

Submission to Foreign Policy White Paper 2017

by Humphrey Boogaerdt

01 AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY NEEDS TO BE GROUNDED IN A CLEAR-EYED ASSESSMENT OF OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS.

Ensure that in future involvement in any war is assessed more rigorously prior to commitment. Use DFAT's in depth knowledge of the particular region to educate all politicians. It is also necessary that the assessment of DFAT can be made public so that the public can put pressure on politicians to act according the facts and not based on 'alternative-facts'.

An example : Before Australia joined the last Iraq war, besides the issue of WMDs, there were also arguments that Saddam Hussein was funding bases of Al Qaeda inside Iraq. You do not have to be a counter intelligence expert to know that no dictator would ever fund insurgent groups in their own country, because of the risk of destabilising their regime. This fact was never denied, but often used as an additional argument to go to war.

03 AUSTRALIA IS AN INFLUENTIAL PLAYER IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

Cooperation is of absolute importance. We have to be part of regional and global organisations (e.g. G20, APEC, ASEAN, UN) to have a say in what would be a better outcome for all of us. We cannot pursue only wins, because that means someone else loses. We have to strive for better outcomes for every country. For cooperation a level of trust is needed and than as a result the chance of military conflict will be reduced. Instead of using win-lose negotiation strategies, use mediation¹ strategies where the aim is win-win. The mediation process should be a fundamental tool of carrying out foreign policy.

We have to work towards the concept of “Sovereign Obligation”², which respects existing borders and opposes their changes by means of force and coercion.

Australia is a trading nation so it is very important that we have a global outlook, have access to global markets and are against increased protectionism at home and abroad.

We loose our “influential player” status if we do not use our own voice. DFAT to advice at least the PM, Foreign Minister and Minister of Trade on diplomatic issues. For example recently the government reaction (more or less none) on Trump's executive order “Muslim Ban” will likely be

1 *Mediator* = Mediators do not advise upon, evaluate or determine disputes. They assist in managing the process of dispute and conflict resolution whereby the participants agree upon the outcomes, when appropriate. Mediation is essentially a process that maximises the self-determination of the participants. The principle of self-determination requires that mediation processes be non-directive as to content.

Mediation = A mediation process is a process in which the participants, with the support of the mediator, identify issues, develop options, consider alternatives and make decisions about future actions and outcomes. The mediator acts as a third party to support participants to reach their own decision.

2 Haass, R (2017) *World Order 2.0 : The Case of Sovereign Obligation* ; Foreign Affairs, vol 96 num 1.

viewed in the region as weak at best, but more likely as a stealthily condoning US policy. Our moral credibility will be lost. The only reason that we still have influence is because for the moment we are still wealthier than many of our neighbors.

04 AUSTRALIA NEEDS TO BE AMBITIOUS IN GRASPING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

Economic opportunities are partially based on Renewable Energy. Australia has such abundance of Renewable Energy (not yet installed) that we could export electricity via deep-sea cables to Asia. In addition energy intensive industries, like aluminium refineries, could be located in Australia and powered by Renewable Energy.

Yes, Australia has an abundance of fossil and nuclear fuels resources. However, these should be left in the ground because it would be a waste of effort to exploit them. The unstoppable trend is moving towards renewables, which removes being subjected to global energy market fluctuations. The overseas markets are dwindling and will become insignificant. In addition fossil fuel extraction is not as cheap as is portrayed by the fossil fuel industry. The reason is that the businesses do not pay for everything, they get their resource cheap or free, do not pay fully to rehabilitate their sites and pay little for waste, e.g. greenhouse gasses. Continuing on the short term path of fossil fuels is a risk of losing our technological advantage by focussing on what will become obsolete technology. Technological expertise is what can be exported. We can help others with the transition to a cleaner planet.

05 AUSTRALIA CONFRONTS A RANGE OF STRATEGIC, SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES.

Australia has to prepare for possible flood of **environmental refugees** from the Pacific and Indian Oceans³. Is there a framework / definition of what an environmental refugee is? Are they the same or different from a “standard” refugee? Environmental refugees are not opportunistic, their migration will be based on the choice of either perishing or having an opportunity to survive by becoming a refugee. If they had wanted to migrate they would have probably done so before the disaster.

What are the government's plans, receive the refugees with open arms or store them on places like Manus island for indefinite periods. It has to be kept in mind that there will not be a few thousand environmental refugees, but 100,000s or even millions potentially arriving on our shores. Australia can learn from the current crisis in the Middle East and its impacts on Turkey and Jordan how they deal with these large numbers.

Turning back the boats will not work, since there will be nothing to send them back to, only the flooded lands they fled and that would be genocide. There needs to be a positive policy to avoid any form of genocide.

Immigration has had an a positive influence on our society and economy. However a sudden mass

3 Collier, P (2013) *Exodus, how migration is changing our world* ; Oxford Uni Press.

environmental immigration will likely have a very negative impact in Australia, at least for the short term and beyond our shores. All the existing infrastructures and means of making a living in the refugees' lands of origin will be lost. Then there is the cost of providing at once for all these environmental refugees, that arrive out of necessity against their will. In addition there will be an enormous strain on Australia's population in how to deal with this influx.

There is no certainty about the impact or even if it will happen, but the only option we have to do everything on our power to avoid this potential disaster is to pursue a more ambitious way to reduce atmospheric pollution and by promoting Renewable Energy. If we wean ourselves off fossil fuels and have no influx of environmental mass immigration, then we will at least have the benefit of a modern clean energy sector. If Australia becomes a leader in this field we will become also more influential in the region. If we drag our heels we will be seen as selfish, short-sighted hypocrites and our standing will be lowered. And it will be sure that our standards of living will fall dramatically.

Australia has also a moral obligation to help prevent a possible climatic disaster and its associated human suffering. So to reduce the likely hood of this stream of refugees more ambitious Climate Change goals have to be met than current is planned for.

The staving off of a climate disaster is a global effort. But if Australia does more than the required bare minimum, we can be seen as leaders, especially if we have flourishing economy. And have the opportunity to expertise overseas.