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My thanks and compliments to IPAN for setting up the 'Costs of War' inquiry even before AUKUS was announced. My field of Foreign Affairs kept introducing into Vince's on Defence, because in Australia, foreign affairs has always been about defence.

Australia has fought in 9 or 10 wars since 1901, always as an ally of Britain or the US. Only once did we fight in defence of Australia. For short times after these wars - WWI, WWII and Vietnam, for example - Australian governments talked about better relations with our neighbours, and better understanding of Asia.

We missed many opportunities to join our neighbours as independent states. We failed to join the Non-Aligned Movement. We were a member of SEATO. We sent forces to the Malayan Emergency and against Konfrontasi. We signed up for APEC and TPP and AIDB but not for China's BRI.

Australia took some independent initiatives: the Colombo Plan. ASEAN Economic Cooperation, and support for the independence of Papua New Guinea, West Irian, and East Timor, as well as for elections in Cambodia and the security of the Solomon Islands, through RAMSI. Australia supported others' independence, but not our own. We have another opportunity now, perhaps our last, to get it right.

Australia had mostly thriving relations with China until 2018, when the Morrison government changed course. Unlike Australia and the US, China has not invaded any country (apart from Vietnam briefly in 1979).

The China threat is a largely American concoction, a scare tactic accepted by [Peter] Dutton [Former Defence Minister in previous Government] and [Richard] Marles [Current Defence Minister], who agree to having Australia buy more US weapons and installing more US forces in Australia. Dutton says it's inconceivable that Australia will not join US forces against China over Taiwan. Marles says Australian forces are 'interchangeable' with those of the US.

Independence in foreign and defence policy is what we need and don't have. Without it, Australia could again be on the losing side in another disastrous war.

IPAN member Nick Deane says: if you want peace, prepare for peace.

Australia must do this with our neighbours, not against them, on what Richard Tanter calls a 'country-agnostic' basis.

Australia must observe the peace clauses of ANZUS, and the non-nuclear SPNFZ, ratify the TPNW, and limit foreign bases on our territory. Australia must reform the war powers.

We must all continue to demand that parliamentarians inform the public truthfully about matters that affect not just their own security, but ours.