

BRINGING WAR TO OUR DOORSTEP

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Paper given at Politics in the Pub
Sydney 3 February 2012

On November 17 2011 US President Obama said, in a speech to the Australian Parliament: *“The United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay,”*

Australian PM Julia Gillard at the same time announced that 250 rising to 2,500 US Marines will be stationed at an Australian base in Darwin. The new deal also includes:

- An increased number of visits by US ships and aircraft.
- greater US access to Australian military bases.
The Australian Government recently signed an agreement to allow US forces to return to North West Cape (the US military facility near Exmouth in WA)
North West Cape will also be the site for the US Space Surveillance Network sensors.
- More joint military exercises. These are used to ensure that the Australian Defence Force can work effectively under US orders and with US equipment. The war games practice ‘interoperability’ which really means turning the ADF into a branch of the US military.
- The storage of greater amounts of US military material and equipment in Australia.

In this context we would do well to remember that the ALP has already abandoned its previous opposition to missile defence and that Australia may well

In addition, the Australian Government is already giving much greater attention – and money – to cyberwarfare and is also buying its own drones.

Recently the Australian Government completed a Force Posture Review which recommends moving Australian military assets to the north and west of the continent.

This, it is claimed, is intended to protect major Australian economic assets ... minerals, off shore oil and gas and so forth.

However, this is a smokescreen, a figleaf. The moves are actually part of a much larger US military realignment that threatens to bring war to our doorstep.

President Obama introduced this military realignment at the Pentagon on January 5 this year when he unveiled the policy document entitled:

Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence

This envisages an “historic shift” in US military alignment with the US maintaining a military presence in the Middle East and Europe but now giving priority to Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The new doctrine places China at the centre of US “security” concerns and prioritises expansion of US war making capacities in Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Hilary Clinton, writing last November in *Foreign Policy*, asserted that the new Asia-Indo-Pacific focus puts the US “*in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values...*”

“Open markets in Asia provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology. Our economic recovery at home will depend on exports and the ability of American firms to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia.”

The Obama administration has announced cuts in military spending but this is nonsense. The cuts are merely a reduction in forward estimates. Real spending will continue and keep US military spending at a higher level than the combined budgets of the next 14 biggest militaries in world.

Announcing *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence* President Obama made it clear that the new doctrine will slow the growth in military spending but that “*it will still grow, in fact by four per cent in the coming year.*”

US officials harp of the alleged threat from China, but concede that China is far away from achieving any kind of parity in military capabilities with US.

A Wall Street Journal article (27/1/12) commented:

“The new strategy would assign specific US-based army brigades and marine expeditionary units to different regions of the world, where they would travel regularly for joint exercises and other missions, using permanent facilities and the forward-staging bases that some advisers call ‘lily pads’.

“Marines, for example, would use a new forward-staging base in Darwin as a launch pad for Southeast Asia, while Washington is in talks to expand its military presence in The Philippines -- both of which are signals to China that the US has quick-response capability in Beijing's backyard.”

Why this “historic shift”?

The main driver is the relative economic decline of the US and rise of China.

Firstly, in the context of the global financial crisis, Washington is attempting to compensate for its economic weakness by using military power to undermine and contain China, to pre-empt its rise as an economic and military rival.

The central US goal is control of markets, natural resources and cheap labour and the power to “free market” corporate capitalism (usually described by Western spokespeople as “international norms” or “our values) on every country.

Secondly, the US is determined to maintain its supremacy and to prevent the emergence of any potentially competing power which could threaten its hegemony.

The Pentagon's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review stated that: *"China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and ... over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages."*

Thirdly, the US military "pivot" into region had significant economic aspects. We have to see it hand in hand with the drive to expand the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and economic bloc designed to organize trade in region on US terms at China's expense.

Fourthly, China's military budget is less than one tenth that of the US but China is providing the "enemy" the US military-industrial complex requires.

Professor Jake Lynch, Director the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney, has written:

"For combat to be immersed in the logic of global markets is to drive it to deliver ever-higher returns. Missiles need to be fired to be replaced, and wars need to be fought to advertise the capabilities of the latest whizz-bang weapons systems. Only then can profits rise to meet market expectations."

Lockheed Martin posted a US\$5 billion profit in 2008 and in the same year British Aerospace reported a 93% increase in profits.

US armaments companies are facilitating India's military expansion, especially space development, through an aggressive move into South Asian markets to supplement reductions in their Pentagon contracts.

Preparing for war with China is and will be the primary justification for the production and acquisition of exorbitantly expensive and extremely profitable new weapons systems.

Not new

We should note that the ideas contained in the *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence* are not actually new.

In 2001 a strategic review conducted by the Bush administration concluded that:

"the Pacific Ocean should now become the most important focus of U military deployments, with China now perceived as the principal threat to American global dominance" and its number one enemy.

September 11, 2001 sent them in another direction.

Despite this, by 2006 the US had six aircraft carriers and 60% of its submarines in the Pacific.

How is the US planning to achieve its goals?

The US has a two-pronged approach — to exert military pressure and to threaten an economic blockade of China.

To achieve this, the US is working to strengthen its alliances and strategic ties throughout Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. These growing strategic partnerships include high-level

military exchanges, joint training and exercises as well as potential collaboration in the defense industry.

