



Chief of Army address to 'The Big Picture' lecture series.

Lieutenant General Angus Campbell DSC, AM, address to 'The Big Picture' lecture series, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, R.G Casey Building, Canberra, Wednesday 30 November 2016.

*Check against delivery*

Australia's interests: Defence-DFAT cooperation

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to be here. I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are meeting this afternoon, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elders, both past and present.

I want to thank the 'Big Picture' team, for the invitation to speak to you today about Australia's interests and cooperation between Defence and this great department of state, DFAT. The last time I spoke here was the launch of Fred Smith's book, *The Dust of Urugun*. Fred's book is more than just a 'good read'. It is a timely and contemporary story about Defence and DFAT cooperation. And how that cooperation manages to seriously interfere with the otherwise stellar career of one of Australia's leading folk musicians.

There is a natural affinity between Defence and DFAT. As our previous Ambassador to Afghanistan, Matt Anderson, remarked to one of my staff a few weeks ago "we are both in the people business". Notwithstanding that our methods of interaction with people are different from time to time. An alternative way of expressing our shared interests may be found in the opinion offered in 1952 by Chou En Lai, the Chinese Premier, and sometimes Foreign Affairs Minister. He said in an interview with a British newspaper; "All diplomacy is a continuation of war by other means". Clausewitz would be rolling in his grave! But understanding differences in perception is essential to communication and cooperation between people.

That we are addressing cooperation this afternoon may appear strange to some in the audience. Beyond Afghanistan, there are many practical examples of cooperation between Defence and DFAT in recent years. The work on the MH17 incident in the Ukraine, or the humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations in Vanuatu, Nepal and Fiji within the last two years are very good examples that come readily to mind.

In fact, practical cooperation between the two portfolios has deep historical precedence. The archival material on the DFAT website shows this; whether in the minutes of the Australian Government Advisory War Councils of 1941, or the 1951 collection of cables regarding the creation of ANZUS. Similarly, a simple search of the Australian Government digital archive reveals a rich trove of cable material highlighting the close

work of the Australian Embassy in Saigon and Headquarters Australian Forces Vietnam during the Vietnamese War. We work together as a norm.

However, diplomatic and defence cooperation can sometimes appear scant in the absence of crisis. Policy can easily but mistakenly be developed and pursued within our own 'stovepipes of excellence'. This is not a particularly Australian problem. There is considerable contemporary literature suggesting this is a universal phenomenon among human organisations.

We all tend to get comfortable doing things our own way. On occasion this represents a misunderstanding or misapplication of statecraft. Other times it reflects ideological preferences for how relations between states should be conducted, and interests pursued. At its worst manifestation, it is a result of petty bureaucratic competition. No matter why, the outcome is invariably detrimental to the national interest.

John F. Kennedy recognised the problem of a false dichotomy between diplomatic and defence approaches to national security. He stated during an address in Seattle in November 1961:

The essential fact that both of these groups fail to grasp is that diplomacy and defense are not substitutes for one another. Either alone would fail. A willingness to resist force, unaccompanied by a willingness to talk, could provoke belligerence-- while a willingness to talk, unaccompanied by a willingness to resist force, could invite disaster.<sup>1</sup>

President Kennedy was correct. There is no choice between diplomacy or defence and security. They are intertwined across much of a state's international endeavours. Foreign Minister Bishop acknowledged as much when she addressed the UN General Assembly on 19th September this year. In an address titled *Bringing Daesh to Justice* she stated that "a military victory against Daesh will not be enough". I agree, it will not. The military alone does not have the answer.

Channeling the recent US election campaign slogans, the clear opportunity in front of us is to, 'make Australia great [again] by being stronger together'!

Of course cooperation is not an 'end' in itself. The effort it takes bureaucracies to rise above natural entropy and functional self-interest must serve a purpose. And the purpose of Defence and DFAT cooperation is to secure Australia's interests – but what exactly are they?

