

SUBMISSION
FROM THE
AUSTRALIAN ANTI-BASES CAMPAIGN COALITION
TO THE
FOREIGN POLICY WHITE PAPER

The Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition (AABCC) was established in 1987. It is made up of a broad range of groups and individuals who work for the removal of all nuclear and conventional war fighting and associated intelligence facilities in Australia. The AABCC sees the closure of these bases as a positive step towards world-wide disarmament and peace.

1. AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY NEEDS TO BE GROUNDED IN A CLEAR-EYED ASSESSMENT OF OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS

How should we define Australia's national interests in a changing world? How should our values underpin Australia's foreign policy? What should we do differently? How can we do better?

Australia's Role and Place in the world

Australia's view of itself should be modest and realistic, not inflated or western dominated. Australia is a middle sized power situated in Asia not in Europe or North America. It has a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population which is largely peaceful and prosperous.

Australia has never defined its interests independent of its allegiance to either the British or the American Empire. A primary value then in having a clear eyed assessment is the ability to see its interests independently of either Britain, in whose name Australia embarked on two World Wars or the United States in whose name Australia went "all the way" Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and lately, Syria. It is impossible to define Australia's real interests by virtue of symbiotic if not outright sycophantic allegiance to Empire.

Both of the major parties see the USA as the anchor of Australia's foreign policy and as a result Australia's authority and standing on the international stage has been severely diminished. We should aim to be a player in the world on our own terms. Our chief task therefore is to uncouple ourselves from the USA in a determined assertive way declaring our independence, abandoning our military alliance (ANZUS) but retaining friendly relations and mutually beneficial economic relations.

Australia needs an independent and nonaligned foreign policy. We should aim to be like Norway which is not a member of the EU despite its proximity to that block and which is able to act on the international stage as an honest broker. Uncoupled from the US our policies on economic, military, foreign aid and other issues will have a great burden lifted from them.

Australia's role in the world should be governed by its own self-interest for the betterment of its people, for the betterment of the world and for good relationships with all countries

What should we do differently?

Nuclear weapons:

We must support the banning of these weapons and get ourselves out from under the so called 'nuclear umbrella'.

Australia is about to boycott major UN multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. The UN resolution and the forthcoming negotiations are the result of intense government and civil society action in recent years that has highlighted the catastrophic humanitarian impacts of these most terrifying and destructive of all weapons, and the imperative to prevent any further use.

Australia's boycott of the disarmament talks will have grave implications. It calls into question our commitment not only to the UN but also to the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, article 6 of which obliges all member states – not just those with the weapons – to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to ... nuclear disarmament".

Australia's boycott will also render our advocacy in other areas less credible. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's frequent pronouncements on the need for a rules-based international system will ring hollow if Australia actively undermines this historic effort to strengthen international law and give effect to the disarmament obligation written into the non-proliferation treaty.

In the region, Australia will yet again stick out as merely an appendage to the US rather than an independently minded nation that considers global interests and its own interests above those of its ally. Every south-east Asian nation, and all Pacific island nations (save Micronesia, which is still vulnerable to US pressure) support the delegitimising of nuclear weapons via a treaty banning their development, testing, manufacture, deployment and use.

Australia's decision is irresponsible and unworthy of a nation that has had a long history of engaging with UN disarmament initiatives. The decision should be reversed.

Military alliances:

The time has come for ANZUS to be abandoned, for the US bases on our soil and US Marines in Darwin to be evicted, and for joint war games to be abandoned.

The role of the war fighting and surveillance base at Pine Gap in particular makes our country a potential nuclear and terrorist target. It also undermines our Independence and sovereignty upon which our foreign affairs policy is contingent.

Pine Gap is built, financed and maintained by the United States. It has grown in its functions and now captures all electronic communications, whether military or civilian, in Australia and many other countries around the world.

The interoperability practiced during the biennial Talisman Sabre joint US-Australian exercises could well make it exceedingly difficult for Australia's armed services to manoeuvre in an independent way, should there be an outbreak of hostility in our region.

