

THE TOCSIN

FLAGSHIP PUBLICATION OF THE
**JOHN CURTIN
RESEARCH CENTRE**
Labor ideas for a better Australia
Issue 8, October 2019

AUSTRALIA SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND CHINA

SPECIAL EDITION

Featuring

Gareth Evans, Senator Kimberley Kitching, Senator Kim Carr,
Tim Watts, Michael Danby, Misha Zelinsky & Osmond Chiu.

Contents

The Tocsin | Issue 8, 2019.

Editorial | 3

Gareth Evans – The Challenges
for Australian Foreign Policy | 5

Adrian Pabst – China's civilisational challenge | 9

Kimberley Kitching – Do you hear the People sing? | 12

Andrew Dettmer – Red Czar over China | 14

In case you missed it – highlights from our recent events | 16

JCRC in the news | 17

Kim Carr – An Academic Iron Curtain? | 18

Michael Danby – Huawei My Way | 20

Tim Watts – The Golden Country
and the Rise of China | 23

Osmond Chiu – Left out? | 25

Adam Slonim – Australia, the United States and China:
A New Policy Framework | 28

Misha Zelinsky – It's the national security, stupid! | 30

Getting to know ... JCRC Committee of Management
member David Cragg | 34

**Gareth Evans' vision for Australia's role
as a good international citizen | Page 5**



**Kimberley Kitching on why democracy
in Hong Kong matters to us all | Page 12**



**Misha Zelinsky looks at the energy
implications of China's rise | Page 30**



The Tocsin, Flagship Publication of the John Curtin Research Centre.
Issue 8, 2019.

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Editorial

Executive Director, Dr Nick Dyrenfurth

Clive Palmer's outrageous election-year-long advertisements claiming Labor was selling Australia out to Chinese interests were demonstrably false and pandered to xenophobia. Yet they resonated for a reason. When the public sees current and ex-Labor MPs (and Liberal MPs for that matter) kowtowing to the Communist Chinese Party government, they take notice. When they hear Laborites parroting CCP propaganda and historical revisionism, they mark Labor down. They are less trusting of Labor to protect them and their loved ones and their democratic freedoms. This is not an argument about the Chinese people, not the 1.3 billion diverse human beings who live in China or the diaspora, rather it concerns a one-party state which is wielding its economic and military might and spreading its anti-democratic ideas, globally. The CCP regime is contemptuous of democracy, the rule of law, and mighty Australian traditions of liberty and self-government – namely free trade unions.

The systematic oppression of China's large Uighur Muslim minority recalls the evils of the Soviet Union's Gulag Archipelago. As I write, the brave citizens of Hong Kong continue to protest against Beijing's interference in their affairs. As social democrats Laborites must stand with the Chinese people, China's minorities and Hongkongers and insist upon their right to live in a democratic society. Emphasising the 'democratic' in 'social democratic' is not a newfangled idea and should be uncontroversial. 'I am a democrat first, and then a socialist', announced E.J. Russell, a Victorian Labor Senator elected to the federal parliament in 1906.

"To be corrupted by totalitarianism one does not have to live in a totalitarian country. The mere prevalence of certain ideas can spread a kind of poison that makes one subject after another impossible ..." So wrote the great anti-totalitarian polemicist George Orwell in 1946. Three decades on from the end of the Cold War, authoritarianism, soft or hard, is on the rise globally. Russia, Turkey and China, and its leaders Vladimir Putin, Recep Erdogan and Xi Jinping are the most prominent faces of this club of strongmen leaders. The spectre of a resurgent far-right politics haunts Europe. Charismatic alt-right politicians are all the rage. Far-left demagogues

are challenging social democratic parties or in some cases superseding them. The undermining of global democratic norms, as we have witnessed with Russian interference in the 2016 US Presidential election, is not confined to China, or local revolutionaries of the far-left and far-right. In 2019, social democrats must be ready to fight a new battle of ideas, at home and abroad.

Granted, the majority of the world's countries are governed by democratic regimes. But the percentage of the globe's population living under autocratic rule still hovers around four billion – China boasting, to the CCP's shame, the lion's share. Still, for some pundits and, shamefully, a handful of Laborites, democracy has become an intellectual fashion accessory, a luxury Gucci bag good enough for the citizens of the West but optional for the rest. Labor in Opposition and the next Labor government must take an unequivocal stand on behalf of democracy in our region and the world over, no matter the noise generated by deeply compromised figures from both major parties, and most shamefully so in the case of the distinguished former Labor premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, who has found himself defending a form of totalitarianism he devoted most of his political life to fighting. A man who once wrote of the "clowns and psychopaths" who ran communist Russia and who recommended a work of history detailing this "terror-filled" past with the following: "Read this book and learn to revile the bastards all over again. To think that it took Australian communists like Lee Rhiannon decades to bring themselves to criticize the tyranny spawned by the 1917 revolution is to be educated again on the infinite gullibility of the idealistic."

Which brings us to the long-running debate over Australia's approach to the rise of China, the focus of this special edition of *The Tocsin*. As many – if not all – the contributors here argue, responding to the challenge of China's rise does not offer a simple 'either or' choice. No serious leader or serious observer has ever argued as such. It is the inarguable basis of any realistic, well-balanced Australian foreign policy. The great democratic challenge of our time is reconciling the demands of Australia's economic relationship with China, our largest

trading partner, with our legitimate national security needs and relationship with the US, our largest strategic ally, one predicated on a joint, unshakeable commitment to democracy. We cannot ignore predictions that China's economy will be double the size of the American economy in twenty years' time. But no self-respecting social democrat can ignore China's military build-up in the South China Sea. Or the plight of the Uighurs. Our social democratic internationalism demands we speak out against the threat of North Korea and China's crucial role on the Korean peninsula. It cannot mean uncritical support for Beijing's Belt and Road initiative. It cannot mean dismissing out of hand discussion around restoring real involvement with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with the US, India and Japan. The 'Quad' is demonstrably in Australia's interests, contrary to the claims of the Beijing 'right or wrong' lobby. It is not a form of US containment or tantamount to a formal military alliance. Australia's involvement would not be acting contrary to its own interests. Must we not be seen in company of democratic friends at the risk of causing imagined offence? Or is this the new Beijing orthodoxy, whereby Australian support for democratic principles is of itself unfashionable?

Orwell knew a thing or two about such matters. The unwavering social democrat paid a price for opposing Stalin's regime, and contesting the naïve argument that the Soviet Union was the major opponent of Nazism: namely, unemployment and exile from Britain's literary class. The great Labor Prime Minister John Curtin paid a higher price. His wartime sacrifice sent him to an early grave in 1945.

Our nation's future depends upon navigating our relationship with China, but it can never be pursued at the cost of betraying Labor's democratic, internationalist traditions. Borrowing an idea from a British Labour friend, let's see Labor leader Anthony Albanese standing at Darwin Port declaring "Australia shall be forever the home of the Anzac people". Some 'progressives' will wince at this sentiment, but they are the precise words used by Curtin on Anzac Day 1942. It is worth quoting his ode to the liberties and freedoms won by working people proceeding those words: "Today, as in 1915, men are dying so that the nation may live ... To the men placing their very lives on the altar of the nation's hopes as they take their place in the front rank of our fighting forces, to the men and women working long hours in the munition factories and essential industries, to all of you, I say: This Anzac spirit, this spirit of Gallipoli and Tobruk, will be our inspiration. We will resolve, each and every one of us, to work and fight, putting all else aside, so that ..."

Curtin was no jingoist. He had led the campaign

against conscription during World War One and was a fierce critic of the causes of that conflict and its monstrous death toll. But he was a patriot and an internationalist who knew his country and the world was engaged in the fight of its life: to save democracy itself. A twenty-first century social democratic approach to China's rise has much to learn from Curtin's great prime ministership.

We have an exciting line-up of publications and events scheduled for the rest of the year. We begin with this the eight edition of our flagship magazine *The Tocsin*. Your correspondent's post-election book *Getting the Blues: the Future of Australian Labor* will be launched on 31 October by Labor's Shadow Treasurer Jim Chalmers. We began our new 'Pathways to Federal Government' series with an address from Brendan O'Connor on 25 September in Melbourne and will shortly hear from Jim Chalmers, Clare O'Neil, Joel Fitzgibbon, Kimberley Kitching and Don Farrell and others over coming months and early 2020. Stay tuned for more news on a range of other exciting Australia-wide JCRC events and bold publications.

As you can see the JCRC has recommitted itself to the battle of the ideas – will you? Signing up will help us fund the research to prosecute big ideas and spread our social democratic message of hope and opportunity for all. It provides exclusive access to all of our reports and *The Tocsin*. If you have not yet signed up to fight the battle of ideas alongside us do so now: www.curtinrc.org/support.

In unity,



Dr Nick Dyrenfurth

Editor of *The Tocsin*

Executive Director, John Curtin Research Centre



The Challenges for Australian Foreign Policy

Gareth Evans sets out his vision for Australia as a good international citizen in the 21st century

Australia faces an international environment, both regionally and globally, more challenging than it has been for a very long time. Big and often disconcerting geopolitical shifts have been occurring, most of them faster and going further than almost any of us would have believed possible not very long ago. They include China's rapid rise; America's rapid comparative decline; North Korea's rapid acquisition of nuclear weapons capability; ASEAN's loss of a significant amount of its coherence and credibility at a time when both have never been more needed; the re-emergence of our own immediate South Pacific region as a potential playground for major power contest; India's long awaited emergence as a major player; Russia playing the role of regional hegemon and global spoiler whenever and wherever it can (although, we often forget, its economy remains no bigger than Australia's); Europe struggling to maintain its own coherence in the face of Britain's Brexit brain-fade and surging nationalist and populist sentiment across the continent; and a deteriorating worldwide commitment to multilateral problem solving, with diminishing confidence in the capacity of a global rules-based order to constrain those who are big and strong enough to think they can act unilaterally. And that list doesn't even mention what is happening in the Middle East, Africa or Latin America.

Of all these challenges, it is the contest between the United States and China which is dominating almost everything else, and certainly concentrating the minds of Australian policymakers more than anything else. China's economic rise has been breathtaking in its speed and magnitude and is now being accompanied by much more geopolitical assertiveness. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the longstanding injunction of Deng Xiaoping for China to 'hide its strength, bide its time and never take the lead' internationally has now been completely abandoned. China wants to be a global rule-maker, not just a rule-taker. It is no longer prepared to accept second-rank status in international financial and policymaking institutions. Its economic strength is now being parlayed into geopolitical

influence on a massive scale across the Asian continent and its maritime surrounds, including the Pacific, through the Belt and Road Initiative.

Strategically, China wants its own space in East Asia, and is no longer prepared to play second fiddle to the United States. Militarily, while its expenditure and overall firepower does not match America's, and catch-up globally will be a long time coming, there has been a very significant modernisation and expansion of its capability, certainly along the East Asian littoral, and into the Indian Ocean. Most disconcertingly, some expansionist territorial claims have been pursued, most notably in the South China Sea, with the continuing creeping militarisation of the reef installations in the Spratlys.

As China's authority has been rising, that of the United States has been manifestly waning, notwithstanding the enormous economic and military power the US continues to have, and the alliances and partnerships it continues to maintain. Its President has forfeited by his behaviour any claim to personal respect, and the Trump administration has squandered US credibility, not just in Asia but worldwide, at multiple levels. By tearing up the painstakingly negotiated and so far totally successful nuclear agreement with Iran; by insulting and alienating his NATO partners, and making clear in multiple ways that he regards allies as expensive encumbrances rather than assets; by walking away from the Trans Pacific Partnership, trying to destroy the WTO, and showing less understanding than a junior high-school student of the economic benefits of international trade; and by mounting a host of other assaults on multilateral institutions and processes, above all walking away from the Paris Climate Accords.

Australia's Strengths

In working out how we should respond to these challenges, we have to recognise that there are obvious

constraints limiting the exercise of Australia's diplomatic authority. We are not a great or major power, with economic or military might to match. We are somewhat geographically isolated, though much less than in the past. As a rusted-on US ally – at least until now – with an unbroken record for more than a century of fighting Washington's wars alongside it, we are not always seen, especially by the global South, to be as independently minded as we like to think of ourselves. Memories linger of our past racist policies, and we have to be more careful than most about charges of double standards or hypocrisy if our immigration or other policies are either wrong-headed or misunderstood internationally. But against all this we have wonderful strengths: assets and capabilities giving real weight to our standing and reputation – some of them inherent or of very long standing, some much more recently acquired. We are by most measures the thirteenth largest economy in the world; by any measure we are the sixth largest by landmass and with the third largest maritime zone; we are one of the most multicultural countries in the globe, with a very large pool of fluent Asian language speakers – hundreds of thousands of Chinese-Australians alone – constituting a fantastic but so far under-appreciated and underutilised resource; and we have, belated though it may be, a strong commitment to our Indigenous people, as the whole world applauded with Kevin Rudd's apology to the stolen generation. We bring to the table a unique geopolitical perspective, bridging our European history and our Asia-Pacific geography; Australians working in international organizations, both official and non-governmental, and our peacekeepers, have won almost universally outstanding reputations; we have had a strong and longstanding commitment to a rule-based global and regional order; and we have had a long record of demonstrated national commitment to the United Nations system in all its security, social and economic justice and human rights dimensions.

Beyond all that, we have been seen for many decades as a creative middle power with global interests and a long – though certainly not unbroken – record of active and effective diplomacy, on global and regional as well as bilateral issues. What should give us confidence in facing the future is how well, particularly under past Labor governments – but, to be fair again, not exclusively so – Australia has played that international role in the past. The Hawke and Keating Governments in particular were able to achieve a great deal both in our own region and wider afield, including helping create the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and other new, cooperative,

regional economic and security architecture; crafting the peace plan for Cambodia; securing the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention and advancing some major nuclear weapons objectives; playing a central role throughout during the Uruguay Round trade negotiations; building, with France, a strong coalition to save the Antarctic environment from mining and oil drilling; and in being a key player in crafting the financial sanctions strategy which finally brought down apartheid in South Africa.

Responding to the Challenges

So how should Australia, and in particular we in the Labor Party – albeit condemned to being in Opposition for the next three years – be reacting to these and other stress-generating international developments in our own region and beyond? I think there should be four primary elements in our policy response: Less America, More Self-Reliance, More Asia and More Global Engagement.

Less America

I am not suggesting for a moment that Australia walk away from the US alliance, from which we unquestionably benefit in terms of access to intelligence and high-end armaments, and – however flimsy the ANZUS guarantee may prove to be in reality – the notional deterrent protection of America's massive military firepower. Continued counter-balancing US engagement in our region is certainly highly desirable, but less reflexive support by Australia for everything the US chooses to do is long overdue. As I have often said, 'Whither thou goest, there I goest' might be good theology, but it is not great foreign policy for a country that values its independence and wants international respect.

My own experience strongly suggests that periodically saying 'no' to the US when our national interests are manifestly different makes for a much healthier, more productive relationship than one of craven dependence. While Simon Crean's position in 2003 that we

would not support the US invasion of Iraq in the absence of a UN mandate gave Kim Beazley and Kevin Rudd, among others, the vapours, he was absolutely right and I hope we would take that stance again if a similar situation arose: I was glad to see Bill Shorten effectively saying as much in his major foreign policy speech before the 2019 election, but that's now academic. The bottom line is that neither we nor anyone else in the region should be under any illusion that, for all the insurance we might think we have bought with our past support, the US will be there for us

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militarily in any circumstance where it does not also see its own immediate interests being under some threat. While that was almost certainly also the reality under previous administrations, it has been thrown into much starker relief by Trump's 'America First' approach, and it should not be assumed that anything would be very different in a post-Trump era. The reality is, as my ANU colleague Hugh White puts it, 'we need to prepare ourselves to live in Asia without America'.

None of this positioning is as breathtakingly adventurous, or politically dangerous, as it might once have been. Recognition that the US is a much less reliable ally than it once may have been is alive and well in Europe, is creeping into the writing even of the conservative commentariat here (certainly that of The Australian's Paul Kelly, if not Greg Sheridan), was clearly a subtext of the Government's own Foreign Policy White Paper in 2017. Both sides of Australian politics are going to have to think long and hard about how sensible it is to resist coming to terms with this new reality.

