

Media Roundup Issue 48 (25/11/17 – 01/12/17)

1. Canberra voices fears but who will contain the dragon?

25/11/2017

Hugh White (member of China Matters Advisory Council)

The Straits Times

The Australian government issued on Thursday a new foreign policy White Paper - the first since 2004 - which broke new ground in acknowledging the growing power of China and the risks that it poses for the US-led order in Asia, to which Canberra remains so strongly committed.

The key to its response to this major challenge is the concept of the "Indo-Pacific region". It is not a new idea, but it has new and growing significance as China's strength and strategic ambition become ever clearer, and America's become correspondingly less certain.

At its heart is the simple idea that China's power can be balanced and contained not just by America but also by India. It presupposes that South and East Asia together constitute a single strategic system in which China and India will inevitably compete for leadership.

Read more:

<http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/canberra-voices-fears-but-who-will-contain-the-dragon>

2. Australia needs to engage China and hedge the risks of this relationship

25/11/2017

Alan Dupont

The Australian

Independence is a powerful, unifying idea that has coursed through Western history from Thermopylae to Catalonia, inspiring nations to greatness and sometimes war. But Australia's march to independence was relatively uneventful and prosaic. Statues of iconic liberators are notably absent in our cities and

towns because there was no war of independence or bloody struggle to throw off the colonial yoke.

Whether through the absence of heroic sacrifice or our sometimes obsessive need for great and powerful friends, it is remarkable how perceptions that Australia lacks foreign policy independence persist more than a century after our formal separation from England.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is reported to have dismissed Australia “as not a real country”. Many of our Asian neighbours still regard Australian foreign policy as subservient to Washington’s, a position echoed by domestic critics such as Paul Keating, who castigates the government for ceding foreign policy to the US.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/australia-needs-to-engage-china-and-hedge-the-risks-of-this-relationship/news-story/c87fd7ac03ae03567f52dcd5b0d76c5b>

3. Asia must react to Trump’s recklessness on trade

26/11/2017

Peter Drysdale

Australian Financial Review

Getting foreign policy right at this point in world diplomatic history has never been more difficult.

For that reason the foreign policy white paper launched by Australia's Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, and Trade, Tourism and Investment Minister, Steve Ciobo, in Canberra last week is a welcome beginning to an important public debate.

It is a masterly exposition of the fluidity and uncertainties in Australia's diplomatic circumstance today.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/australia-needs-to-engage-china-and-hedge-the-risks-of-this-relationship/news-story/c87fd7ac03ae03567f52dcd5b0d76c5b>

4. Trump administration backs Australia white paper

26/11/2017

John Kehoe

Australian Financial Review

The Trump administration has endorsed the Turnbull government's foreign policy white paper which tilted more hawkish on China, with a senior US diplomat saying the document outlines "issues of concern" that are shared by the US and Australia.

In contrast to China's response that Australia should stop making "irresponsible" comments about territorial disputes in the South China Sea, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matt Matthews said the US welcomed the paper and would work with Australia to uphold order in the Indo-Pacific.

"Both our nations are diverse democracies with foreign policies based on the principles of individual freedoms, open markets and the rule of law," Mr Matthews said in a statement.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.afr.com/news/policy/foreign-affairs/trump-administration-backs-australia-white-paper-20171125-gzslv>

5. China media says Canberra 'negative'

26/11/2017

Rowan Callick

The Australian

The reactions in China to Australia's foreign affairs policy white paper have been muted since the document's release on Thursday morning — with the predictable exceptions of an official defence of Beijing's South China Sea program, and academic antipathy to the "Indo-Pacific" concept.

The only substantial coverage of Australia in the Chinese media on Friday was instead a touching story from Xinhua news agency of the Queensland ambulance crew who went out of their way to give a dying woman a view of the ocean she loved, at Hervey Bay.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang described the white paper as giving “an overall positive evaluation of China’s development and China-Australia relations, but made irresponsible remarks on the South China Sea issue”.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/china-media-says-canberra-negative/news-story/22f24ac10804f3d00a153047d6c1d1f4>

6. Beijing Hinders Free Speech in America

26/11/2017

Wang Dan

New York Times

I spent nearly seven years in a Chinese prison for being a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. I was freed in 1998, and the Chinese government let me leave the country. I chose to go to the United States, where I could freely speak my mind without fear of being thrown in prison.

