



The 2014 Hedley Bull Lecture

FAULT LINES IN AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Delivered by Colin Chapman
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It's a real honour to be at the University of Sydney tonight, and to be asked to give this year's Hedley Bull Lecture. And it's time to commemorate Hedley Bull. How often, in the last ten days, we've heard that most famous of Australian political jingles – It's Time. In a year when so many complex international issues have pushed their way into the daily rants of the shock jocks, it's time to remember the tenets of Hedley Bull - and, of course, his classic textbook, *The Anarchical Society*, still a primer for international affairs students today.

What would he think of the state the world is in – the imbalance between order and justice? His theories are being sorely tested - as increasingly we use words that describe constructs rather than states, like the Middle East, Europe, Asia, particularly Asia. What is Asia? Hedley was an order man, now there is disorder. And it is this disorderly world that causes me to question some aspects of Australia's foreign policy - fault lines that create tremors.

Now, I must pause – add a couple of sentences to your kind introduction. This is the Politics Society, but you did not mention my politics. This is important in the context of what I'll say about these fault lines. You see, while fascinated by politics, I'm not a political animal. I don't carry the baggage of the left. Nor am I an addict of the right. I'm a floating voter. I analyze policies with a jaundiced eye, remembering always what Harold Wilson used to say, "politics is the art of the possible"².

Why must I tell you this? It's because when I examine closely the fault lines in Australian foreign policy – in the Middle East, in the Anglo-sphere, at the United Nations, in North Asia and the Indo-Pacific – I see a common theme, our relationship with the United States. Not so much the ANZUS treaty per se, though that bears discussion, but taking a forensic look at the way the US relationship now works. Unlike those who would bury ANZUS - I see some here tonight - I am not anti-American. I'm not like that former Cold War warrior Malcolm Fraser, who now sees the Tea Party, rather than Reds, under his bed. I have close American friends and I've worked for some strong-willed, opinionated Americans – Ben Bradlee of

¹ *The Anarchical Society, a Study of Order in World Politics*. London, Macmillan 1977.

² [Otto Von Bismarck, remark](#), Aug. 11, 1867 German_Prussian politician (1815 - 1898)

the Washington Post, who died last week, George Friedman at Stratfor, Rupert Murdoch. And while I worry about American attitudes towards Australia, the problem for us is not that, but the widespread perception that we always look to Washington for guidance - rather than taking the more difficult course of thinking through an independent view that may lead us to do things differently. Let's examine these fault lines – starting with the Middle East. We were understandably involved in the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa in two World Wars. The Australian contribution, as part of the old British Empire, is the stuff of legends. We fought and died offshore, but not until Japan bombed Darwin was our country directly threatened.

After the British withdrew from East of Suez, the strategic alliance with the United States took us into the Korean and Vietnam wars, largely for ideological reasons. It was not until the two Iraq wars and the war in Afghanistan that Australia entered major conflicts where it can be argued they had little to do with the wellbeing of the Australian people. After Saddam invaded Kuwait, a case could be made for pushing him back, and President George H Bush made the right political decision to limit military intervention. But the second Iraq war and Afghanistan were different. We went because Australia is a U.S. ally, not because Saddam Hussein or the Taliban in Afghanistan were a threat to Australia. In pure trade terms, Iraq was actually a good customer, buying our wheat.

When Barack Obama became president we thought US military involvement in the Middle East was winding down. There was the US commitment to Israel, of course, but Obama was not uncritical of Jerusalem. And Israel had shown it did not need the US military presence – if anything it was seen as a disadvantage. But then Washington –like many others - became seduced by the catchphrase, the Arab Spring: people fighting for freedom from ruthless dictators – Gaddafi, Mubarak, Bashir Al Assad.

The United States surely made a strategic mistake in getting involved in the Syrian civil war. It was understandable. Television reported Syrian forces using Russian arms to slaughter civilians. The cry went up “do something”.

The trouble was that by arming the rebels – no expense spared – the US reignited the forces of terrorism. And we can't say we were not warned. In fact, warned by the old spymaster himself.