More Self-Reliance

Preparing ourselves to rely less on America certainly means being more of a diplomatic free agent: adding to our reputation and credibility with an activist foreign policy that is creative, proactive, value-adding and unconstrained by the constant urge to look over our shoulder to Washington. More than that, it does entail, in military terms, building defence capability that involves not only more bucks than we are usually comfortable spending but getting a bigger bang for each – focusing as Hugh White argues in his new book, *How to Defend Australia* (La Trobe, 2019), on maritime denial, with a complete rethink of our major equipment expenditure priorities. It certainly means maximising our capacity to protect our shores and maritime environment (including the South West Pacific) from hostile intrusion, but also having a capacity to engage in military operations wider afield if there is a good national interest (including responsible global citizenship) case for doing so. While defence expenditure has been increasing – with both sides of politics committed to maintaining it at a credible two per cent, or slightly more, of GDP – given the size of our continent, our capacity to defend ourselves against any existential threat is limited. I am optimistic enough to believe that in today's world the costs and risks of waging war so wildly outweigh any conceivable benefits for any significant player that the likelihood of a major conflict in the foreseeable future is very low. But defence planning always has to be based on worst case assumptions, taking into account potential adversaries' capabilities, not just known intent. In that context we have to get used to doing more.

More Asia

This to me has two dimensions: on the one hand, strengthening our relationships at all levels with key regional neighbours like India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan and South Korea, as a collective counterweight to a potentially overreaching China; and, on the other hand,

trying to develop a more multidimensional relationship, not just a one dimensional economic one, with China itself. As much as I would welcome Australia developing an even closer relationship with ASEAN as a whole – with all its potential for harnessing the region's collective middle power energy and capacity – and to see that relationship perhaps extending in the future to some form of associate membership rather than just partnership, I suspect that for the foreseeable future internal divisions, and the organisation's culture of extreme caution, make it unlikely. Our efforts in South East Asia should be focused on its two heaviest players, Indonesia and Vietnam, as well as our traditional partners Singapore and Malaysia. Which means, among other things, that just about the last thing we should be doing is gratuitously putting any of those relationships at risk by the kind of unbelievable folly involved in Scott Morrison's pre-election Jerusalem Embassy thought-bubble.

So far as China itself is concerned, it is critical – and I am glad to see last year's Foreign Policy White Paper spelling this out quite clearly, and this focus becoming evident in policy statements from our own side – to approach the relationship in a spirit of multi-dimensional engagement. We should be trying to build mutually beneficial connections at multiple levels, not just see the country as a one-dimensional economic partner, crucial for our prosperity but to be treated warily and confrontationally on anything to do with security issues in the hope and expectation, almost certainly now misguided, that the US will do the heavy lifting for us on that front. None of this means becoming Beijing's patsy, any more than we should be Washington's: we should not hold back in making clear our own commitment to democratic and human rights values, and should be prepared to push back strongly when China overreaches, as it has in the South China Sea. But it does mean recognising the legitimacy of many of China's own security and economic national interest claims, including the essential legitimacy of the scale and ambition of the Belt and Road Initiative: with us being a little less anxious about its regional security implications, and being prepared – with appropriate commercial caution – to be an active participant in the enterprise. It certainly means recognising the legitimacy of China's demand to be now not just a rule-taker but a participant in global rule-making. In that context, one of the most productive ways of building content into Australia's relationship may be to work more closely with China on the whole range of global and regional public goods issues – from climate change to nuclear arms control, from terrorism to health pandemics, from peace-keeping to responding to mass atrocity crimes – on many of which issues China has in recent times been playing a more interested, constructive role than has generally been recognised. Some will say Xi Jinping's rapid occupation of the climate space abdicated by the US, and rush – for a time, anyway – to champion the virtues of free trade, was cynical opportunism, but I don't think we should necessarily assume so: we should be exploring the options.

More Global Engagement

I strongly believe that this should come back into

focus as a sustaining theme of Australian foreign policy, picking up the idea that what I have described as 'being, and being seen to be, a good international citizen' is itself a core national interest, sitting alongside the traditional duo of security and economic interests (Penny Wong, prefers the expression 'constructive internationalism' to 'good international citizenship', but it's the same idea). Cooperatively advancing global and regional public goods is not just a matter of boy scout good deeds – there are hardheaded reciprocity and reputational returns. The willingness of ALP governments in the past to take seriously the pursuit of global and regional public goods, even when there was no direct or immediate economic or security return, has been a fundamental point of differentiation between us and most of our conservative opponents for decades now, and it's time in my judgement for this to take centre stage again. Australia has been at its best, and our standing in the world highest, when we play to the national strengths I described at the outset, and have projected ourselves effectively on to the world stage as a country deeply committed to our common humanity and determined to do everything we can to make the world safer, saner, more prosperous and just.

In the contemporary world, every state's security, prosperity and quality of life is best advanced by cooperation rather than confrontation, and Australia should be a relentless campaigner for just that. There are many public goods issues on which we could make a positive difference, using our own strengths as a capable, credible middle power and the strategies of international coalition building that are the essence of effective middle power diplomacy. Take, as just one example, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, where we have played a major role in global agenda setting in the past with the Canberra Commission initiated by Paul Keating in 1996 and the Australia-Japan Commission initiated by Kevin Rudd in 2009, and can play a major role again, including – I don't think it's too naïve to hope – by working with China, which has long been among the least enthusiastic of the nuclear-armed states. I don't disagree with those who say that the recently negotiated UN Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty – the Nuclear Ban Treaty – is aspirational rather than remotely operational in its present form and is never likely to win the support of any present nuclear-armed states. But I do think we should be more prepared to knowledge the normative – moral, if you like – significance involved in two-thirds of the world's countries participating in its negotiation, and not in any way accept that support for the Ban Treaty somehow undermines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): it does not.

My own view is that the most useful way forward is to develop a broad-based international coalition aimed at bridging the widening gulf between those who clamour hopelessly impractically for global zero now, and those who want to do nothing at all about nuclear disarmament. The beginning of wisdom here is a serious step-by-step process of the kind proposed in the Rudd-initiated International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) I co-chaired with my Japanese counterpart Yoriko Kawaguchi. Such a process would focus initially on the '4 Ds' – Doctrine ('No First Use'),

De-alerting (to build in launch-time delays and reduce the possibility of catastrophic error), Deployment (reducing the number of weapons actively deployed) and Decreasing overall numbers to a small fraction of the 14,500 presently in existence.

We know that complete elimination of nuclear weapons is going to remain out of reach for a very long time, but we just have to do something to reduce the salience and legitimacy of the most indiscriminately inhumane weapons ever invented, and the most immediate risk to life on this planet as we know it. The other great existential risk is, of course, climate change: but nuclear weapons can kill us a lot faster than CO2. Nuclear disarmament should be core business for any Australian government worth the name, and certainly any Labor government. My own strong belief is that Australians just don't accept that we are another also-ran, and that any government which adopts a posture which concentrates just on our more obvious bilateral relationships, and just on our immediate neighbourhood (though I support completely the re-engagement and re-focus on the South Pacific which has been capturing so much attention recently), and which remains myopic about what is capable of being achieved if we engage in a whole variety of multilateral forums with the skill and stamina which has served us so well in the past, will be a government that will simply not be playing the confident external projection role which most Australians want it to.

Our track record over many decades overwhelmingly shows that Australia and individual Australians are decent and committed international citizens, independently minded – and with a real egalitarian streak, something which plays well with a great many other countries based on our strong record, from peacekeeping missions to diplomatic forums, of neither sucking up to the powerful nor kicking down at the powerless. Playing to that instinct of decency, focusing on cooperative problem solving, working through forums like the G20 and East Asia Summit and APEC where as a result of past Labor government efforts we have a top-table place, using all the energy and creativity that has traditionally been associated with Australian middle power diplomacy at its best – and above all with ALP governments – will be far and away the best way of ensuring in the years and decades ahead, in a region and world in which the tectonic plates are shifting and every possible kind of uncertainty abounds, that this great country of ours not only survives but thrives.

With Bill Shorten leading a new ALP government and Penny Wong leading our external relations team, Australia really would have been in very good hands, fully realising our capability in a way that we have almost completely failed to do over the previous five years, and doing so in a way that will bring real and lasting benefit not only to our own people, but those of our region and the wider world. That's not to be for now. But it is critically important that we keep alive our distinctive flame in foreign policy until the next election and in the future beyond.

Gareth Evans AC QC was Foreign Minister from 1988-96 in the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments.

China's civilisational challenge

Adrian Pabst on why social democrats must defend the West

The Australian Labor Party has a proud record of being both patriotic and internationalist. No-one embodied this paradoxical disposition better than John Curtin. He went from being a passionate pacifist who mobilised against conscription to being a patriotic wartime leader. Curtin did not live long enough to build the post-1945 settlement but he laid its foundations – not least Australia's contribution to cementing the Western alliance against totalitarian Communism while also forging an alternative to laissez-faire capitalism.

Labor's legacy provides a rich resource for developing a political position and foreign policy in response to the rise of China. For the past few decades, social democrats in Australia and across the West have wrongly assumed that Beijing's embrace of economic liberalism and integration into the global economy would progressively bring about political liberalisation and the spread of democracy to the People's Republic. It is now clear that the dominant model of capitalist globalisation is compatible and often collusive with authoritarianism. The authoritarian nationalism of Xi Jinping's rule is not so much an aberration or deviation from a supposedly inevitable course of universal history towards progress as the consolidation of cultural exceptionalism – the Middle Kingdom and its unique civilising mission against the foreign barbarians at the gates of the Great Wall. The Cold War that ended 30 years ago was an ideological battle between capitalist democracy and totalitarian communism. Now the geopolitical struggle is civilisational and it pits Western humanism against the anti-humanist outlook of China's ruling classes.

Social democracy is unprepared because its frequently uncritical championing of economic liberalism means that parts of the Labor Party fail to understand the nature of the threat. Many social democrats view growing tensions with China only in economic terms. They lament the intensifying trade war waged by the Trump Administration and still believe that more globalisation will somehow integrate China into the liberal world order. For them history really did end in 1989 when they expected a global convergence towards Western market democracy. The surprise about setbacks – from Iraq in 2003 to the 2008 financial crisis – has since morphed

into a state of denial. Brexit, Donald Trump, and China's assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea or its brutal crackdown of popular protests in Hong Kong are misunderstood as just headwinds that will not blow the ship of liberal globalisation off course for long. For much of the left, low wages, deindustrialisation, and job-exporting trade deals are seen as inevitable in the forward march of progress, when in reality this programme favours China at the expense of the West. Worse, parts of the centre-left do not grasp that China's fusion of Leninist state collectivism with totalitarian tech control represents a threat to Western civilisational norms, notably a commitment to the dignity of the person enshrined in fundamental freedoms, rights, and mutual obligations.

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It is not just that Beijing views political liberalism as a source of weakness and corrosion of its hard-won authority. The Chinese leadership also rejects the principles of liberality on which Western civilisation depends, such as free inquiry, free speech, tolerance for dissent, respect for political opponents, freedom of religion, and the fair treatment of minorities. Granted, the West has fallen short of these standards in the past and still does so today: we need to do much better to live up to our own principles. But contemporary China is fast becoming a totalitarian system under a new guise. This includes a crackdown on domestic opposition, the internment of up to a million of Uighur Muslims in the restive region of Xinjiang, as well as the persecution of Christians and other religious groups across the country. What is new is a surveillance state that manipulates minds and creates a climate of fear and self-censorship, combined with the aggressive promotion of Chinese ownership of key strategic assets as part of the Belt and Road initiative of infrastructure investment. Neo-Confucian 'global harmony' and China's supposedly peaceful rise are a cipher for the country's hegemonic ambitions.

The rise of China entails more than a geo-political or geo-economic challenge. Security and prosperity are at the heart of international relations, but a contest over civilisation is the new pivot of international relations. Brexit, Trump and the resurgence of Russia, China and

India have put culture and civilisational identity at the heart of both domestic politics and foreign policy. As Christopher Coker puts it in his book *The Rise of the Civilizational State*, we are “living in a world in which civilization is fast becoming the currency of international politics”. China’s pursuit of hegemony represents a contest over what are norms of civilised life within and between nations and peoples. The rejection of Western universalism by the dominant elites in Russia and China challenges the idea of the nation-state as the international norm for political organisation. The Chinese ruling classes view themselves as bearers of unique cultural norms and they define themselves as civilisational states rather than nation states because the latter is associated with Western imperialism – in the case of China a century of humiliation following the nineteenth-century opium wars. Martin Jacques, author of *When China Rules the World*, argues that, “The most fundamental defining features of China today, and which give the Chinese their sense of identity, emanate not from the last century when China has called itself a nation-state but from the previous two millennia when it can be best described as a civilization-state”.

Xi Jinping has repeatedly called on the country’s elites “to inject new vitality into the Chinese civilization by energizing all cultural elements that transcend time, space and national borders and that possess both perpetual appeal and current value”. By this he means the timeless appeal of Confucian harmony that is promoted by the Communist state at home and abroad. A vision of a civilisational sphere of influence underpins Beijing’s efforts to bring Taiwan and the South China Sea under Chinese control. The unfolding trade war with the US is just the beginning in a larger East-West confrontation over two rival civilising missions, including control over technology that has the potential to redefine what it means to live in society and be human. The furore over the Chinese state-backed company Huawei and its involvement in the building of a 5G mobile phone network in Australia and the UK is a harbinger of battles to come.

China presents its path of development as not for export, whereas the US-led Western model is portrayed as expansionist. In reality, the Beijing consensus of Leninist state capitalism and neo-Confucian global harmony is being pushed across Central Asia and even Europe using the Belt and Road initiative of infrastructure investment. Xi’s China is also deploying propagandist PR and soft power. A worldwide network of over 700 Confucius Institutes embedded in foreign universities and its domestic film industry promote the Chinese civilisational state. This is backed up by the English-language edition of the official newspaper *China Daily* and China Central Television’s multi-lingual programmes. The Chinese Communist Party is creating a surveillance system that makes Western tech platforms look like paragons of privacy protection. The all-seeing internet and high-tech facial recognition control individual behaviour in cities and in restive regions such as Xinjiang, where according to estimates cited by the UN as many as one

million Muslims are locked up in re-education camps. Corporations collude with the state by feeding data used to blacklist dissidents and enforce censorship. Knowledge and power are concentrated in the hands of party planners who manipulate the wider population to their way of thinking. During Mao’s rule from 1949 to 1976, the Communists replaced the idea of a government of people with the administration of things. Under Xi, China looks set to evolve into a tyranny by numbers.

The country’s dependence on huge investments in Africa, Latin America and Central Asia for market outlets and political influence suggests hegemonic ambitions. Xi’s vision of a harmonious world order is one in which China’s civilisational state will be beyond criticism from within and without. China’s leadership is on a charm offensive to seduce the liberal West. In January 2017, while Donald Trump denounced the Davos dogma of free trade, Xi addressed the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort, saying that “globalisation has powered global growth and facilitated movement of goods and capital, advances in science, technology and civilisation, and interactions among people”. China’s hegemony advances under the cover of economic liberalism.

Few social democrats have taken a stand. But if the centre-left does not speak up for the persecuted Muslim minorities in China, and for the freedoms of all the Chinese, then Western values of equality, liberty and solidarity mean nothing. Social democracy has to rethink its political position and foreign policy vis-à-vis China. First of all, there are reasons for sounding the alarm about worldwide Chinese influence. The potential participation of the Chinese company Huawei in new 5G mobile phone network constitutes a threat exceeds by far the potential theft of intellectual property and even national security. It is about the control of technology that is capable of redefining what we mean by freedom of conscience and free speech.