The term 'Australia's national interest' is commonly used in political, national security and international relations circles. The Army is no different. Our mission states; *the Army is to prepare land forces for war, in order to defend Australia and its national interests*. The question that arises is whether the term 'national interest' is meant to infer creation of a general sense of desirable circumstances, or a specific set of desirable conditions. In Australia's case, the answer is both. DFAT and Defence each use the term in a different sense, to ultimately get to the same place.

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<sup>1</sup> President John F. Kennedy *Address in Seattle at the University of Washington's 100th Anniversary Program*. 16 November 1961.

Almost two decades ago Australia's first foreign policy white paper, *In the National Interest*, stated the interests at the core of Australian foreign and trade policies were "the security of the Australian nation and the jobs and standard of living of the Australian people". Six years later the next White Paper, *Advancing the National Interest*, simplified it to "the security and prosperity of Australia and Australians".

The foreign policy white paper 'minimalist' approach contrasts with that of defence white papers, which favour detail. The 2016 Defence White Paper is indicative. It identifies three 'Strategic Defence Interests'. These are:

- A secure, resilient Australia, with secure northern approaches and sea lines of communication.
- A secure nearer region, encompassing maritime South East Asia and South Pacific.
- A stable Indo-Pacific region and a rules-based global order.

The point that emerges from this examination is not a different understanding of the national interest. Rather, it is of differing organisational cultural preferences for how these interests are expressed.

An alternative, 'neutral', statement of what we seek aligns with thoughts offered last year in this place by Hugh White. As I understand it, Hugh asserted the circumstances of the international order over the last few decades have been remarkably in Australia's favour. And that, ideally, Australia's interests would be served by 'more of the same'. I think his assessment is correct. And I also agree with his opinion that 'more of the same' is unlikely. There is evidence that the international system is not as 'well kept' as we may wish; that it is fraying.

This year's Defence White Paper details six key drivers that our Government believes will shape the development of Australia's security environment out to 2035. The drivers it identifies can clearly be seen at work today. But I have a sense that time is moving more quickly than anticipated when the White Paper was being written only last year. I am going to briefly examine some indicators of the fraying of the international system that we prefer, and is so vital to our national interests.

As I stated recently at our Army's conference in Adelaide, the sheer breadth of contemporary individual empowerment arising from the digital revolution: information, influence, identification, lethality, mobility, financial and social - is extraordinary. And for the most part this is a very good thing. But we cannot ignore the impact that this has on our traditional conceptions of sovereignty, opportunity and threat. Innovation is driving connectivity and complexity across the Indo-Pacific region, and beyond.

The cyber domain - with all that it promises, good and bad - is not a foreign country where our diplomats and soldiers can engage at a safe distance from Australia. It is immediate and proximate. It is in our homes and our workplaces. It puts large holes in our traditional views of how statecraft is conducted. The US Department of State's website offers this assessment:

Rapid increases in the availability and power of information technologies are changing the modes of international relations and the conditions for statecraft in the 21st century...but these technologies are not ideological, democratic or progressive by nature. They enable the desires of users and amplify existing social and political forces. The dynamism of networked societies delivers both positive and negative outcomes.

It goes on to conclude:

The disruptive social, political and economic changes that information networks have unleashed demand that diplomats ask new kinds of questions and reckon with new kinds of challenges.<sup>2</sup>

Much of the continuing conflict in the Middle East is being driven by individual empowerment through innovations in technology, digitisation and connectivity. Over more than a decade a lot of people have been killed in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Mahgreb in the fight against Al Qaida, the Taliban, Daesh, and other radical ideologies. Yet the number of deaths has had little impact upon the ideology driving these conflicts. The ideology is rampant and resilient.

At the other end of the scale from the empowered individual, is the assertive state, acting in an increasingly discomfoting fashion. We watch as the interplay between states occurs beyond contemporary norms, or is perhaps returning to previously established norms. Russia's assertive tone in Europe is just one example of such challenges to the status quo. Our region is not exempt from this phenomenon. These challengers seek to drive change in ways calculated to avoid over provocation and self-defeating responses: it is classic brinkmanship. And they tug at the fabric of the global stability and order Australia wants to retain. As we have learnt, little green men aren't all from Mars.