In an op-ed article in the *New York Times*, Russia's president Vladimir Putin wrote that Syria's opposition was not fighting a battle for democracy. This was an armed conflict between government and opposition in a multi-religious country. Let's recall what he said:

“There are few champions of democracy in Syria. But there are more than enough Qaeda fighters and extremists of all stripes battling the government. The United States State Department has designated the Al Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant,

fighting with the opposition, as terrorist organizations. This internal conflict, fueled by foreign weapons supplied to the opposition, is one of the bloodiest in the world. Mercenaries from Arab countries fighting there, and hundreds of militants from Western countries and even Russia, are an issue of our deep concern. Might they not return to our countries with experience acquired in Syria? After all, after fighting in Libya, extremists moved on to Mali. This threatens us all.”³

Whatever his motives, Putin has been proved right. As Charles Glass put it in the current issue of the *New York Review of Books*, “The prospect of America reversing its policy from threatening to bomb the regime in August 2013 to actually bombing the regime’s enemies this year, gave the regime hope. It saw that not only would it survive, but that it would become, however covertly, a partner of the nations that had worked most assiduously to remove it.”⁴

So the Middle East is the first, and the most immediately significant, fault line in Australia’s foreign policy. What are we doing there?

You might say that with Australia’s own oil output running out - and consumption is rising - we are very dependent on the Persian Gulf. Most of our refined petroleum comes from Singapore, itself 80 per cent reliant on the Middle East. Key suppliers, like Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, have good relations with Australia.

It would seem sensible – and I think Hedley Bull would agree - for Australia to continue our strong relationships with the Gulf States, without becoming embroiled in regional conflicts, especially the bloody religious battle between the Sunnis and the Shia. This is not our conflict, any more than was the bitter struggle between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland – the Troubles as they were euphemistically called. Our job is to ensure the Sunni/Shia feud does not spill over into Australia’s large Muslim community.

The second fault line running through Australia’s foreign policy - one related but not confined to the Middle East – is the United Nations doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect. Our distinguished former foreign minister, Gareth Evans, championed the concept. Each nation has a responsibility to protect its people from mass atrocity. If it can’t, as has proved to be the case with the legal government of Iraq, it can seek help.

That’s the theory, but implementation is less than perfect. Australia’s intervention with the United States, Britain and a number of Arab nations against the Islamic State certainly meets the criteria of ‘just cause’. The threat from the jihadists is serious, causing irreparable suffering to human beings, especially Arab women and children.

³ Pleas for Caution from Russia; Vladimir V Putin, *The New York Times* November 11 2013

⁴ The Syria We Don’t Know; Charles Glass. *New York Review of Books* November 2014.

Yet, as we know, there are considerable and multiple complications with RTP, especially when exercised by absolute outsiders, NATO members. The first arises from super power technology – including so-called precision bombing from the world’s most sophisticated aircraft, as well as the use of unmanned, targeted drones. These can – to use a military term – degrade the enemy, but at a price. That price, all too often, is the death of large numbers of innocent people trapped in harm’s way. If they’re lucky, if you can call it luck, they may end up in a refugee camp.

The doctrine of Responsibility to Protect was invoked by the Federal Opposition in its support for the Government’s decision to send the military into action against the Islamic State. In her first speech as shadow foreign minister Tanya Plibersek listed criteria that she considered had been met to justify Australia’s involvement.⁵ It was an important speech, and it’s sad that the Canberra press corps gave it so little shrift. Firstly, she argued, there was proof that communities in Iraq faced genocide from Islamic State, which was highly intolerant of people that don’t subscribe to its own extreme version of Sunni Islam.

Second, Plibersek asked, is there the right intent? In other words, was the purpose of Australian involvement to relieve human suffering, or for was it for some ulterior motive? She told Parliament that, unlike 2003, there is no intention of regime change. Well, no, but it’s not that simple. You can degrade ISIS, but what then? Restoring law and order to lawless countries is a huge call.

