



**Submission in Response to the Call for Public Submission on
Foreign Policy White Paper**

Introduction

The Chinese Australian Services Society Limited (commonly known as “CASS”) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the Government’s call for public submission on Foreign Policy White Paper.

As a long standing community organisation, CASS has been dedicated to assisting disadvantaged people from local communities and advocating on their behalf. We would like to share our views and experience with the Government on Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper.

Our submission is a reflection of the viewpoints and concerns that we received from our service users and people in our community, as well as observation and conclusions we made while delivering services to our clients, who have been affected by existing foreign policy and may be affected by potential changes. This submission does not represent in any way the position of CASS as the organisation.

About Our Organisation

CASS was founded in 1981. Its main service objective is to provide a wide range of welfare services to the community, and assist migrants to settle and integrate into the Australian society. The comprehensive range of community services and activities provided by CASS includes residential aged care, home ageing services, disability services, vocational training, settlement and health, volunteering, and family and children services. Most of the services we provide cover the whole of Metropolitan Sydney, with some covering the areas down to Wollongong. We serve the Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Vietnamese, people from other CALD communities, as well as mainstream Australians. More than 2,400 families access our services and activities weekly.

**The key areas that we would like to bring to the attention of the Government on
Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper**

1. Australia’s National Interests

The foreign policy of each nation is formulated on the basis of its national interests and it is always at work for securing its goals. Statesmen and policy-makers have always used it in ways suitable to them and to their objective of justifying the actions of their states.



In the Australian context, main aspects of national interest may be:

- Mainland defence and self-reliance that is adequate in size, training, equipment and support for detection, deterrence and direct mainland defence;
- Sufficient capability in maintaining regional stability and security, strong influence and positive regional ties with neighbours, including the role across island chain, stability in Southwest Pacific area as well as the relationship with Indonesia and other Southeast Asian nations;
- Global security and maintaining basically peaceful core global relationships;
- Economic development based on neo-liberalism and International Free Trade, as well as good international economic relations with our trade partners;
- Internationalism, which addresses concerns about international controls and agreements over refugees, international crime, the environment, weapons of mass destruction and health issues etc.

In order to define the realistic national interests for Australia, we must accurately determine Australia's position on the world stage, and appropriately prioritise the level of vitality of each aspect of our interests. To achieve that, Australia needs to start thinking of itself as a serious-minded nation, which determines not to support any trend to a retrograde world of two alliance systems.

2. The US Alliance

Since WWII, Australia established close links with the US and accepted the US's involvement while seeking to retain the British connection. At the post-war stage, Australia was deeply involved in discussions concerning the creation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, a system that contributed significantly to America's post-war prosperity.

Australia has been investing heavily in the US alliance thenceforward and firmly tied to US global hegemonic position. Such support is based on consistency with core socio-cultural assumptions and close defence ties between the nations, as well as the expectation of return obligation to Australian defence if required.

Being firmly tied to the alliance, Australia has fought alongside the US in many wars, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. The closeness to the US government and the enthusiastic involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan war have only increased fears among Australia's predominantly Muslim Asian neighbours. Australia will always have to be fighting alongside



the US, taking the stance that US takes based on the US's global position instead of our own. This has resulted in extensive military spending as the US frequently uses coercive measures for conflict resolution.

There's often strong continuity in the conduct of Australian foreign policy, of which incoming governments are usually successors to the foreign policy of the last administration. It is observed that all prime ministers since 1996 adopted a play-it-safe foreign policy of unquestioning strategic alignment with the US. However, after years of sclerosis in our foreign policy, it is time that we understand Australia is capable of many important and positive roles besides "America's deputy sheriff". We need to sustain a wide network of relationships across the globe as a nation with independent sovereignty and policy, and should not simply follow the US global policy.

We urge for an Australian strategy in a real sense that operates outside the US alliance and independent Australian diplomacy of stature in the world.

3. The "Middle Power" Label

From some perspectives, the term "middle power" refers to states that are able to provide for their own defence but without great capacity for coercing others. These states should also be able to shape parts of the international system, not the overlying structure, but at least refining specific parts in ways that suit their interests.

There are many different perceptions of the balance between Australia's global and regional imperatives, its strategic interests and international responsibilities. There was a broad acceptance that Australia has global interests, but a divergence on how much and what sort of effort it should devote to protecting them. Due to the heavy use of the term by policymakers, the Government seems to be happy to embrace such a national role conception.

There is no doubt that Australia has its influence globally and regionally. Being a producer of energy and other resources, we have an impact on world commodity prices, and are very important to the resource hungry industries and countries. We provide considerable geographical utility as a site for intelligence, communications and military training and garrisoning. We also serve a useful purpose in providing high-end air and maritime capability to this part of the world, providing valuable security blanket for New Zealand. More importantly, we have the ability to lead local stabilisation missions in the area. The security and prosperity of Asia may very well depend on what position that Australia decides to take.

However, we must not have an inflated view of our own importance in the world. Statistically Australia might be the 12th largest economy in the world, however its contribution to the



world total GDP is only slightly over 2%. ASEAN would continue to grow in its own inimitable fashion, restraining Australia's potential to expand its influence in Southeast Asia.

We believe that Australia should not use the term 'middle power' to describe who we are or how we operate as a country in the international system, nor should we imply a desire or intention to be shifting and pushing regional and global affairs except for the purpose of peace building and keeping, or suggest a focus on being the hero and 'the decider'.

4. Key Relationships with International Partners

It is clear that the US will no longer be as dominant as it was in the late 20th century.

In Asia we face a situation where, as many people have pointed out, our principal economic partner is no longer a member of the same security alliance. Successive Australian governments since the 1990s have told us that there was no need for Australia to choose between our security and our economic prosperity.

