

Australians Want To Be Free From US Entrapment. The Case For Neutrality.

Citizen groups all over Australia are gathering steam for their demand that the Australian Government change course and declare neutrality. In a recent Conference of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), Pascal Lottaz explained what Australian neutrality would mean in practice and how to achieve it. There are few places on earth that are as ideally located as Australia to be not only a peaceful country but a peaceful and neutral continent. Support Australian Neutrality by signing the petition for a neutral pacific: <https://worldbeyondwar.org/declareneutrality/> Ipan's Proposal for an Alternative Self-Defence Policy for an Independent Australia: <https://ipan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Ipan-Alternative-Self-Defence-Policy.pdf> Support IPAN: <https://ipan.org.au> Oh and if you want some neutrality goods check this out: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com>

#M2

Ladies and gentlemen, hello. My name is Pascal Lottaz. I'm an associate professor at Kyoto University, where I study neutrality in international relations. I would like to thank the organizers of this event today, and I sincerely apologize for not being able to be with you in real time. At least in video, I can maybe talk a little bit about the implications of the neutrality proposal for the defense policy of Australia that you've got. That's what I would like to focus on—to discuss with you a little bit this idea you've got. And I must say, it's a wonderful idea.

And it's a very straightforward idea that Australia should naturally not be aligned or not be in a military alliance with any other state, but care about its own military and security defense while not isolating itself from the rest of the world. I think the IPAN proposal for an alternative self-defense policy makes this pretty clear. One of the pillars of the proposal is, of course, to have a non-nuclear and armed neutrality. The proposal correctly talks about this as being a standard for many neutral countries. In fact, especially the permanently neutral countries in Europe, such as Switzerland or Austria, those are the standard models for an armed neutrality with a military.

In the case of Australia, it would, of course, also involve a large and very important navy. And by "large," I mean that military capabilities always need to be adjusted to the actual threat level a state faces. Australia, with its very, very beneficial geopolitical position, really wouldn't need to be militarized to the teeth. I must explain here that neutrality as a security policy is, of course, an alternative to the alliance system. Forming an alliance rests on the logic of the big stick and big carrot. What I mean by that is that by pooling resources, states increase their threat level to the outside. In the most benign version, they only remain with the threat and never go outside—they never attack other countries.

Unfortunately, what we have seen in the recent past is that NATO and other alliance members of the West have repeatedly used their military capabilities to fight wars abroad, outside their immediate territory—the territory they claim to be defending. We just need to think about the Iraq War, or the way that NATO states implemented the no-fly zone in Libya, to see that these military alliances can very easily become offensive alliances in order to subdue outside rivals. And of course, in the Iraq War, this was not a NATO war per se, but it was a war of the "coalition of the willing," of states closely related to this military alliance.

And this is something that easily happens. It easily happens that if you're part of a formal military alliance, you're sucked into causes that have nothing to do with the primary purpose of the military alliance. In international relations, we call that phenomenon "entrapment." It is easy for states to get entrapped in the military affairs of others if they are closely integrated. In the case of Australia, what you're proposing at IPAN is to create a defense policy that by default excludes such military posturing—so this idea of the big stick, of being able to threaten everybody else—and you propose to exchange it with what I call the small stick and the small carrot.

By the way, the big carrot would be that if you play along, then you get all the benefits of being a friend of the alliance, and that can come with a lot of very lucrative economic deals as well. But then, if you use the other strategy—the neutrality strategy, as you're proposing here—then the suggestion is that, as a neutral state that defends itself at home, alone, without coalition partners, what we are doing is not threatening any potential adversary with great pain or with the ability to strike them at home. What we are proposing is that if the adversary tries to come to us and actually tries to invade us, we still maintain the capacity to inflict considerable hurt on them.

So if an attack happens, we will defend ourselves, but we will defend ourselves alone, and we will maintain the capacity we need in order to inflict substantial hurt on the other side. Will this be enough to overwhelm any and all forces that anyone can ever threaten against you? No, it won't. But let's remember, even in alliances, it is not impossible to defeat alliances. Just look at how the First World War worked out. This was a war of alliances, and all alliance partners on all sides got dragged into it and suffered horribly. So alliances are not a guarantor of remaining unharmed. And so, neutrality too is a strategy to create incentives for the outside. It's an incentive for outside forces not to attack in order not to get harmed.

And the small carrot, of course, is the offer by neutral states that you can have economic interactions with us—just us—and you can get a lot of benefits from us as long as you don't attack us, right? So we play ball as far as we can, but if you try to breach our red lines, which is our own territory, then we will maintain military capabilities. And that's the whole idea of non-nuclear-armed neutrality. The non-nuclear part is very important as well, of course, because it also ensures that Australia stays in line with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and with the basic standards of the modern world, where we don't want to see further proliferation of nuclear arms.

Another pillar of the IPAM proposal is non-alignment as a step towards neutrality. Non-alignment and neutrality are not the same concepts, but they are closely related. I mean, it is generally accepted that permanently neutral countries should not be, cannot be, part of military alliances, although this detail is never spelled out anywhere in the Hague Conventions or anywhere detailed in writing. But it is an accepted standard that neutrals should not be military allies. By creating a foreign policy that calls itself non-aligned, this would definitely be a step towards then achieving neutrality during times of war between others, right? I would like to stress this point here.

