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## Appendix H

### **OCKHAM'S RAZOR 'Arms and the Man' (1995)**

Ian Buckley

1995 being the 80th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing and the 50th anniversary of the ending of WWII, it seems timely to reflect on the sacrifices made by those who served Australia in those two World Wars - both those who served and survived, (sometimes at considerable disadvantage), and those who served and died - in the hope that such reflection might increase our understanding of how these wars came about and prevent further similar tragedies.

Looking back into history, we see that the motives behind wars have been basically about land, resources, markets and so on, indeed, most being caused by extreme forms of greed and power hunger. However, when we come to the First and, especially, the Second World War, most of us are convinced of our side's essential innocence, having been persuaded by the rhetoric, the slogans, of the day. That is understandable because there was much truth in these since, by war's outbreak, we faced extremist military regimes intent on our downfall. However, such was never the whole story because it totally ignored the materialistic basis of that war, including the contribution that our side made to promoting these military regimes. If, even today, this seems hardly credible, one must remember that those who produced the war-time slogans, the politicians of the day, did not wish to admit of any such contribution. However if, on behalf of our children and grandchildren, we want to avoid going down the same tragic pathway, we must honestly re-appraise our recent past.

Since Australia's involvement in WWI was entirely subsidiary to that of Great Britain, we need to consider the contribution that this, our Mother Country, made to the growth of international enmity and then, disastrously, for commercial reasons, to building up the military strength of its subsequent enemies.

By the turn of this century the colonial empires of Britain, France and Russia controlled, between them, most of the world's lands and their peoples. Though 'late starters' in this industrial and colonial race, Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy wanted a greater share of this material wealth. The driving force behind these disturbing trends was the urge to rapid industrial expansion and wealth, especially by the leaders of heavy industry, a significant part of which was the arms industry. Being commercially driven, the arms industries of all of these nations sought markets, not just for their nation's defence, but abroad, selling to anyone having the means to pay. As such business was stimulated by increased international tensions, such tensions were taken advantage of or, where insufficient, contrived by publicity scares, as in the notorious Mulliner affair of 1909. (1-3, 5, 7, 8)

In that scare a certain Mr Mulliner, of the Coventry Ordnance Works, claimed that

Germany had, secretly, sharply increased its manufacture of dreadnought battleships in breach of its agreement to limit its naval strength to some 60% of Britain's. Although it was eventually admitted by Churchill, amongst others, that Mulliner's claim was false, that admission came far too late to prevent the British government sharply increasing its battleship orders and, in response to that, the German government raising its orders, much to the satisfaction of both countries' battleship builders.(5)

But that is just one example, - the tragedy being that while the public of both sides were convinced that increasing armaments would make their nation more secure and war less likely, the reality was an uncontrolled arms race which, as Britain's pre-war Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey, stated after the war, made for ever increasing instability and eventual open conflict. (2, 5-7)

A further tragic consequence of the unbridled commercialism of the arms makers was that through the deals that they did with one another, once war came, the casualty rates were enormously increased.

One such example was the deal Maxim-Nordenfelt, a company closely allied to Britain's Vickers, made with Germany's Krupps to provide the know-how for the manufacture of the then revolutionary 600-shot-per-minute Maxim gun, the machine gun which, but little modified, would slaughter so many hundreds of thousands on the Western Front. (1)

Another example which had tragic effects on young Australians and others was Britain's pre-war build-up of Turkey's naval power. British arms firms, including Vickers and Armstrongs, set up a subsidiary called the "*Imperial Ottoman Docks, Arsenal and Naval Construction Company*". Aided by the *British Naval Mission to Turkey*, this company undertook to supply the Turkish navy with battleships, submarines, torpedoes, trawlers and naval mines. Business went well until war broke out, but then, as things turned out, Turkey lined up on the other side. However, Britain's leaders were confident that a purely naval assault would force a passage through the Dardanelles and bring to terms the Turks, for whose integrity and military prowess they had scant respect. But they miscalculated, the Turks employed their newly acquired naval strength, especially the torpedoes and mines, to protect the Straights, and the assault failed. This led to the tragic attempt at the land invasion we know as the Gallipoli campaign. (1, 4, 5, 9)

So far I have dealt only with the role that uncontrolled commercialism (aided by compliant politicians) played in bringing about WWI and in amplifying its tragic effects. But what about WWII - wasn't that simply a case of extreme militarism and unprovoked aggression by Hitler's Germany and its allies?

