

PIBCI - Perspective

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Who are our mates?

Do we really know who our good mates are?

War, conflicts, regime change, and rising military budgets are some of the symptoms of a world that has become increasingly volatile and unstable. During such troubling times, it is important to have good mates who will support you and cover your back. Good mates should possess qualities such as loyalty, honesty and trustworthiness. Since federation, Australia has relied on its good mates to provide security. We have also done our bit by sending our sons and daughters overseas to defend the interests of our mates in times of conflict. Yet, we seem not to have questioned the qualities and intentions of our good mates. As the world enters troubling times, we need to better understand who exactly are our good mates? Are they honest and respectable? Are they helping to solve the world's problems or are they part of the problem? Will they back us up in times of trouble, or are they just full of hot wind? Who exactly are our mates, and can they be trusted?

Australia's security blankets – A brief history

Since colonisation, Australia has established a long history of outsourcing the security of our borders to foreign powers. It has heavily relied on its British overlords to provide security from other imperial empires whilst taking the approach that what is good for Britain is inherently good for Australia. With the onset of WW2, it quickly became clear that what was good for Britain was not necessarily good for Australia as our troops were sent to the northern hemisphere to fight in the European theatre of war whilst Imperial Japan advanced through Asia and the Pacific. Following the defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, the British empire rapidly disintegrated and with it, Australia's security guarantor. When the dust of war settled, the USA was left standing as a military and economic superpower. The commonwealth government of Australia eagerly turned its gaze away from Britain and looked across the pacific seeking a new security blanket. Despite the collapse of Nazim in Europe, the defeat Imperial Japan, the breakdown of the British empire, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Australia has grown used to sheltering itself under the aegis of the world's single superpower, the USA. Regardless of our geographic location, successive post war governments have reinforced the need to protect our island continent from a range of threats and enemies that have yet to materialise. Moreover, they have tangled our nation in a web of security alliances that have demanded our support.

Our reliance on the USA for national security must be understood through the lens of power dynamics. As the smaller nation in the relationship, Australia has been subject to the USA's influence and dominance both internationally and domestically. Such influence has been exerted through various channels; political, economic, ideological and cultural. All of these put together has limited Australia's ability to carve out an independent path. Our alliance with the USA has restricted our

capacity to negotiate international arrangements, diluted our sovereignty and on many occasions compelled Australia to align with US policy directives. Due to the USA's dominant role in the relationship, Australia's sovereignty has diminished. The AUKUS pact has formally united our past and present security providers in a more formalised sense, further restricting our independence and undermining our status as a neutral nation.

Who are our good mates?

A good mate in Australian parlance generally means a close friend that possesses the qualities of honesty, loyalty and trustworthiness. A relationship with a good mate should be based on mutual respect. Generally speaking, a good mate will accept you for who you are help you out during good and bad times. Since federation, Australia has viewed Britain and the USA as 'good mates' ready to back us up in times of need. In turn, Australia too has supported its good mates during war and conflicts. Yet, we need to pose the question, how good are our mates?

A close investigation of Australia's past and present security guarantors (Britain and the USA) features a blood-soaked history punctuated by deceit, deception and destruction on a grand scale. It is estimated that the US military launched 469 foreign interventions since 1798. Fifty percent of these between 1950 – 1991; twenty-five percent since of these took place between the end of the cold war through to 1991. This includes a long line of coups, coup attempts and a string of failed wars that have killed and maimed millions of people plunging local populations into generations of conflict, poverty and instability. Korea, Cuba, Iran, Vietnam, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and the current proxy war in Ukraine are some of the more notable foreign interventions initiated by the USA. The USA has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to unleash its military might across the globe. It remains the only nation to use nuclear weapons on two occasions. This year alone, the US has attacked Yemen with devastating missile barrages and more recently, bombed Iran whilst undertaking negotiations. On both accounts, the USA did not flinch at violating international law.

Setting aside military muscle, the USA has a long history of employing a number of tools aimed at pressuring governments and coercing nations to bend to its will. Through the power of the US dollar, financial sanctions, trade tariffs, lawfare, seizure of national reserves and assets, the USA is able to manipulate smaller nations. The use of advanced technology and its monopoly over media outlets and social media further helps to oil the wheels of US foreign policy objectives. For decades, the USA has kept small nations like Cuba and Vietnam in a stranglehold through the power of crushing financial sanctions.