If, as I have argued, the Chinese Communist Party led by Xi Jinping has adopted a civilising mission, then the contest with China is not primarily ideological but civilisational. Far from being racist or supremacist, this is a long-overdue recognition that threats to Western values are often more subtle than mere military power and therefore potentially more sinister, like the monarchical absolutism of imperial Japan under the rule of Hirohito who was worshipped by his followers like a god-like leader. Then as now, the rising power poses a unique challenge because it is not part of the tradition of Western philosophy, history, and culture. This is not the same as the idea by the American academic Samuel Huntington about a ‘clash of civilizations’, which suggests that after the end of the Cold War conflicts would be predominantly between civilisational traditions rather than ideological systems. The battle between the West and the rest is not at all inevitable, as Huntington (or rather a simplistic reading of him) implies. Instead, there is a compelling case for saying that different civilisations need to understand themselves and one another much better and also accord respect to those who have different civilisational norms.

What this seems to suggest is a different approach to geopolitics. Whereas the post-1989 world witnessed Western attempts to export liberal market democracy, our times mark the return of great power competition around rival civilisational norms. The West is committed to the intrinsic worth of each and every person. Contemporary China under Xi Jinping, by contrast, is concerned with the collectivity. The West believes in personal rights and obligations set out in constitutions that constrain state power. Xi's China, on the contrary, believes in obedience to an omnipotent state that overrides constitutional boundaries. The West promotes a market economy based on private ownership and free enterprise. China is building a model of state capitalism based on Communist control of property and state-owned corporations. The West seeks to uphold a free space of human association independently of the state, whereas China views all intermediary institutions as a conveyor belt between the party and the people. Of course the contemporary West does not always live up to its principles, just as China's ruling classes do not uphold some of the best Chinese traditions of culture and civilised life. But at the heart of growing tensions between the West and China is a fundamentally different outlook.

Western concerns with the dignity of the human person enshrined in human rights rest on Christian humanism and its focus on the common good. This is not a collective 'public good' imposed by experts, but rather a good pursued by all which exists only in reciprocal relationships and the constant striving towards both individual fulfilment and mutual flourishing. The liberty of each and the equality of all are important principles, but even more important is lived fraternity. It redeems freedom devoid of social solidarity and provides trust and cooperation. What binds people together is what makes us free and society more just. By contrast, the Chinese leadership defines harmony in terms of collective utility – the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers. This is brought about by the central state and enlightened elites who have been carefully selected to enforce the will of both party and army. China's ruling Communists are deploying high-tech facial recognition and algorithms to control individual behaviour. The system of social credits rewards obedience and compliance. The fusion of a Leninist 'administration of things' with neo-Confucian collectivism replaces the Western idea of a government of the people with a tyranny by numbers. All this – combined with large-scale Chinese investment in Artificial Intelligence, robotics and genetics – suggests that Beijing is more interested in the power of the strong over the weak than the equal dignity of all.

... social democrats should speak out and defend the West's best traditions. If China continues to deny its citizens religious freedom and the right of political dissidents to emigrate, then Western politicians and civic leaders have a duty to act. A new approach to international politics is now required in order to be clear about the threat posed by China but also about the potential to bring about a proper balance of power anchored in respect between different civilisations.

Against this background, social democrats should speak out and defend the West's best traditions. If China continues to deny its citizens religious freedom and the right of political dissidents to emigrate, then Western politicians and civic leaders have a duty to act. A new approach to international politics is now required in order to be clear about the threat posed by China but also about the potential to bring about a proper balance of power anchored in respect between different civilisations. And yes the West has no monopoly over what are civilisational norms or a proper debate with other civilisations. Meaningful dialogue between civilisations is becoming more difficult just when mutual understanding is more necessary than ever. The terms of debate between

different civilisations will likely not be Western. As Coker argues in his book *The Rise of the Civilizational State*, the pushback by the non-Western world means that "the West may be out of the business of shaping history for everyone else or even itself". However, this means that the West needs to develop a strategy of how to confront China in case of human rights abuses while at the same time encouraging the country to renew the legacy of Confucian and Buddhist social virtues, such as hospitality, benevolence, and trustworthiness. The damage of Mao's Cultural Revolution needs to be repaired and not plastered over by Xi Jinping's increasingly atavistic nationalism. While contemporary conservative parties in Australia and elsewhere slide into a radical-right politics of division and demonisation, the centre-left has

a unique opportunity and duty to offer a constructive alternative. But to do so, social democracy also has to uphold the West's best traditions and practice the principles it inherited from Greco-Roman philosophy and law as well as Judeo-Christian religion and ethics – the unique value of the person and free human association independent of the state, which are under threat everywhere. Above all, what is missing is meaningful dialogue between civilisations for the benefit of mutual understanding and cooperation based on shared interests. A 'clash of civilisations' is neither necessary nor normative.

When the Iron Curtain fell thirty years ago, Vaclav Havel – the Czech dissident turned President – said that 'we are concerned for the destiny and the values that brought down Communism – the values of Western civilisation'. Havel was right. The renewal of Western civilisational norms is vital for the West and the world.

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Do you hear the People sing?

Democracy in Hong Kong matters to us all,
writes Kimberley Kitching

Earlier this year walls covered in colourful post-it notes began to pop up across Hong Kong. The phenomenon was previously seen during the city's 2014 Umbrella Movement. Colloquially known as Lennon Walls, they take their name from an organic memorial that sprung up in Prague after the assassination of John Lennon in 1980. They are a place for positivity and solidarity – anyone can come and scribble a message, sketch a drawing, paste a picture or quote some song lyrics. Lyrically, the Movement has adopted “Do you hear the People sing?” from Les Misérables as their unofficial anthem.

Around the world, the mosaics affirm messages of support for Hong Kong's democracy movement. In Australia, they can be seen at university campuses across the country. But they have also become a flashpoint for controversy. At the University of Queensland, a Lennon Wall started by international students from Hong Kong and had grown organically was destroyed in the middle of the night by masked men. This came just weeks after the same university was the scene of a violent clash between pro-Beijing students and supporters of the protest movement.

It is deeply concerning that in Australia, where democratic institutions are enshrined in our constitution and a contest of ideas is encouraged, support for a democratic movement devolved into such violence. But in a way, it is symptomatic of the current global political climate. In public discourse around the world we are seeing the centre being hollowed out, making way for fringe radicalism that is having a regressive effect on democracy. Earlier this year, a proposed bill before Hong Kong's Legislative Council that would have allowed for extraditions to Mainland China set off a chain of events that cannot be wound back. Initially, opponents simply demanded the bill be withdrawn. They held legitimate concerns that those deemed problematic by Beijing would be picked up off the streets and brought before an opaque Chinese legal system – one which boasts a criminal conviction rate of 99 percent. Carrie Lam, the island's Chief Executive, along with a majority Beijing-backed Legislative Council, could have saved themselves from the complex situation in which they are now entangled had they heeded these calls earlier. There was a period of several weeks in which had the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance amendment bill been scrapped, Hong Kong's Exco might have been perceived to be standing up against encroachment into their affairs by China. Instead, they find themselves in a situation of complete loss of face. Lam is a vastly diminished figure. She has said she would quit

if she had “a choice” – further flaming the belief that she is a politician operating at the behest of a higher authority.

The situation reached boiling point when local police, who up until that point had shown restraint, responded with disproportionate brutality. Week-by-week, as the marches grew bigger, so did the violence after sundown. Rubber bullets, batons, water cannons, pepper spray – all have become the norm on the streets of Hong Kong. But among all this the Movement has remained resolute. At times, almost two million people, or a quarter of the population, of all ages have taken to the streets in support. Momentum was expected to dwindle as time wore on but what we have actually seen is a galvanising of support. The Movement has since made additional demands. They want Lam to resign, the establishment of an independent judge-led inquiry into police brutality, amnesty for all those arrested, as well as universal suffrage. It is hard to see an end to this stalemate without one side making major concessions. Indeed, there has been an escalation: the Chief Executive has imposed the Emergency Regulation Ordinance – a colonial era law – to ban masks at all rallies whether they are lawful, or unauthorised; two protesters have been shot by police using live ammunition for the first time. In one incident a 14-year-old boy was shot and the police officer responsible suffered burns when a petrol bomb ignited near him. The 14-year-old was arrested, making him the youngest person to be charged in connection with the protests. An 18-year-old who was shot a few days earlier was also arrested and charged.

Concerns with Beijing's increasing interference in Hong Kong's affairs are not new. Their Liaison Office – a de facto embassy of sorts, is well known for operating deep clandestine interference and misinformation operations. Beyond financially propping up pro-China businesses and placing hand-picked individuals into important administrative roles, it has also been reported to own at least half of the city's bookstores. This Orwellian tactic is a clear attempt to control the distribution of information in Hong Kong. What should concern us about all this is that China is in breach of the trust of the agreement that the world signed up to when Hong Kong was handed back in 1997. Central to that agreement was the right to self-determination – a ‘One Country, Two Systems’ policy. One Country, Two Systems ensured the autonomy of the territories' economic and financial institutions, trade relations and system of government. Crucially, it also allowed for Hong Kong to maintain its own legal system, including an independent judiciary and police force. But recent months have given us an unfiltered view into the proliferation of violence on the streets of Hong Kong.

Regular instances of shocking brutality at the hands of a client-police force have rightly led to outrage from the international community. Australia, as one of the oldest democracies in the world and a regional power, should use our influence to defend democratic institutions where they are under threat. Both the Foreign Minister, Senator Payne and the Shadow Foreign Minister, Penny Wong have emphasised Australia's support for the One Country, Two Systems policy.

It was for this reason that Liberal MP Kevin Andrews and I decided to establish a Friends of Hong Kong parliamentary group. The group is a place for the discussion and promotion of a peaceful solution to the ongoing situation. Any solution, though, should reflect the democratic values that its people have come to cherish and to respect the unique history of Hong Kong. So far, we have seen support from all quarters of Parliament. We have members from across the spectrum of major parties, as well as the cross bench and minor parties. The people of Hong Kong deserve the autonomy that was promised to them and the world. Internationally, we are seeing an attempted legislative response to the ongoing situation. In the US, a draft bill is currently being circulated: The Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019. If passed, it would allow for sanctions to be placed on officials who commit human rights abuses and undermine the autonomy of Hong Kong. Its practical application would be similar to Magnitsky-style legislation in various jurisdictions around the world. While the bill has failed previously in different iterations, time will tell if there is now an appetite for this. Both sides of the aisle in Washington seem to have reached a general consensus on China, and on Hong Kong. On Hong Kong, both Elizabeth Warren and Marco Rubio have written recently and in agreement.

In Australia, there are still those unwilling to take a clear stand on democratic principles including the rule of law, free and fair elections, rights of minorities, and a free press. So ubiquitous is the coverage of issues of political interference, intellectual property theft, non-transparent donations and academic espionage that it has all but drowned out reporting of the positives of the Australia-China bilateral relationship. Hundreds of years of Chinese migration, deep business and trade linkages, two-way education transfers and everything that the proud Chinese-Australian community brings to this country should be the first things that come to mind when we talk about China today. But public sentiment on China and its rise is shifting. No longer is this seen through the prism of a benign international actor only interested in domestic matters. If you walk out onto Treasury Place in Melbourne or Eagle Street in Brisbane today, everyone will have a view on China. This probably wasn't the case only a year ago.

Internally, China fears that a failure to crack down on the situation in Hong Kong could lead to a contagion of pro-democracy movements across the mainland. This is an especially delicate situation considering Taiwan—another territory China considers its own, and that will hold presidential elections in January 2020. While the People's Liberation Army has not been sent in to shut down the protests, troops are massing on the Shenzhen border – a short drive from downtown Hong Kong. The CCP released

truly chilling promotional footage of riot squads in action in what can only be interpreted as a blatant attempt to intimidate Hong Kongers; the recent parade celebrating the 70th anniversary of Chinese Communist Party rule is this, writ large.

Trying to understand the motives of the Chinese leadership and the intricacies of its political system may seem as complicated as a Rube Goldberg design, however, the ultimate aim is as simple as his machines' functions—the survival of the CCP. Carrie Lam, in the leaked secret recording where she indicated her desire to quit her post also noted that the situation had become a national security and sovereignty issue for Beijing. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that we are about to see a Tiananmen-style crackdown on the streets of Hong Kong. What this does show is how Beijing treats regions in which it lays an historical claim. When issues relating to Taiwan, Tibet or disputed maritime areas arise, China forcefully tells the international community that it has no place commenting on its own internal sovereignty. Here, Australia should pursue values-based engagement with China. We should prosecute our interests as part of our international engagement and not be intimidated when these are threatened.

China's bellicose language toward the Hong Kong protesters—likening their actions with terrorism, also reflects an internal belief that Hong Kong's strategic importance is not what it once was. The headline economic indicators back this up. In 1997, Hong Kong represented about twenty percent of all China's economic activity. Today, this is barely three percent. At the time of handover, China had not yet ascended to member status of the World Trade Organisation. Back then, Hong Kong served as an entrepôt trading port that Chinese goods could be funnelled through in order to avoid tough trading restrictions. Hong Kong sits at the mouth of the Pearl River Delta—a sprawling collection of metropolises that are the world's manufacturing base and one of its most densely populated areas. Nearly 50 percent of all Chinese trade once passed through Hong Kong's ports—it is now around 12 percent.

But this does not tell the whole story. For the international business community, Hong Kong represents a progressive, stable city where they can locate their regional headquarters—a safe gateway to the Chinese market. Its regulated financial systems, market-oriented economy with a US dollar-denominated currency, rule of law and long connection to the West all contribute to a conducive business environment. Hong Kong still represents the largest source of overseas foreign direct investment into China. In 2018, almost half of all projects with overseas investment into Mainland China had links back to Hong Kong. The ongoing situation in Hong Kong has investors and the international business community spooked. The threat of further Chinese intrusion into the territory and weakening of corporate and public governance structures have them actively considering alternatives – Singapore being the obvious choice. It is interesting to note that Hong Kong is home to the largest number of Australian expats after London.

Recent events have brought into sharp focus the Hong Kong-Australia Free Trade Agreement. This is currently going through parliamentary processes, including the Treaties Committee. So how events unfold from here will have a real impact on the passage of this trade agreement. Legislation is set to be presented to parliament later this year, but it has been the Labor Party's position that the Morrison government must assure the Australian public that it will not in any way undermine Hong Kong's autonomy and the One Country, Two Systems agreement.

Hong Kong's unique history means it is the last region with Chinese oversight in which people can openly demand their democratic rights. The protest Movement's leadership represents a generation who has come of age seeing those

rights slowly being taken away. Unlike Mainland China, where economic liberalisation in the 1980s ushered in three decades of double-digit growth, lifting a billion people out of poverty and creating a new middle-class, Hong Kong's younger generation has seen their living standards go backwards. Cost of living has increased, social services are declining and there is an acute lack of affordable housing. Combined with the repeal of one of the last mechanisms the people have to exercise self-determination, you have a powder keg waiting to blow. The match that finally set it off just happened to be February's proposed extradition bill. Democracy is under threat in Hong Kong. This does not just matter to the generation taking to the streets to demand that this is preserved – it matters to us all.

Kimberley Kitching is Labor Senator for Victoria.

Red Czar over China

Andrew Dettmer urges a more nuanced approach to debates over China

Australia's relationship with China is quite properly a matter of study, debate, and discussion. But it is also the location for a great deal of fear and prejudice. Scott Morrison's newfound interest in our largest trading partner seems to be based more on his desire to position himself in the Trumpsphere than the needs of Australia. The post-war history of Australia's relationship with China – the time of “Yellow Peril” and “Red Scare” – gives us a great example of how not to manage a relationship. In that period, public policy-making bordered on the near-paranoid. At the height of the Cold War, the presence of a behemoth (albeit one shattered by over a century of war and famine) to our north and the delusions of the “Domino Theory” made any objective assessment of China and its people difficult if not impossible. In ways that seem near delusional now, Vietnam was seen as a vassal state of China.

