

SUBMISSION TO THE 2008 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ON DEFENCE

But the blindness of superiority continues in spite of all and upholds the belief that vast regions everywhere on our planet should develop and mature to the level of present day Western systems which in theory are the best and in practice the most attractive. There is this belief that all those other worlds are only being temporarily prevented by wicked governments or by heavy crises or by their own barbarity or incomprehension from taking the way of Western pluralistic democracy and from adopting the Western way of life. Countries are judged on the merit of their progress in this direction. However, it is a concept which developed out of Western incomprehension of the essence of other worlds, out of the mistake of measuring them all with a Western yardstick. The real picture of our planet's development is quite different.

Solzhenitsyn 1918-2008 Harvard Address June 1978

In February 2003 prior to our invasion of Iraq, I heard Kevin Rudd speak at a peace rally. He was then Shadow Minister for Foreign Policy and I had never heard of him, but I was greatly impressed when he said: *in determining foreign policy, the first thing to consider is: what is the most **compassionate** thing to do.* I left that meeting fantasizing that such a man might be our Prime Minister! Today I fantasize that compassion will be the first thing his government considers when determining defence policy.

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QUESTION ONE

What role should our armed forces play?

The first two tasks outlined in the Defence Policy Discussion Paper are:

1. Deterring and Defeating Attacks on Australian Sovereignty
2. Fighting Terrorism

It's a political reality that we must appear to be doing this. But as we go forward we must also work on other levels.

First we must address "Power Blindness"

Power blindness can be defined as an inability for those with power to see that they have an unfair advantage then relentlessly pursuing this advantage while blaming their victims for their excesses.

Secondly we must begin examining the **unexamined assumptions** that go hand in hand with power blindness I have outlined some examples of this from the discussion paper:

1. *The ability to evade, disrupt, attack and, occasionally, defeat **conventional state power** has emboldened many, including some states, to use violence more readily and more often. What it means to have power, and how that power is used, have taken on new meaning – we have seen...non-state actors gaining access to the **tools of violence** that were once the sole preserve of states* Defence Policy Discussion Paper Ch 3 pp 21,15

Key assumptions underlying the above:

- That **conventional state power** is right and has the right to attack others, conversely those who attack state power are wrong i.e. terrorists, militants, insurgents and “rogue states”
 - **Tools of violence** are a good thing in the “right hands”
 - Those with the most “tools of violence” get to decide **whose hands are right**.
2. *...Others have elected to sponsor terrorism and other forms of violence in order to destabilise **the global order**.* Defence Policy Discussion Paper Ch 3 p 19

Key assumptions underlying the above:

- **Global order** is: western, (Christian) democratic, capitalist order.
 - This is the **right global order**.
 - Those who challenge this are evil “**the worst of the worst**”.
 - It is unfortunate if global Capitalism creates global **haves and have nots** but the have nots have not the right to challenge this, after all it will come right in the end if we just let the U.S. control the world and all the oil, after all look at the good job they’re doing with their own country.
 - Those who challenge **U.S. domination** in the 21st century are terrorists.
 - **Capitalism is orderly**.
3. *Other powers are also competing more aggressively for power and influence. A small number of these states have rejected the **international order** and have chosen instead to gain **strategic leverage** through the development of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile systems. Some of these states have chosen to use their natural resources to coerce others or **impose their will** on their neighbours. .*

Defence Policy Discussion Paper Ch 3 p 19

Key assumptions underlying the above:

- When we (the good guys; coalition of the willing) **impose our will** on others it’s for the greater good, when others (the bad guys) try to impose their will it’s terrorism.

- It's OK for the U.S. and some "allies" to gain **strategic leverage** by developing weapons of mass destruction but not anyone else, if they try they'll be threatened or attacked with United States' WMDs (for the greater good of course)
- **International order** is that which maintains those with greatest power in their position of dominance.