I earned a doctorate in history in 2009 and took a teaching position in Taiwan. I taught contemporary Chinese history and led a weekly seminar — a “China salon” — of open discussions about Chinese society and politics. Many of the seminar topics, like the 1989 protest movement and political reform, were taboo in the mainland but safe for public discussion in Taiwan.

The salons drew large numbers of mainland students attending Taiwanese universities on exchange programs who were hungry for the truth about China’s past. Many of them wondered about the Tiananmen Square crackdown, for example, because there is little mention of it in China’s history books.

Read more:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/26/opinion/beijing-free-speech-america.html>

7. America or China? Australia is fooling itself that it doesn't have to choose

27/11/2017

Hugh White (member of China Matters Advisory Council)

The Guardian (edited extract from *Quarterly Essay 68*)

In early June 2017 Malcolm Turnbull gave the keynote speech at a big defence conference in Singapore. He warned of China's ambition to become the region's leading power, and called on America and its friends and allies in Asia to block this ambition and preserve the old US-led regional order.

This was the first time an Australian prime minister had plainly acknowledged the strategic rivalry between China and America, which was long overdue. But Turnbull expressed great confidence that America would prevail over China, and that Asia would therefore continue to flourish under US leadership. So the Australian government is still a long way from acknowledging, to the rest of us or even to itself, what is really happening between America and China, and what it will mean for Australia.

For a long time Canberra's refusal to admit either that a great strategic contest is underway between our major ally and our major trading partner – or that the contest might not go as we'd like – has been symbolised by the bold assertion that "Australia doesn't have to choose between America and China."

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/27/america-or-china-were-fooling-ourselves-that-we-dont-have-to-choose>

8. Foreign policy white paper has no answer to our biggest regional challenge

27/11/2017

Geoff Raby (associate of China Matters)

Australian Financial Review

Finally, the government's white paper on foreign policy has arrived. Judging by media and the public's reaction, it has been underwhelming. This is no one's fault. It is in the nature of the beast. Credible foreign policy cannot be developed in a public document with all the international sensitivities involved, and public

servants cannot be expected to strike out in new directions from existing government policy.

The whole exercise is intended to create the impression that the government of the day is thinking about the big international issues and has an active foreign policy agenda. Over the years, Australian governments have become less prepared to engage with contested ideas over foreign policy. It is telling that the report was not tabled in Parliament with a full parliamentary debate.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.afr.com/opinion/columnists/white-paper-has-no-answer-to-our-biggest-regional-challenge-20171127-gztij5?btis>

9. Australia's Search for a China Policy

27/11/2017

Ian Hall

IAPS Dialogue

The *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Peter Hartcher recently opined that for all Donald J. Trump's manifest faults, the President has done one good thing: he has 'shocked' Australia into thinking about foreign policy more intently than it has done for decades.

Hartcher has a point. Trump's election has certainly generated a sense of urgency. There is palpable concern in Canberra that a Presidential misstep or misjudgement could cause a serious headache somewhere in the Indo-Pacific at some point during his term. But Trump is not the only factor driving the rethinking. The other is China. The question of how best to manage the challenges it poses is forcing the reconsideration of long-held assumptions, polarising Australian policymakers and analysts for the first time in a generation.

Read more:

<https://iapsdialogue.org/2017/11/27/australias-search-for-a-china-policy/amp/>

10. Foreign Policy: Rising China as Rule-Taker or Rule-Maker?

27/11/2017

James Laurenceson
Australian Outlook

From an official Australia-China relations standpoint, the release of the Australian government's Foreign Policy White Paper has gone smoothly. It was reported that China's foreign ministry had said that while the white paper contained "some negative statements" and "irresponsible comment", notably in relation to the South China Sea, a full reading showed "an objective look at the China Australia relationship". Chinese government complaints about Australia's position on the South China Sea are nothing new.

But the official response isn't the whole story. Nick Bisley, professor of international relations at La Trobe University and editor in chief of the *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, was in Beijing attending a bilateral dialogue at the time of the paper's release. He tweeted, "I cannot stress enough how much they hate the FP [Foreign Policy] White Paper."