Critical engagement was discouraged both by the Australian government as much as the government of the People's Republic. Primitive and time-consuming communications made it difficult, although not impossible, as the many visits by members of the Communist Party of Australia to attend schooling and political education attest. Yet one has only to look at the fate which befell Australian communists like Rex Mortimer and his associates. After returning from China fairly disillusioned with the experience of China under Mao, Rex came up against an intransigent CPA leadership under Ted Hill, as well as the damaging scrutiny of ASIO, both of which saw him as an “unreliable element.” Engagement with China was treated with suspicion by a succession of Liberal governments from Menzies onwards, until the advent of Whitlam.

The advantages that Australia may have obtained had the engagement been more active were lost in the prejudices of the Cold War.

From 1961 until formal recognition took place, any political contact with China was almost exclusively via the CPA (Marxist-Leninist), formed when Hill departed the CPA in 1961. Unfortunately, it chose the route of hagiography and compliance with the twists and turns of Mao's leadership, variously providing unstinting praise (and acres of regurgitated prose) for the Great Leap Forward, the 100 Flowers, the Cultural Revolution, etc. There was however an area in which some contact was maintained. Australian trade unions sought to have dialogue with the Chinese trade union movement, such as it was, to try and seek areas of common understanding. Much of this occurred via the Australian peace movement. The only recognized “union” in China is the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). The ACFTU incorporates all of the local and municipal trade unions in China. Rather than being a federation of trade unions such as the ACTU, the ACFTU operates as a national body. It is however subject to direction and appointment by the CCP and recognises the “leading role” of the CCP in all matters. This has often acted as a brake upon greater dialogue and cooperation between Australian unions and their Chinese counterparts. Australian unions have sought dialogue in different ways. For example, the Queensland Council of Unions has regular dialogue with the Shanghai Municipal Trade Union federation, one of the largest component parts of the ACFTU. Likewise, through global union federations such as IndustriALL, the views of the ACFTU have been sought and discussions held. However, the overwhelming view is that the ACFTU is an organ of state rather than a

free and independent trade union federation. This has not prevented the ACFTU from seeking affiliation to the ITUC and other bodies. The ACFTU's status as an independent trade union is hard to sustain. China's position on the "Basic 8" ILO Conventions on workers' rights is illustrative. While it has ratified Conventions 138, 182, 100 and 111 (on minimum age, child labour, equal remuneration and discrimination in employment) none of the "organising" rights conventions (29, 87, 98 and 105) have been so recognised.

Bargaining in China is not as we would recognize. Unions in China see themselves as making their companies more efficient, rather than demanding better wages and conditions. Such union organisation as exists in workplaces is often directed more to welfare outcomes, dealing with individual issues such as housing and family matters. This reflects the massive social dislocation which has accompanied economic development; many millions of Chinese workers remain undocumented and so have no housing or other social rights in the areas that they work in.

There are strikes in Chinese workplaces but the ACFTU is not involved. As the economy has continued to grow, pressure on wages has also increased. There was a large unofficial strike wave in 2011-12, leading to some increases. However, many Chinese workers simply resort to the measure that workers in overheating economies have always resorted to, to follow the money, i.e. to seek other better paid jobs in their field. This led to an increase in the social dislocation referred to above, which the Government seeks to control by limiting transmigration. As a labour market measure this has been of limited effectiveness.

Health and safety is also problematic. In large enterprises OHS is a critical part of risk management. Consequently, personal protective equipment (PPE) is commonly issued, often to a very high standard. However individual workers are not empowered to deal with their own safety. The situation in smaller workshops is very different. On my observations, many machines are unguarded, basic PPE like safety boots a rarity, even welding goggles not commonly issued.

The introduction of new productivity measures and new technologies is reasonably fraught. Cybersecurity standards are lax; whether this is because all technology must be subject to Government oversight is unknown, but many sellers of corporate software from the developed world are wary of allowing unfettered access and therefore development of their technologies in China. Foreign companies operating in China must only use servers based in China; neither code nor information is allowed be encrypted.

Much of the progressive thinking about the workplace arises from the cooperative sector. Cooperatives have been a feature of the Chinese economy from 1938 and have blossomed since the Revolution. Many of the "hundreds of thousands" of cooperatives in China are in the agricultural sector, but there are many thousands in the manufacturing sector as well. Because they are by definition participative, electing managers, etc., there is less of a directive nature to relations between management and workers. In my limited experience, it appeared that many of the cooperatives were open to consultation and innovation in a way that would enhance their approach to improved productivity measures. The difficulty arises from their lack of access to capital.

The state-owned sector is still approximately 2/3 of China's economy. However, as The Economist described it, "The success of the private sector in China is undisputed. Its most innovative and global technology stars are all privately run... The non-state sector contributes close to two-thirds of China's GDP growth and eight-tenths of all new jobs. The proportion of private ownership in industry continues to rise as that of the state recedes. This is for good reason: SOEs' return on assets is half that of privately held ones." The CCP, however, requires that the party have a presence on boards of management. As reported in the same Economist article, the requirement is now that tech companies, not subject previously to the requirement to have members of the CCP on the board of management are now being required to do so. The impact

that this has on decision making is difficult to discern, but given that all workplaces of over 100 people have been required to have a CCP branch in the workplace for many years, it may be discerned that such requirements would have a restricting impact on company decision making. Regardless, wages and conditions for Chinese workers continue to improve. While the developed world has seen a freeze in wages, and in some instances going backwards, the regionally-determined minimum wage in Shanghai (the highest) is RMB 2,480 (US\$358), while the average wage in that province is RMB 9,723 (US\$1,405) per month.

The situation is unclear, at best. The ascendancy of Xi Jinping as supreme leader – the new czar – is undoubted. And the Chinese economy has slowed. In the context of a manufactured trade war with the US, his nerve may be the stronger, given the lack of internal scrutiny he is subject to. The role of technology is currently to be a servant of the state under Xi. It remains to be seen how innovative China can be. But let's hope that we do not revert to the irrational fears of our racist past.

Andrew Dettmer is National President of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and JCRC Advisory Board member.

In case you missed it...

Take a look back at highlights from our recent events,
and recent news coverage from the John Curtin Research Centre.



**Brendan O'Connor kicks off our
▼ Pathways to Government Series**



**▲ Melbourne launch
of our AI Report with
Martin Pakula ▼**



**Adrian Pabst
Story of Our Country
book launch ▼**



**Sydney Launch
of AI Report with
Daniel Mookhey ►**



JCRC in the news

Catch up on all our latest musings, straight off the desks of our Committee and Board Members.

Congratulations to our Committee of Management member Clare Burns on being appointed to the role of Victorian ALP state secretary!



And our best wishes to Kosmos Samaras who after fourteen years in the job will step down as Victorian ALP assistant state secretary and director of campaigns. We wish him well in his new endeavour: as a director of Redbridge group.

Senator Kim Carr's article in the most recent edition of *The Tocsin* attracted significant media attention. One report distils the key points made by Kim: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2019/07/30/kim-carr-labor-policy/>



Our Executive Director Nick Dyrenfurth recently had an opinion piece published with *The Age*. For more details of the launch of his new book, *Getting the Blues: the Future of Australian Labor*, head to the JCRC Facebook page.

Labor has not learnt the hard lessons



The launch of our Pathways to Government series with special guest Brendan O'Connor attracted significant media interest.

You can read the coverage here: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/veteran-labor-figure-warns-against-dumping-policy-platform-says-win-within-striking-distance-20190924-p52ujg.html>

Brendan's full speech can be found at: <https://brendanoconnor.com.au/news/latest-news/john-curtin-research-centre-presents-pathways-to-government-melbourne-wednesday-25-september-2019/>



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An Academic Iron Curtain?

The Balkanisation of international research is not in Australia's interest, argues Kim Carr

In these times of heightened anxiety about China's global influence, Australia's scientists and researchers all too often endure the smear that they are collaborating with a foreign power. The accusation, made by hawks within the defence and security establishments, conflates several things that are not the same: concern at the activity of international students on Australian campuses; the need to uphold quality assurance standards in higher education institutions; the need to protect our cybersecurity; and the importance of genuine international research collaboration. The hawks – and those in the media who uncritically report their remarks – ought to know that these are all different things.

Yet the notion that we should fear research collaboration with the People's Republic of China (PRC), and that reputable scientists in Australia's universities and research agencies are at least dupes, if not actively disloyal, is relentlessly put forward. In part, this reflects the fact that the neoliberals who in earlier decades pushed for the opening up of trade relations with the PRC by declaring it to be a 'market economy' have been mugged by reality. Blinded by their own ideological blinkers they assumed that PRC was becoming a Western-style economy, and that this would gradually but inevitably lead to it becoming a liberal democracy, too. It hasn't happened.

That said, however, the hawks are being highly selective, indeed quite arbitrary, in their focus on the PRC. After all, it is not the only authoritarian state with a record of human rights abuses whose students visit this country and undertake research in PhD programs. Yet strangely, nothing is said about the students who come here from the Middle East or Africa. Apparently, it is only the PRC whose treatment of dissidents and minorities is cause for concern. Nor do the Sinophobes acknowledge that there is more than one state with the technological capacity to threaten Australia's cybersecurity. Russia and the United States could all do so. It is a matter of record that even friendly nations sometimes do things that friends are not supposed to do, such as stealing our passports and the identities of our citizens. The factual record, however, is something that those intent on whipping up a new cold war against the PRC prefer to ignore. They certainly refuse to acknowledge the fundamental fact concerning Australia's international research collaboration: that we have one of the most highly regulated defence trade export regimes in the world.

The Defence Trade Controls Act 2012 was introduced

in response to concerns that it was too easy for other nations, and perhaps non-state actors, to obtain sensitive material from this country. The Act regulates the access to technologies placed on a Defence Strategic Goods List, which is maintained through regular exchanges between the Department of Defence, universities and industry. In its own documents, Defence has been quite clear, contrary to media reports, that it does not rely on self-assessment by universities and agencies to ensure compliance with Australia's export controls. The Department is in regular contact with these institutions to ensure that academics and researchers are aware of Australia's export controls and of any proliferation risks in sharing technology. The defence trade controls system applies to all exports of controlled technology, regardless of whether the exporter is a university, a government agency or from the private sector.

As evidence to Senate estimates hearings confirms, in the time that the system has been in force only one breach has been reported. That involved CSIRO and Pakistan, not the PRC. (CSIRO, it should be noted, is not negligent on security matters, or when it comes to protecting its own communications. The agency has told estimates hearings that it blocks approximately 500,000 attempts to hack into its IT systems each year.)

An independent review of the Defence Trade Controls Act has been conducted by Dr Vivienne Thom, a former Director-General of Intelligence and Security. In her report, submitted in October last year, Thom stated that she did not "support the broad approach implied by the recommendations" in a submission to the review by the Department of Defence. In the understated language of official reports, that is an emphatic rejection. Here was a senior government consultant, herself a member of the national security establishment, rejecting proposals for a tougher set of restrictions on the transfer of technology to foreign entities. The Department had recommended expanded powers for the Minister to prohibit technology transfers, an extensive permit system for those seeking to supply or transfer technology, and enhanced restrictions on so-called "dual-use" technologies, i.e. those that are not inherently military but which might have a military application.

Consider the implications of that last proposal. Those who talk about "dual-use" technologies typically argue that they are something new, because the traditional distinction between military and civilian technologies is disappearing in the digital age. This contention is, to say

the least, historically uninformed. The naked flame has been with us for a very long time, and so have carving knives. These are not inherently military technologies, but it is not difficult to conceive of circumstances in which they could be used as weapons, or indeed, to cite situations in which they have been so used. The Defence Department's recommendations, if accepted, would essentially have given the Department the right not only to block transfers of information and technology, but to intervene in most forms of intellectual collaboration between Australian researchers and their counterparts overseas.

The advancement of science depends on such collaboration, and the highly restrictive regime the DoD was proposing would, over time, have substantially reduced Australia's access to new knowledge and to the new technologies that are transforming our world. The universities and research agencies that submitted to the Thoms review recognised that implication in the Department's proposals and argued strongly against them. Universities Australia commented that the proposals "threaten investment in Australian research and development, making it more difficult to build new industries (including a defence industry), or achieve the ambitions of government initiatives such as the Global Innovation Strategy". The Academy of Science submitted that "the Defence recommendations amount to the unilateral ability to prohibit, control or regulate any technology, irrespective of its status as a listed technology on the Defence Strategic Goods List, and the ability to suppress publication of any given research activity: "Such a regime would create enormous uncertainty, with no ability to determine whether a technology would be allowed to be developed, deployed, communicated or exported. This environment would not be conducive to investment in high quality research".

The Academy's comments neatly exposed the irony in the Defence proposals: in the pursuit of enhanced security for Australia, the Department was effectively seeking to impose a regulatory regime of the kind that authoritarian states typically rely upon, and which democracies like Australia have historically condemned as inimical to the spirit of free inquiry. That kind of creeping authoritarianism, of course, is what happens in cold wars, and the surest sign that we are embroiled in a new cold war against the PRC is the demand for tougher restrictions on the release of "sensitive information".

The demands have not ceased, despite Dr Thom's rejection of the Defence proposals. In its campaign to shackle international research collaboration, the Department's hawks appear to be using proxies, including right-wing thinktanks, who also submitted to the Thom review in support of tougher regulation, and often get quoted in the mainstream media, conjuring up some disastrous outcome from the fact that Chinese graduate students sometimes come to Australia to undertake their doctoral research. The media stories have not cited any evidence of real, or even likely, security breaches from this kind of international exchange, just as there has been no reporting of any security breaches at Australian universities or science agencies under the existing defence trade

controls regime. It is all conjecture, bordering on fantasy. But that has not stopped ideologues from indulging in it – which, of course, is another feature of cold wars. This latest cold war is an unusual one, because even the cold warriors cannot dispute the fact that the PRC is absolutely indispensable to Australia's economic prosperity.

In the previous cold war, between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union, the Soviets were never serious challengers to the global economic dominance of the US. But in the new cold war, it is the PRC's economic rivalry with the US that is shifting the geopolitical balance. And, as we know, that places Australia in a delicate position because the PRC is by far our most important trading partner while the US remains our principal strategic partner. So Australia's cold war warriors concede the importance of bilateral trade with the PRC, and, at least in principle, do not oppose Chinese investment in Australia (however ambivalent they may feel about it). But they remain suspicious of – and are often openly hostile to – intellectual cooperation and exchanges that would benefit both countries. The problem is not only that their attitude is contradictory. The narrow frame through which they view research collaboration ignores the reality that science is a global enterprise, in which Australia must participate if it is fully to reap the rewards of its own scientists' work.

Australian science, measured by citations, has a global market share of about 3 per cent. To punch above their weight, our scientists must collaborate with their colleagues in other countries, especially in the US, Europe, India and China. Australia simply does not have the scale of physical and human capital, nor a sufficiently large domestic market, to engage at the international frontiers of technology by itself. This country spends \$20-25 billion a year on research and development (R&D), compared with about \$500 billion each by both China and the US. Slightly more than half of our R&D spend is by business, but most of that is on applications of existing knowledge, not the creation of new knowledge. Universities are the main institutions in Australia engaged in the discovery of new knowledge and, measured by the number of articles published in peer-reviewed journals, collaboration between Australian and Chinese researchers is a rapidly growing part of that activity of discovery. In 1998 only one per cent of Australian peer-reviewed journal articles included a co-author affiliated with a Chinese institution. By 2018 the proportion had risen to 15 per cent, and if the existing growth rates continue this year the PRC will overtake the US to become our leading international collaborator. That does not mean we are de-coupling from the US in research collaboration, because our collaborations with the PRC and the US are different but highly complementary. Collaboration with the PRC is oriented towards the physical sciences and engineering, whereas with the US it tends to be oriented towards the life sciences. It should also be noted that much of our research collaboration with the PRC is in support of various forms of humanitarian assistance; if we turn away from that, it will be more difficult to express our concerns at human rights abuses in China.

