

Australian military-intelligence insider calls for war mobilisation powers

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A key member of Australia's military-intelligence establishment was afforded a column in the Murdoch media's *Australian* on Tuesday to insist that the country had to be prepared, with sweeping emergency powers, for the increasing likelihood of a nuclear war.

Under the headline, "Warnings as Domsday Clock edges ever closer to midnight," Alan Dupont declared that "civil defence and national mobilisation on a scale we haven't seen since World War II" was now essential.

Greater powers were needed "to mobilise Australian society in the event of war, a prospect that must be taken seriously given the rising number of geopolitical flashpoints around the world."

Essentially, this means placing the country and its population on a war footing militarily, economically and politically. That happened in both world wars. Workers were subjected to wartime speedup and "sacrifice," immigrants were interned without trial, socialists were jailed for opposing the wars and basic democratic rights were overturned to suppress dissent.

Dupont's article began by pointing out that the "doomsday clock" established in 1947 by the Chicago Atomic Scientists was reset this year at 90 seconds to midnight, indicating that the world was closer than ever to a nuclear catastrophe. In doing so, they stated that they saw the world "confronting numerous interconnected crises with no circuit-breakers in sight."

The article provides some idea of the discussions and planning taking place in the ruling class, mostly behind closed doors, for Australian involvement in potentially catastrophic US-led wars against Iran, Russia and China, and for the outlawing of opposition.

Dupont, a former army officer, intelligence analyst and ministerial adviser, is an influential figure. He is currently chief executive of geopolitical risk consultancy The Cognoscenti Group and a non-resident fellow at the Lowy Institute, an Australian capitalist thinktank.

His previous roles include being the start-up CEO of the Australian and US government-sponsored United States Studies Centre, set up at the University of Sydney in 2006 to counter anti-war sentiment following the US-led invasion and devastation of Iraq. He also headed the Liberal-National Coalition government's Defence White Paper team in 2013-14.

To underscore his message Dupont cited, among others, new British Army head Sir Roland Walker who declared in July that the UK and its partners had just three years left to prepare for war against an "axis of upheaval" comprising China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. British Labour Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer then said he "completely agrees" with Walker's assessment.

Like Walker, Starmer and their counterparts in the US and Europe, Dupont portrayed the coming war as one caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, alleged Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific and Iran's possible development of nuclear weapons.

In reality, the US and its imperialist allies are intent on establishing global hegemony via what already amounts to a three-front war. They deliberately provoked the Moscow regime's invasion, including by expanding NATO to Russia's borders. They are seeking to goad Beijing into entering a similar trap by escalating economic and military measures against it while backing Israel's genocide in Gaza as part of efforts to trigger a wider Middle Eastern war against Iran.

The Albanese Labor government has placed Australia in the forefront of this aggression. It has not only unequivocally backed Washington on all three fronts. It has turned Australia into what US officials have described as a "central base of operations" for a war against China via the AUKUS military pact and US basing arrangements.

Dupont said Australia was unprepared for war, despite "a whole-of-government crisis management framework"

underpinned by the 2020 National Emergency Declaration Act.

That legislation provides for potentially dictatorial measures.

It authorises the Governor General to make a “national emergency declaration” if the prime minister deems that an emergency, whether occurring in or outside Australia, is causing harm that is nationally significant. “Emergency” is not defined, leaving vast scope for a government to activate the provisions.

Once a national emergency declaration is in force, a minister can revoke or vary federal laws by an executive order—a “legislative instrument.” That is, basic protections of civil liberties can be swept aside and other measures decreed to enforce the war effort, including police and military powers.

This legislation was pushed through parliament in late 2020 by the former Morrison Coalition government, backed by the then Labor opposition, under the false flag of responding to the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfire disaster and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

None of these measures had anything to do with dealing with these catastrophes, whose terrible costs, including in lives and livelihoods, were almost entirely the result of government failures to protect the population.

As the WSWS warned, this legislation and the other state and federal “emergency” laws that were activated at the same time were directed against social and political unrest, including against all the governments’ failures.

In addition, in 2018 the Coalition government, again backed by the Labor Party, passed legislation to expand powers to rapidly call out the armed forces to deal with “domestic violence”—that is, civil unrest.

Dupont’s intervention further indicates the underlying political agenda. He has joined other ruling class representatives in demanding that the federal emergency laws now be bolstered and accompanied by more explicit wartime powers.

Dupont said Mike Pezzullo, the former head of the Department of Home Affairs, had argued that “we need to adopt and modernise the practices of the 1930s and 1950s by preparing a war book that details what needs to be done and by whom in the event of war.”

A war book would be “an integrated set of plans to protect critical infrastructure, supply chains, industrial material and essential sectors of the economy such as shipping, aviation, health services and pharmaceuticals.”

A partial transcript of Pezzullo’s speech, delivered to an invitation-only security seminar in April, showed that the

ex-Home Affairs chief went further than that. Among other things, he spoke of “the mobilisation of labour and industrial production,” the allocation and rationing of goods and services, and plans to ensure “social cohesion” and “domestic security.”

Pezzullo said a war book was needed, above all, to make sure that the population had “the mindset and the will that are required to fight and keep fighting to absorb, recover, endure and prevail.”

This means conditioning people to accept and endure a protracted war.

Similarly in May, another prominent member of the military establishment, ex-Joint Intelligence Organisation chief and Defence Department deputy head Paul Dibb, told News Corp Australia’s “Defending Australia 2024 Summit” in Canberra there was a “yawning gap” between the potential threats facing the country and its readiness to defend itself.

In July, Dibb jointly-authored an article for *The Strategist*, published by the government-financed Australian Strategic Policy Institute, which urged the government’s yet-to-be released 2024 Independent Intelligence Review to examine whether the “National Intelligence Community” could “meet the challenges” posed by “round-the-clock military operations sustained over months rather than days.”

Similar preparations for protracted wars are underway throughout the imperialist capitals. On September 26, the UK House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee issued its report, “Ukraine: a wake-up call.” It declared the necessity to ready the armed forces to “sustain prolonged conflict” and to involve “the whole of society in the UK’s security and defence, given the heightened threat environment.”



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