And the Chinese he was speaking with were elites who 'liked' and had a 'soft spot' for Australia. Nonetheless, they had read the document as distinctly tilted against China.

Read more:

<http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/china-rule-taker-rule-maker/>

11. Despite what politicians and the media say, freedom of speech is alive and well on campus

27/11/2017

Lauren Bliss
The Conversation

Headlines that categorise international students as a problem for freedom of speech in Australian universities paint students with a broad brush, ignoring diversity in the student body. This stereotyping and reduction of cultural diversity can be seen in headlines like: "for Chinese students the state is an extension of family".

More important is how these news stories overlook that these are students, not actors of a foreign state.

Pronouncements from politicians and the media on the need to preserve freedom of speech on campus ignores that the lecture theatre is a space for education, not politics. This is a crucial and obvious distinction.

Read more:

<https://theconversation.com/despite-what-politicians-and-the-media-say-freedom-of-speech-is-alive-and-well-on-campus-86929>

12. China has a plan to rule the world

28/11/2017

David Ignatius

Washington Post

The friendly words exchanged between Presidents Trump and Xi Jinping this month softened the edge of a Chinese economic and military buildup that a recent study commissioned by the Pentagon described as “perhaps the most ambitious grand strategy undertaken by a single nation-state in modern times.”

At the Beijing summit on Nov. 9, Xi repeated his usual congenial injunction for “win-win cooperation,” and Trump responded in kind, calling Xi “a very special man.” Trump also complained about the Chinese trade surplus, but the visit was mostly a serenade to Sino-American cooperation.

What caught my ear was Xi’s hint of China’s big ambitions in his toast that night. He quoted a Chinese proverb that “no distance, not even remote mountains and vast oceans, can ever prevent people with perseverance from reaching their destination.”

Read more:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/china-has-a-plan-to-rule-the-world/2017/11/28/214299aa-d472-11e7-a986-d0a9770d9a3e_story.html?tid=ss_mail-amp&utm_term=.8372426afc53

13. New world is dawning for Australia in its dealings with a dominant China

29/11/2017

Paul Kelly

The Australian

At last there are signs of a tough, even brutal, debate about the implications of the rise of an assertive and Leninist China and its consequences for an Australia that merrily assumes it can stay independent and live by values repudiated in Beijing.

Australians inhabit a dream world, yet we are unique among G20 nations as the country most exposed to pressure, intimidation and leverage from Beijing. The Australian psychology, still imbued with the residue of its “lucky country” cargo cult, is slow to grasp the awesome transformation before the nation and is unprepared for the unprecedented challenge it faces.

In his just released, highly contentious but brilliant Quarterly Essay *Without America*, Hugh White turns the China-America debate in this country on its head by arguing, first, that the US has already lost the big strategic contest with China for primacy in Asia and, second, by documenting the consequences for Australia of living with China as hegemon, a fate the nation cannot even begin to comprehend.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/paul-kelly/new-world-is-dawning-for-australia-in-its-dealings-with-a-dominant-china/news-story/2dc75157646abcf1cfa63ae9b4b3de35>

14. Labor senator Sam Dastyari warned wealthy Chinese donor Huang Xiangmo his phone was bugged

29/11/2017

Nick McKenzie, James Massola & Richard Baker

Sydney Morning Herald

Labor senator Sam Dastyari warned Chinese Communist Party-linked political donor Huang Xiangmo last year that his phone was likely tapped by government agencies, including the US government.

Before the two spoke, Mr Dastyari gave Mr Huang counter-surveillance advice, saying they should leave their phones inside and go outside to speak.

The face-to-face meeting between the pair in the grounds of Mr Huang's Mosman mansion in Sydney last October came several weeks after Mr Dastyari quit the frontbench over his dealings with Mr Huang.

It also occurred after ASIO briefed senior political figures, including from the Australian Labor Party, that Mr Huang was of interest to the agency over his opaque links to the Chinese government.