All of this means that our status as a high-income

society will increasingly depend on remaining open to international transfers of new technologies and to research collaboration with international partners. The existing level of collaboration, be it with the PRC, the US or even Europe (our other major research partner) cannot be unwound without doing significant damage to the economic and social fabric of the nation. Yet the attacks on research collaboration with the PRC have not ceased, and there are signs that the government is heeding the urgings of the cold war warriors. Last month, the federal Minister for Education, Dan Tehan, announced that the Government was establishing a “University Foreign Interference Taskforce” to provide “better protection for universities” against foreign interference. The Minister said that the taskforce would bring together universities and “Australian Government agencies” to work together to develop a set of “best practice guidelines to support and environment of trust and to guide decision-making, based on potential risks, so that Australian universities can continue to produce world-class research”. The announcement was as noteworthy for what it did not say, or for what it merely implied, as for what it actually said.

Why is it apparently assumed that Australian universities are not already following “world’s best practice”? (To repeat: the Defence Trade Controls Act already enforces

a tougher regulatory regime than that which applies in the US.) Why is it also assumed that this taskforce will support “an environment of trust”? The very creation of the committee implies that “Australian Government agencies” do not trust the commitment of universities to national security? And, why should it be expected that the operation of such a taskforce will ensure that Australian universities can continue to conduct world-class research? With “Australian Government agencies” looking over their shoulders all the time, researchers are more likely to be inhibited and frustrated than to be able to do the work they need to do. Australia’s vice-chancellors and the directors of research agencies, dependent on the flow of public funds to keep their institutions functioning, are in a difficult position. To push back against the new demands for oversight of Australian researchers by “non-expert policy analysts” is to jeopardise the resources on which those researchers rely for what they do every day. Simply to comply with those demands, however, is to risk the unravelling of what world-class scientists and researchers have achieved. No government that is committed to the prosperity of this country should put academic and research leaders in such a position.

Kim Carr is Labor Senator for Victoria.

Huawei My Way

Michael Danby writes on the threat posed by the giant Chinese telecom

If you were to travel back in time to October 2013, Huawei was a rapidly rising Chinese telecom equipment manufacturer, emerging from seemingly nowhere. Huawei’s products were often priced 10-25 per cent less than United States and European equivalents. It was booming. It courted Western decision-makers and welcomed many Australian politicians to all-expenses-paid gift-dispensing trips to visit their impressive facilities in China. In those innocent days of Western incomprehension about the strategic purposes of China’s high-tech conglomerates, then Liberal Party Foreign Minister Julie Bishop was even naive enough to accept a Huawei tablet and phone package while accepting her guest’s lavish hospitality. Bishop later dropped the Huawei gear like costume jewellery as soon as the media started mocking her security naivete.

Huawei in China issued a directive that a local Australian board be established. Former Victorian Premier John Brumby (who has now retired from Huawei’s service) and former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer were invited to join a local fig-leaf board of directors and,

of course, were paid a big, fat stipend.

This kinder, gentler time in 2013 was long before China’s unelected President Xi Jinping determined upon South China Sea expansionism or had locked up at least one million Uighurs in East Turkestan. Remember then, Tony Abbott was still relatively freshly elected as Prime Minister and his sometime leather-jacket wearing alternate Malcolm Turnbull was the Communications Minister, with his eyes very much on the prize. Turnbull and his Liberal moderate faction sometime-ally, Julie Bishop, then the Deputy Leader and Foreign Minister were both very much in Huawei’s camp and were pushing very hard indeed for their government to reverse the decision of the previous Labor government to block Huawei from supplying hardware to the \$50 billion NBN project. Back in 2013, Australia’s call was a symbolically important decision for Huawei, knowing it would be noticed and possibly emulated by other Western governments. Beijing’s hi-tech “national champion” Huawei were clearly pushing very hard for it to go their way.

Foolishly, as it turned out, a year prior, in September 2012, Huawei had volunteered to appear before the first

ever public hearing of the Parliamentary Committee on Intelligence and Security where they were bushwhacked with very pointed questioning from Labor Senator Mark Bishop, Tasmanian independent Andrew Wilkie and me. I was prompted to do so, in part, because *The Economist* had run a famous cover story titled 'The Company That Spooked the World' which made riveting claims about the role of the Chinese Communist Party in the company's affairs. Like a lamb to the slaughter, Huawei Chair Admiral John Lord and colleagues confirmed the central and most damaging *Economist* claims, i.e. that a Chinese Communist Party cell existed in the company above management and was, indeed, required to be so by Chinese law. This was no Cisco or Motorola or Nokia just plying its wares, it was a very different conception of business from Western capitalism. Lord argued that all firms in China were required to act in this way, cold comfort for those concerned about the implications of allowing sensitive telecommunications infrastructure to be supplied by a Chinese firm. Further, he admitted Huawei was the recipient of massive soft loans from the Chinese government because it officially deemed the company a "national champion."

At the time, it was not clearly understood in the West that Huawei was not only capable of being manipulated from time to time by Beijing decision-makers but was, arguably, a strategic tool being used by Beijing for future domination of the world in the event of conflict. A few good men, or persons if you include a level-headed Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard, including her Communications Minister Senator Steve Conroy, saw to it that Huawei was initially blocked from the NBN, acting on the sensible and cautious advice of our national security agencies, who, in turn, rely on the input of the Five Eyes intelligence services of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the New Zealanders and of course Australia. But there was a change in government and Turnbull was determined to do things differently from his predecessor. He turned the NBN on its head, in a way Labor has maintained considerably increased the cost while considerably diminishing the level of service by curtailing the extent of fibre connections to premises. And, on the much lower profile issue of Huawei supplying the NBN, Turnbull was keen to distinguish himself too. According to media and other reports at the time, Bishop and Turnbull pushed for the decision.

As Communications Minister Turnbull – ever the know-all – received briefings from the security agencies strongly advising him against approving Huawei. But Malcolm, of course, knew better, and it became well known in Canberra he was going to ignore them and urge Cabinet to dump Labor's ban on Huawei. I was worried. At times I felt like I was one of very few in Canberra who could see clearly that the rise of China had many unforeseen consequences for Australia from which most of us were averting our gaze and our intellectual bandwidth. We craved the end of history, as Francis Fukuyama promised, where the good guys won and we could just do business with everyone, keeping us safe from nasty jihad but generally living without fear or threats or trouble. This was all wilful blindness relating to China

and Putin's Russia.

Many Labor moderates, with the dishonourable exception of a cabal of crooks from an element of the NSW Right, led by their patron ghoul Bob Carr, and I use the term crooks quite deliberately for describing people who would willingly take bungs from influence-peddlers and in other ways act corruptly. They are not alone, of course, in New South Wales, which does always seem to be the worst state branch of anything, Liberals included. The NSW ICAC has rightly damned both sides of politics in that convict colony where the Rum Rebellion seems to be ongoing festival of malfeasance, many of its worst practitioners ended up in jail.

Their Independent Commission Against Corruption, if unleashed in federal jurisdiction, might bring several members of the NSW Right and a few federal Liberals well and truly undone. But there were exceptions. Conroy, as noted, was one. Bill Shorten, then Labor Leader, was another. Intelligence Committee Chair Anthony Byrne was stealthy in his intel-issued greatcoat but was no less sound for it. We needed him on that wall, to paraphrase Colonel Jessup's cinematic testimony in the classic *A Few Good Men*. They were a powerful counter against the mercenary instincts of some of our sleazy NSW colleagues who at times seemed practically hypnotised by the shiny gold coins of Beijing's billionaire agents of influence.

And so it was that I set about seeking my Leader's mandate to rip down Turnbull's Huawei kite, in a setting where everyone was telling me Cabinet's approval of Huawei as an NBN supplier was basically a done deal. It was a setting, remember, where we few Beijing realists were surrounded by Beijing's buddies on both sides of the aisle, some of the Liberal ones we now know were even wearing solid gold Rolexes worth hundreds of thousands of dollars from Beijing influence-peddlers they later falsely claimed were fake.

In September 2013, I made the case to Bill in a private meeting that reversing the ban was an unacceptable risk to our national security by allowing the Chinese intelligence apparatus free access to our telecom infrastructure and therefore the content of all Australian communications. He listened intelligently, and quickly set about writing to Prime Minister Abbott to encourage him formally to follow the advice of the national security agencies to block Huawei from being permitted to become a supplier to the NBN and to seek a briefing for Labor from those agencies about Huawei. Shorten's letter was sent. We heard nothing back for about a week until a screaming front-page headline in *The Australian* on Halloween 2013. Presumably the Prime Minister's Office, headed by its hard-headed Peta Credlin, now head-butting Labor on SkyNews After Dark, realised what was at risk: not only would a potential foreign adversary have access to the telecommunications backbone of the nation but give a then newly elected Labor leader, a hawk on national security issues, a chance to outflank Abbott as more vigilant on these matters than he was.

As so it was that my old friend, and Abbott's even older

friend, Greg Sheridan, the foreign editor of The Australian got 'the drop' of Abbott's letter to Shorten declaring that the Abbott government was going to retain Labor's ban on Huawei. In keeping with the uniquely strange ways of the Canberra bubble, the letter appeared first in the Australian newspaper long before it was received by the Leader's office. Sheridan's article didn't mention the awkward fact that the catalyst for Abbott's decision was Shorten's letter asking for the PM to arrange an ASIO briefing for the Opposition on their views at the time about Huawei. This was presumably stage-managed by Abbott's office to avert any potential political gain by Labor at the time.

In my twenty years in parliamentary politics, I didn't often care who got the credit for good things happening. And at this point, we can generously acknowledge that Abbott did the right thing, his Cabinet acquiesced to his correct decision, and that Bill Shorten was entirely right in sending off his highly consequential missive. We now know how important this was. Australia's bipartisan opposition to the CCP's encroachment on our telecommunications infrastructure was a turning point for how Huawei was perceived by Western governments. The Economist, which had sparked the original international concerns about Huawei, later editorialised on the fightback against 'China's Sharp Power', against Beijing's aggressive but non-military measures such as debt diplomacy and foreign interference being led by Australia.

Not long before the 2019 election, the last nail was hammered into Huawei's coffin in Australia, with the now Prime Minister ruling them out for being a mobile (5G) telecoms equipment supplier as well. And since Halloween 2013, we have seen Turnbull, once he'd pushed Abbott out of the way to grab the job he wanted, transform from a rich Sino-opportunist with a history of joint ventures with CCP-approved mining giants into a very modern model of a respectable Prime Minister where he showed remarkable realism and sense about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of our relationship with the People's Republic of China. He had learned to take the security agencies' threat assessments seriously. Further, we have seen the most naked and outrageous display of Huawei's deep and potent connections with the highest echelons of power in Beijing. Its founder's daughter was arrested in Canada, to be extradited to the US, on charges, as yet unproven, that she and Huawei engaged in criminal sanctions busting in allegedly breaking sanctions with Iran. What happened next? No fewer than thirteen Canadian citizens were detained in the People's Republic of China by its notoriously arbitrary, politically directed and corrupt law enforcement authorities in almost immediate response to the Huawei extradition bid. It was a typically clumsy and ugly response by the increasingly Leninist regime of Xi Jinping. But it smashed for all time the thin opaque glass of pretence that was layered around Huawei that it was somehow a private concern utterly disconnected from Beijing and its attempt to project power around the world. Looking back on Halloween 2013, I'm reminded of an old Eurythmics tune released in the latter half of their melodic reign:

*Hey Hey I saved the world today
Everybody's happy now
The bad thing's gone away*

Huawei hasn't, of course, gone away even though its state-sanctioned agenda is now obvious to all. And nor has China's seemingly nearly constant efforts to hack information systems in Australia, to bribe Australian decision-makers and engage in what we might generally call 'foreign interference' in our public life disappeared either though few now argue about who and what is behind it all. Beijing's pressure on Australia has not, of course, been limited to the drama around Huawei. We have the strategic pressure of the militarisation of the South China Sea and attempted debt-led leverage over South Pacific countries by Beijing. Australia's foreign political donations issue has just been dealt with by federal legislation supported by both sides of politics, but its damaging legacy is still playing out in NSW ICAC hearings. Professors John Fitzgerald and Rory Medcalf together with various thinktanks, the ABC and its 4 Corners programme have led a reasoned debate about China's influence in academia epitomised by Bob Carr's now discredited Australia China Research Institute. Millions in Hong Kong began their struggle against the heavy hand of Xi's regime, protesting against the potential chilling effect of an extradition treaty with mainland China.

Extraordinarily, Australia only just avoided such a treaty itself in 2017. At a State lunch in Federal Parliament's Great Hall, then Foreign Minister Julie Bishop pledged to China's Premier Li Keqiang, that the Australian Parliament would pass its seven-year delayed extradition treaty with China. We didn't. The day after the Foreign Minister's speech, I made a little noticed response to a nearly empty chamber as Deputy Chairman of the Treaties Committee in which I announced the Opposition would not be supporting the extradition treaty. Later, Senate crossbenchers and the Greens Party signalled they would refuse to pass the treaty. By this stage, opponents of the treaty among government backbenchers revolted at their party room meeting. The prospect of extradition from Australia to face China's notoriously unjust justice system was dead. Thankfully nearly one million Chinese Australians are now governed solely by our laws not by Beijing's. In the cause of freedom, we have won some battles. And lost plenty too. Evil has a big chequebook, successfully seeks out many agents and shows remarkable shamelessness and persistence.

The Battle of Huawei was ultimately won because of a few good people like Gillard, Conroy, Shorten, Abbott and, I hope it's not immodest to claim, me. There are many more battles yet to come.

And, if we remain vigilant, Australia can win all of them.

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The Golden Country and the Rise of China

We must look to the lessons of our past as Australia navigates the rise of China, argues Tim Watts

China has loomed large in the Australian imagination since the arrival of Europeans on our continent. The presence of the massive and mysterious Middle Kingdom to our near north has inspired the dreams and anxieties of Australians for generations. The idea of China as a potential market, source of migrants and military threat has shaped the thinking of policy makers and politicians throughout Australia's modern history. More than that though, the way that the early Australian colonists saw the Chinese 'other' shaped the way they saw themselves as Australians. It was the contrast we used to define who we were and how we were different from the old world of both the West and the East. More often than not though, these Australian conceptions of China and the Chinese were founded in ignorance. Projections of our own anxieties rather than perceptions of reality. For Australia to succeed in the time of a rising China, we will need to learn from the mistakes of our past and see the Chinese nation and Chinese people for who they really are. To do this, we'll first need to change the way we see ourselves and how we've changed since the national imaginings of the early colonists.

It's no exaggeration to say that our forebears defined what it meant to be Australian through explicit racial contrast with Asia, and China in particular, for the better part of a century. From the time of the pre-Federation gold rushes, early Australian nation builders used the popular local conception of an Asian 'other' to stake out what was distinctive about the emerging Australian identity. The foundations of the new, independent Australian identity – egalitarianism and irreverence, resilience and mateship – needed an 'other' to give them definition. Stereotypes of the newly arrived Chinese prospectors – physically weak and morally corrupted, scheming and submissive to hierarchy – were a projection of everything the colonists wanted their new nation to avoid. These characteristics of the Chinese arrivals were inherent to their race. Not only did every Chinese arrival possess these characteristics, but these characteristics were immutable. Their presence in Australia would change our country for the worse.

These attitudes were actively promoted by colonial politicians of all ideological bents, the labour movement and the nationalist bush poets and writers who came to prominence in these times. The relationship between the emerging Australian identity of this time and the colonists' stereotypes of the Chinese was summed up by the editor of the Bulletin, James Edmond who declared:

By the term Australian we mean not those who have

merely been born in Australia. All white men who come to these shores – with a clean record – and who leave behind them the memory of class-distinctions and the religious differences of the old world; all men who place the happiness, the prosperity, the advancement of their adopted country before the interests of Imperialism, are Australian. In this regard all men who leave the tyrant-ridden lands of Europe for freedom of speech and right of personal liberty are Australians before they set foot on the ship which brings them hither. Those who fly from an odious military conscription; those who leave their fatherland because they cannot swallow the worm-eaten lie of the divine right of kings to murder peasants, are Australians by instinct – Australian and republican are synonymous.

But, as Edmond continued, 'No n****r, no Chinaman, no lascar, no kanaka...is an Australian.'

