

1. Australia's Foreign Wars: Origins, Costs, Future?!

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A. Introduction: - Aims, scope, means, hopes

These essays aim to provide an easily accessible outline of Australia's diplomatic-military history that might help guide us towards a saner future. I've focused on the fate of Australia and Australians but always in the context of events and influences from the outside world. The initial series includes decisions and events occurring before last Century - decisions which, assisted by the weapons of mass destruction of the day, culminated in two catastrophic World Wars within a mere 20 years of one another, wars costing the lives of some *100 million* people, including *one hundred thousand* mostly very young Australians. Sadly, as the world seems to have learnt all too little from those disasters, I've considered as well the last 60 years, thus covering all the 20th century - and beyond, with all its bizarre silliness,- the beginnings of the 21st.

For the future security of all our children (and theirs) I believe it vital to stimulate a wider interest in the area. Initially that might come from wanting to check the information given. After all, much of it may strike you as mere fantasy: - how could *anyone*, let alone educated leaders, have implemented so many of the bizarrely inappropriate, dangerous, and counter-productive policies here described? It's only fair to go to the source - the book or paper referred to - and check it out! To facilitate that, I've included many references (sources, bracketed with page numbers) these shown at the end of each essay, - as well as in a final comprehensive reference list.

As already indicated, if I had to state a central message in what follows, I could do no better than apply to *all* the wars Australia has involved itself in, Churchill's judgement concerning the origins of World War II, namely that they were, in his terms, "*unnecessary*", - that just like WWII, *all* these wars, could have been avoided. Regarding the causes of both WWI and WWII, I've relied heavily on Churchill's testimony - as well as that of Lord Robert Cecil, - not only because these British Conservatives were intimately associated with the events, but because their accounts so clearly reveal the decision-making background and, in each case, their totally self-

defeating outcomes.(WC1i; WC2, 30-1;WC4i; RC) In essence, the messages revealed are highly reminiscent of American historian, Barbara Tuchman's wonderfully insightful "*The March of Folly.*" (BT3)

Since we are, as Wendell Wilkie said One World, many issues raised in these essays will be world issues, but lets begin close to home by raising a current question, that of our safety as Australians, Australian security.

B. Australian Security: - Are we Aussies Secure?

For many the above heading may come as a surprise. As far as our current situation is concerned, why should we question either our security or our alliances? After all, Australia has never before experienced such a great creation of wealth as over the present era. Militarily we threaten no other country (or so we say) and no other country threatens us.(written 2005) The Cold War is past and although there are said to be some 'rogue states', Australia is allied to the US, the one remaining Superpower. So are we not justified in feeling utterly confident in our future security?

Well I believe the short answer is 'no, - not in the least' - and for the following reasons:

1. Sources and Maldistribution of Australia's Wealth: Since European settlement, the creation of our wealth has been built on unsustainable practices, primarily involving exploitation of fragile soils, scarce water resources, forests, and the export of our finite agricultural and mineral products. Aggravating that still-current approach, has been a traditional and now increasingly uneven distribution of the wealth created, a key factor incompatible with a sustainable healthy domestic market, incompatible with a proper degree of social justice, cohesion and goodwill.

2. The State of the World and its Wealth: Despite the creation of the world's current wealth - which has never been so prodigiously large (far more than enough to support the essential needs of *all* its people) current global economic arrangements have ensured its increasingly uneven distribution.(Appendix E) Indeed, the resulting extremes of wealth and poverty frequently aggravate social tensions, oft-times leading to outright conflicts. Moreover, much of this extraordinary wealth creation has been at the cost of the natural environment, the health of which is essential for sustainable (as well as agreeable) living everywhere. So the current patterns of world economic development are totally incompatible with both environmental and social stability. No wonder that despite this unprecedented wealth in the world, international statesmen and military strategists, - without giving the slightest hint as to why it *need* be so, have long proclaimed that the world is moving into 'an increasingly unstable future'!!

3. Lack of Security from Our Superpower Ally: But as you may respond (in desperation?!) since Australia has as its ally the US, the one remaining Superpower, does that not guarantee our security? After all, the currently-preferred global economic model is based largely on that of the United States, with more and more countries including our own, conforming to that model. Moreover we know that the US commands overwhelming military force, not only vast arrays of high-tech

conventional weaponry (with absolute air and missile superiority) but thousands of strategic and 'theatre' nuclear weapons. So, with the US as Ally, what possible threat to our security could we face?