US exceptionalism

Driving its global dominance is the myth of US exceptionalism. The USA sees itself as a unique and morally superior nation in comparison to other countries. This self-sustained belief suggests that the US is superior in its values, political system, and historical development in which it has a special role in the world to promote its set of values and interests. Unfortunately, history has demonstrated that such a belief in superiority leads nations and empires to act with impunity and exercise a level of arrogance that places the world at peril. The past few decades have witnessed the USA act with a high degree of arrogance by excluding itself from international law. Acting without restraint, the USA's wilfully breaks international law, unilaterally attacks nations, and works towards isolating nations through the power of economic sanctions and trade tariffs.

Britain's dark shadow

As a former empire, Britain has been at the forefront of colonial wars, conflict, genocide, mass starvations and theft on a grand scale. The genocide committed against First Nations peoples in Australia, the transatlantic slave trade, the opium wars instigated against China, the mass looting of India and the starvation of three million Bengalis barely 75 years ago are but the tip of Britain's violent history. Many of today's conflicts can be directly attributed to Britain's unscrupulous drawing up of national borders that left ticking timebombs for local populations once the British colonisers were forced to leave. Such examples include the contested border of Kashmir, the division of India into three nations, and the forced acquisition of Palestinian land. Despite its diminished role following WW2, Britain continues to play an active role in propping up unpopular regimes, destabilising democratically elected governments and supporting US military actions.

Britain's history of foreign intervention did not cease with the collapse of its empire. Following the end of 1945, Britain has been involved in forty-two known coups. Currently, details are emerging of Britain's meddling in Slovak political affairs, aimed at undermining a democratically elected government in the European Union.

Both the USA and Britain are heavily involved in supporting Israel's ongoing genocide against the Palestinian population. The USA is the primary supplier of munitions to the IDF that is directly used against Palestinian civilians and infrastructure. Britain regularly utilises its foreign base in Cyprus for intelligence and logistics purposes that ultimately facilitates the Israeli genocide of Palestinians. Britain unashamedly hosted the Israeli President Isaac Herzog in London, who is on record stating that 'The entire [Palestinian] nation out there that is responsible'. Despite global outrage against the rogue nation of Israel, Britain continues to welcome senior Israeli military officials on British soil.

The belligerent actions of the USA and Britain clearly highlight that both nations routinely violate international law. Both nations regularly interfere in the political affairs of other nations. They plan and execute covert operations aimed at destabilising the social and political order of other countries. On the occasions where that fails, Britain and the USA openly resort to military actions. Regardless that such actions reflect those of rogue nations, the Australian government continues to pursue a security partnership under the banner of AUKUS with two nations who are notorious for fuelling international tensions, conflict, instability and aiding a genocide.

Making money out of misery

Both the USA and Britain are amongst the world's leaders in the international arms trade. The USA alone constitutes 41 percent of the international arms trade which is equivalent to the following nine nations making the USA the planet's undisputed leader. The USA dwarfs all other nations in the top 10 list of arms traders. The top five international arms manufacturers are US companies.

Despite the USA dwarfing all other nations in the international arms trade, this should not obstruct the fact that Britain ranks 7th in the international arms trade, comfortably ahead of Spain and Israel. With 3.7 percent of the world's arms export market, Britain's BAE systems ranks 6th behind the USA's top 5 arms manufacturers. With the lion's share of corporate interests lying behind the USA's and Britain's export of arms, it is little wonder that both nations have a vested interest in promoting war and conflict.

The Western military garrison

Comprising 49 countries, the USA heads the world's largest and most powerful bloc of nations. The US-led bloc is the only grouping of nations that displays a high level of integration in terms of its political, economic and military aims and objectives. Under the banner of US values, the bloc's inner circle includes Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Japan, Western and Eastern Europe, South Korea and the Philippines. Most of the nations belong to a web of military and intelligence alliances such as NATO, AUKUS and the Five Eyes.

The level of military spending on behalf of the US-led block is staggering. In 2022, the US-led military bloc accounted for 74.3 percent of the world's actual military expenditure. The USA alone dedicated US\$ 1,537 billion or 53.6 percent of the world's total military expenditure. The rest of NATO accounted for 12.6 percent. The non-NATO US-led military bloc tallied 8.2 percent of global spending. To put this in perspective, China accounted for 10.2 percent and Russia accounted for 3 percent. Such figures clearly highlight the colossal amount of government funds that are diverted from essential public services and into military spending that lines the pockets of the world's largest arms manufacturers. Ultimately, the mammoth amounts of public funds spent on arms fuels the wars that perpetually plague the globe. Given the scale of military expenditure by the US-led military bloc, it is little wonder why the US has demanded its NATO allies in Europe to increase military spending to 5% of GDP. The USA's head of the re-named Department of War, Pete Hegseth recently called on Australia to increase military spending to 3.5 percent of GDP, a whopping jump from the current 2.3%. Under such pressure, the federal government recently announced that it would pour \$12 billion into a 'defence hub' which will provide a parking area for US and British submarines. It is highly likely that more public funds will be diverted away from essential services and into military spending, further establishing a US-led garrison in Australia.