Time has come to forge a new relationship with the US.

China:

To date no vessels have been stopped or threatened in the South China Sea so the suggestion that Australia should use its military to enforce 'freedom of navigation' is both unnecessary and dangerous.

It is unacceptable that Australia should support a position whereby an array of US warships can sail with impunity close the Chinese coast. No nation would permit such a threat.

The issues of the islands in the South China Sea must be worked out by the nations concerned. The Philippines seems more than able to come to an agreement with China about their disputed islands and a similar pattern should be encouraged with the other nearby countries and China. Australia need not and should not interfere.

East Timor:

The fact that Australia has been involved in trickery to defraud this poor country of its resources is an international scandal. The sooner we have a fair border between our two countries the better.

Israel:

Australia compromises itself by declaring close and important ties to Israel and the two State solution when Israel contravenes international law and breaches UN resolutions by systematically destroying Gaza, and approving an increase of illegal settlements while at the same time demolishing Palestinian homes.

Australia must abandon its policy of complete, often unquestioning support for the policies of the Israeli Government.

North Korea:

How can Australia affect any change in the ongoing threats on the Korean Peninsula when it is seen as just an arm of US foreign policy? The Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea has to be treated as a sovereign country and not be portrayed as a group of mad people.

The DPRK's belligerence may well be explained by the fact that it has had a permanent US nuclear capable military force posted on its border for over 50 years and that the US -- which has the biggest military arsenal in the world -- often refuses to negotiate, does not fulfill agreements made and so forth.

There can be no peace, let alone reunification, until there are genuine, respectful negotiations.

Japan:

The tripartite agreement between the US, Japan and Australia has to be ended as it creates a further irritant on the stage of the China and Australia relationship.

Regional peace:

It is in the interest of Australia that our region is one of peace where trade and economic relationships are in good order. There is no advantage for Australia for any trade war or hot war with China.

Refugees

Australia needs to find its moral backbone. The first step in resolving a problem is to admit that there is one. Australia currently perpetrates an immoral regime of human rights abuse in its treatment of asylum seekers.

Given that Australia has contributed to many of the wars that are directly creating many of the asylum seekers, Australia has a particular responsibility to welcome and care for them.

Conclusion

It is in Australia's interests that we base our foreign relations on Australia's interests, on fair dealing with our neighbours and on working for the benefit of all peoples. We should therefore uncouple our relationship with the US and cease working for the benefit of US foreign policy.

2 AUSTRALIA HAS DIVERSE INTERESTS THAT SPAN THE GLOBE.

Which countries will matter most to Australia over the next 10 years? Why and in what ways? How should we deepen and diversify key relationships?

New Zealand

On our eastern coast we have New Zealand with which we have good relations. However this relationship is at times disturbed and even undermined by Australia's wholehearted support for US policies.

Papua New Guinea

Australia needs to be more involved in the immediate north of our country with Papua New Guinea. Rather than seeing it as an opportunity for investment and profit for Australian companies, we should see it as part of our responsibility from our colonial past.

PNG's internal problems and conflicts cannot be resolved by external military means; Australia needs to invest far more heavily in diplomacy, education, sustainable development aid and so forth. Dumping refugees on an already struggling country will only exacerbate existing problems.

South Pacific Island Nations

These islands are the first in line to be affected by global warming and hence Australia's responsibility is to support them in their fight to have the world's chief polluters cut back seriously on emissions. However, at present Australia is behaving as if there is no risk of global warming.

Australia will also be seriously impacted by 'environmental refugees' from our region. To respond to this humanely and generously we need to start planning now for land and service provision where regional refugee communities can maintain their cultures alive. Australia should also take a more proactive and leading role in the global campaign to reduce warming.

Meanwhile these island states need aid and other support and opportunities for seasonal work for their residents to travel to Australia for short periods.

Indonesia

To our North West is Indonesia, largest economy in Southeast Asia, a diverse archipelago nation of more than 300 ethnic groups, the world's fourth most populous nation and the world's 10th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity.