Read more:

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/labor-senator-sam-dastyari-warned-wealthy-chinese-donor-huang-xiangmo-his-phone-was-bugged-20171127-gzu14c.html>

15. Sam Dastyari's position 'untenable' after Chinese donor revelation: Julie Bishop

29/11/2017

Adam Gartrell

Sydney Morning Herald

Revelations that Labor's Sam Dastyari told a Chinese benefactor his phone was most likely being tapped by intelligence agencies makes his position in the Senate "untenable", the Turnbull government says.

Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop has accused Senator Dastyari of acting against Australia's national security interests and Attorney-General George Brandis said the revelations raised serious questions about his loyalties.

Senator Brandis said the revelations were also a test for Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, who brought Senator Dastyari in from the cold by giving him the leadership role of deputy Senate whip earlier this year.

Mr Shorten said while he receives regular confidential briefings from security agencies in his role as a major party leader, he denied sharing any of that information.

Read more:

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/sam-dastyaris-position-untenable-after-chinese-donor-revelation-julie-bishop-20171128-gzus62.html>

16. United Front, China's important 'magic weapon'

29/11/2017

Kirsty Needham

Sydney Morning Herald

Minutes before state broadcaster CGTN cut to a live, rare press conference with China's United Front Work Department last month, former diplomat Victor Gao cut to the chase.

"China has no interest in exporting its political system - and it wouldn't work," Gao told the mostly foreign TV audience.

The department is tasked with "rallying" the non-Communist parties and religious groups within China, the overseas Chinese diaspora and "standing firm against separatism".

Gao was pre-empting the western reaction to the discussion likely to follow. Are they trying to export communism?

Read more:

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/united-front-chinas-important-magic-weapon-20171129-gzv562.html>

17. Media has pivotal role in China-Australia ties

29/11/2017

Chen Ping

Global Times

Chinese media outlets have been keeping an eye on Australia recently, and news coverage about the nation is time-sensitive. For example, Chinese media outlets, including the Global Times, reported and editorialized on Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper shortly after its release. In addition, coverage related to Australia is wide-ranging, touching on all aspects of Australia, as well as plenty of in-depth reporting. For one thing, Chinese media outlets are bound to beat a path to report on the Australian Open in January 2018. Furthermore, Chinese media outlets, especially mainstream ones, seldom criticize or make irresponsible remarks about the domestic affairs of Australia.

Similarly, Australian media outlets also pay close attention to China. Australian mainstream media's coverage of China reflects that Australia attaches importance to China, and in turn, China is vital to Australia.

Read more: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1077857.shtml>

18. All at sea: 'Shanghai Sam' Dastyari, the 'whale' and the 'lost' tape recording

30/11/2017

**Nick McKenzie, James Massola & Richard Baker
Sydney Morning Herald**

On June 17, 2016, Senator Sam Dastyari strode to a podium engraved with Australia's coat of arms and began the press conference that would almost destroy his career.

Dressed in a charcoal suit and flanked by two Australian flags, Dastyari projected statesmanship.

The South China Sea is China's own affair," Dastyari was later reported as saying in a Chinese language news outlet. "On this issue, Australia should remain neutral and respect China's decision."

Read more:

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/investigations/all-at-sea-shanghai-sam-dastyari-the-whale-and-the-lost-tape-recording-20171127-gztmlwc.html>

19. Overstating Chinese influence in Australian universities

30/11/2017

**Fran Martin
East Asia Forum**

Both Australia's national government and its security agency ASIO have expressed concerns over the influence that the Chinese government exerts on Chinese student groups studying at Australian universities. They have also accused Beijing of using those groups to spy on Chinese students in Australia.

Ministers, security specialists and the media have contributed to a rising chorus of questions over the implications of foreign interference for Australian universities. Are these students' actions remotely controlled by the Chinese embassy or groups such as the United Front? Are they spying on each other? Does the expression of their opinions imperil freedom of speech in Australian universities?

Many of these reports appear to be based on thin research and significantly overstate their case. A five-year study of the social experiences of a group of 50 Chinese women at eight universities across Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney paints a different picture.

Read more:

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/11/30/overstating-chinese-influence-in-australian-universities/>

20. Huang Xiangmo compared Tasmania to Taiwan

30/11/2017

Rowan Callick

The Australian

Sydney based developer Huang Xiangmo recently compared Tasmania with Taiwan, in congratulating the state on forming a branch of the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China.