Growing military footprint

The structure that supports the US-led military bloc is a comprehensive web of military bases that covers the globe. Currently there are 902 known US military and 145 British military bases across the planet. The figures exclude facilities and locations used by private military forces, military industrial communications complexes, and facilities used for covert projects. The reality for the many nations that host such facilities is that they have ceded their sovereignty to a foreign power which includes Australia, who currently harbours 17 foreign bases.

The alarming reality is that there are very few nations in the world where the USA or Britain do not have a military presence. This is reflected by the fact that most nations across our planet have been subject to US or British invasions, interventions and military deployments. It is difficult to imagine that the unrest and conflicts in Ukraine, Yemen, Iran, Syria and the current genocide in Gaza are not directly or indirectly linked to the US-led bloc's expansionist drive towards maintaining global dominance.

Nostalgia's Tight Embrace

Australia's historical reliance on a larger power's protective security embrace extends beyond military and economic links. Since colonisation, Australia has existed between British and US cultural imperialism. Following the end of WW2, Australian governments have largely (but not

comprehensively) cut Britain's apron strings and tethered the nation to the US war machine. Successive Australian governments have also modelled our society on that of the USA. Unlike the total destruction that wreaked through Europe and parts of Asia, the USA greatly benefitted from WW2, leaving it as the supreme western superpower. War leveraged its booming economy by fuelling its industry. As Australian governments sought the USA's security embrace, the nation was encouraged to adopt US consumer culture. In the wave of US ascendancy, Australia became a willing recipient of US foreign capital and technology.

Fast forward to 2025. The United States and Britain are the biggest investors in Australia. More alarmingly, most of Australia's biggest companies are majority-owned by US investors. This is in spite of the media hype about China's influence in Australia, and warnings of China's influence in corporate boardrooms. US corporations eclipse all other nations and have significant influence in our politics through investments in Australian stocks. Of Australia's twenty largest companies, fifteen are majority-owned by US-based investors. Three of them are at least twenty-five percent US-owned. Amongst the companies that exhibit a high percentage of US ownership, many are house-hold names such as the Commonwealth Bank, CSL, BHP group, Woolworths and Westside petroleum. Of note is that four of the big banks are majority-owned by American investors. A vital fact is that the ASX's top 20 companies make up close to half of the market capitalisation of the Australian Securities Exchange. This high level of foreign concentration of ownership should be a major concern to our nation's sovereignty regardless of our security links with the USA.

Despite our geographical distance from our current and past security guarantors, Australia's culture has been overlaid by US and British culture. Much of our news does not come from our region, but from Britain and the USA. Our entertainment is saturated by US blockbuster movies, Hollywood celebrities and decades of British TV. Our products and mass advertising are closely aligned with that of the US and to a lesser extent Britain. By closely aligning Australian culture with the USA and Britain, Australia has become culturally dependent on both former and present security guarantors. This has facilitated a heterogeneous pattern of cultural activity that is wide open to the influence and dominance of US and British objectives. It also oils the wheels of US and British foreign policy directives that are broadcast through a sympathetic and foreign owned mass media.

A global citizen

For Australia to act as an internationally ethical nation, it needs to choose its mates very carefully. It needs to critically look at their history, motivations and their recent actions. We also need a government that has the backbone to call out our mates if they are working against peace, progress and our national interests. To date, the federal government has been reluctant to call out the USA and Britain for supporting Israel and its ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people. The federal government has been largely silent in relation to the supply of arms, intelligence and resources to the IDF by our good mates. The federal government has been virtually silent with regards to the USA's illegal bombing of Yemen and Iran. It felt comfortable to lead naval operations in the Red sea primarily aimed against Yemen's blockage against Israel. The federal government has worked with the US, Britain and NATO nations to supply military hardware, training and funds to Ukraine. The Australian government has joined naval missions passing through the sensitive strait of Taiwan. All these actions may align with US foreign policy objectives, yet they do harm to our national interests. Such actions are provocative, diplomatically reckless, and extremely hazardous. Many of Australia's

military adventures in the far-flung corners of the globe do not serve peace, progress or reinforce stability in our region or elsewhere.