Third, is intervention the last resort? Has everything else been tried? There is a problem here. The people who should really be fighting the ruthless expansion of Islamic State are those countries most threatened by it: Saudi Arabia with the immensely rich and very well-armed House of Saud, the glittering Gulf sheikhdoms, and Turkey. Instead they expect the West to bear the brunt. Some of these countries are providing some support but if the Gulf States and Turkey want to avoid the kind of caliphate Islamic State has in mind, they need to fight for it.

Even more important, as London’s *Sunday Telegraph* has argued⁶, following a major investigation, the Gulf’s rulers should go after those elements in Saudi Arabia and Qatar that have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to ISIS. These groups and individuals should be subjected to sanctions – banned from London – but the British won’t do that.

Tanya Plibersek posed other questions. Are the means proportionate? Is there a reasonable prospect the action will protect human life? Are the consequences sure not to be worse than doing nothing? These are to answer. It would be great to be able to say ‘yes’ - but the answers are probably ‘no’. Repeated warnings from the Obama administration say this is going to be a long haul. Few experienced military

⁵ Statement on Iraq; Tanya Plibersek, MP for Sydney. Federation Chamber, Parliament of Australia, 3 September 2014. As recorded by Hansard.

⁶ *Sunday Telegraph*, London, 28 September 2014

commanders believe some vestige of security can be restored without what they call 'boots on the ground'.

As my distinguished predecessor delivering this lecture last year, Professor Hugh White, said recently, Islamic State can only be defeated on the ground. To quote: "That will require very large land forces, committed for a very long time, and accepting heavy casualties. For half a century America and its allies have been trying to win messy civil wars without fighting themselves and by training and equipping one side or the other. It never works." Unquote.⁷

So, you have to ask, "Is the United Nations Responsibility to Protect all its cracked up to be?" Dag Hammarskjöld, that most respected of secretaries-general used to say, "the United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell"⁸. I'm sure he meant it, but we've been to hell and back several times since he said that - in Kosovo, in Rwanda, in Libya, and now in Syria and Iraq.

The problem of RTP lies within the United Nations itself. I remember attending the annual forum in 2004 when one of the main themes was "Reforming the UN – Once and for All". Gareth Evans, then head of the International Crisis Group, pointed to a loss of confidence in international institutions.

Eleven years on, the threats are greater, but confidence has not been restored. So long as there is an unbalanced largely Atlantic-centric Security Council - giving permanent members a power of veto – the problem will not be solved. But there is some hope for RTP if discussions now going on can be brought to fruition.

This arises from a neat idea floated by the Chinese scholar and vice president of the Chinese Institute of International Studies, Ruan Zongze – Protecting Responsibly. He argues for tough criteria that must be satisfied before any military mandate is provided, with conspicuous efforts to exhaust diplomatic solutions. And then further accountability to ensure that the "protection" objective remains foremost, rather than any party's self-serving ambitions.

There surely is considerable scope for China to be drawn into a serious discussion with a view to putting flesh on the bones of the idea. Surely Australia should initiate this in the Security Council?

Another fault line in our foreign policy reflects our geography. Our relations with the major Asian powers are complex. The biggest is how can we best deal with our

⁷ Why the Campaign against Islamic States is Doomed; Hugh White. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 2014

⁸ Address by United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld at University of California Convocation, Berkeley, California, Thursday, May 13, 1954

⁹ Responsible Protection: Building a Safer World; Ruan Zongze. CIIS, 15 June 2012: http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2012-06/15/content_5090912.htm

principal economic partner, China, our second economic partner, Japan, and our strategic partner, the United States? Present policy is to accommodate all three. While this has the twin benefits of pragmatism and expediency, it can only be a tactic, not a strategy.

Senior figures from both the US and China have already fired shots across our bows. Hillary Clinton, Obama's first secretary of state, and possibly the next president, said in June - in a reference to the government's push for a free trade deal with Beijing - that it "could make Australia dependent on China to the extent of undermining freedom of movement and sovereignty, economic and political". This produced a headline saying Clinton says Australia two-timing America.¹⁰

China has been more guarded in its criticism of Australia's alliance with America. Shortly after Clinton's remarks, Professor Wu Xinbo, executive dean of the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University of Shanghai said there were "limits to which Australia could tighten strategic co-operation with the United States without putting its relationship with China at risk"¹¹. He did not define those risks.