Neutrality doesn't mean that you remain untouched by conflict. I think it is very important to recognize that conflicts between other states always create pressure in the system and create pressures that also affect the neutral. So, in this little graphic here that I created, I usually explain this as follows: we've got neutral state A, we've got belligerent one, and we've got belligerent two. And the relationship, the mutual relationship between the two belligerents, is one of war, unfortunately. But the fact that both belligerents maintain a working relationship with neutral A—so B1 has a working relationship, B2 has a working relationship—and that relationship is one of peace. These states are at peace with the neutral.

That's very essential, right? This constellation creates the problem that, of course, both B1 and B2 will try to put pressure on neutral A to be more neutral on their side, right? To help them more, because they will accuse the other one of being evil and whatnot, and try to increase pressure. The neutral always needs to make it clear to its two partners that it is neutral toward the primary conflict. It's not neutral toward them; it is neutral toward the conflict, and it will maintain a working relationship with both. Neutrals always have the hardest time in the world making belligerents understand that the beef these two belligerents have with each other is between them.

It's not the neutral's problem. But this is very essential, and this—what I call a conflict constellation—creates pressure points. It creates very severe pressure points on the neutral, and this is where the neutral needs to defend its position. And what I mean by defend is usually defend politically; if necessary, defend militarily as well. And fun fact: if a neutral actually takes military measures against incursions on its territory by a belligerent power in order to prevent that from happening, that's, under international law, not even regarded as an act of war. It's a necessary thing to do for the neutral in order to maintain its neutrality.

If a neutral does not fend off illegal incursions into its territory—and in the case of Australia, that would also include its sea lanes of communication—if it does not fend that off, then the other belligerent is actually legally allowed to take military measures against that inability. And, you know, that's how neutrals very easily get sucked into conflicts, right? So there's a minimum capacity needed to maintain and defend the neutrality of the neutral. And just maybe in closing, let me also point out that since 2017, the United Nations recognizes the 12th of December as the Day of Neutrality.

The United Nations used to be quite hostile toward neutrality, especially when it was founded back in '45, '46, '47. There was a long debate at the UN about whether neutrals are even compatible with UN principles, which include, of course, the self-defense principle or the collective self-defense component. The debate, though, over the last 80 years has shifted quite a bit, and today the UN recognizes the importance of neutrals. Just to point this out, the UN defines neutrality as the legal status arising from the abstention of a state from all participation in war between other states, the maintenance of an attitude of impartiality toward the belligerents, and the recognition by the belligerents of this abstention and impartiality.

The UN also recognizes the importance of neutrality as aimed at promoting the use of preventive diplomacy. So, for you in IPAN, something to look at is this terminology of preventive diplomacy—how you think that Australian neutrality and a new defense posture could support or boost the ability of Australia's Foreign Service to engage in preventive diplomacy in order to help quell conflicts before they even boil up. There are a lot of problems with this, of course, because the structural impact that neutrals can have on foreign conflicts always depends on the willingness of the belligerent parties to actually let that happen.

And, you know, what we're seeing in Ukraine is a situation in which one of the two sides even proactively tried to undermine the neutrality of Ukraine—and successfully undermined the neutrality of Ukraine. And I'm not speaking about the Russians; I'm speaking about NATO countries, which really worked over time, for many years, to make sure that neutrality was something that Ukraine would ever have to promise, or that neutrality actually went away. They had a neutrality clause in their constitution until 2014, but that was then revoked, which is really a pity and is one of the reasons why this proxy or implementation war is currently taking place on the territory of Ukraine.

But for Australia, I strongly believe that what we are learning from the situation is that having a foreign policy of neutrality, or a principle of neutrality or non-alignment—whatever you call it, it doesn't matter that much—as long as there is a dedication in political circles to maintain a certain degree of autonomy and actually defend their right not to be sucked into third-party wars. Just a very quick point on how this can be achieved: there are many different ways of doing this.

The simplest and most straightforward way would be for you to convince the political leadership to actually start using that rhetoric. If you start using the rhetoric—even if just one of the Australian leaders starts saying, "We want to be neutral"—that would already have an impact. It wouldn't yet create a clear situation, but it would have an impact and it could get things rolling. The next stage would be an official policy: a policy of non-alignment, a white paper from the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign Office that says Australia strives to achieve neutrality—something like that.

And one of the strongest forms you can get would be, of course, creating a law about it or even a constitutional amendment or a constitutional article saying Australian foreign policy is one of neutrality and spelling it out, and then actually having it, through the political process, included and ingrained in your state setup. Some people then will argue, "Oh, but that has no force under

international law. It needs to be recognized by international law." That is nonsense. If you declare it, then it will become a reality because other states will notice it. And international law—just, you know, war is outlawed under international law and it still happens.

Some people even argue that's why neutrality is actually also a thing of the past, but that's not true. War remains a reality, and so does neutrality. If you declare it, you are already doing everything you can. And on a higher level, you might then even try to get recognition—not guarantees, but recognition—by states, by third parties, that they recognize your neutrality, either at the UN, as the Turkmenis are doing, or bilaterally with states. You might demand some form of recognition, or ask them to please send you a letter saying that they take note of your declaration of neutrality. With this said, those are the steps that can be taken. There are various forms.

And just one more fun fact: even if you don't declare neutrality under international law, if war between third states breaks out and Australia doesn't take part in it, it is automatically categorized as neutral and the laws of neutrality start applying. This is also important to know. So you can also pressure your politicians by saying, "Look, we just don't want you to join all the wars. And if you don't do so, then the laws of neutrality apply. And we demand, as a pressure group, that you live up to it." And my time is over. I leave you with this: if you have any questions, please write me an email. I'm happy to be in touch with all of you. Thank you very much.