These essays will ultimately focus on this third issue, from an historical as well as current perspective. Initially, however, let's consider how burgeoning Empire 'superpowers' of the past behaved when confronted by trade competitors; how Australia, as an ally of two of them, fared - and how, today, the one surviving superpower is responding unwisely, often militarily, to economic competition (and what it fears may become greater competition) from China. How it is behaving aggressively in response to its ever-expanding (insatiable?) appetite for oil. Also how, without open debate, it is dealing with its impending market failure - brought on by extreme maldistribution of wealth, i.e., too many *insolvent*, ('would-be but-can't-be') customers, coupled to outrageous financial corruption at the top. And finally how, if we continue failing to recognise the danger, we Australians may go on allowing ourselves to be drawn by our insistent 'pressing' ally and our own mindless leaders into more and more ridiculous, self-defeating and virtually certain catastrophic conflicts.

C. Alliance Implications of the 'Threat' of a Rapidly-Growing China

This section was drafted before September 11, 2001, when the prime international concern of the United States, our Superpower Ally, was the rapidly-growing economic power of China. Although, seemingly, that US concern has been overshadowed by 9/11 and the discovery of possible sources of terrorism and threats from various 'rogue states', including the 'Axis of Evil' powers, Iraq, Iran, Syria and North Korea (all *weak* countries, note) it can be anticipated that sooner or later the 'threat' of a growing China will be rediscovered and projected back onto the world stage. (Indeed, as I revise this, the issue is again being raised with some urgency – see, “*Plan B needed if Taiwan reaches flashpoint,*” article by Tony Pratt in *The Canberra Times*, August 22, 2005, p.13.

1. A Wake-up Call from Tim and Malcolm

Some five years ago, in commenting on the conflicts of interests between the US and China, Tim Fischer (then National Party leader) drew attention to the "*increasingly shrill edicts*" issuing from the US military and academic establishment, pointing out that "*Australia was told that it must automatically jump on the US side in any conflict with China over Taiwan*", and (quoting former US Defense adviser, Dick Armitage) that in such a conflict "*...the US would expect 'Australia to help out with the dirty work'*" . (Tim Fischer, "*Good, bad and ugly of US-Australian Relations*", in *The Australian*, 5 June, 2000. (TF) If Australians were to go along with that, we (especially our young people) could land in extremely serious trouble. And why China?! After all, by US standards China is both an economic and military dwarf. Its billion-plus population could no doubt supply a vast army, but its military and air technology is limited and compared to the United States' tens-of-thousands of ICBMs, China commands a mere 40 or so. Moreover its economic power is but a tiny fraction of that of the US. So why the concern about China?

A useful historical parallel is Britain's attitude towards Germany in the early part of

last century. Remember, until World War I Britain was the 'top' industrial power, and since it also 'owned' a fifth of the world's lands and their peoples, it was easily the pre-eminent Empire of the day. And yet Britain felt insecure. That was less for ongoing differences with its traditional competitors, France and Russia, but more and more because Germany was by then forging ahead industrially and commercially at a simply prodigious rate. So although still clearly in the lead, by 1904 Britain could see that Germany's growth rate, if not checked, *might* lead to its eventual economic, military and naval ascendancy. (Churchill, "*The World Crisis*" (WC1i); see also 2C & 3B(a-c) below)

As we know, the current rate of economic growth in China is very high, its GDP increasing some 7-8% annually. In 'compound interest' terms, that is extraordinarily impressive. However anyone aware of the very serious environmental and social impacts of such growth rates would know they are not sustainable for long - certainly not long enough for China to get anywhere near the US's level of economic activity. And yet for those in the US obsessed with China's current growth rate - and nightmares of competition ahead - that rate is seen to threaten US economic hegemony.

2. The Ultimate (real) Threat

Now if in the event of a US-China conflict, our government went along with the idea of Australia 'doing its share of the dirty work' as a way of guaranteeing its future security (as happened over Vietnam, the Gulf War, and more recently, the War on Iraq) that would be in defiance of morality, of key historical lessons, of our own true interests. It is well to remember that while superpowers want, indeed, expect support from lesser powers, they don't need to return favours. Not that Australia has been in dire need for US military help to defend its own shores for it is already well prepared (cf, Australia's *Defence Review 2000 Report*) - but when Australia requested US ground support in East Timor, it was refused. So if in a US-China war (say over Taiwan) Australia was to 'do its share of the dirty work' with our forces on the ground, then in light of current aims of minimal US casualties, we could expect the US to confine *its* efforts to aerial and missile warfare of the most horrendous kind. Indeed, as pointed out by Malcolm Fraser, since China is a vast land with population in excess of a billion, the use of nuclear weapons would be virtually certain because such would be needed for the US 'to prevail'. (MF, 6)

