

Inquiry into international armed conflict decision making

We have been living in Australia since 1984. Moving from Zimbabwe, a war-torn country, we have personal experience with conflict that we wish no one here experiences. Coming to Australia has shown us the value of an open and free country.

Australians pride ourselves as being part of a vibrant, inclusive democracy.

With the Prime Minister and his cabinet being able to commit Australians to an armed conflict without the due process of parliamentary debate and consensus, this is more authoritarian than democratic.

The majority of Australians have no desire to see loved ones risk their lives being sent to distant lands into questionable conflicts.

The media seems intent on conditioning us to the fact that conflict with China is inevitable and we must support the US in preventing the rise of China. Are non-western countries not allowed to flourish?

Given our geographical location, it seems to me that our dependence on distant allies is putting us at odds with our neighbours who are alarmed at our desire to build our military capabilities for a conflict that they see as avoidable. Our diplomacy is almost non-existent with Asian countries, apart from Japan and South Korea. We dropped the ball in the Pacific and only now are trying to make up lost ground.

War should not be our first action, and debate is essential. Will the Prime Minister and cabinet be accountable for their decision? Was John Howard accountable for the Iraq and Afghanistan debacles? Politicians want to act unilaterally but do not want to be accountable for the outcomes. If our leaders were the first into battle, I can assure you they would practice diplomacy much more diligently.