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IPAN's Vision: An Independent and Peaceful Australia

10 May 2024

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
PO Box 6100,
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade References Committee

Dear Committee Secretary

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry which is examining Australian support for Ukraine.

Introduction

IPAN is a national body comprised of peace organisations, faith group/organisations, trade unions and environmental and anti-nuclear groups. IPAN campaigns for an Australia that acts independently of foreign influences and alliances in the best interests of the Australian people, seeking and promoting peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with all countries. IPAN is a broad national network of around 50 organisational members and over 100 individual members

This Inquiry is of significant interest to IPAN and its member organisations, who have been monitoring the situation in Ukraine with great concern since the conflict began over two years ago. There is a complex, historical context to the current war which needs to be understood and IPAN fully recognises there are many diverse views on this war among genuine peace-loving people across the world.

Since 2022, IPAN has called on the Australian Government to support a peaceful and just resolution in Ukraine, which needs to be achieved through diplomacy and negotiation, not military means; including,

1. Calling for an immediate ceasefire and a Russian military withdrawal
2. Calling for support for the Ukrainian President's commitment to negotiate genuine neutrality for Ukraine. This would involve the USA and NATO accepting that Ukraine will not join NATO.
3. Calling for a United Nations Peacekeeping force to be formed to supervise a ceasefire.
4. Calling for a cessation of hostilities between the Government of Ukraine and the people of the Donbas region.
5. Signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as this current crisis highlights the danger of an escalation to a nuclear conflict.

We believe that the above actions are both urgent and necessary to de-escalate the current situation for an escalating war which could end up involving the USA and NATO military against the Russian military causing widespread destruction and suffering together with the unthinkable prospect of nuclear weapons being used. We condemn the use, or threats to use, nuclear weapons by any country.

This submission specifically addresses items **(a), (c) and (d)** from the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

With regards to Australian support for Ukraine:

(a) whether the support is timely, coordinated, and comprehensive

IPAN believes that there are crucial questions missing from the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry - for example, the fundamental question of whether it is appropriate for Australia to be providing the type and level of support it has already provided and what form this support should have taken and what it should be in the future.

There seems to be an implicit assumption in the Terms of Reference that the support provided by Australia has been appropriate, and hence the question around whether that support has been “timely, coordinated and comprehensive”. IPAN believes that there needs to be far more discussion and debate around the decision by Australia to be involved in support for Ukraine – which has been primarily military related.

For example, Australia has sent short-range air defence systems, armoured vehicles and drones for the Ukrainian military. IPAN is concerned that continuing military support only leads to more Ukrainians being killed, without resolving the conflict, and this must be challenged. Examining such questions as these is critical to any comprehensive analysis of Australia’s support for Ukraine.

IPAN believes that Australia’s role should be in the form of humanitarian aid and diplomacy for example, through encouraging peace building talks. The current conflict and the historically long contention between the USA-NATO and Russia must not be allowed to escalate. The dangers of a mis-step leading to the use of nuclear weapons are too great, as are the dangers of widespread misery and death.

Peacebuilding and diplomacy must be at the forefront of any efforts to support the situation in Ukraine and to attain a negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia. Australia could play a positive role in brokering such arrangements, which IPAN believes requires a number of experienced peacebuilding teams, from different countries, who are acceptable to both parties in the conflict. It is critical that Ukrainians decide for themselves the ways in which their country needs to rebuild and have control over their future.

(c) efforts to hold Russia to account, including by addressing mis- and dis-information in Australian public debate and the region;

Regarding the public debate in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, IPAN is fundamentally concerned about the lack of reliable and balanced information across media organisations broadly. The current conflict in the Ukraine has not occurred in isolation – but is a result of an historical context that is incredibly complex. IPAN has concerns that media reporting seems to imply (largely through silence on the matter) that what happened in 2014 has had no effect on what has happened since – whereas the media should be providing critical analysis of the events that preceded the conflict and the role of the West in contributing to this.

It is so important for the sake of transparency that accountability be applied to both sides of the conflict not just one. In a world flooded with relentless propaganda it is often hard to discern the truth from manufactured lies by big powers’ vested interests who benefit from continuing this senseless, and bloody war. Truth is always

the first casualty of imperial wars. IPAN believes more balanced reporting by the media is required, including the way that information and updates are provided by the Australian Government to media outlets.

As concerning as mis-information and dis-information are, the non-provision of information also undermines the reporting of reliable and balanced information. IPAN is concerned regarding the lack of meaningful information about the situation in Russia to available to Australian public. It is also very rare, for example, to hear from people who have been affected for the past ten years by the bombing in Donbass.

We believe that the media must be prepared to provide far more critical analysis of the role of the Australian Government in its 'compliance with the ways the USA has played a role in initiating and perpetrating the conflict, with peace negotiations stymied by US-led war economics. We are all now paying dearly for this.

IPAN is also concerned that the media seems to have taken an unhealthy and unhelpful binary approach to framing this war. It is either a bloody war aimed at annihilation or a Russian takeover of a peaceful country. Reporting on an alternative narrative focusing on peace and justice, achieved through diplomacy and negotiation, is basically non-existent.

(d) related matters.

Since February 2022, IPAN has opposed the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and has also condemned the attacks by the Ukrainian Government on the people of the Donbas region.

However, it is crucial to consider the impact of various events that preceded the Russian invasion, which requires going back many decades. In the 1990s the USA had promised former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not move "one inch eastward", a promise which the USA broke. This was just one among many other assurances about Soviet security given by Western leaders to former President Gorbachev and other Soviet officials throughout the process of German unification in 1990 and on into 1991.