Subsequent mopping up ground operations, which to say the least, would be extremely ugly, extraordinarily dirty, difficult, and dangerous, would involve the troops of US allies. If we Australians had accepted the role of ally, then mopping up operations by our soldiers would simply be '*our share of the dirty work*'. Undoubtedly the US, determined to remain the world's one and only superpower, would 'win' such a war. But such a victory would be at the cost of unprecedented carnage and devastation - hence, of the utter abhorrence of the world and our own self-contempt. Australia, along with the US and any other allies would, in world opinion, become totally isolated moral outcasts.

So before we Australians go along with any alleged alliance commitments (which, remember, governments have always made 'on our behalf') we should recall Australia's past experiences with allies. After all, Australia's exploitation by 'trusted

allies' is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, since our nation's birth just over 100 years ago, there are three striking instances in which one or other rich and powerful ally exploited our country's loyalty, causing grievous harm to our young people in wars which should never have occurred. First, we would do well to recall our alliance experiences in the origins and conduct of World War I and its aftermath. (see Essays 2-6; also IB2) Secondly, we should consider how the betrayal of WWI sacrifices and the return to business-as-usual Old Diplomacy practices led so swiftly to WWII.(cf Essays 7, 8, 9) And thirdly, we need to record how the lessons of WWII were all too soon forgotten, indeed immediately supplanted by the new ambitions and enmities of the Cold War (see 9 I(a-c)) with its threatened nuclear-annihilation (the absolute ultimate in terrorism) neo-colonialist exploitation of Third World peoples and intermittent wars, including the United States' tragic wars in Vietnam (Essay 10) Korea (Essay 11) – and now Iraq, in which we shamefully embroiled ourselves - in the vain expectation of guaranteeing our future security.

3. Other threats

(i) Oil (and other resource) avarice

The current apparent insatiable desire to own or at the very least control the world's diminishing supplies of oil is a potent source of conflict, as in Iraq today - and who knows where tomorrow. This important topic will be included later in these essays.

(ii) The Push for 'Full Spectrum Dominance'

As even a brief knowledge of mankind's recent history reveals, this is by no means a new disease, since it has long afflicted Western Christian and other technologically-advanced civilisations intent on following their 'manifest destinies' – especially since the Industrial Revolution. Always that push involves serious economic and political exploitation of other people, whether citizens of the home state or foreign. It is the purpose of these essays to show just how counter-productive to the general well-being have been all previous attempts to gain such dominance. At the very least market failures, at the worst, calamitous self-defeating wars. That sadly still-too-relevant topic will be considered again later, together with considerations as to what might be done to reverse this dangerously destructive top-down urge, hopefully including concerted bottom-up Ghandi-like ground-swell refusals to cooperate with all such destructive nonsensical projects.

(iii) Terrorism

As already noted, the section on the alleged threat from China was written before September 11, 2001, before the world's attention was diverted towards combating Twin Towers and other terrorism. Led by the United States, the response to that event has been joined by many other nations, including China, Russia, Israel, Pakistan and Indonesia, countries intent on taking military action against their own dissident groups - all categorised as 'terrorists' for one or other purpose. For such governments it has seemed too good an opportunity to pass up - although it will impact unjustly in all cases where dissidents have suffered grievous economic, political and human rights exploitation and abuse. I have dealt with the origins, nature and possible solutions to the problems of terrorism in an essay published in the

June, 2002 issue of *Eureka Street* (IB3; see Appendix J)

In summary, it seems clear that international trade competition (including that from China) along with the industrial world's seemingly insatiable resource hunger; the exploitation of Third World peoples; the ever-increasing demands on our already over-stressed natural environments, - (all aspects of the urge for the patently-impossible ever-expanding economies, the impossible dreams) will remain the key stumbling blocks on the road to world peace. But before dealing with these contemporary issues, let us look to useful lessons from the past concerning the origins of major international conflicts, beginning with their Imperial roots, the background to the Boer War and to World War I - and how Australia became involved.

C. Sources

Sourcing Text Citations: These are shown in shorthand form by bracketing the author's initials. When author has more than one work, following number indicates which work. For multi-volume works, Roman numerals (e.g., ii) indicate volume number. The *page* number referred to in an author's text follows the comma. Thus, for example, page 200 in Churchill's "*The Second World War*", Volume 1 ("*The Gathering Storm*") would be shown as: (WC4i, 200).

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