Prime Minister Scott Morrison is to be commended for understanding that the world now faces the most threatening strategic stability outlook since 1939. Whether throwing the considerable sum of $A270 billion at hi-tech defence hardware is the best possible response to the deep problems that beset not just Australia, but the whole world, is a question that perhaps has not been given enough thought.

In a world awash with weapons, are more exotic and hi-tech weapons the answer or are they merely going to compound the problem?
In an Australian budget that has already gone way into the red (and for excellent reasons), and in which the pandemic blazons the immediate need for investments in pandemic preparedness, vaccines and vaccine research, ICUs and ventilators, an announcement that the need of the moment is a ten year spending plan worth 270 billion on exotic ways to kill other humans, especially ones with whom we would be wiser to be collaborating on coronavirus vaccine research seems oddly placed. True, the defence forces have made extremely useful contributions in both fighting bushfires and in fighting the coronavirus pandemic. The capabilities that made that possible should urgently be expanded. But exotic ship to ship missiles add nothing to those more mundane, but much more useful, capabilities.

This is not at all to deny that the concerns that underlie Prime Minister Morrison’s defence spending plan are real. Of course they are real. Indeed, they are even MORE real that Prime Minister Morrison himself admits they are catastrophically, civilisation-endingly, real. The likelihood of a nuclear exchange in which everything we call civilisation and possibly in which humans as a species would perish, has simply never been higher. The answer is not however to invest in nuclear weapons or indeed in any weapons at all, but to work to eliminate them.

Australia has critical infrastructural dependencies on eg, the internet that make us acutely vulnerable to both cyber and EMP threats. These need to be addressed not just to secure us from human enemies but from for example, a massive coronal mass ejection.

The answer to global strategic instability, undoubtedly as bad or worse than in 1939, is not to add to it with yet more weapons.
It is to seek peaceful solutions to those problems and to encourage others to seek such solutions.

In the meantime there ARE real investments that should be made in Pandemic preparedness, in infrastructural resilience, in infrastructure more broadly, in health and education and in social security that would both give Australia something truly worth defending and would in themselves diminish potential threats.

Prime Minister Morrison is right to be concerned about Australia's security.

Spending $270 billion on war is unlikely to improve matters.

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