More recently, in 2014, according to several sources, the USA played a pivotal role (including provision of funding) in the overthrow of the [then] Viktor Yanukovich Ukrainian Governmentⁱⁱ and established a puppet Ukrainian regime, which then banned many opposition parties. This was followed by the former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's abrogation of the Minsk' Agreements and the duplicitous behaviour of the French president Hollande and German Chancellor Merkel in what were, in reality, sham negotiations which undermined any real possibility of adherence to Minsk II. This then provided time for NATO to train and expand the Ukraine Army in preparation for a war that both the USA and the Banderist regimeⁱⁱⁱ wanted.

IPAN believes it is important to acknowledge that Russia had tried dialogue starting with the Minsk agreement which like other attempts at negotiation was thwarted by the USA, the UK and Western nations. Western nations therefore have contributed to the conditions that have created this war deliberately thwarting dialogue and negotiation. We condemn the inflammatory conduct of US/NATO in expanding a war that could have been prevented through timely UN peacebuilding and negotiation.

Tellingly, then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson subsequently pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelinsky to ditch peace talks with Russia in the Republic of Türkiye, during April 2022. Johnson argued that West would back Ukraine all the way in the war against Russia. It is also interesting to note that U.S History professor

Michael Kimmage has criticised the West's position for it being "the opposite of deterrence" and for its weakness and has stated that. "Western policy was an invitation for Putin to go further".^{iv} It is interesting to note an analysis by Swiss Policy Research that posed the question: 'Is the Russian invasion of Ukraine illegal? The answer to this question is more complex than most people on both sides of the conflict assume', which states that "it appears rather difficult to objectively describe the Russian invasion of Ukraine as "unprovoked" and they go on to say "Moreover, it appears likely that the US would have responded in a similar way to a Russian or Chinese alliance with Cuba or Mexico."^v

The report of the analysis concludes that "From the point of view of international law the Russian invasion may be problematic but it may not be obviously illegal".^{vi} We include reference to this analysis in this submission as a resource that would be useful for this Inquiry to consider as part of the broader analysis of western policy in relation to the war in Ukraine.

We strongly encourage that this Inquiry examine (1) the ways in which previous western policy in relation to Ukraine may have contributed to the conflict that began in 2022; and (2) whether or not Australia could have played a diplomatic role in challenging elements of western policy, especially the policy of our ally, the USA, which set the scene and fed into the current war.

IPAN has no doubt that the catastrophe for the Ukrainian people and the world could have been avoided. A pathway based on peacebuilding, neutrality and non-violence could have been forged to resolve the conflict and to allow the people of Ukraine and Russia to be able to live in peace without political interference, military expansions and invasions by foreign powers. Ukrainian neutrality would provide Russia with the "buffer-security" from NATO that it seeks.

Since the tragic events began to unfold in February 2022, IPAN has supported the calls by the United Nations for an immediate ceasefire by all parties, a withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine and a de-escalation of the conflict. IPAN has argued, that genuine negotiations must take place in order to achieve a peaceful solution to the long standing and ongoing crisis. We have also expressed our solidarity with both the people of Ukraine and Russia in their calls for peace.

The core tenet of IPAN's concerns regarding Australian support for Ukraine is the decision-making process of successive Australian Governments which we believe have completely lacked independence. We believe that throughout this conflict Australia has simply acted in lockstep with the USA, and uphold the sovereign rights of people and countries to determine their future without the political or military interference by foreign powers. We are greatly concerned, that the civilian populations of Ukraine and Russia are being used as proxies in a war between two competing powers: US-NATO and Russia, and that Australia has endorsed this.

The casualties and collateral damage of these big powers' proxy war are the civilian population of Ukraine, Russia and the world. The only winners are the multinational weapons and fossil fuel corporations on both sides which are profiting massively from the continuation of this war. IPAN believes that Australia should not be supplying military hardware and software to Ukraine, as such support only serves to extend the suffering. From IPAN's inception in September 2012, our objectives have centred on building a movement for an independent and peaceful Australian foreign policy, disentangling Australia from its involvement in US-led wars and for Australia to stand on its own two feet in terms of defence and foreign policy.

IPAN categorically opposes:

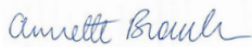
- Wars of aggression
- Foreign military occupations and incursions on sovereign countries, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Political and military interference by foreign powers in the internal affairs of countries
- Deliberate acts of military and political provocations leading to military conflicts and war
- Economic sanctions that impose severe hardship on the lives of ordinary people.

Longer term, Australia can play a leading role in addressing the violence structured into patriarchal political systems and guiding our children from an early age to live in harmony with our environment and each other will lead to a more encompassing and (r)evolutionary peace.

Thank you for considering the range of concerns we have raised in this submission.

Yours sincerely

Annette Brownlie,



IPAN Chairperson

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ⁱ From declassified U.S., Soviet, German, British and French documents, Source: National Security Archive at George Washington University <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu>

ⁱⁱ This is a claim made by other people such as Jeffery Sachs, the eminent US economist. In addition, Victoria Nuland and John McCain were in Kiev during 2014 stoking the Banderaist uprising, with Nuland caught out demanding that Arseniy Yatsenyuk (a neo-nazi) should be the new Ukrainian Prime Minister, saying "fuck the EU".

ⁱⁱⁱ A faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists

^{iv} Ordinary Professor and Chair of the Department of History at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC., cited in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minsk_agreements

^v <https://swprs.org/is-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-illegal/>

^{vi} <https://swprs.org/is-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-illegal/>