, any personnel or munitions or any other military assets, which it locates in such bases, are under the complete and unchallenged authority of the United States." The elected officials that inked this agreement have signed over our national sovereignty to a foreign power. In effect, Australia is rapidly being transformed into America's aircraft carrier.

The consequences

The consequences of handing over sovereignty and pursuing war are on full display in the unfolding tragedy that is Ukraine. This horrific proxy war being waged with the military and financial backing of the US government to the tune of billions ensures that tens of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian lives

are being lost while the western powers dial up the usual rhetoric about freedom and democracy. As the proxy war grinds on across Ukraine, the death toll is yet to peak whilst the economy of Ukraine is in tatters. With infrastructure being destroyed on a daily basis, and over 8 million of its citizens having left its borders, it is difficult to see how Ukraine will ever return to its former self. It is important to reflect that US support only lasts as long as it serves the interests of domestic politics. The US has a habit of cutting its allies loose when military adventures turn into disasters. All too quickly the US neglected its promises to support and liberate the people of Afghanistan. It has turned its back on Iraq. It has forgotten its crimes in Vietnam and is yet to apologise for the only nuclear bombings to take place in history on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

How will Australia fair should we be prompted to militarily challenge China? How long will the US support Australia should the conflict turn nuclear? Who will feed and house refugees following a conflict? Clearly, a conflict with China is not in the interests of Australia. On the contrary, there is much development and trade to be discussed and promoted that would greatly advance both nations.

Australia – it's time to wake up!

A cursory look at Australia's international rhetoric about China, our military posturing and the mainstream media's hyping-up of the China threat are all signs that we are being groomed for the next proxy in the biggest conflict to yet take place. Years of foreign advice supported by our homegrown political elite have watered down Australia's sovereignty. It has altered our nation's strategic interests and independence and aligned it with the trajectory of a foreign power bent on artificially manufacturing the next big conflict.

The reality is that the next conflict will not be with a poor developing nation, but with our largest economic partner who is a nuclear armed superpower that is on the global ascent. Australia cannot afford to continuously follow the US blindly from one failed conflict to another. Nor can we support the dangerous game of escalation that the US is currently engaged in. The stakes are too high,

and we cannot ignore the fact that Washington is trying to push Australia into the forefront of the next military disaster.

As Australians, we need to seriously assess the risks of entering a military confrontation with China. As citizens, we need to balance the potentially disastrous consequences of challenging China with saying no to blindly following US military ambitions. Ultimately, we need to put a stop to being exploited at the hands of a foreign military power that simply treats Australia as an expendable military asset.

Ultimately, we need to work towards our own national interests, that support peace and prosperity. The aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should always serve as a signpost for those in need of clear direction in times of conflict and uncertainty.

Join PIBCI and support peace and progress.

Anthony B – Website Editor

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