Apart from the rhetoric, much has been written, but perhaps nothing with such passion as that in Malcolm Fraser's book, *Dangerous Allies*.¹² As we know, "Dump ANZUS" is the shorthand for what he says. (As someone who had to field calls from Fraser when he was prime minister and I was acting editor of *The Australian*, his conversion to the anti-American camp came as a surprise, but there we are). Surely, we must look at our policies in the region with a different perspective to Fraser's, who is as uncritical of China as he is critical of the US.

He, seems to have forgotten basic freedoms the US has, and China does not, like free speech. Google and Facebook are still blocked in China, while only last week Apple, a company that has contributed many billions of dollars to China's prosperity suffered a serious cyber attack, damaging enough for boss Tim Cook to visit a vice-minister to register a protest. He is not alone. Both the US and the EU Chambers of Commerce have complained about "bullying" by Chinese officials from the Ministry of Finance and Commerce handling competition issues.

Our foreign policies in Asia should be dictated by realism, not polemics, and, as Hedley Bull would have wanted, by state by state relations, not by often ambivalent multilateral constructs. Dealing with China is tough - our business leaders know that. We will only earn respect in Beijing by being frank. We will not be able to agree on everything. But we should say what we mean, and mean what we say.

¹⁰ Hillary Clinton criticizes Australia for two-timing America with China. Paul McGeough, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June 2014

¹¹ Wu Xinbo quoted in Tony Walker, 'China's muscle flexing splits opinion', *Australian Financial Review* (online), 1 July 2014

http://www.afr.com/p/national/china_muscle_flexing_splits_opinion_DhVNbhmpDLtJlmkBG4Wn1M

¹² *Dangerous Allies*; Malcolm Fraser, with Ain Roberts. Melbourne University Press, May 2014

We have to do the same – more frequently, more openly, and more objectively – with our other friends in Asia. It's not enough just to talk about Australia being involved in the region, or being an Asian player, we have to act as if we are part of Asia. That does not mean we have to be in lockstep with China, or forsaking our alliance with the United States. But I would argue that we must avoid giving the impression that we prefer the company of our American friends to taking our place among the many large and important countries in our neighborhood. Remember, they also have an interest in seeking a safe and prosperous future in an environment where China is becoming the dominant economic power, and where there are great power rivalries. But they seek a more independent route.

Earlier this week John McCarthy, the *eminence grise* of Australian diplomacy – who has headed our missions in Jakarta, Bangkok, Tokyo and Delhi, as well as Washington and elsewhere, reminisced that 20 years ago Australia was recognised as being fully involved in Asia. The initiatives of the Keating government, the energy and engagement of Gareth Evans in putting Australia's views across, in brokering a settlement in Cambodia, and in writing an Asian strategy for the government that we could do worse than follow today.¹³ These achievements earned Australia recognition. Now, John argues, Australia has lost its way, has leapfrogged Britain as America's greatest ally. John said, "We are a satrap of the United States"¹⁴

These are strong words, especially for someone who has been a leading practitioner in our foreign affairs establishment, but still sees value in ANZUS. Is he right? Have things changed? Are we turning our backs on our geography, or is this a misconception? After all didn't Julia Gillard bring us the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper? While heavily aspirational (and – I would argue – not improved by heavy rewriting of Ken Henry's original draft) didn't it re-focus us all on the importance of Asia? Did not all the work that went into it from those in civil society, business, the universities, the military not help our understanding? Didn't Tony Abbott in opposition promise 'Less Geneva, More Jakarta'? Hasn't Julie Bishop been a tireless foreign minister, restoring relationships with Indonesia? Didn't Abbott earlier this year navigate the treacherous shoals of tensions between China and Japan in a very successful visit to both countries? Are relations between Canberra and Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo not significantly better than they were under Kevin Rudd? All these were positives.