We need to strengthen our mutually beneficial trade and other relationships and increase our participation in regional forums with Indonesia. People to people exchanges between Australia and Indonesia must increase but to do this Australia must make a bigger effort to teach Bahasa in Australian schools and universities. The more effort put into good relations between Australia and Indonesia the better.

Given that Indonesia is a Muslim country (in fact as the biggest Muslim country in the world) we need to work on our understanding of that perspective.

The issue of West Papua is complex and may cause difficulties. But it is clear that it is time that West Papua was freed from Indonesian control (and the human rights abuses, economic exploitation of the land and environmental devastation that have accompanied that control) and it became an independent country. In engaging in this issue there will be many pitfalls but this is where patience and human rights should reign supreme rather than a quick fix that accommodates Indonesian elites in the exploitation of that country.

Which global trends, such as developments in technology, environmental degradation and the role of non-state actors, are likely to affect Australia's security and prosperity? How should Australia respond?

One worrying development in technology is in the area of surveillance. Australia has been caught out spying on the Indonesian President and his wife. This underlines the imperative for Australia to act with high principles in regard to this technology.

The second area of concern is the development of drones. Drones have many economic and scientific uses which are valuable but weaponised drones are a completely different question. Their use to date has not complied with accepted rules of war and Australia should work in international forums to ensure that these rules are complied with in future. It would contribute to reducing threat perceptions, fear and hostility if Australia did not purchase, lease or use weaponised drones.

4 AUSTRALIA NEEDS TO BE AMBITIOUS IN GRASPING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

The framing of this question indicates the attitude of the Government to trade and economic opportunities. Use of the words **ambitious** and **grasping** is offensive. Our foreign policy should exhibit keenness to promote Australian products and services but we should be persuasive, transparent, respectful of other interests and fair in our dealings.

5 AUSTRALIA CONFRONTS A RANGE OF STRATEGIC, SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES.

How can Australia best deal with instability beyond our borders?

Several principles should underpin our participation in overseas armed conflict:

1. Have all diplomatic efforts been exhausted?
2. Has the UN asked us?
3. Any request should be considered by the nation's parliament before a decision is made...
4. Is the conflict on our doorstep? Then it may be in our interest to intervene, especially as an honest broker to resolve a conflict.
5. Is the fight a civil war between two internal forces or non-state actors? If so it is not a situation that Australia should intervene in militarily. Instead our response should be to work to persuade the sides to cease fire and come to the negotiation table.

Australia must move to exercise greater control over how Australia companies act overseas to ensure a just recompense for resource extraction and the elimination of human rights abuses, environmental destruction and corruption. Currently Australian mining companies are among the worst in these areas. It is desirable that countries should have the highest regard for our commerce and our government should see to it that fair dealings are being followed.

6 AUSTRALIA USES A RANGE OF ASSETS AND CAPABILITIES TO PURSUE OUR INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS.

How can Government work more effectively with non-government sectors, including business, universities and NGOs, to advance Australia's interests?

The Australian Government should work with non-government sectors to make as many Australian citizens aware of our international responsibilities. Australia universities should be subsidised to take students from regional under developed countries in a type of 'Colombo Plan' where they would get a well-resourced education that may not be available in their home country. One condition must be that the selected students return to work in their home country for 4 or 5 year.

Greater investment in diplomacy could yield great benefits for Australia's security and sustainable development as well as that of our neighbours.

Australia needs to increase its aid budget significantly so as to stabilise its position as the "partner of choice" for the Asia Pacific region. Aid contributes significantly to reducing causes of conflict and developing friendly relationships. It is in our own and our neighbours' interest to increase this to at least the UK level of 0.7%.

As one small example, sporting organisations should be encouraged to have 'boutique' players from our neighbours rather than Europe or South America. For example, Cricket Australia has created the Big Bash league. The Australian Government could well insist/encourage each team to have a boutique player from one of the minnows in world cricket.

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