This proved his final important task as president of the council, a Beijing-modelled body from which he stepped down last weekend as president — having opened branches in every Australian state.

The council's principal effective goal is to combat Taiwan independence, so Mr Huang said: "The heart-shaped island of Tasmania is separated from the Australian mainland by the Bass Strait, which is akin to the Taiwan Strait which separates Taiwan from the Chinese mainland."

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/huang-xiangmo-compared-tasmania-to-taiwan/news-story/d19305b1045157c2e2d9eaf9ba8d0f4a>

21. Sam Dastyari makes statement to Senate

30/11/2017

**Rachel Baxendale & Greg Brown
The Australian**

Labor senator Sam Dastyari has repeated his claim that an audio recording of his press conference with members of the Chinese community “shocked” him, as it did not match his “recollection of events”, after being hauled before the Senate to explain himself this afternoon.

A partial tape of the July 17, 2016, press conference emerged yesterday, in which Senator Dastyari pledges to respect China’s position on the South China Sea while standing next to Chinese Communist Party-linked businessman Huang Xiangmo, who had previously paid one of his legal bills.

“The Chinese integrity of its borders is a matter for China and the role that Australia should be playing as a friend is to know that we think several thousand years of history, thousands of years of history when it is and isn’t our place to be involved,” Senator Dastyri said at the press conference.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/sam-dastyari-under-pressure-to-quit-after-donor-allegations/news-story/733362ecc8d8bf7b163b21950b9aa803>

22. Chinese students must be welcome in Australia

01/12/2017

**David Gonski & Ian Jacobs
The Australian**

A powerful China is here to stay. The government’s foreign policy white paper makes that point firmly while also positing that China’s continuing rise means friction is all but inevitable — against the backdrop of the US being encouraged to remain active in Australia’s back yard.

These are complex waters to navigate and, as Paul Kelly so rightly pointed out in this newspaper on Wednesday, the underlying issues demand a vigorous debate on our values and Australia’s opportunities and risks.

In the white paper, education again emerges as a shining light. The nation's third largest export earner is positioned at the heart of our foreign policy agenda — somewhat overlooked in the aftermath of the white paper's release.

This is significant because much of the recent debate may have sullied the reputation and critical importance of international educational links, with allegations of international students driving sinister Communist Party agendas and undermining our independent universities.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/chinese-students-must-be-welcome-in-australia/news-story/83e17843a55520eaf6128a26ec39dfee>

23. Converging approaches on Chinese investment

01/12/2017

John Edwards

The Interpreter

Although both have been very open to foreign investment, Australia and the United Kingdom have for decades championed quite different regulatory approaches. In the UK very few foreign investment proposals require government scrutiny. In Australia, at least in principle, a great many do – though the result in both cases is to permit the vast majority of investments.

Increasingly, however, the UK and Australian approaches to foreign investment are becoming more alike, driven in both countries by the same policy perplexity. Both recognise the increasing importance of China's economy, both wish to welcome a growing global surge of China direct investment into their economies, and both wish to do so on terms that take account of the special character of China investment. That is, investment from China is often from state-owned industries, is assumed to be part of a larger strategic and government-directed plan of economic expansion, and, whether rationally or otherwise, is sometimes troubling to not only Australian and UK national security agencies, but also the major security partner of both countries, the US.

Read more:

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/converging-approaches-chinese-investment>

24. China's army mocks Australian military concerns with poetry

01/12/2017

Primrose Riordan

The Australian

China's army has used a Tang Dynasty poem to mock Australian concerns about China's military build-up.

Deputy editor of China's nationalistic Global Times Chen Ping has made a veiled warning to Australia that the country could be subject to the same economic coercion tactics that China used on South Korea.

Senior Colonel Wu Qian, Director General of the Information Office of China's Ministry of National Defence, was asked about concerns raised in the Australian white paper and elsewhere that China is seeking to increase its military presence abroad.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/chinas-army-mocks-australian-military-concerns-with-poetry/news-story/bd79a33cb47b38ff5f7c198c8ee5c361>