But what message do we send when Tony Abbott goes to London and advises the Scots to stay within the UK, and discusses Ukraine and the Middle East with David Cameron. When he is intending to 'shirt-front' Putin at the upcoming G20 in Brisbane/ When we entered a special relationship with NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. And of course now we are back in the Middle East, without any clear idea of how and when this particular commitment will end. What has this

¹³ Gareth Evans, speech to the Pacific Rim Forum, Bangkok. "The Asia Pacific in the Twenty First Century: Conflict or Cooperation", December 1 1995

¹⁴ John McCarthy, speaking at the annual Conference of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 26 October 2014

to do with our geography? Has the government not noticed that few, if any, of our Asian neighbours have bought into conflicts beyond their geography – not India, not Indonesia, not Singapore, not The Philippines?

Seasoned observers like John McCarthy and Professor Hugh White see Australia as ambitious to play a role beyond its horizons, rather than participating fully in shaping the one issue that really matters to us – the peace and prosperity of the Asia Pacific. Professor White said this week there is no higher priority in Australian foreign policy “Nothing that goes on in the UN Security Council, or at G-20 matters as much as this”, White said.¹⁵

The elephants in the room here, of course, are China and the United States, and their global rivalry, and the issue is the fundamental shift in economic power that has pushed White to the forefront of those who believe Australia may have to make a hard choice between the two. Neither shade of Australian politics wants to make that choice, and say they don’t have to. The trouble is that as long as the American alliance works the way it does, the perception, in much of Asia, is that Australia is firmly on the side of the US, not working within Asia for collaborative solutions. We need, briefly to look at how the two rivals stack up – and how this looks to others in the region.

China China’s economy will overtake that of the United States in absolute terms very soon. By 2030 China’s economy is likely to be 2.3 times larger than it is now and its middle class could rise from 10 percent to 70 percent of the population. That would mean around 850 million people enjoying good living standards. China has boosted military spending, particularly in the expansion of its seaborne forces. The People’s Liberation Army will soon be a more advanced, powerful fighting force. It is developing and acquiring advanced military hardware and capabilities - including stealth jets, aircraft carriers and cyber warfare.

In the medium term it will not be anywhere near the US military in sophistication or reach, but it will be a force to be taken seriously. China has also invested billions of dollars in new ports on the rim of the Indian Ocean, in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, with rail links underway back to China’s heartland. This is a wise security step, given China’s dependence now on ships bringing oil and resources through the narrow Straits of Malacca.

It is understandable China wants recognition of its new status, to be seen as a major global player. The word it hates most is “containment”. It will push back hard at any policy that appears have this as an ambition.

United States The US has been a Pacific power since World War II, and we can all speculate what would have happened to Australia – and China - had that not been

¹⁵ Professor Hugh White, speaking at the annual Conference of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 26 October 2014

the case. Some think the United States is in decline. Certainly American politics is dysfunctional, and polls indicate Americans have lost faith in their leaders. Yet statistics show that in the last 20 years there has been a significant decrease in crime, fatal car accidents, alcohol and tobacco consumption, and noxious emissions. Also on the plus side, the US remains the world's technological leader, it has returned to space exploration and commercialized it. The country has largely solved its energy problems, with big shale developments on the ground and potential solar energy from satellites. Global corporations, some that did not exist 50 years ago, have made a massive contribution.

What upsets the Chinese is what Beijing perceives as US self-aggrandisement, or a failure to acknowledge that China is an equal. Of course, many US political and other leaders do not see China as an equal. Commentators like George Friedman, note that the US Navy still "controls all of the oceans"¹⁶, a comment, while true, that inflames Chinese passions because it serves as a reminder of their humiliation in the Opium Wars, when Britannia ruled the waves.

We should not forget Russia's Pacific ambitions, under the experienced and analytical eye of Putin, He wants to restore Russia's global influence to where it once was, without the legacy of Marx, Lenin and Brezhnev. Given that his country is constrained by a sanctions regime that is hurting Europe as much as it is Russia, he has turned east to China. No fewer than 50 major deals were signed this month when China's premier visited Moscow, as Beijing tore up any residual support it had for UN sanctions.

Most other Asian countries embrace co-operation, which must be the correct policy. They want to build their prosperity, trade freely, and live in peace. Like New Zealand, which is in ANZUS but handles America differently.