Australia's support of US-led actions across the globe further degrades our reputation in the international community and undermines ethical principles of truth, justice, respect and beneficence. The federal government has displayed duplicity and hypocrisy by denouncing China, Russia and Iran whilst diplomatically tip-toeing around Israel as the IDF commits the most heinous crime this century. The Australian government promptly ejects the Iranian ambassador following threats by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu towards, an indicted war criminal. Yet, the Australian government continues to permit the Israeli ambassador to reside in Australia, and continues to provide so-called "non-lethal parts" for Israeli F-35 fighter jets that bomb Palestinian hospitals and schools.

If Australia is to forge its own path in the world, the public needs to demand that our sovereignty is protected and strengthened. We need to collectively demand that Australia's interests are placed ahead of those of foreign powers such as the USA and Britain. Given the bloody history of both our past and present security guarantors and their support of Israel's genocide, we need to recalibrate our nation's stance toward them both.

The public needs to demand that the federal government develop security options beyond the belligerent spheres of the USA and Britain. We need to reassess the nature of the many foreign bases that are stationed across our nation. The USA has established itself as a permanent military occupant of Australia. This undermines our sovereignty and places our population at peril should a conflict in the region break out. Successive federal governments have helped to intertwine Australia into the US military apparatus. The dubious purchase of US nuclear submarines, the development of housing for US troops in Australia's north and the recent announcement that the federal government will tip \$12 billion into a 'defence hub' ultimately makes its way into the pockets of the US arms companies that fuel the US war machine. By channelling colossal amounts of funds into the US war machine, essential public services go wanting. Improving our health system, bettering our public schools, cancelling student debts all continue whilst resources are wasted on military hardware.

For over a decade, the USA has pressured Australia into confronting our largest trading partner, China. The corporate owned media have helped to create the 'China threat' which has dominated the mass media landscape laying down the foundations for increased arms spending, the purchase of nuclear submarines, missiles and the tit-for-tat tariffs war with China. Australia's continued naval operations through the Taiwan strait simply acts to provoke China, which reverses the recent good will visit by prime minister Albanese to three cities in China.

It is vital for Australians to redirect the federal government's approach towards China by promoting peace and stability in the region, rather than following US directives to build up our stock of arms and prepare for conflict. Australia needs to re-establish its credentials as a neutral international actor in the community nations willing to support diplomatic initiatives and brokering peace deals. Increasing military spending, joining military alliances with the world's largest arms suppliers and operating our naval ships in diplomatically sensitive regions is a sure path to more war, conflict, destabilisation and international chaos.

Our path forward

For many decades, Australia's comfort zone has been disappearing as our security guarantor, the USA has dragged its allies from one disastrous war into another. During this time, the international landscape has rapidly changed and US primacy has diminished. The USA's status as the world's single superpower is in descent, our relationship with the USA is also in a state of rapid transition. Given the changing international reality, Australia needs to mature by casting aside the belief that we need a security blanket to protect us from foreign threats that have yet to materialise. We can no longer pretend that what is good for our security guarantor is good for Australia. This was made evident in WW2 when Britain relied on our soldiers to defend its interests in Europe and in North Africa whilst placing our borders at risk of invasion. Today, our nation's naval forays into the Red sea, the Taiwan Strait, our military and financial support for the western backed Ukraine government and supply of 'non-lethal' parts for Israeli jets highlights the naïve and dangerous games Australia is playing on the world stage. Our interests do not lie in the conflicts fuelled by our so-called allies. Our interests lie in our region, and in building peace and supporting stability. Our taxpayer funds belong in our region improving relations with our neighbours and meeting the needs of our citizens rather than lining the pockets of the world's largest arms companies.

We are at a critical juncture in time where the world is experiencing multiple spot fires across many regions of varying intensity. This is the time where a strong international force for good is required to quell the numerous global conflicts that are poised to engulf the world and to put an end to an active genocide. With the necessary public support, Australia is well positioned to exercise neutrality and apply diplomatic efforts to create the conditions for peace and stability. Australia needs to strengthen its ties with neighbouring countries by integrating ourselves into regional partnerships. We need to set aside historical sentimentality by strengthening our ties with our region and capitalise on our multicultural community's links with our neighbours. We also need to intensify our criticism of our so-called good mates who have a long history of war, conflict and destabilising nations.

For too long, the major political parties and the mainstream media have cultivated a narrative that creates fear, escalates tensions, invents enemies, promotes military spending and normalises violence and warfare. As a nation, we need to choose our mates based on their conduct and objectives. We need to put our interests first and we need to ensure that we reclaim our sovereignty.

Help Australia promote regional stability, peace and security by joining PIBCI today.

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