My own ancestor, Charles Nantes, shared these views. Nantes was a member of the first Geelong council, who petitioned the Victorian colonial government in 1857 warning that the arrival of "the Chinese" in Victoria was "fraught with the greatest danger to the social, moral and political prosperity of this colony". The petition also called for Parliament to "immediately introduce the most vigorous measures to check any further increase of the Chinese race in Victoria" and to "effect a reduction of their numbers by imposing such a poll tax on all who may come hither as will induce them to prefer returning to their own country."

The perceived threat of invasion – military or cultural – by these never-could-be Australians was a powerful bonding force amongst the new colonists in the pre federation era. It was particularly virulent in the labour movement. The most striking example comes from prominent labour polemicist William Lane. Lane's *Yellow or White?: A Story of the Race War of AD 1908*, published in serialised format in 1888, predicted a take-over of Australia enabled by the collaboration of Australian business and government elites with scheming Chinese migrants. After Chinese migrants are given equal rights by the colonial government, 12 million 'yellow men' are induced to migrate to the colony and the colony's democratic institutions become captured. The Queensland Premier marries his daughter off to Sir Wong Hung Foo, a local Chinese millionaire, to consummate the union of China and Australia. It takes the murder of the hero's daughter while 'defending her honour' against

Sir Wong Hung Foo's advances before a 'cleansing' war led by bushies from the Queensland outback is initiated to reclaim Australia for the white colonists. In case the serial's readers missed the message, Lane published a series of accompanying op-eds which warned bluntly that "a true racial struggle...going on... and Australia is the prize ...These clannish and unchangeable coolies and Chinamen will surely clean the white man from the far South – if we let them."

It was this kind of thinking that caused Australia to engage in an extraordinary act of self-sabotage – the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act, otherwise known as the White Australia Policy. The importance of the bill to the newly Federated nation is reflected in the fact that it was the first issue our first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, described as 'high policy', debated by the Federation Parliament. Eighty nine of the 111 members and senators of the Federation Parliament spoke on the bill and only two opposed it on the grounds of its affront to equal human dignity. Five future Australian Prime Ministers participated in the debate in terms that wouldn't be out of place in an 8Chan forum today. The policy (and its pre-Federation antecedents) changed our demography, slowly strangled the Asian-Australian diaspora communities that had emerged in the gold rushes, some of which had established significant trading relationships between Australia and China, and sabotaged our relationships in our region for more than half a century. Of course, there was never any real threat of invasion that could have justified these actions. When we listen to Chinese-Australians themselves, a very different reality emerges. When Chinese migrants came into contact with the emerging Australian values and behaviours in this period, they invariably adopted them. As John Fitzgerald powerfully argues in his history of the Chinese-Australian experience of this time, *Big White Lie*: "When we consult Chinese-Australian sources it becomes clear that no high principles were at stake in the clash of cultures between white and Chinese Australia. Even a cursory examination of what Chinese Australians were saying and doing reveals that they were no less committed to freedom, equality and fraternal solidarity than were other Australians."

Or as Vivian Chow put it in 1932: "Send a Chinese to America and he tries to become a monopolist because of the ambitious example set before him. Send him to British Singapore and he strives to become a contractor with designs on knighthood...Send a Chinese to Australia, he becomes a labour leader and a booster "for the working man's paradise."

There are countless historical examples of how the Chinese Australians adopted and embodied the values of their new country. One of the heroes of Gallipoli, Billy Sing was a cane cutter, a drover, a roo shooter and an opening fast bowler before becoming the ADF's most prolific sniper on record. John Wing, was a ten year old Chinese Australian boy living as a second class citizen under the White Australia policy when he wrote to the 1956 Melbourne Olympics Committee suggesting that the athletes should march together as 'one nation' in the games closing ceremony; Australia's enduring egalitarian

contribution to the Olympic idea. Even Australia's first Chinese settler, Mak Sai Ying, ultimately given up the trade he brought to the colony to take up that most Australian of vocations, becoming a publican in Western Sydney. Chinese-Australians were never an unchanging, monolithic threat to the Australian identity. They did not have hierarchy and servility encoded in their DNA. They did not deny the fair go, egalitarianism and mateship; rather, these Australian values were denied to them.

This is a lesson we would do well to learn well in a very different time for our nation. The Australia of today looks radically different to anything that our Federation-era leaders could have ever imagined. By initiating a series of changes to our immigration system that would continue for two decades, John Howard triggered the first Australian migration boom since the end of the White Australia policy. In a generation, the Asian-Australian community grew from around 3% of the population, to over 12% of the population. It's the story of my family. One hundred and sixty years after Charles Nantes sought to drive the Chinese from Australia, his great, great, great, great, grandson married a Hong Kong Chinese-Australian migrant and his children are Eurasian Australians happily living in a diverse and prosperous modern Australia. The changes to our country set in train by Howard's immigration reforms changed our country for the better. Whether you measure it by community attitudes to immigration and multiculturalism, migrants' reported levels of social inclusion and happiness, migrants' employment outcomes or impact on the Australian economy, immigration has been a bigger success story in Australia than any other country in the world over the past two decades. Against the odds, we've become a nation that combines established Westminster institutions and an open economy with a young, dynamic and diverse population many of whom have a cultural perspective that connects us directly to both the growth engine of the global economy and the major geostrategic challenges of our time. We've got the potential to be a 'Golden Country' where people can come from all around the world to realise their full potential and build a nation free from the cultural, political and economic repression of the old world – East and the West.

The only problem is, Howard didn't just change our migration system, his 'culture wars' broke our ability to talk about the resulting changes to our demography and what they meant for our national identity after a century of nation building in the image of white Australia. As a result, we are still suffering from a psychological hang over from a century of nation building in the image of White Australia. Though we recognise that the nation building of white Australia is no longer fit for purpose, no new, equally powerful identity has emerged to take its place. The result is a successful multicultural society with monocultural institutions. Despite comprising over 12 per cent of the Australian population, taken as a whole Asian Australians make up just 1 to 3 per cent of the senior leadership of Australian business, public services, universities, professions, media, and film and television. Our conceptions of what it means to be Australian and who is able to represent us in the leadership positions of the institutions of power in our country are decades

out of date. We're squandering what could be one of our greatest assets in responding to the opportunities and the challenges of confronting our nation in the age of the rise of China.

How different would the debate over Gladys Liu's conduct have been if instead of being the sole Chinese-Australian woman in Parliament, she was one of thirty Asian-Australians in parliament as we would expect if Asian-Australians were represented proportionate to their population? How different would the media coverage of the debate have been if we had twenty Asian-Australians in the press gallery? To succeed as a nation in the era of the rise of China we'll need to harness all of our talents in the cause. To bridge the gap between the new national reality in Australia's communities and the outdated national imaginings perpetuating themselves in our institutions, we need to start taking national identity seriously again. We need to reinterpret our history and reimagine our

future through a shared vision of what it means to be Australian today and the values we hold in common. We need to build a new idea of what it means to be Australian that includes all of us. In the 2018 Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration Noel Pearson set out the task before us and offered a vision of the nation we could become. He argues that "Three stories make us one' as Australians, 'the Ancient Indigenous Heritage which is its foundation, the British Institutions built upon it, and the adorning Gift of Multicultural Migration.'" It's a positive assertion of our changed national identity that creates space for us all. It doesn't define Australia by our diversity, it defines us as a diverse people coming together to create one story. It's a vision for a national identity that would let us see ourselves for who we are and, in the process, let us see the rest of the world more clearly too.

Tim Watts is the Labor MP for Gellibrand and the author of The Golden Country: Australia's Changing Identity (Text, 2019).

Left out?

Osmond Chiu on why the Australian Left struggles when it comes to China

A few weeks ago, a friend posted a meme from an anti-Liberal Facebook page. The meme was about revelations federal Liberal MP Gladys Liu had an honorary position with a group believed to be a United Front organisation. What shocked me was the conspiratorial claim that it showed Liu was a "Chinese operative". Comments included assertions she was a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) spy and should be deported. The Facebook page is not small; it has over 57,000 likes - more than the Victorian ALP. This post was one of many that have been posted. They were followed by Silent Invasion author Clive Hamilton suggesting Parliament should consider whether Gladys Liu is in breach of Section 44, having allegiance to a foreign power. Like many others, he was querying her loyalty to her country of citizenship, a long used racist trope against the Chinese diaspora.

I am no fan of Gladys Liu, the way her campaign for Chisholm was conducted, or her conservative politics. She has plenty of questions to answer about her fundraising and association with these organisations, but I mention this because it highlights the possible direction of the debate about foreign interference by the People's Republic of China (PRC). As this debate about PRC interference in Australia has surfaced in the last two years, there has been a notable absence of much of the social democratic Left from the debate. The silence during this debate perhaps reflects uncertainty about how to speak to the complexity of the China debate, and individuals do not automatically line up

along a traditional Left-Right axis on this. The uneasiness is exacerbated by language barriers. There is a level of activity that is not visible to most Australians because it is conducted in Chinese, on platforms and websites that most Australians do not frequent. With estimates that only 130 Australians with non-Chinese heritage are proficient in Mandarin and chronic underrepresentation of Chinese Australians in our institutions, much of this political discourse has thus flown under the radar, or only become apparent when it was too late. The response to the campaign of misinformation against Labor on WeChat at the recent federal election highlights this as campaigners, candidates and the media failed to understand how information is disseminated on WeChat.

A turning point has been the protests in Hong Kong which elevated the issue. The sight of nationalistic rallies opposing the protests, counter-protesting of HK solidarity gatherings, the doxxing of Hong Kong activists in Australia and harassment of their family members has been unsettling. It goes without saying that we should have solidarity with Hong Kong protestors and unequivocally oppose threats and harassment, but many seem unsure of how to respond without knee jerk proposals.

Geopolitical rivalries driving the debate

The US-China geopolitical rivalry is driving a lot of this

debate and most importantly, reaction to it, and it cannot be ignored. Even before public awareness of Xinjiang or the protests in Hong Kong, there has been a growing hostility in the US towards China under both the Obama and Trump Administrations with its portrayal of the PRC as an expansionist strategic rival. Here in Australia, the debate, such as it is, is characterised within two frames: 'national security' versus 'economics'. Traditionally that has not stopped the Left from engaging in debates, but we have struggled to engage because we have no existing framework to fall back on for guidance. While there is a reactive instinct against anything seen to represent American imperialism amongst some sections of the Left, there is no sense the PRC is an ideal political model or provides an inspiring alternative. There is concern about increasing authoritarianism and human rights violations but also wariness about suggestions of inevitable future conflicts between China and America. There is an uneasiness too about who some of those most vocally opposed to the CCP are and where their politics lie. One example is the recent University of Queensland protests against the Confucius Institute. Organisers initially listed Andrew Cooper as a speaker. Cooper was one of the co-organisers of the recent Conservative Political Action Conference in Sydney, whose organisation LibertyWorks has provided a platform for far-right views. When this was communicated to the protest organisers, he was disinvited, but it reinforces suspicions that some involved in pushing a harder line against the PRC see it through the lens of a civilisational culture war that Australia should actively participate in. In April 2019, the then Director of Policy Planning in the US State Department expressed this very view, stating it is "a fight with a really different civilisation and a different ideology".

Overlaying this is external pressure on Australia to accept the notion it must "choose" America for national security, almost regardless of whose interest it serves. There is an assumption that this is a zero-sum choice between a hegemon in our region where we must choose the PRC or the USA. It is also assumed the aim of the PRC is for Australia to become more independent from the USA, and perhaps to create a dependency relationship. None of the underlying assumptions appeal to the Left: that the choices are a PRC or American hegemon or a significant increase in Defence spending. Any expression of concern is delegitimised and can be followed by an accusation of being compromised as a 'useful idiot' of the PRC, inadvertently doing their bidding or worse, a "wǔmáo" (五毛), implying someone is being paid to have pro-CCP views.

It is unclear what is fact versus fiction

No one with credibility claims there is no foreign interference from the PRC or that we should not take reasonable steps to protect ourselves from it, but the opaqueness of this debate means it is hard to discern what claims are real, what are exaggerations and what other interests are at play. This opaqueness makes it difficult to engage without appearing conspiratorial. The opaqueness, lack of information and assuming the worst of China's intentions leaves the public discourse open to hysteria

and conspiracy. It can result in guilt by association or conspiratorial claims about a 'Chinese takeover'. This is not limited to the populist far right as eerily similar comments have been made by the Tasmanian Greens claiming the Cambria Green development in Tasmania is part of a plan to turn the state into a base for CCP regime intentions for Antarctica and questioning the number of skilled migrants from the PRC.

Several public examples also raise questions about how much PRC influence is confirmed and how much is speculation about Beijing's possible, assumed, and inferred intentions. For example, the head of ASIO recently referred to journalists being recruited as foreign spies during the Press Freedom inquiry, using the example of Australian Financial Review journalist Angus Griggs being approached. The journalist in question stated it was a clumsy and naive approach and that ASIO seems to have "appropriated the anecdote for its own ends." This is not to deny serious recruitment attempts do not happen, but it raises questions about other examples. Another example are claims collaboration with PRC researchers in the higher education sector is sharing scientific research that will be used by the People's Liberation Army in its military technology. Senator Kim Carr raised questions about these claims and noted the lack of evidence provided, citing two reviews and Senate Estimates testimony. Professor Michael Biercuk has also noted the debate about foreign interference failed to understand universities conduct open, publishable research when it comes to basic science. Similarly, claims iron ore exported to China might be used for military purposes smacks of overreach, the subtext being the PRC is the modern equivalent of 1930s Japan with imperial designs on the region. The lack of clarity about what those who make such claims think Australia should actually do raises more questions.

The fears of quiet Chinese Australians

The treatment of PRC influence as a national security and geopolitical debate has ignored the domestic impact on Chinese Australians. While we should be critical of China's human rights record, Australia has a sordid history of anti-Chinese racism. As a Chinese Australian, I have been deeply uneasy about the direction of this debate and I am not the only one. The constant use of the term "Chinese influence", a term that collapses the distinction between the Chinese diaspora, including Chinese Australians, and the PRC Government, rather than referring to CCP or PRC influence has been a particular worry. It shows an ignorance that "Chinese" is commonly used to refer to people who are not from mainland China and are part of a larger diaspora with shared cultural heritage. The uneasiness cannot be understood without the broader context of a steady stream of stories in the Australian media for years with Sinophobic undertones about property and schools that blur public distinctions between Chinese Australians and PRC nationals.

When casual comments about the loyalty of Chinese Australians are dropped during this debate, it reinforces a concern that we might become collateral damage. A price some say, while unfortunate, is necessary because they

claim the threat from the PRC is greater. This concern is not unfounded as there is a long history of the loyalty of the Chinese diaspora being questioned, leading to discriminatory policies, and anecdotal reports about conversations in the public and private sector regarding hiring Chinese Australians. It is not the current situation that primarily worries Chinese Australians but what happens if it escalates. There is a real worry the debate becomes stripped of context and sensationalised by the media in a wider public debate, normalising Sinophobic talking points. The dismissal of these genuinely held fears does not ease those concerns given the history of anti-Chinese racism in Australia and support for Hanson and other far right parties. This has been made worse by the actions of Prime Minister Scott Morrison. In the process of claiming every question about Gladys Liu is driven by racism, he has made it far more difficult to highlight the actual racist undertones in some comments about Liu as now it will be seen purely through a partisan political lens, dismissing genuine concerns about anti-Chinese sentiment.

Many have no confidence the PRC influence debate will be conducted with nuance in the media. When it comes to the PRC, the media is prone to sensationalism. Andrew Hastie's recent op-ed, while mentioning the Maginot line, did not mention Nazi Germany. Yet social media by the Sydney Morning Herald stated allusions to Nazi Germany and this framing dominated its coverage. The newsworthiness of sensationalised claims risks promoting perverse motivations and perpetuating narratives with only loose connection to facts.

Unfortunately, Chinese Australian voices in this debate have been limited. In part, it is because of the diversity of the community, shaped by where people migrated from and when. This diversity has meant there is no form of peak national representation for Chinese Australians. Existing representative organisations are predominately organised by Chinese Australians who have come from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore or elsewhere in South East Asia who often speak other Chinese dialects such as Cantonese or Hokkien, not more recent Mandarin-speaking migrants from mainland China who have formed their own organisations. But there has also been an uneasiness about speaking out and the few who do so express their views in an extremely careful manner to avoid being publicly tarred. It has meant the more vocal voices in this debate are critics of the CCP rather than those who are uneasy about the possible direction of this debate.