Indonesia the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and others are engaged with China, but also quietly encourage a sustained regional role for the United States. The case of Vietnam is particularly interesting. Once supported by China and the former Soviet Union, post war, it still has a Communist government, like China. Like China, it now has a social market economy. Yet it is wary of its former protector and has established excellent relations with its old American enemy. It is anxious the United States should stick around.

These are the countries with which we should be more overtly aligning ourselves. Theirs are the leaders we should be seeking out for discussion and debate. And we should make it clear that, as Gareth Evans used to argue, it is the region's collective and comprehensive security that is uppermost in our minds, not getting involved in a US or NATO call to some distant shore.

¹⁶ The Next 100 Years; George Friedman. Doubleday, 2009; Page 16

We need to remember that just because we have a treaty with the United States, we do not have to line up with Washington on each and every foreign policy issue. To his credit, Tony Abbott pushed back when Hillary Clinton got heavy about a free trade deal with China. But last week, Secretary of State John Kerry pushed Abbott to keep Australia out of China's new Infrastructure Investment Bank – this at a time when infrastructure investment is the third item on the Brisbane G-20 agenda.

Abbott, of course, has said he wants to be known as the Infrastructure Prime Minister! At the signing ceremony last weekend with 21 countries present, Australia was conspicuously – and sadly - absent¹⁷. This absence was condemned widely in informed circles, notably by Geoff Raby, our former ambassador to Beijing, Telstra's finance director Andy Penn, Fortescue Metals CEO Neville Power, and others at this week's Futures Forum.¹⁸

The bank is President Xi Jinping's personal initiative to demonstrate that China can and will demonstrate global leadership. But the foreign minister, Julie Bishop, an experienced corporate lawyer, wanted to do more due diligence, sensible except we know Washington sees this bank as an extension of Chinese power, and will do everything possible to undermine it.

The list of those who are charter members of the Infrastructure Investment Bank include India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Brunei, Bangladesh and Mongolia, and, soon, Indonesia. When wondering why Australia was absent, people in Asian capitals will not say, Australia is doing due diligence. They will say, "it's because Obama and Kerry told Tony Abbott not to". That is the perception, and, in this case, the reality.

Another example is the behind-closed-doors negotiation for a Trans Pacific Partnership, a trade deal that goes well beyond tariffs into areas such as employment conditions, human rights, health and safety, and much else. Australia and New Zealand, many ASEAN countries, Japan and South Korea are participating, but China is excluded, by order of the United States. The spin coming out of the opaque discussions is that Beijing might be invited later when the rules are settled, assuming they are. This is a serious proposal, but not transparent. Like much else, it has not been seriously debated in Parliament. Australia should not have gone along with the process without more open debate.

Now we have to be careful not to overstate all this, not to overstate the desire in Washington to contain China. A Gallup poll recently put China as enemy number 1, and there are hawks in Washington who talk up war. The more rational do not see the conflict that way, but they have yet to be persuaded that the Americans cannot contain China. And we get mixed signals When President Obama last dropped into Canberra, in November 2011; he talked of "continuing to build cooperative

¹⁷ *Australian Financial Review*, P1 October 24 2014

¹⁸ *Australian Financial Review*, P1 October 26 2014

relationships with China.” He said he had directed his security team to make the US presence and mission in the Pacific a top priority. “The United States is a Pacific power and here to stay”, he said. But when he talked about economics, he didn’t mention China by name, but said, pointedly, “economic partnerships can’t just be about one nation extracting another’s resources.”¹⁹

He did not say, as I’ve heard it reported, “We will do everything in our power to retain the status quo”. Nor was the speech, as suggested by Bob Carr in his diary, “basically all hard rhetoric against China. Yet, on ABC’s *Lateline*, Paul Keating said that the context of Obama’s speech was ‘sticking it to China’, and that the Australian Parliament was being “verballed as part of what looked like being the stringing out of a containment policy”²⁰. When Tony Jones said, ‘verballed’ is a pretty strong expression, are you suggesting Obama did it on purpose, Keating replied, “Of course that is what he was up to – the Americans are quite ruthless about this”. Now all of this may just be semantics, but Keating went on to say, which is as relevant today as it was then. “China is not the old Soviet Union, and we would be making a huge mistake in trying to contain it. Great nations need strategic space. What we need is a region where China can emerge and not dominate. And where absolutely the US is a participant.”