Moving from the empowered individual and assertive state, I turn to the unstable planet. 2016 is about to join the regular drum beat of being described as the next 'hottest year on record'. The simple, present reality of climate change is tangibly occurring around us as the world collectively struggles to adequately implement plans to adapt or mitigate. Ongoing yearly increases in temperature will have a testing effect on all. If not because of the impact of environmental change, then surely because of the economic shock such change can elicit, should the nations of the world not get adaption or mitigation right. Inaction on climate change is estimated to see a 23% decrease in global GDP by the end of the century, if the world gets it wrong.

And what of the powerless? There are around 65 million displaced humans on the planet at the moment. This is an unprecedented number. The sheer scale represents a serious challenge to the conventions on refugees and displaced persons established after the Second World War. The absence of any internationally agreed position on how to deal with the issue should be a source of deep discomfort to those who subscribe to the idea of a community of nations and the utility of international institutions.

So too the recent degradation of the International Criminal Court, as numbers of states choose to leave, joining those that did not accede. Is this demonstrative of a waning

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<sup>2</sup> US DOS: <http://www.state.gov/statecraft/overview/> accessed 23 Nov 16

commitment by some to international organisations? It is a concern for those powers, such as Australia, that value such organisations for the support they offer to a global rules-based order.

Another factor tugging at the fabric of the established international order is the resurgence of populist domestic politics in many nations across the world. While the policies and political alignment of the populists are varied, they inevitably share an enthusiasm for nationalism and rejection of globalisation, multilateralism and the global institutions that moderate self-interest.

Assisting the rise of populism has been the impact of social media. Millions of people now get their news and their so called 'news' from the internet. What was once clearly apparent as 'opinion' in traditional media is now embedded as 'news' in what is often a cultural echo chamber. The erosion of the fourth estate in the face of such developments augurs poorly for 'information assurance' as we move forward.

As I have previously remarked, being a demagogue with hundreds of thousands of followers no longer requires the apparatus of a state, society or media ownership. A persuasive idea, a device that costs a few hundred dollars and an internet connection will get you on your way. What concerns me even more is that many people either don't know or don't care: truly a despot's paradise.

There are clearly other tensions that I haven't touched on. And I'm very open to debate whether any or all of the issues I have raised really matter. But my aim isn't to present an exhaustive list of problems; it has been to establish the assertion of a 'fraying' in the international order we prefer. The question then arises: how should we cooperate to secure Australia's interests in an increasingly difficult environment?

The default answer of course is 'statecraft' - defined as "the art of government and diplomacy". We often associate statecraft as being the art practiced by political élites and leaders. However, in our system the great departments of state are the practical enablers of statecraft, through both policy development and transactional engagement. DFAT, Defence, and all of the other key components of our whole-of-government national security apparatus, are vital to providing the supporting mechanisms of Australian contemporary statecraft.

Statecraft is the vehicle which can drive practical, policy-led DFAT and Defence cooperation. A demonstration of this is the intertwining of portfolio interests represented in the conduct of 2+2 Ministerial Dialogues with nations such as the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, India, Germany and Papua New Guinea.

As noted by Foreign Minister Bishop at the PNG Ministerial Forum in Canberra on 3rd March this year, such meetings allow, "focus on defence and security cooperation, which is so important as we face a number of regional challenges". Below the heady level of ministerial engagement, and with their fulsome support, I see great opportunity to deepen our diplomatic and security cooperation in the field.

Cooperation should never be taken for granted. It has to be worked at by each new generation. My experience has been that this is not something that can be achieved by 'turning to page 15' of a document and reading a direction to 'cooperate now'. It is

acquired and maintained by the 'lived experience' of each generation of departmental officials.