How the Left should respond

Walking a fine line is not easy but will be necessary. We do not have the luxury of being able to turn our back on China. We exist in the Asia-Pacific and cannot undo China's integration into the global economy. They are our largest trading partner and even with economic diversification, we would not be immune from the contagion of a financial crisis or economic downturn in China. Engagement, as has been the policy of the social democratic left since Whitlam, is critical.

We should not condone what is going on within the PRC under an increasingly authoritarian direction such as the horrendous, dystopian treatment of Uighurs, Kazakhs and other minorities in Xinjiāng, crackdowns on NGOs and Marxist students organising workers and its campaign against protestors in Hong Kong but nor should we caricature China. All this is occurring side by side with regular strikes, environmental protests such as that recently in Wūhàn and its own version of #MeToo that sidestepped censors. It is far from monolithic country where everything is directly controlled by the party-state at the pull of a single switch. We can still be vocal on human rights without resorting to scaremongering and the exclusion of China from international discourse, or indeed, necessary diplomatic discussions around cooperation on climate change, for example.

For the Left, the principles of anti-racism, democracy and internationalism should underpin its thinking. There must be both a rejection of PRC apologetics and any claims about individuals without evidence that imply guilt by association. It means taking this debate seriously, rejecting calls for veiled racial discrimination under the guise of national security, speaking out against speculation about the loyalty of Chinese Australians and avoiding using terms like "Chinese influence". We must demand evidence and detailed explanations rather than speculations of worst-case scenarios and have an awareness of how media reports and loose language can be completely taken out of context. We also need to be aware of the underlying ideological agenda of political actors and demand solutions to address genuine concerns about foreign interference to ensure fears do not become used to justify increased user pays in higher education or draconian national security legislation. Instead, it should be a rallying call to maintain strategic assets in public ownership and reverse the outsourcing of the responsibility for public funding of our key institutions. It means providing funding for ABC Chinese and SBS Mandarin to prove quality, independent journalism and properly funding our universities and schools including Chinese language programs.

The salience of the PRC influence debate has been aided by growing distrust in our public institutions. It requires strengthening our democracy – rebuilding confidence in our political system by supporting campaign finance reform to move away from a transactional model of politics and integrity commissions with teeth. It requires the protection of peaceful freedom of expression and assembly by dissidents in Australia from harassment and surveillance to fight unfounded speculation about the stance of governments that is also corrosive. Finally, it means advocating for an international rules-based order in our region that does not allow political, economic or military dominance by larger countries, defending human rights in Xinjiāng, Tibet and Hong Kong and elsewhere, and a clear opposition to a new Cold War and associated military arms race in the Asia-Pacific.

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Australia, the United States and China: A New Policy Framework

Adam Slonim writes on the need to rethink Australia's relations with today's great powers

The current discord between the world's largest economic and military power – the United States of America – and the world's second largest economic and military power – China – is sending shock waves throughout the global economic and political orders. The effects reverberate into the hip pockets of ordinary people as global growth slows, military expenditure goes up, nationalism begets confrontation, and fear of real conflict.

What is Australia's dog in this race? If you listen carefully to the speeches of our government, you are likely to think that we do not have any clear policy to guide our interests and actions in this miasma of chaos and conflict. In the absence of a clear, consistent and coherent policy framework in which to assess the actions of the critical actors in this unfolding global drama and plan for the protection of Australia's national interests, it is now urgent that one be developed. Let's be clear about the goal: protecting our national interests is primary. The first and foremost national interest is the security of the Australian Commonwealth. Given our continental size, small population and limited military capabilities, we are reliant on the ANZUS Alliance with America to ensure our protection from aggressors. This nearly 70-year-old Treaty with America, the brainchild of John Curtin borne of necessity during World War Two, has ensured Australia remained safe and secure.

ANZUS protects Australia (and New Zealand) from physical threat. Article V states that "an armed attack on any of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of any of the Parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific." ANZUS means we are inextricably linked to, and our foreseeable destiny tied to, the United States of America. Yet a military threat is not the only security danger. An increasingly vital aspect to the notion of security is the ability to operate safely and securely within the cyber domain. This includes protection of government operations, protection of Australia's physical utilities and facilities, and the ability for business and individuals to maintain freedom from threat in the cyber realm. There are several important dimensions to this issue. The first is protection from cyber assault. We have seen in a number of cases now that a cyber assault can cripple national infrastructure. Familiar examples include Israel and the USA's joint 'Stuxnet' virus assault on Iran's nuclear infrastructure in the late 2000's; Russia's crippling of Georgia's media, government and various pipelines in the run up to the Russo-Georgia War of 2008; and Russia's

cyber assault on the Ukraine in 2017 which disrupted banks, government ministries, media and utilities.

Protection in the cyber realm is now one of the most important national obligations for any country. In this context, we have little to fear from like-minded nations, such as the USA, but more to fear and actively protect ourselves from those who do not share our view of the world. Another dimension to this new battle ground is Australia's reliance on America's cyber capabilities. Through the framework of the Five Eyes Alliance (a signals intelligence sharing arrangement between America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), Australia's eyes and ears on the world are greatly enhanced by participation in this group. Our Defence Signals Directorate shares Sigint with the Five Eyes and in return, reaps tremendous amounts of data and understanding of the region. This is grounded in the reality that the United States has layers of military satellites roaming space vacuuming up ground communications. Australia does not. And given Australia's desultory investment in Artificial Intelligence, and very late entry to cyber warfare, we are almost entirely dependent on American technological capabilities.

With so many interdependencies built up over seventy years, Australia's security is tied up with the American alliance, irrespective of which occupant sits in the Oval Office. Yet, if the USA and Australia ever found themselves on opposing sides of a major policy divide, especially if the current mercurial President or worse in the future (which is an option that must be planned for given the brokenness of the American electoral system) limited or closed off Australia-USA defence and security ties, Australia would be highly vulnerable. And while it is possible to be overly fearful of such an eventuality, as Susan Glasser recently reminded us in a prescient article in Foreign Affairs, "History has shown that just because something is inconceivable does not mean it won't happen."

Australia's second item of national interest is the economic security of our commonwealth. And here the focus shifts to the role of China. The numbers speak volumes. Australia's economic relationship with China stands at a total trade flow (exports plus imports) of \$183 billion per annum in goods and services. This dwarfs all other trade relationships by a factor of nearly three. China now represents 24% of the total of Australia's trade with the world. One in every four dollars is China oriented. The boom in this economic relationship has yielded an astronomical 12% CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate). By contrast, the Australia – USA trade flow is now at

\$68Bn, a decline from its peak, and a CAGR of only 3.4%. In the education sector alone, 38% of all overseas students are Chinese, generating \$12Bn in revenue. Iron Ore, Coal, and other minerals generate even more massive returns to Australia. In a word, Australia is economically dependent on China.

This is problematic. As China expands its presence throughout the world via its Belt and Road Initiative, dependence on Australian goods and services will diminish. But in the short term, the reverse is true. Politically, herein lies China's fault line; authoritarian/totalitarian regimes are inherently unstable as they rely on repression to maintain order and control. They survive when their promise of a better life is delivered but fail when the economic return diminishes. China needs Australia as a key element of regime survival. While there is nothing inherently wrong in having our military/cyber security tied to America and our economic security separately tied to China, there is a significant problem when America and China's interests diverge, and Australia makes decisions on how to handle the fallout. The stakes are high.

At the root of the current conflict between the United States and China is a much more significant issue. The current trade (and hidden cyber) war between the two superpowers is in fact a subset of a larger clash between differing conceptions of how the world should be ordered. If ever there was a clash of hegemonies representing two totemically different systems, this is it. The United States is a nation grounded in the values and norms of private property (and its protection by the State, including Intellectual Property), and an associative set of freedoms around trade, personal liberties (such as expression, assembly, habeas corpus and worship), democracy, an independent judiciary, and a limited role of the State. China, on the other hand, has an idiosyncratic view of these issues, best summed up by the medieval Church dictum, 'Extra Ecclesiam Nulla est Salus' – there is no salvation outside the Church. In this case read the Chinese Communist Party. All is subordinate to the absolute rule of the Party, irrespective of the occupant of Zhongnanhai (and their idiosyncratic views of tenure). From America's perspective (and countries with shared values like Australia), China has committed seven deadly sins that reverberate across the international system and through which it has revealed its true intention – an aggressively malign approach to international order: theft of intellectual property; forcing technology transfers; hacking; dumping of goods across borders; subsidising manufacturing and trade; international debt entrapment; and currency manipulation. Worse still, China has undertaken an aggressive forward-based military posture in the South China Sea. In a case brought against it by the Philippines in the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2013, China refused to participate in the proceedings and then ignored the verdict.

This goes to the heart of the current Hong Kong protests. How can a population used to the rule of law live with any certainty when China's judicial system is based on a completely different principle – the political needs (and whims) of the ruling Party? From China's perspective, it is merely acting in its own self-interest. It sees the global arena, as Hedley Bull once famously remarked, as a state

of anarchy in which the West (led by the USA) has created and shaped an international order in its own image, with its own rules, institutions and norms. This system simply does not suit China's goals and ambitions. And those ambitions are fiercely nationalist, not internationalist. China has not to date sought, nor likely will seek, to export its ideology and impose it on other nations. Why this is so is a confluence of many historical, geographic and political factors. China is a unique civilisation. The point is it is not expansionist and under Communist Party rule, ruthlessly survivalist by nature. Because China has not engaged in ideological dissemination, the popular idea that China must be somehow 'contained' in its territorial ambitions is decidedly false. China is not like the Soviet Union once was, where George Kennan's brilliant insights into the sources of Soviet conduct necessitated a confrontational and adversarial policy. While China is not an existential security threat it may still be an adversary in some areas, and simultaneously a partner in others.

For Australia, China is an adversary in buying influence through debt entrapment in the South Pacific (to Australia's chagrin based on years of policy neglect). Yet it is simultaneously a partner – and a most prized partner – in ensuring freedom of navigation in the Straights of Malacca, one of the most vital shipping lanes in the world that links the Indian with the Pacific Oceans. China does challenge America's, and by extension, Australia and the larger western hemisphere's conception of the prevailing US-led and dominated international system – a rules-based order. The fundamental question for Australia is how to navigate effectively between these duelling hegemonies, linked to America as we are by deeply shared values and history, while connected at the hip in our region to China.

There are two traditional schools of thought in how to assert one's national interests in the international arena. And I will suggest there is a third frame in which to assert our national interests. The idealists suggest that national interests are pursued through a framework of values and principles. As such, Australia should pursue its interests through making claims to seeking changes in the international arena that accord with and pursue our ideals in unilateral and multilateral arrangements. We do this now with involvement in for example, multilateral Arms control forums. When Gareth Evans was Foreign Minister, he asserted policies which stressed that Australia had a role in the world as a 'Good International Citizen'. Evans even called this a national interest for Australia. In our relationship with America, the idealist approach poses no major troubles. With China, it causes roadblocks. Our protesting the lack of fundamental human rights for the millions of Uyghurs in Xinjiang Province is a forceful assertion of a values-based foreign policy. The question for Australia is what level of pressure do we apply to our relationship with China over value conflicts? Should we tie trade to human rights? The idealists would have us do so.

Realists, by contrast, would have us mostly ignore the internal dynamics of China and engage in the pursuit of our interests through the prism of power politics. It is in our interests to confront China's engagement in the South Pacific simply because it poses a security dilemma in 'our neighbourhood' in which Australia is a dominant power.

A major flashpoint that highlights the inadequacy of traditional frameworks is Taiwan. Do our interests lie in supporting Taiwan because it is a member of the democratic club in which we, the USA and others stand in concert, or because our support for America's staunch backing of Taiwan makes us a more reliable ally to America and that is vital for our defence and security posture? Or do we support China's position that Taiwan is a "renegade" province of the One China, because there is some truth in that claim, or because our trade interests suggest agreeing with China is simply good business? Neither idealism nor realism can resolve this conundrum. In an increasingly complex and fast-moving world, driven at technological light-speed, we must adapt to these challenging times in new ways. The international system is in a state of flux. The existing post World War Two world order is in decline as nationalism, not globalism, becomes the new standard by which international relationships are conducted.

I suggest we adopt a new foreign policy strategy; the transactional approach. Transactional does not mean a foreign policy without principle nor does it mean the ruthless pursuit of power politics alone. It combines both with one more salient feature – flexibility. A case by case understanding of where our interests are best served and how to approach the situation free from inserting the situational data into a pre-existing blanket framework. As a stable and global middle order power, Australia's interests lie in navigating deftly between the fissures and cracks of power politics to ensure our national interests are best served. It does mean supporting the United States on some issues and supporting China on others. It means seeking to resolve tensions between the two superpowers and purposefully seeking to inflame those tensions when it provides us with leverage without risking the whole game. For example, Australia should support Taiwanese self-determination (as a value-driven principle) and not engage in American-led navigation challenges in the Taiwanese Straights (because of the power politics). It may even suit Australia to consider changing our diplomatic

ties with Taiwan – up or down according to the risk:benefit calculus! Transactionalism is not also not a new form of mercantilism. That is, we should not seek to weaponise trade to advance our own interests at the expense of others. Our Foreign and Trade Policies should be more nuanced and flexible. Transactionalism does mean a much more robust situational understanding and enhanced calculation of return-on-interests.

For example, the most urgent situation in which an adept policy is required is with Climate Change. It is to China that we must look for cooperation, guidance and collaboration, not the United States. China, not America, should be our most valued partner in combatting regional climate change, which is the existential threat of the next decades.

It is true that Australia is a member of the western liberal-democratic alliance. And it is equally true that our security relationship is intimately linked to the beacon that still sits at the pinnacle of that alliance. But that does not mean we cannot maintain an independent approach to the world. It is true that China ensures our economic prosperity. But that does not mean we do not maintain an independent posture. Australia recognises that the world is in a state of flux. A transactional approach is required to navigate our international relations, and especially the USA-China escalating trade dispute. The advantage always goes to those who can calibrate policy to situational advantage with an adept and nimble touch. Managing the relationships and tensions of your friends and adversaries on a situational basis is a challenging job. It is a risky business running a transactional foreign policy and it requires great leadership. But the rewards are worth the effort.

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It's the national security, stupid!

Misha Zelinsky looks at the energy implications of China's rise

In an earlier time, to get elected as a federal government you had to keep the people safe, secure and prosperous. Spook the horses on the economy or national security and you could kiss government goodbye. Yet Australia's blasé attitude to sovereign capability over the last few decades suggests that our politics has shifted away from this traditional contest, with national security losing its status as a dominant 'Daddy' issue, instead riding in the backseat to economic management. But history is about to come

roaring back – and Labor needs to be ready with a plan.

For evidence of this policy malaise, take a look at our fuel security policy. Australia now has less than 28 days of national fuel reserves. Any military strategist will tell you, take away a nation's capacity to fuel itself and you will quickly bring it to its knees. However, this misfortune is self-inflicted. Rather than relying on a military foe to do it for us, Australia actively created this weakness by failing to plan for a very foreseeable problem. Given our

supreme reliance on road transport, within 7 to 10 days of a major interruption to maritime trade, our supermarket shelves would be empty, airlines grounded, trucks parked and hospital medicine stocks depleted. Extreme rationing would loom. Within weeks Australia would come to a grinding halt – unable to feed, medicate or defend ourselves.

Our fuel security crisis is emblematic of a deeper problem. A quick look at our national inventory shows that our cupboard is startlingly bare. Australia's sovereign capabilities – that is, our ability to provide the 'basics' for ourselves in the event of a crisis – are flashing red. Keeping a healthy manufacturing base through minerals and metals production and machinery, ensuring pharmaceutical development and stockpiling and maintaining critical food and energy supplies are a few other critical steps to maintaining our sovereignty. Many countries hold these items in reserve – so why don't we?

