



# Ipan's Proposal for an Alternative Self-Defence Policy for an Independent Australia

## Preamble

The Frontier Wars in Australia, a genocide by civilian settlers and government forces against Aboriginal peoples, have left a legacy of lasting scars on the nation. They resulted in displacement, dispossession and profound spiritual, cultural, social and economic disruption of the First Peoples.

Their ongoing trauma permeates the narrative. Recognition of this is required to guide reconciliation, truth telling, healing and current injustices. The most notable outcomes have been poor health, high numbers of deaths in custody, high incarceration rates, low employment and denial of custodianship of country.

Acknowledging the significance of the Frontier Wars is essential to fostering an inclusive and equitable future for the nation. This encompasses the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to have robust self determination of their affairs and lands.

IPAN's proposed alternative defence policy presupposes a united nation which can only be achieved by reconciliation through genuine Treaty/s between the First Nations peoples and the current settler immigrants. This policy contrasts strongly with current subservience and dependence on the US, believing that the Australian people now numbering 25 million, can defend our territory and can indeed do so without dependence on a big power.

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IPAN campaigns for an independent Australia that promotes peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with all countries. A truly independent Australia would not be beholden to any foreign power, but seek to resolve hostilities and differences between countries in our region by peaceful diplomatic means. It would embrace a policy based on the principle of "non-nuclear Armed Neutrality". Importantly, it would place primary reliance on the critical tools of diplomacy to foresee and resolve international differences and to develop positive and peaceful relations with all countries based on equality and mutual respect. Non-alignment could be a step towards neutrality.

'Neutrality' means that Australia would have no involvement in any wars between other countries. It would prevent Australian territory being used in such wars. This necessarily means ending foreign military bases on our soil.

This version of neutrality would not be isolationist. To the contrary, it would involve active involvement in international affairs opposing oppression and injustice, hosting meetings between belligerents, acting as a mediator in disputes between countries and peace building in our region and wider.

'Armed' means having the capacity to effectively militarily defend Australia against hostile incursions into our sovereign territory. Australia is ideally placed geographically to implement such a policy.

'Non-aligned' means forming no military alliances or agreements with other nations. Australia could find more security by joining the non-aligned movement.

The primary role of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) would be to safeguard Australian territory and its approach waters within Australia's 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including the area surrounding its offshore territories. We call this Australia's Primary Defence Perimeter (APDP). Within this zone, the ADF would act solely in defensive mode, and not act aggressively outside of it, either by itself or in league with any foreign power.

Australia should not be drawn into territorial disputes between big powers. No Australian troops would be sent to fight in overseas wars. However, Australia would contribute to United Nations peace-keeping and humanitarian operations as its contribution to regional and global peace. Military defence of the APDP would be the responsibility of the ADF, without reliance on any outside military power. Australia would cultivate positive relationships with other Non-Aligned countries, particularly those in our region e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Laos

The maintenance of a truly self-reliant national defence policy requires the reconfiguration/reform of the ADF, extensive re-development of a sovereign and publicly owned Australian manufacturing and industrial base to provide self-reliant support to the ADF, and the development of all essential services and critical supply chains within the APDP. Where necessary, defence systems and materiel will be sourced from other countries on a transactional basis, preferencing countries with similar defence postures and foreign policies to our own. A publicly owned Australian defence industry would replace foreign arms manufacturers who dominate Australia's defence economy. Currently, corporations such as Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing etc. have inordinate influence in directing military and foreign policy in Australia.

Changing Australia's defence policy will require a collective national involvement by Australians, since self-defence extends beyond military service to include civil defence with significant part-time emergency reserves.

It is expected that defending the territory of an independent Australia and its neutrality will stimulate a broad patriotic voluntary response that will meet all the military and civil defence needs. Conscription will not be necessary. Conscientious objections to participating in any war will be respected and made a legal right.

in 2023 the proposed alternative defence policy based on non-nuclear armed neutrality had support from the Australian people. According to two national opinion polls in that year, a clear majority of Australians favoured Australia keeping out of a US-China war and adopting a neutral position. (See foot note 1)

IPAN acknowledges that the adoption of neutrality for this situation is currently blocked by the US grip on Australia, politically, militarily and economically. To implement this defence policy of neutrality it will be necessary to break with the US alliance. Only a broad-based united people's movement will have the capacity to achieve this.

US and Australian provocations towards China are the most immediate threat to Australia. AUKUS, Pine Gap, FPA and the presence of US military bases contribute to this danger. In the immediate term, the most certain way to protect Australia is by preventing any Australian involvement in a US-led conflict with China.

Nuclear war is an ongoing existential threat to the world. Going forward we would do well to invest in the conditions of peace and justice. This includes signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

This requires mobilizing the Australian people, from all walks of life, into a broad mass movement demanding peace, no Australian involvement in a US-led war with China, cancelling AUKUS and nuclear powered submarines, termination of the Force Posture Agreement, closing Pine Gap and other US military facilities in Australia.

Alternative Self-Defence Working Group, 24 March 2025.

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Foot note 1:Lowy Institute Poll

<https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/charts/military-conflict-between-china-and-united-states/>