MILITARY PRESSURE

The deal with Australia is only one piece in this strategic jigsaw. Others include [and there is not enough time tonight to go into them all or to consider them in any detail]:

- Over 100 military bases in Japan.
- Large arms sales to Taiwan.
- Stationing combat ships in Singapore.
- Deployment of US sea-based drones in Pacific by 2018.
- Expansion of missile defence systems in Australia, Japan, South Korea.
- Joint exercises with India and Vietnam.
- Lifting a US ban on military co-operation with Indonesia's "Kompas" Special Forces and the sale of 24 F-16 fighter jets to Indonesia.
- Overtures to Myanmar/Burma, including the recent visit by Hilary Clinton.
- Joint military training with India and Thailand.
- The November 18 "Manila Declaration with its pledge of closer US military ties with the Philippines.
- Effective US military occupation of South Korea. As one example, in the event of war, a US general would be commander of the South Korean forces.
- A massive military buildup on Guam.
- US wooing of India with offers of help with nuclear weapons and Star Wars technologies. Australia is assisting here with the sale of uranium to India.
- India's participation in multilateral regional security forums such as the inaugural Asean Plus Eight meeting of regional defense ministers in Hanoi in late 2010.
- Strengthening relations between India, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam.
- The recent granting by Vietnam of access to its ports for an Indian naval presence in the South China Sea.
- Holding an inaugural India-Japan-U.S. trilateral strategic dialogue in Washington recently.
Given the decision to sell uranium to India, an Australia-India-Japan-United States strategic group seems likely soon.

ECONOMIC BLOCKADE

The massive expansion of its manufacturing sector means that China is now heavily dependent on the import of energy and raw materials.

About 80 per cent of the oil brought into China crosses the Indian Ocean and enters South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca.

US is seeking effective naval control of these areas in line with its 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review demand that the military develop a plan to maintain US “access” (which really means control) over these strategic waterways.

The military’s response has been the development of a so-called **Air Sea Battle** plan which calls for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corp to work together, using anti-satellite weapons, cyberweapons, submarines, stealth aircraft and long-range missiles, to deny China access to areas near its territory .

Claiming to defend “freedom of navigation”, the US is positioning military assets to maintain strategic dominance of the South China Sea and key “choke points” such as the Malacca Strait.

It is significant that India and Thailand have been conducting maritime patrols of the Strait of Malacca and while we are meeting tonight the Indian Navy is conducting military exercise Milan in the Bay of Bengal approaches to the Strait of Malacca.

Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, Maldives, the Seychelles, and Mauritius are taking part in the Milan war games.

All this, plus military facilities and deployment of US troops, ships and planes in Australia and so many other countries in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, gives the US the ability to shut down China’s imports of energy and raw materials and to cripple its economy.

China’s response

Official Chinese responses to the new US alignment have so far been fairly calm and restrained.

However, we would be foolish not to recognise that it is inevitable China will respond to US military and economic threats and efforts to ‘contain’ their country.

Back in 2009, during the debate on the Defence White Paper, Australia’s intelligence community was widely quoted as stating that

China’s limited military build-up should be understood as not a threat to Australia but as China’s response to US military expansion in this region.

We can reasonably expect this response to escalate.

In a Financial Times interview, former US Secretary of State Brzezinski commented:

“We have to focus on Asia but not in a manner that plays on everyone’s anxieties ... It becomes very easy to demonise China and they will then demonise us in return. Is that what we want?”

Bringing war to our doorstep

The US policy *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence* will inevitably create more regional tension and instability, it will provoke a regional arms race with its concomitant threats to budgets and democracy, and it will increase the possibility of war, even nuclear war.

Australian Government active support for the policy brings war to our doorstep, threatens the security of Australian community, and risks relations with Australia's major trading partner, the country credited with getting us through the global financial crisis relatively unscathed. It will cost Australian taxpayers billions of dollars and cause massive environment contamination.

Dr Joseph Gerson, Director of Programs at the American Friends Service Committee, put it this way (and although he is talking about the US, this also applies to Australia):

"The new Pentagon Guidance actually undermines real security for the U.S. people. Instead of investing in building the 21st century infrastructure our children and grandchildren will need for economic security, and instead of using the nation's resources to stanch the flood of housing foreclosures and to ensure access to higher education for the nation's young people, the Guidance provides the rationale for endless wars and endless subsidies to the military-industrial complex. It is a tragedy beyond Shakespearian proportions.

Here is Australia, while we cannot have much impact on the United States or Chinese Governments, we do have some possibility of influencing the Australian Government.

A new network of peace groups has been established in Sydney with the aim of raising public awareness and building opposition to Canberra's support for the new Australian policy.

We hope that many of you here tonight will decide to become part of this effort by joining our yahoo group which will share information and action alerts for this campaign. Just send your name and email address to Marlene at mlobeid@hotmail.com or Denis at denis@anti-bases.org.

Since World War II, the ALP and the Coalition have basically agreed in their subservience to US interests. As a result there has been relatively little public scrutiny or debate about Australia's military strategy and military spending.

Now is the time to begin this scrutiny and the debate.