The return of history

Since the end of the Cold War, Australians have not had to confront our own mortality in the event of a global or regional conflagration. Under the cosy blanket of US global military hegemony and an era of relative global and regional peace and stability, Australia has grown dangerously complacent. We began to believe that we could have enduring peace without security and that great power competition or threats to our way of life could never return. Our politics has followed the signal from voters with the battleground for government defined by the ability to manage the economy through its record 27 years of growth – essentially a demand to keep the good times rolling. This complacency has allowed Australian governments to run down our sovereign capability in previously unthinkable ways – ways that go far and beyond our fuel security – with little to no scrutiny from the public. It's hard to imagine Australians living under the threat of Soviet annihilation or for that matter Japanese invasion, being fine with the concept of a fuel induced national shutdown in little over a week. And yet today that is exactly where Australia finds itself. That era of stability is now over – and it's time we woke up to the very material threats that exist to the world order and regional stability. History didn't finish in 1989. It just paused – and now its hurtling forward at ever alarming speed.

As Australians wake up to this reality, their concerns and demands will shift politics back to a more traditional multi-faceted ground – the ability to keep our country prosperous and secure. The end of the Cold War didn't just bring in a new era of sunny-sided optimism, it also ushered in an era of blind faith in markets to deliver – including the things that we would really miss in the event of a disruption. Markets are no doubt incredibly efficient allocators of resources and extraordinarily powerful in the abstract, they can be rocked by the real politick of nation-states and the hard power of military rivalries. And market failure in this sense is a lot more serious.

While we could probably go a little while without a fresh delivery of iPhones, it's hard to make a 'she'll

be right' case for medicines or vaccines. Free market ideologues and more sanguine economists will say that Australia has nothing to fear from its import reliance. After all, nothing has happened thus far. On that basis we could get rid of fire stations in the wet seasons. Other economists will tell you that markets work well – until they don't. Which is exactly when you need governments to intervene to correct them. While we should never stop working with allies and global institutions to secure the rules of the road that has made the world work so well, we would be crazy to have a naive faith in their capacity to deliver to us on a just-in-time basis in absolute perpetuity. A quick scan around the world should have any foreign policy dove shuffling nervously in their shoes. The recent bombing of Saudi Arabian production knocked out five per cent of global oil production overnight and sent prices soaring only scratches the surface of global tensions. The Chinese Communist Party is increasingly assertive in the South China Sea, militarising islands in crucial shipping lanes, providing armed guards to illegal fishing, bullying our friends in ASEAN and making overtures to our Pacific neighbours with promises of cheap and easy money through their so-called Belt and Road Initiative that comes with many strings attached. The Middle East is a tinderbox, with Iran seizing oil tankers with alarming regularity while also threatening to close off the Strait of Hormuz – the channel responsible for 40 per cent of seaborne oil supply. Disruption could come at any minute.

In this context of new and emerging threats, when it comes to sovereign capability – the national capacity to feed, fuel, defend and generally look after ourselves in the event of a crisis – it's clear that we enormously underdone. Put simply, there are very real questions as to whether Australia could stand on its own two feet if it ever needed to. These questions are no longer intellectual abstractions, rent seeking hypotheses or hawkish sabre-rattling. That we need to ask them at all should worry all of us. In an era of returned great power competition, everything old is new again – and that includes Australia's national security and sovereign capability policy settings.

Fuelling the national interest

When it comes to security risks, we must be abundantly cautious. Any government worth its salt should really start with energy supplies. After all, it fuels everything else – including our national security. The International Energy Association mandates that nations keep 90 days of fuel available in case of an emergency, while national security strategists will tell you it should be far higher for a country such as Australia. Drilling down, these numbers are even worse. When it comes to diesel – from a low of 12 days – we now have 21 days of supply. Aviation fuel supplies sit at 28 days at best. And this doesn't factor in a spike in usage from a crisis such as air force demand or panic purchasing. Our reliance on overseas fuel makes us incredibly vulnerable to global disruption of oil markets or hostile actors seeking to cut our continental castle off from critical supplies of liquid fuels. Unlike other nations, Australia doesn't 'stockpile' fuel. Instead, our energy minister can theoretically nationalise fuels sloshing about in the domestic market in an emergency. Australia's own

Department of Energy has questioned this approach, stating the “burdensome” nature of the process would likely “delay an effective Government response in an emergency.”

Even if they did work, Australia’s contingency measures assume we have enough fuel in the system or can make enough in the event of a crisis. However, neither of these are true of Australia. Australia was once completely fuel sufficient. But today, 90 per cent of our transport fuels are imported as either crude or refined product. Put simply, Australia is at a self-induced crisis point. The Morrison Government’s recently announced ‘plan’ to deal with the self-induced fuel scarcity problem would be laughable if it wasn’t so serious. In the event of major disruption, the Prime Minister has agreed to ‘borrow’ some oil from the stockpiles the US keeps handy. That’s assuming they can get it to us. But what if global sea lanes are blocked, as has happened recently? Or a major supplier of oil is attacked by drones, which literally just happened? It makes infinitely more sense for Australia to stock enough fuel to supply itself behind the castle moat, rather than waiting for someone to, hopefully, break the siege and deliver us some.

As a country we must ask ourselves – what product and know-how does Fortress Australia need to learn, produce or stockpile in order to stand on its own two feet should trouble ever come to our region or our shores. And then we need a plan to make sure we have it at our disposal. Furthermore, we should ask what are the things that the world might need from a reliable, democratic supplier and what economic opportunities might those open up?

Like economic management, if we don’t get our national security settings right – particularly in the context of rising global and regional tensions – Labor can expect to find itself in opposition for a good time yet. For the party that is traditionally synonymous with nation building and gave Australia its greatest wartime leader in John Curtin – this should be an easy political case to make to the voting public. The intersection of these concepts with Labor’s natural affinity with industry and regional policy may map out a pathway for Labor to return to government with the most powerful mandate of all – the national interest.

So, what are the potential areas of vulnerability and what are the opportunities? First, the bad news. From seven refineries in 2012 we are now down to four, with no policy to retain any refineries at all. Since 1997, we have lost two major steelwork facilities in Newcastle and Wollongong. Since 2014, we closed two major aluminium smelters and an alumina refinery. In 2016, we lost our ability to make complex vehicles when the auto industry

shut up shop. We’ve seen shipyards close and continue to lay off workers around the country. The French are helping us learn how to make our own submarines again – with that prospect still at least a decade or more away. We’re down to one major glass production facility. Unlike every other country in the world that quarantines gas for itself – Australia now exports so much of its own gas that we are literally choking our ability to power our factories, gas turbines and households.

More bad news. Our electricity generation fleet is due to shut down in the next few decades with no plan to replace it. Critical medicine shortages – something we don’t even measure in Australia – are on the rise worldwide. For example, Australia recently suffered a major shortage of EpiPens. And climate change is creating an era of drought and bush fires that is stretching our agribusiness model and ability to feed ourselves to breaking point. The scale of Australia’s deskilling makes for a chilling read for those worried about our national capability. The industries listed above are ‘core’ functions of a coherent national security backbone. All countries that are serious about defending themselves jealously guard them. While we should secure these vital functions, we should also consider the vital tech, minerals and capability that we need for the future and identify supply chain opportunities for Australia. This will involve watching what the world is up to and working closely with our friends.

The Panda in the room

While Trump’s ‘America First’ trade strategy is gaining all the headlines, make no mistake, every country in the world is currently contemplating its exposure to global supply chains and supply of critical economic items. A mild decoupling of the West and the Rest is already underway and is likely to quicken rather than slow in the coming years and decades as countries seek to quarantine their supply chains from potential hostile actors. The reason for this is simple – the Chinese Communist Party’s increasingly assertive and winner takes all approach to economic markets and military forward projection. While one cannot necessarily blame the Chinese Government for wanting to dominate economically – it lifts people out of poverty and provides the financial strength to fund military muscle – they themselves wouldn’t expect the world to let the challenge go unmet. When historians look back at the moment that strategic rivalry emerged between the United States and China it may not be Obama’s Pivot or even Trump’s America First election – but rather the ‘Made in China 2025’ industrial plan outlined by the Xi regime.

Not content with its domination of base metals and

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commodities manufactures, China aims in short time to own the cutting edge and emerging industries of artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, quantum computing, digital signalling and others. These high-tech industries will not just define economic dominance, they will also define military supremacy. The China industrial model – where it promotes national champions and seeks to embed them in trading partners – amounts to a form of techno-nationalism that has much of the world spooked. The increasing banning of Huawei from critical infrastructure is a symbol of this deeper suspicion. It is in this context that the US has turned to Australia to secure a reliable supply of rare earth minerals – the critical ingredients for high tech and military manufactures – as a hedge against China's near total dominance of market share. Given China has previously used this dominance to bully its neighbours Japan and South Korea – two advanced manufacturing powerhouses – and threatened to do likewise to the US in the escalating trade war, this would seem prudent.

Labor could look to deepen this link beyond the mining of rare earth minerals – something Australia has in abundance – by partnering with allied nations in downstream, processing and downstream battery and computer chip technologies. An advanced Australian manufacturing sector would create jobs, add value to our natural endowments and give the world confidence that it would not be held hostage by autocratic regimes. The creation of an Australian hydrogen industry would not just reduce emissions in Australia and export partners – it would give friends like Japan confidence that they wouldn't be energy choked by their assertive CCP neighbours.

Channelling Curtin

Many of the challenges that face the country – fuel security, youth unemployment, climate change, wages growth, regional growth, human capital investment, research and development – when overlaid with a national security and capability policy, begin to make sense. And this crisis in national capability represents an opportunity for Labor – however it requires a rethink of our views on sovereignty and national security. Sovereignty is a tricky conversation for Labor members, activists and supporters. Many tend to view sovereignty with a suspicion akin to Samuel Johnson's critique of patriotism; that it is the last refuge of the scoundrel. And while it's true that Coalition governments can use national security cynically, this doesn't mean we can afford to ignore it. Ignoring the issue in the past has caused the party to split and kept the ALP out of government for generations. The last time modern Labor dealt with a national security crisis largely came in the form of John Howard's conflation of terrorism and orderly migration.

While Labor supporters were right to condemn Howard's cynical use of dog-whistle politics, it didn't make the opposition benches are more comfortable. Ignoring the issue and failing to credibly plan also made governing – when it came – almost impossible and unauthorised boat arrivals hurt the Rudd-Gillard governments. A failure to meet the current national security moment could see Labor left with another Tampa – an issue that dogged the party for nearly two decades before it was able to reach a settlement internally and with the electorate.

The Morrison Government's treatment of fuel security shows that for all their tough talk, they haven't got the policy chops to deal with this complex network of policy challenges. This weakness should give the party confidence to take the government on and demand a proper national sovereign capability plan. We should start by ending the madness when it comes to fuel security and demand urgent investment in domestic refinery capacity and fuel storage in order get our reserves up to acceptable levels. Australian capacity is far better than than shipping the petrol in

from Singapore and letting multi-national oil and gas companies game Australians through price gouging.

There is a hunger for leadership on this issue. When you couple this polling with the popularity of industry policy more generally and the fact that much of the investment will inevitably be regional and northern in its application – in seats Labor must win to form government – and you start to see a powerful 2022 ALP political campaign emerge from a strong national security footing. When you consider that much of the investment could also occur in seats that are most exposed to transitions to a carbon reduced or neutral economy, a national sovereignty and capability industry plan can help overcome the understandable

economic anxieties that fuel the political resistance to climate action in many parts of the country. New jobs in new industries backed by strong national interest will give people confidence that they won't be abandoned in the transition. National security represents a rare policy sweet spot for Labor that provides job security, diverse and broad economic growth and – critically – electoral popularity.

While it's undoubtedly true that Australia should make friends with our neighbours, pursue multilateral answers to global challenges and work towards a better, more peaceful world underpinned by a liberal rules-based order – our region is becoming more challenging and potentially more hostile. It's time we woke up to that reality and acted accordingly.

Misha Zelinsky is the Assistant National Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union.

Getting to know...

John Curtin Research Centre Committee of Management Member, David Cragg

What got you interested in politics?

I'm fortunate enough to have 'come of political age' during the Whitlam period. My family was Labor, my parents branch members primarily involved because of Gough's democratic reform of the Victorian Branch, and I'd attend the occasional branch meeting years before I joined. My first active election was December 1975, which was a salutary lesson. We had the ideas and the ideals, but zero public credibility. Non-political Australians are not going to trust you if they suspect you're not on their side. The election of Neville Wran in March 1976 signified that all was not lost, and Don Dunstan's distinctively South Australian experiment kept the fires of social democracy burning. The past forty years has been a challenge of retaining Gough's civic idealism while grasping at some economic credentials. We see this today – Labor is trusted to run hospitals, schools and roads at the state level, but not taxation, energy & defence nationally.

Tell us about your working life.

Well, I will always be a frustrated history teacher – the study of history was and is my only true love. Courtesy of student politics and Young Labor, I went seriously off track. After my first job as a law clerk, I ended up working from July 1981 to April 2018 in the movement with the Federated Ironworkers Union, the Victorian branch of the Australian Workers' Union and as Assistant Secretary of Victorian Trades Hall. I'm a bit like the life-long ALP Senator who got up for his retirement speech and said he'd concluded, after decades of observing the place, that the Senate was a waste of time and should be abolished! Wisdom in hindsight, but I do think that limited tenure should be considered across different aspects of the movement, and moving Labor people between the private and public sectors should be positively encouraged.

Any advice for young activists?

As I noted in looking at the very admirable career of Bill Landeryou, general unionism in Australia is in diabolical trouble because we were lured away from the award system, and unionised workplaces are no longer permitted to discriminate against non-union suppliers. For most of the twentieth century, the framework of Australian employment law was pro-union and pro-discrimination. But since the Brereton-Kelty amendments of 1993, the movement has been bogged down in legalese. The only light I can see is the licensing of specific trades and occupations – where you have, in the interests of public safety and professional competence, registration boards, the movement is hanging in there. So, my advice – focus on a licensed occupation, of any sort, and accept that vocational reskilling will be an on-going part of most working lives in the twenty-first century.

Tell our readers an unusual fact about yourself

The more Labor think tanks, the better – in a multitude of counsel, there is safety. But I would like some demarcation and equitable distribution of the movement's precious resources across a range of 'approved' Party research and training institutes. Compared to the 1970s, we have a lot more intellectual work happening, but I'm not sure that it is having the impact we would want. The IPA is a model for the dissemination of clear and articulate ideological messages. My unusual fact is that I admire the articulation of the IPA - and as a liberal-conservative socialist, I can live with a fair few of their policy recommendations – except lower taxation!

What do you like to get up to outside of work?

I attended 20 of the first 25 Byron Blues Festivals, live music is a blessing – I've slowed down more recently, and the Byron Writers Festival (ABC Radio National at play) is now more my speed these days. Live theatre impresses me deeply, and at least a couple of times a year I indulge in the weird melodrama of nineteenth century opera – it is very good that those times are past. Mature age studies at university is also good fun.

What is the one big policy problem facing Australia and the solution?

The big policy problem facing the Labor Party is that most Australians think it will say and do anything to get elected. When the Liberals and Nationals appear to be politically principled, you know you have got a 'mother' of policy problems. The self-indulgence of the Rudd-Gillard period should cause Labor folk to hang their heads low. Rudd's abandonment of the "great moral challenge" of our time was shameful, and the gutlessness of how we handled the Ken Henry tax review – a golden chance to initiate a mature discussion with the community about the tax base of government revenue - is beyond despair. We don't train our politicians, and we expect them to be competent and mature, without any good reason. I've seen at the Victorian level how opposition is a wonderful opportunity to consider what worked and what didn't when last in government, to form strategic alliances around the community, and to generate a genuine sense of humility and public service within the Party. Senior shadow ministers in Victoria 1992-99 and 2010-14 were accessible, and policy committees worked well – can anyone say the same of federal Labor 2013-2019?



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‘The nation looked to Labor,
and it did not look in vain.’

- John Curtin, 26 July 1943