That’s beginning to sound like the right policy for Australia. So how can it be implemented? The first objective must surely be for Australians to get out there and make these arguments. To say, repeatedly and often, we support cooperation, not containment. And to say this in Asian capitals, and in policy forums from Davos to Denver, wherever in fact these matters are discussed.

Julie Bishop restored Australia’s reputation with Marty Natalegawa, but to begin all over again with Retno Marsudi, a career diplomat, who has served in Canberra, and is now Indonesia’s first woman foreign minister. I hope to read that Ms Bishop and Peter Varghese are packing their bags for Jakarta. We need more Jakarta, less London, less Washington.

And in our relationship with Washington, we need to examine each and every issue with the region’s peaceful interests in mind. When the United States suggested we provide a facility for a modest number of American marines to be trained in Darwin, we concurred. But we also arranged for some of these troops, along with ours and soldiers from the People’s Liberation Army should be involved together in a bush survival exercise in the Northern Territory – the first of its kind. Very little has been written about it, I hear it was a great success. Why are we not telling the world about it? It’s one small step in the right direction.

That was a good move. And Bob Carr, as foreign minister, was surely right to push back against the immediate leasing of Cocos Island for use by US drones, ostensibly

¹⁹ Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament, 17 November 2011. Issued by Office of the Press Secretary, White House, Washington DC.

²⁰ ABC TV *Lateline*. Paul Keating interview 23 November 2011

for surveillance. But why not invite Indonesia to join us in undertaking this kind of work for the benefit of the whole region. It could be the first stage of what should be a serious move towards a closer economic and strategic partnership.

We must persuade the Americans that they must avoid what Singapore's prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong calls a worst-case scenario – a “riven and fractious Asia”.²¹ He describes this as US-China relations fraught with tensions, pushed by a zero-sum view of the world, and a lack of mutual trust. China's influence, instead of being welcomed, would be merely tolerated by other smaller countries in the region. That will damage the region's economic prosperity, including China's. The Singapore prime minister's best outcome would be if the major actors could determine that the Asia Pacific should be a region of harmony and prosperity, working together and settling differences patiently and cordially.

The United States would need to go further in recognizing China's ascent, and encourage it to take a greater role in global issues. The US needs to change its stance on China joining the Trans Pacific Partnership. China, for its part, must commit to all the norms of international law. This scenario makes the world's three largest economies as competitive powers that cooperate in the interests of peace.

Australia must start to explain to China and other countries its commitment to ANZUS, and its history. It also needs to explain that there are limits. The defence minister David Johnson did that when he told ABC's *Lateline* in June that he did not believe a military action over the Senkaku islands disputed between Japan and China would invoke the ANZUS treaty. But telling *Lateline* is not enough. Australia must also tell the United States that it will decide, the Parliament will decide, when we put our armed forces in harm's way.

At the AIIA conference, Senator Brett Mason, speaking on behalf of both the prime minister and the foreign minister, extolled the importance of Australia being a top 20 nation, and gave examples of our leadership in the G-20, and the Security Council. We have a tendency to be too modest about our global achievements, he claimed.²²

But neither our temporary roles in G-20 or on the Security Council – desirable though they undoubtedly are – will solve the two fault lines in our current foreign policy – our involvement in the Middle East and the urgent need to align ourselves more closely with our neighborhood – in a way that involves working with other countries to persuade the US to take a more balanced approach to the Asia Pacific. This requires more thought, more independence, and, above all, more assertive action. You could call it a pivot back to Asia.

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²¹ Lee Hsien Loong, 'Scenarios for Asia in the Next 20 Years'. Speech delivered at the Nikkei Conference 2014, Tokyo, Japan, 22 May 2014.

²² Senator Brett Mason, speaking at the annual Conference of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 26 October 2014