Chapter five of the Defence White Paper 2016 outlines a substantial plan for a more active and internationally engaged Defence posture. As you would be aware, Defence already has a wide range of attaches and support staff at posts throughout the region, and around the world. And we have experienced great teamwork and receive consistent assistance and support from DFAT at each of those posts. I trust, and very much want, the reverse to also be true! The White Paper directs an expansion of Defence's international presence, engagement and cooperation.

For Army, this will see growth in our representation in some Indo-Pacific states, with enhancement of our representation in many others. Supporting this I have directed a greater focus on the manner in which we train, develop and manage language and cultural competencies among Army's people. If they're not what you want, they're not what I need – so please, do let me know.

Another important aspect of Defence's international engagement and posture that affords a good opportunity for Defence and DFAT cooperation is the Defence Cooperation Program. An exemplar project within our region is the Pacific Patrol Boat Program (PPBP). This multi-decade effort made a great contribution to our regional neighbours and their assertion of maritime sovereignty. It has also provided an enduring point of access and constructive influence.

DFAT staff across the region have made vital contributions to this DCP project. In turn, our diplomatic effort has benefitted from the goodwill the project has generated. Defence is now re-capitalising the success of this project with the roll out of the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP) across our near region from 2018. The PMSP will see replacement or new boats delivered to 12 nations.

I see opportunity for more business as usual, 'people to people', cooperation between DFAT and Defence. Our aim here should be to form habitual relationships of trust and understanding. I think we should take our lead from Vincent Van Gogh, who said "great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together". We do not need to build new architectures, processes or opportunities to develop cooperation. My sense is that they already exist; we just need to be alive to them and seek to grow their latent potential.

Evidence of this is abundant. The acquisition and realisation of the operational capability of amphibious ships, HMAS Canberra and HMAS Adelaide, is providing an extraordinary opportunity for regional engagement by DFAT, the ADF's joint force and our international partners. The real success of this was tangibly demonstrated during the DFAT led, defence supported, post-cyclone disaster relief operations in Vanuatu and Fiji.

Recent years have also seen enhanced cooperation between Defence and DFAT in training for joint operations in a coalition and contested environment – the 'pointy end' of statecraft. This has seen DFAT staff engaged and integrated into the Army's premier 'warfighting' training activity, Exercise Hamel. Similarly, the Commander Joint Operations, Vice Admiral David Johnston, has sought and received extensive DFAT commitment to joint and combined exercises.

A good recent example was Ambassador Peter Tesch and a large DFAT staff component being embarked aboard the *USS Blue Ridge* during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2015. The bottom line: sometimes one good foreign policy officer can be worth 1,000 troops because the effects each can create are quite different, and should always be complementary. This was certainly my experience as a commander in the Middle East area of operations. Talisman Sabre 2017 will be a significant activity for us and our partners, and another great opportunity to build upon our 'lived experience' of cooperation.

The steps being taken to develop cooperation 'in the field' are necessary and appropriate. But I do see an opportunity to build on our day to day business of what we might call 'Canberra warfare'. Modeling the highly successful ADF Parliamentary Program, I think we could consider the use of temporary, short-term personnel exposure between DFAT staff in the RG Casey building and Army Headquarters staff at Russell, or our major field headquarters. Such a thing is feasible, should we have the will to do it.

Australia's interests clearly face a challenging future in an international environment that I think is fraying somewhat. Hope does not make an enduring rules-based global order. We do. States, power and interests still shape the international system. And it appears hard power, more so than soft power, is making a comeback.

Clausewitz observed of hard power that "war has its own language but not its own logic". The American strategic thinker, Bernard Brodie, expanded upon this when he said rather optimistically "the language is most cruelly obscene but the logic it serves may at times give it some redeeming social value".<sup>3</sup> While Sun Tzu reminds us:

To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.

This is surely the greatest value that cooperation between the soldier and the diplomat can aspire to achieve.

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> Brodie, Bernard, (1973) *War and Politics*, MacMillan New York, p.1