Oh For an Independent Australian Foreign Policy

The Australian mainstream media continues its misreporting of the ongoing war in Ukraine. The latest example, also repeated on the ABC and SBS television outlets, was the bombing of a hospital in Mariupol. This was presented to the viewing public as an unprovoked and reckless Russian attack on a hospital, filled with pregnant women waiting to give birth. The incident was seized upon also by the Ukrainian president who cited it as an example of Russian disregard for civilian life.

As is so often the case in reporting on this war, the facts were completely different. It had been seized several days earlier by the fascist forces that are the true rulers of Ukraine, and all its civilian patient population has been forced to go elsewhere. Far from a heartless Russian bombing of a civilian hospital, it was in fact an attack upon a military base. Somewhat surprisingly, there were no deaths reported from the attack.

The Australian media did not allow the facts to spoil a good horror story of yet another Russian atrocity. That same media has also met with complete silence the announcement by the Prime Minister that Australia was sending millions of dollars of aid to Ukraine. It is very difficult to find any country in the world further from Australia than Ukraine. The gesture again was met with total silence by the Labor Opposition whose foreign policy for the upcoming election can best be summarised as “me too”. The ghost of former prime minister Gough Whitlam is well and truly gone from the Australian Labor Party.

It is also difficult to establish the Labor Party policy on the bizarre decision of the government to spend an estimated $190 billion on acquiring eight submarines. These submarines are to be nuclear powered, although Australia currently lacks not only the ability to build such submarines, but also lacks the means of servicing them. Some
commentators have suggested that they will effectively be under United States control. Certainly, their announced
goal of operating in the South China Sea as a means of constraining China is spectacularly unconvincing.

The reasons for this are multiple. The Chinese have already built a very large navy, and the ability to track and
destroy potentially hostile submarines is one of their prime objectives. Secondly, the policy assumes that 20 years
from now, when the submarines are actually functioning, the western navies will still have access to the South China
Sea is at best an heroic assumption.

Thirdly, the Chinese already have nuclear weapons capable of reaching all parts of Australia. In the event of
hostilities between the two countries who seriously believes that their nuclear armed rockets will not be delivered to
Australia’s cities and other key parts of the military system such as Pine Gap? The latter town is the home of an
American run spy base and in the event of a war with China would certainly be a prime target.

The Prime Minister obviously believes that the forthcoming general election, now less than nine weeks away, is
going to be a “khaki election”. We will be encouraged to believe that Australia is in dire peril and only the Coalition
can save us. It is a measure of how far out of touch the Prime Minister is with reality that he has based his
diminishing hopes of re-election upon such a facile policy.

One would like to think that the Labor Party has a more mature approach to Australia’s vital national interests.
Unfortunately, such hopes are largely without any foundation in reality. The spectre of the fate of Gough Whitlam,
who was overthrown on the eve of his intended announcement to Parliament that his government was going to close
Pine Gap, is one that continues to haunt any future Labor government. That was an American engineered coup, a
brutal reality that no Australian government ever since has been able to confront.

It has led Australia to in effect becoming a colony of the United States. It loyally followed the United States into wars
in Afghanistan (which lasted 20 years) and Iraq (we are still there!) and support for multiple other illegal exercises
by our “American friends”. It is one of the more depressing features of the debate about Australian foreign policy
that it always assumes the starting point of a continuation of the United States alliance.

The two latest manifestations of this blindness are Australia’s membership of the so-called Quad of Nations (with
Japan, India and the United States) and the latest manifestation of these strategic blunders, the so-called AUKUS
(Australia, United Kingdom, United States) alliance.

Despite a huge effort combining bullying and bribery, the United States has been unable to draw India into a
confrontation with Russia. Those two countries have a long-standing friendship, reflected most recently in India’s
refusal to vote against Russia in the recent United Nations vote on the Ukraine war.

Japan is a similarly unsteady ally in the anti-China cause. Like Australia, China is Japan’s largest trading partner. Its
freedom of movement is also hampered by the ongoing presence of thousands of United States troops based in the
country. That Japan is still an occupied countries 77 years after World War II ended is testimony to the truism that
one of any nations hardest tasks is to ever get rid of the Americans after their unwelcome presence is ensconced.
Just ask the Iraqis and the Syrians (whose oil is still being stolen on a daily basis) how hard it is to get rid of an
unwelcome and unwanted United States presence in their country.

Australia faces the same fate. There are already multiple United States military facilities in this country and getting
rid of them is almost impossible. The fate of the Whitlam government is ample evidence as to the fate of those who
tried. No Australian government ever since Whitlam has shown the least inclination to lead a truly independent
nation. Instead, as United States power inexorably fades, Australia risk being dragged down with it. We have only
ourselves to blame.

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