The above might well read:

The US is always competing more and more aggressively for more power and influence. They have rejected the international order, specifically the UN and the non-proliferation treaty and chosen instead to gain strategic leverage through the continued development of WMDs and ballistic missile systems. The US has chosen to use its natural resources (and its weaponry) to coerce others or to impose their will on those states of strategic interest. The use of violence by the U.S. since 9/11 has led to an unprecedented destabilization of the global order economic and other wise.

(Refer: Project for a New American Century)

So which of the Seven Key Tasks should we pursue most vigorously?

Of the seven key tasks for our defence forces outlined in chapter 4 of the Public Discussion Paper the major one for the future must be providing **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief**. It seems vital in our era to build and develop strengths in this area and unwise to leave emergency services and fire fighting to unpaid volunteers.

The second key role for our military that should be pursued most vigorously is **peacekeeping** identified in the discussion paper as:

- Providing Security in Stabilisation Operations
- Supporting Australian Statecraft

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QUESTION 2

What kind of armed forces should we develop?

*When armed force was the principal and most significant tool of national security, armed forces were typically the lead agency for national security issues. **This is no longer the case.***

Defence Policy Discussion Paper Ch 4 p 27

It is time to **deconstruct the militarization** of our planet. Forget missile shields and build instead a peace shield.

The major *state actors* have littered our planet and the surrounding space with their *tools of violence* creating an inconceivably dangerous environment for our earth and its inhabitants. The last 100 years have demonstrated irrefutably that armed force doesn't accomplish peace. Defence forces may continue for some time to be a political necessity but they accomplish at best an illusion of security and in reality only misery and suffering. The (male) human impulse to fight and kill (**testosterrorism**) must pose at least as great a threat to our survival as climate change.

We must take the **arms out of our arms** and the force **out of our defences**.

In the near future armed force will still be necessary for show. But we must develop real capability in responding to humanitarian crises and natural catastrophes.

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QUESTION 3

What kind of defence forces can we afford?

*Australia has benefited from an increasingly globalised economic environment and it will likely remain in Australia's interests to continue to support these positive developments. However, **societies that benefit from globalisation** can also become more vulnerable... In some cases, factors (that) draw communities together ...are being used to **reject the established international order.***

Defence Policy Discussion Paper Ch 3

If some "societies benefit from globalisation" then it follows that some do not. Shouldn't this matter? Perhaps those who **reject the established international order** see little order and little to value in the "global order" Perhaps they see the global order as an order of hierarchies of wealthy and powerful nations who exploit, invade and bomb those less wealthy and powerful. Perhaps they know that the global order

requires them to submit to the domination of the United States of America, perhaps they don't want to be controlled by or become client states of foreign powers.

So what can we afford?

- We cannot afford a world where only **parts of humanity prosper**
- We cannot afford to arm ourselves to fight and attack our fellow humans and at the same time prepare to defend ourselves and our fellow humans against the **devastation of climate change**. This is tantamount to fighting over deck chairs on the Titanic.
- In a world of massive food shortages we cannot afford **guns and butter**
- We cannot afford to continue tilting at windmills. **Reactivity** can play no role in the future of human relations if we are to have a future.
- We cannot afford to perceive others as **enemies** / "Them and Us"
- We cannot afford allies who treat us and the planet we share with **belligerence and contempt**.
- We cannot afford defence as an **adrenalin rush**

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We must begin by demilitarizing the combatative mind set, still firmly entrenched in the limbic brain. We can start symbolically; take the force out of the ADF and rename it e.g. **Defence Australia**.

Today's peacemakers are yesterday's tree huggers. Remember them? Advocating care for our forests and river systems, our oceans and wildlife and getting arrested for their efforts; and the Seattle protests of 1999 against market economy practices. **Our governments must catch up with the prophets**; the usual time lag is a luxury we can no longer afford.

"The prophets endure and can only be ignored at the risk of our own despair."
Abraham J. Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper & Row, 1962,