Well, I certainly used to think so and I suspect that many of you do still, but let me share a little of what can be learned from the writings of Philip Noel-Baker, who was Personal Assistant to Lord Robert Cecil, President of the 1932-33 Disarmament Conference. (5, 6)

You know, the human cost of WWI was so terrible, so absolutely awful, that it had a truly profound effect on all, - that resulting in concerted moves towards more civilised approaches to international affairs. As the lesson had been well and truly learned that excessive arms brought insecurity, not security, it was deemed essential to reach international agreements on arms limitation. Under the Versailles Treaty, not only was Germany to be totally disarmed but, under Article 8 of the League's Covenant, all nations undertook to reduce their arms to the lowest point consistent with national safety. That stand, though not to the liking of the world's arms industries, was not seriously challenged until the early 1930s. At that stage, however, Germany, being totally disarmed, was no threat - so it remained only for the other major powers to implement their commitments to purely defensive arms.

This opportunity lay open at the *First World Disarmament Conference of 1932-33* when the US President, Hoover, proposed an agreement not only for overall arms reduction but, importantly, one to increase the power of defence by reductions in the types and numbers of offensive weapons such as large mobile guns, tanks, bombers, submarines and so on. This proposal met with enthusiastic support by all of the smaller and, indeed, most of the major nations of the world.

Unfortunately, however, efforts within Britain and France were critically divided. Although there was great public enthusiasm and, indeed, strong support by some in high places, the aim of many British policy makers was to increase arms, their primary concern being to hold onto the Empire's colonial territories and to maintain an image of 'greatness'. In addition was the enormous press and parliamentary pressure brought by the arms traders who sought to undermine the earlier British stand.

So, when Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald appeared in Geneva in March 1933, not only did he make a half-hearted case for arms reduction but, by immediately thereafter visiting Mussolini to discuss the idea of a "European Council" (of Britain, France, Germany and Italy) that would have undercut the League, he revealed that Britain's stand on arms limitation was mere tokenism. Without Britain's whole-hearted support, no arms agreement could succeed and, as Sir John Simon, Britain's Foreign Secretary, had earlier warned, Europe had to face the clear choice: - either all nations had to disarm together, or Germany must be allowed to re-arm. Encouraged by its Committee of Imperial Defence and its arms manufacturers, Britain chose the latter and an unleashed Germany, by then under Hitler, joined in another catastrophic arms race which, as we know, culminated in the second world war.

In this brief account, I have outlined just some of the contributions that our side made to the weakening of international law and order and the strengthening of potential foes in the lead up to each of the World Wars. In it you will recognise the now familiar features of economic rationalism, the influence of those who believe that one may justifiably take profit wherever opportunity presents.

Now, if we are tempted to say "well that's just history", we should remember more

recent examples, such as the arming of Iran and Iraq during their war, as well as the ongoing contributions that the international arms trade is making to today's problems. During the Cold War that trade reached \$1000 billion a year. Now, with the Cold War behind us (and despite the vast arms accumulations from those years), annual arms production continues at some \$800 billion worth. That unwarranted misuse of resources not only fuels all current international and internal conflicts, but it acts as a powerful commercial pressure on governments and others willing to pay. Currently, that pressure is mainly on the oil-rich Middle East and on the burgeoning economies of the Asia/Pacific. It would be nice to think that Australia, our country, was not only not involved in this trade, but that it was taking a stand against it. Unfortunately, through its joint ventures, such as the missile-capable submarine project with Kockums (the giant Swedish arms firm), and by its promotion of regional arms sales through bazaars like AIDEX, Australia is encouraging the over-arming of itself and its Asian neighbours. Like selling heroin, or children into prostitution, that may be profitable for some, but it is very bad news for our nation's security and long-term health. However, if Australia were to withdraw from this particular excess of economic rationalism, it would be in a strong position to influence its Asian and Pacific neighbours towards sensible arms limitation agreements, agreements that would allow weapons sufficient for each nation's defence, but prohibit those designed for offence.

No, its not beyond our imaginations to come up with suitable solutions to our long-term security problems, but it would be sound policy to act before these become too great.

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