



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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If Australia doesn't want a war of annihilation with China, stop what we're doing

Prime Minister Scott Morrison's announcement of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) alliance explodes the myth that by standing up to China, Australia is defending its "sovereignty". The new arrangement, which will supposedly deliver Australia nuclear-powered submarines, locks Australia more than ever into military decisions taken by our "dangerous allies", as the late former PM Malcolm Fraser called the USA and UK in his 2014 book by that name. Fraser had warned explicitly in 2012 that the China policy Australia was pursuing in lockstep with the USA risked nuclear war; the AUKUS pact escalates that danger precipitously.

Is this really what Australians want?

AUKUS is an alliance against China, but Australia should heed the warnings of other countries in the region which have expressed serious alarm at the move. In a 17 September statement Indonesia's foreign ministry expressed that it is "deeply concerned over the continuing arms race and power projection in the region", and called on Australia to maintain its commitment to regional peace and stability. Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said on 18 September that he feared AUKUS would be a "catalyst for a nuclear arms race in the Indo-Pacific region". Former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad had a very blunt warning for Australia in the 21 September *Australian Financial Review*: "Even if these submarines are not carrying warheads, they will introduce nuclear capabilities to the region," Dr Mahathir said. "So you have escalated the threat. This will elicit a response from China. ... This agreement indicates you openly regard China as a possible enemy and that, if it comes to the crunch, you might even go to war. Just imagine what war would do to Southeast Asia," he said.

Despite having their own disagreements with China, including over competing claims in the South China Sea, the nations of Southeast Asia do not see China as a threat in the way recent Australian governments have chosen to. Indeed, they have been growing closer to China, and if anything AUKUS has accelerated that trend: The Lowy Institute's Southeast Asia program director, Ben Bland, noted in *The Australian* on 23 September that "Indonesia's position on China is really different from Australia's and, if anything, it's moving closer to China", and Malaysia's defence minister announced on 22 September he intends to visit China to "get the views of their leadership, particularly their defence, on AUKUS and what could be their action".

In Australia, the voices speaking out against AUKUS belong to the older generation of politicians, public officials and diplomats who, as Malcolm Fraser did, advocate that Australia should pursue a foreign policy in our national interest, independent of the USA and UK. The Citizens Party cited a number of these senior statesmen in the 22 September *Australian Alert Service* magazine ([available to read in these excerpts](#)):

- Former PM Paul Keating, who led the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to strengthen Australia's relationships in Asia, has rightly warned that "This arrangement would witness a further dramatic loss of Australian sovereignty, as materiel dependency on the USA would rob Australia of any freedom or choice in any engagement it may deem appropriate."
- Emeritus Professor Hugh White, former head of strategic analysis at the Office of National Assessments in 1992-93 and deputy secretary of defence for strategy and intelligence in 1995-2000, warned that "it deepens our commitment to the United States' military confrontation of China, which has little chance of success and carries terrifying risks."
- Former deputy ambassador to China (1974-76) and former ambassador to Iran (1985-88) John Lander wrote that "the increasingly confrontational approach by Australia towards China, especially the talk of going to war over Taiwan in conjunction with the United States, should be of great concern to all Australians, whether they have a favourable opinion of China or not." Ambassador Lander urged the government to reaffirm its One China policy, as a way to help defuse the dangerously rising tensions.

John Lander provided a historical perspective on the current China tensions that most Australians and Australian politicians would not be aware of. He cited Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Policy Planning Paper QP11/71 of 21 July 1971 (then Secret/Eclipse, now declassified), which argued that there was "cause for concern whether our alliance with the United States can protect us at every step

from political disadvantage resulting from the manner in which the United States conducts its global policies.... Accordingly, we shall need, now more than ever, to formulate independent policies, based on Australian national interests and those of our near neighbours, that will enable us to react quickly to developments in United States' policy towards China and Indochina" (and the rest of Southeast Asia).

That institutional impulse for independence, which had some influence in foreign policy over the next two to three decades, is now completely gone. Instead of formulating independent policies, Australia is now cheerleading the agenda of "war-hawk" neoconservatives and liberal interventionists in the UK, USA, and Australia, intent on surrounding China with a string of military alliances in the Pacific region. The current trajectory of this policy can only end in World War III.

If Australians don't want war, we must demand our government stop what it's doing: Stop preaching "sovereignty" while giving away foreign policy and operational military independence to the USA and UK. Stop aligning Australia to the most extreme and belligerent hawks in two countries on the other side of the world, while ignoring our regional neighbours whose security we are risking along with our own. Stop accepting the WMD-style lies that pave the way to war, because few will survive to say "oops" as the world effectively did after the Iraq fiasco. Start acting independently in our national interest by seeking common ground with our regional neighbours, including China, especially on mutually beneficial economic development initiatives that can lay a foundation for lasting peace.