

Security (in Australia) in the 21st century.

Submission to NSC Consultations on “Securing our Future.

Introduction :

Australia is surrounded by what must be the world's biggest moat. This body of water is situated in a particular world zone – the Asia-Pacific. In considering the question of Security there are clear (Keating inspired) implications in finding “security *in* Asia as against finding security *from* Asia. This implies a proactive geographically-aware approach to the question of Security which is not simply self- focused but contextually responsible. This is to say that I deem inadequate the NSC assertion that “it is reasonable to say that national security is about the way country protects itself”. In my view national security is a globally contextual responsibility which indeed includes self-protection.

Security, however is a very wide spectrum of domains – from the deeply personal, even individual matrix that supports mental health to the interactional relationships which themselves range from the between-individuals to social to civil to various political levels until branching out to everything that is included to the overall journey to international and world relationships. All this is to say that any discussion about security needs to be wholistic [human security](#) and not restricted to one sector – like militarism and it's generator - the military industrial complex MIC). En passant, I add that the MIC and national security are inversely related – meaning that the more the MIC thrives, the less secure the world is.

Security, if it is to be real, needs to find a template that covers the full range of human reality. One that captures no less than everything. I suggest the template should bear the name of [justice](#). Justice, in my view, is fundamentally about giving everyone what rightfully belongs to them and ensuring that systems reflect love for all people.

I submit that where justice is present - peace will prevail. And where Peace prevails is the very definition of Security.

History

Australia has a past, a present and a future. The past is a colonial settlement which played out (and still plays out) the logic of “Terra Nullius” – which maintained that the land was “without a people”. It took almost no time at all when the presence of the colony brought displacement, disease and death to the people of the land. Throughout the entire continent massacres took place which rendered tribal units dysfunctional and in some places the deaths reached [genocidal proportions](#)

But colonialism is a two edged sword. The Golden Rule (“Do unto others..”) is only half right. The quiet bit is a corollary of another truth: that we are all connected. Indeed all of creation is. At the core of settler colonialism is the dehumanization and therefore the

diminishment of the other. This unavoidably results in the acquisition of what are considered superior cultural values by the dominant group. This in turn leads to cultural and world disharmony and therefore insecurity.

When Climate Change hits, Justice demands an attitude of compassion based on equality. Particularly when those neighbours are among the least responsible for the polluting industrial and military (unquantified) causes of the world-wide changes.

The National Security College (NSC) within the Australian National University has set out a series of questions aimed , basically to find out just what Australians think on the subject of Security. In turn, the Australian Peace and Security Forum (APSF) has made a submission on Securing our Future. I find I am in agreement with very much of what the APSF says but would like to add comment in the spirit of the NSC Issues paper consultation process. That said, there is much in the Issues paper which is beyond my competence for comment. I shall therefore be selective in the points I raise as a way of expressing my opinions.

Introduction : *What are the security challenges and opportunities for Australia now and in the future ?*

Australia has always been linked via an alliance with one senior partner (originally Britain) or another (USA.). Although seen as an insurance policy in anticipation of future defence needs, the alliance with one or other has seen Australia into six major conflicts since WW2 : Korea; Vietnam, Indonesian Confrontation; Gulf War, Afghanistan an Iraq War. The argument here is not that Australia should not form and engage in alliance-based campaigns. The point is to maintain sufficient independence based on national sovereignty to allow the freedom to declare where to draw the line.

Currently there are developments which see Australia being possibly drawn into a joint action with the USA against China. There are differing views in Australia about whether China has hegemonic ambitions to rival the USA. It is my understanding that the declared point of dispute with China (Taiwan) is not of any strategic significance for Australia. Being drawn into conflict with Australia's biggest trading partner at the behest of the USA is, in my view a very flawed prospect. I fully agree with the APSF submission that "the worst possible outcome for Australia would be war between China and the United States in which Australia becomes involved." P.3.

The world as a whole seems to be moving away from former patterns of security and safety. The Middle East, the War in Ukraine (and the nuclear brinkmanship between Russia and the US) , the threatened war with China and the whole transition away from US hegemony to a multi-polar world are creating an environment in which, more than ever, Australia's own sovereign identity needs to be stable and well grounded. Again, I see the need for Australia to "recalibrate its alliance with the United States".

Consistent with my opinion on the need to recalibrate the alliance with the US is my firm negative opinion of the AUKUS project which I characterize as profoundly unwise to the point of being ridiculous. There are many reasons, which in my life experience is itself a substantial reason for rejecting almost anything. The literature of commentary is substantial against and includes many prominent figures (including the fmr PM Keating "Worst deal ever ! "). At the top of the list of woes is the secrecy of the AUKUS genesis. It reminds me of the 10 part Ken Burns video-doc on the Vietnam war : " Conceived in secrecy." . The image of helicopters being jettisoned from aircraft carriers, to say nothing of the fear ridden population, is a haunting memory. The deception behind the Iraq war in the face of world-wide condemnation is another fiasco copied yet again by the urgent evacuation of Afghanistan.

Close behind the culpable secrecy of Morrison is the less than 24 hours capitulation of the then Opposition Labor Party. All of this is to point to the manifest injustice of the mis-use of power and renders any hint of consultation with the voting public a very sick joke. I would hope that in some way the power of the voting public can yet be harnessed in the name of justice and peace. There is much to confront in the search for justice under the heading of national security.

The further big issue for me is the injustice of being "led by the nose" into a cabal that is not at the service of Australia's national interests. I think I have made the point.

Peter Griffin

41 Kintore St

Dulwich Hill 2203