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Policy

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) recognises that:

- National defence is a legitimate role of the Commonwealth government. However, unnecessary expenditure on defence contributes to excessive taxation.
- The security of Australia is heavily dependent on goodwill with other countries. This can be promoted by active engagement, particularly through trade. Indeed, the prosperity and interdependence resulting from free trade is a key contributor to peace.
- Australia can never be entirely self-reliant in defence as it lacks the technological resources, manpower and financial capacity to protect itself against attack by a major power. However, it can deter aggression through defence alliances with countries that share its values and by maintaining the ability to both resist and strike back.

Use of The Military

1. The LDP recognises that international terrorist movements may have to be fought internationally, but believes the ADF should not be involved in the suppression of terrorist actions in other countries unless such actions are a direct threat to the security of Australia.

Such involvement should be subject to authorization by a prior vote comprising at least two thirds majorities in both houses of federal parliament.

2. Australia may commit the ADF to UN operations including peacekeeping, subject to authorisation by a prior vote comprising at least two thirds majorities in both houses of federal parliament.

3. In rare cases Australia may commit the ADF to the relief of oppression in another country, subject to authorisation by a prior vote comprising at least two thirds majorities in both houses of federal parliament.

4. The enforcement of immigration laws, fishing zones, or intervention in aboriginal townships in the Northern Territory, are not appropriate tasks for the ADF except coincidentally to its principal activities.

5. Terrorist acts should be classified as crimes and, when occurring on Australian territory, should not involve the ADF unless they involve foreign state sponsorship or the magnitude of the threat exceeds the capability of civil security forces. Such involvement must be authorised by cabinet and confirmed by a parliamentary resolution at the first available opportunity.

6. The LDP accepts that the ADF should be available to help supply emergency aid in the event of natural or man-made disasters, within Australia or overseas, if required. However, cabinet authorisation should be required followed by a parliamentary resolution at the first available opportunity.

7. The LDP opposes any use of the ADF in domestic political disputes including industrial action.

8. The LDP would repeal the Crimes (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment) Act 1978, thus allowing Australians to voluntarily engage in efforts to overthrow authoritarian and oppressive regimes.

Promoting Peace

9. The LDP would seek to lessen the risk of conflict by promoting free trade (including unilateral removal of trade barriers) and diplomatic engagement. The LDP supports professional diplomatic engagement together with trade representation (funded on a user-pays basis) to foster bilateral trade.

10. The LDP supports the current alliance with the United States and recognises that it is integral to deterring major power aggression. However, it also recognises that the US has alliances with many countries and its assistance in the event of conflict cannot always be assured.

Military Service

11. The LDP is unequivocally opposed to compulsory military service (including preventing volunteers leaving the services when their term of enlistment has expired). The LDP believes that if the citizens of a state choose not to volunteer to defend it, that state does not deserve to be defended.

12. The LDP supports the establishment of military cadet units and similar arrangements in schools as a means of encouraging and normalising interest in voluntary military service, as long as no school is permitted to make such service either directly or indirectly compulsory.

13. The LDP supports a military based on a core of full-time professionals complemented by an extensive volunteer reserve, with men and women viewing part-time military service as the new norm, beneficial to both themselves and the country.

Military Capability

14. The LDP believes Australia can achieve a far greater degree of defence preparedness than at present, at a significantly reduced cost to taxpayers.

15. The focus of the full-time military should be on the three strategic capabilities able to achieve long distance force projection. These comprise a strategic strike capability, an effective submarine fleet, and a rapid reaction, air-mobile expeditionary force including Special Forces.

16. Most of the navy's surface fleet would be sold to help fund new acquisitions. Some patrol boats and frigates may be kept to establish a coast guard while hospital, supply and amphibious capability may be retained for humanitarian disaster relief.

17. Primary responsibility for the defence of Australia's landmass should be transferred to a part-time force.

18. The part-time Citizens Military Force (CMF) would be re-created as the principal pillar of our national land defence, based on the core of the current Active Army Reserve.
19. Most of the full-time Army would be disbanded, retaining only those capabilities that have long training lead times and essential staff needed for part-time forces. Most of the army would comprise reservists who cycle in and out of active service.
20. Service in the CMF would be promoted with major incentives including generous tax credits for days served and for employers who allow CMF members to take time off to train.
21. Service in the CMF would involve short periods of full-time training rather than weekend involvement, with most units sufficiently well organised and trained to require only limited preparation for active service.
22. The CMF would be predominantly organized around communities with the aim of making voluntary CMF service to defend your local area an integral part of everyday community life. (In this respect the Swiss model is very relevant.) Some specialist technical units would also be required.
23. A combined arms, air deployable Australian International Brigade of mainly foreign volunteers led by Australian Officers (along the lines of the French Foreign Legion and Ghurkhas) would be created for use as an expeditionary army against international conventional and asymmetric military threats.
24. This Australian International Brigade would be funded by hiring its services to friendly countries and the UN for military duties in accord with Australian foreign policy.
25. The LDP does not support artificial maintenance of a domestic defence industry. Defence procurement should be based on buying the items best suited to the defence tasks required, from the most competitive suppliers in Australia or overseas. However, the LDP does recognise the need for strategic stockpiling of war materiel to insure against hostilities disrupting foreign supplies.
26. The LDP believes considerable savings can be achieved by greater involvement of the private sector in competing to supply goods and services to the ADF.
27. The LDP supports the maintenance of a nuclear reactor and nuclear expertise.

Discussion

History shows that standing armies can be a threat to liberty, which led to the 1689 English Bill of Rights and Third Amendment to the US Constitution. Freedom is best served by limiting the size of the permanent military while being able to quickly expand it if required.

In addition, imposing limits on the ability of the government to engage in war can reduce the risk of military conflict for political advantage.

The LDP recognises four types of threats to national security around which its national defence policy is based:

1. Regional small-scale conflicts or failed states that pose a moderate threat to Australia or its allies or have major humanitarian consequences;
2. Aggression by a medium or major power seeking to coerce the Australian government into modifying its policy on a specific issue - disputes over oil or fishing rights are possible examples;
3. Invasion by a major power seeking to secure a permanent foothold in Australia; and
4. Currently most significant, international terrorism by non-government forces.

Recent years have seen the role for the ADF envisioned by successive Liberal and Labor governments drastically change. As the surrogate conflicts of the Cold War and the threat of major conventional and nuclear conflict has receded, the void has been filled by an exponential increase in military operations other than conventional war.

As a result, both at home and abroad, the traditional role of the ADF to prepare to fight the armies of hostile states has given way to preparing primarily for a paramilitary transnational policing role.

The LDP is concerned at the effects of this shift in the use of the ADF, which at best raises the prospect of endless increases in defence costs requiring higher and higher taxes, and at worst raises the spectre of a police state.

The LDP's Defence Policy has been framed in response to these concerns, and seeks to balance the need for a capable ADF with limited military expenditure by re-focusing our defence priorities back to military concerns and by re-aligning our defence assets towards achieving significant strategic capabilities.

In this way, alone amongst other Australian political parties, the LDP's Defence Policy is a plan to allow the ADF to punch well above its weight at a significantly lower cost to the taxpayer.