However, we are making such choices every day and those choices are becoming more complicated. China and other emerging countries have a growing interest in shaping the world in which they are stakeholders. In new areas like cyber and genetic engineering, norms and standards can only be set with their engagement. Australia will have to become more directly engaged in shoring up the multilateral system and establishing its new rules.

Therefore, Australia needs to start deliberate conversation and partnership with our friends and neighbours in Asia and Indo-pacific area, countries that consist of 70% of Australia's foreign trade.

We believe in Australia's capability to balance its relationships with various stakeholders, as Australia is a multi-cultural society, where domestically relationships between different ethnic groups are good and harmonious. There is no reason that such value does not underpin and nurture our foreign policy.

- China

With China's rise, it is inevitable that every nation in the region needs to pursue an effective relationship with China for sustainable prosperity in the next a couple of decades. In fact, the relationship between Australia and China will be the prominent defining feature in the area.

China's rise is at the centre of changes occurring in our region, and is changing the dynamics of the entire international system. China took a brave step to embrace the global market, which has proved to be the right strategic choice. Australia's links with China are emerging. By 2015, China has already become Australia's biggest trading partner and a large source of foreign investment, spending \$11.1 billion on Australian assets and contributing to the



booming real estate market and labour market. With the implementation of the “One Belt One Road” policy, China will become a significant strategic partner to Australia as much as it has been economically.

The recent dispute in South China Sea indicated that China wants a greater say in existing global and regional arrangements and institutions and to promote new arrangements and institutions which reflect its interests. It is understandable and it is possible that Australia’s certain interests align with China, for instance a direct interest in freedom of navigation in the area as a maritime trading nation.

Labor has expressed support the peaceful rise of China. As our relationship with China matures and deepens over time, so too can we expand the links between our defence forces and personnel. It is a relationship currently centred on trade and will develop over time into a rounded and mature relationship as trust and confidence builds and eventually achieve mutual interest and benefit.

Therefore, Australia should maintain a neutral position in this symbolic muscle flexing between the US and China, and take no position on the competing claims.

We also believe in adopting a similar approach in our relationships with our other neighbours in Asia, which is focusing on trade, investment and aids as well as issues relating to common interests and international law and norms in the region. Our other neighbours in Asia include but are not limited to Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

- United Kingdom

Economically, Australian wealth largely depends on exports and commodity prices, which is why we actively support freer international trade, pursue bilateral free trade agreements and participate in multi-national organisations and events such as G20, as we benefit from fewer subsidies and tariff barriers in our trade partners.

With Brexit moving through the British parliament, the UK government needs to consider how it will approach trade agreements once it leaves the European Union. Prime Minister Theresa May has specifically identified a free trade agreement (FTA) with the US as a key measure of her government’s success.

As an independent player, the UK has been out of the global trade-negotiating environment for decades. Without the negotiating weight of the EU, UK will be in need of more bilateral and regional FTAs for its trade agenda. With a long and deep relationship with the UK, it is highly possible that Australia can work with the UK on some profoundly difficult trade and regulatory issues that were not resolved in the EU-US negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

5. Other Aspects

In order to secure Australia’s national interests, we also propose the following:



- Close cooperation with multilateral and international organisations to tackle global issues, for instance WHO and The UN Refugee Agency;
- Lower the cost of international transportation to facilitate exporting;
- Lower the labour cost and increase budget deficit to attract foreign investment;
- Infrastructure construction particularly IT infrastructure upgrade, to support domestic demands and to expand our influence in global economy;
- Utilise Australia's advantage in IT industry, quality agricultural products and abundant industrial resources;
- Reinstate our researches in high-end technology, science and health and restore our advanced position in technical innovation and invention from the 1970's;
- Better management and efficient utilisation of the skills and experience brought by our skilled immigrants;
- More funding and resource to maintain and further develop the relationships between the Government and the community, more information sharing and transparency to facilitate correct and wise decision making.

6. The Execution of Foreign Policy

Last but not least, few important developments in Australian foreign policy in recent years could have been foreseen by white papers. No white paper published in June 2016 would have considered the implications of the election of the Trump administration.

To understand the world, foreign policy needs reconnaissance capabilities. To disseminate the policy, to conciliate and persuade, we need excellent diplomats, not only from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade but from the many other government agencies, to be actively engaged in the business of foreign policy. It takes all the potential resources of Australian soft power, outside as well as inside government, and to build them further so as to secure the goals and objectives of our foreign policy.



Conclusion

To secure the goals and objectives of the national interest of Australia, we urge the Government take the following advice into consideration to formulate the Foreign Policy White Paper:

1. Reconsider Australia's involvement in the US alliance, distance from certain elements of the alliance if necessary; start building a strategic system that centers and prioritises Australia, instead of the support we are bound to provide for the US;
2. Refrain from the propaganda of Australia being a "middle power";
3. Prioritise Australia's military and security capacity for serving the purpose of peace-keeping in the region and for national security;
4. Adopt an open-minded mentality and contemporary approach in the relationships with other nations with a particular focus on Indo-Pacific area; be prepared for a changing global environment in which the US is no longer the number one power and for a new pattern of big power relations;
5. Develop effective tact and diplomacy skills and a team of effective diplomats, who have thorough understanding in Australia's role in the world and high proficiency in utilizing diplomatic means for exercising power and securing goals of our national interests.

In this submission, we have included the feedback that we received from people in our community, including our volunteers and staff members. We would appreciate if the Government takes into account the viewpoints and concerns raised in this submission. We are happy to have a further discussion to elaborate these viewpoints and concerns.



Reference

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