

Media Roundup Issue 54 (13/01/18 – 19/01/18)

1. Samoan PM hits back at Australia's 'insulting' criticism of China's aid program in Pacific

12/01/2018

Bruce Hill

ABC News

Samoa's Prime Minister says a Federal Government frontbencher's criticism of China's aid program is "insulting" to Pacific Island leaders, and has the capacity to "destroy" Australia's relationship with the region.

The comments come on the heels of a bubbling diplomatic row that has broken out between Australia and China regarding Pacific relations, with Beijing lodging a formal protest over International Development Minister Concetta Fierravanti-Wells' attack on its Pacific aid programs.

Senator Fierravanti-Wells on Wednesday accused China of building "roads to nowhere" and "useless buildings" in the Pacific.

Read more: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-12/samoan-prime-minister-hits-back-at-insulting-china-aid-comments/9323420>

2. Military deal with Japan to counter China's might

13/01/2018

Primrose Riordan

The Australian

Japan's military could conduct exercises out of Darwin under a historic defence agreement being negotiated by Malcolm Turnbull and Shinzo Abe, as part of a multi-pronged strategy to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific.

The wide-ranging agreement, which will also allow military equipment and ammunition to be transported far more easily between the countries, will be progressed during the Prime Minister's trip to Tokyo next week, as Australia faces a growing row with China over government criticism of Beijing's Pacific aid.

After official Chinese media branded Australia an "arrogant overlord" in the Pacific this week, Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi

yesterday added to the diplomatic storm, saying he was shocked by International Development Minister Concetta Fierravanti-Wells' public criticism of China's Pacific aid and demanded a formal apology from Canberra.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/military-deal-with-japan-to-counter-chinas-might/news-story/25ec275dec028bad99b9e41bbc98a4eb?login=1>

3. Fierravanti-Wells comment on China's Pacific aid was out of line

13/01/2018

John McCarthy
The Australian

It is a strange time of the year. People say bizarre things and newspapers, looking for stories, print them. And then real news is created. The first question arising from the comments by our Minister for International Development, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, about the quality of Chinese aid to the Pacific region is: Why make them?

Apparently she wanted to highlight issues raised by Maurice Newman ("China emerges as all-powerful new deity in Pacific cargo cult", *The Australian*, 1/1). He argued China was usurping our influence in the South Pacific.

It was nonetheless an odd way to go about it. And if the Chinese are behaving badly, should we not hear from the islanders first? They are, after all, accepting the aid.

Read more (Paywall):

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/fierravantiwells-comment-on-chinas-pacific-aid-was-out-of-line/news-story/2bedc789a7bb393d51351b80af659976>

4. China complaint over MP's comments looms over Turnbull's visit to Japan

14/01/2018

SBS News Online

Defence and trade ties are expected to dominate the agenda when Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull holds bilateral talks with his Japanese counterpart in Tokyo.

Japanese troops will be able to conduct military exercises more easily in Australia under an agreement Malcolm Turnbull is hoping to cement next week during his visit to Tokyo.

The prime minister will visit Japan on Thursday for an annual leaders' dialogue with his counterpart Shinzo Abe.

The visit is Mr Turnbull's first overseas trip since his government released its foreign policy white paper last year and coincides with a tense period in Australia's relationship with China.

Read more: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/china-complaint-over-mp-s-comments-looks-over-turnbull-s-visit-to-japan>

5. Chinese backlash predicted over looming Australia-Japan defence deal

14/01/2018

Andrew Tillett

Australian Financial Review

Efforts need to be made to reassure Beijing an imminent defence agreement to boost cooperation between Australia and Japan is not aimed at containing China's rise, former army chief Peter Leahy has warned ahead of Malcolm Turnbull's visit to Tokyo on Thursday.

Defence experts believe the visiting forces agreement Australia and Japan are negotiating will spark a further backlash from Beijing on top of tensions already inflamed by the Turnbull government's determination to introduce foreign interference laws in response to concerns about growing Chinese influence in domestic politics and junior minister Concetta Fierravanti-Wells' criticism of China's foreign aid program in the Pacific.

Against the backdrop of China's assertiveness and North Korea's nuclear ambitions, Mr Turnbull and Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe will discuss the progress towards completing the agreement but are not expected to sign it.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.afr.com/news/chinese-backlash-predicted-over-looming-australiajapan-defence-deal-20180114-h0i3t0>

6. China experts decry Turnbull government critique of influence

15/01/2018

**Rowan Callick
The Australian**

Prominent Chinese experts on international affairs yesterday intensified their assault on the Turnbull government's growing critiques of Beijing's influence within Australia and in the Pacific Islands.

Zha Daojiong, professor of international relations at Peking University, said some of Australia's own "friendship promotion" activities overseas were deemed as influence peddling by the Chinese government too.

"Australia has programs to publicly support Chinese individuals and organisations, including some of the same nature as China's Confucius - Institutes," he said.

Professor Zha views "the ongoing fist-raising in Canberra and Washington as a culmination of year-after-year of doublespeak — 'welcoming China's rise' in official channels of diplomacy with Beijing while being 'more aware of the - approaching Chinese' in domestic contexts."

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/china-experts-decry-turnbull-government-critique-of-influence/news-story/1af1aee07ea4e4594e1a9be723113a57>

7. Qantas fixes 'error' amid Beijing's clamp down on corporate speak

15/01/2018

**Michael Smith
Australian Financial Review**

Australian companies are scrambling to "correct" the way they refer to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau following a clampdown by Chinese authorities on the Marriott International hotel chain and other foreign firms for describing the sensitive territories as countries.

Qantas said on Monday it was changing the way it described some "Chinese territories" on its website after it and 23 other foreign airlines came under pressure for what Beijing has called a geographical blunder.

"Due to an oversight, some Chinese territories were incorrectly listed as 'countries' on parts of our website. We are correcting this error," a Qantas spokesman said.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.afr.com/business/transport/aviation/qantas-fixes-error-amid-beijings-clamp-down-on-corporate-speak-20180115-h0jfal>

8. Push to commemorate China's 'forgotten' Anzacs

15/01/2018

Michael Smith

Australian Financial Review

Albert Wong says the lack of Chinese faces in Australia's Anzac Day parades says a lot about the "forgotten" role China played in World War I.

While about 5 per cent of the country's population is ethnic Chinese, the Hong Kong-born Australian businessman says the thousands of Chinese labourers who fought alongside Allied forces in Europe has never been recognised.

Though China's role in World War I is not a prominent chapter in military history, historians estimate up to 140,000 of the country's labourers worked alongside Australians, Britons, French and Russians digging trenches, unloading ships and burying the dead.

They are known as "The Forgotten" Chinese Labour Corps. Military historian Will Davies approached Wong, a prominent member of the Australian-Chinese business community, to try to raise funds for a memorial dedicated to the Chinese "Anzacs" who supported Australian troops in the fighting.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.afr.com/news/push-to-commemorate-chinas-forgotten-anzacs-20180114-h0i1z4>

9. Top Chinese diplomat denies Beijing bullies foreign students in Australia

16/01/2018

Andrew Greene

ABC News Online

China's second-highest ranking diplomat used a dinner gathering with Labor MPs in Canberra last year to strongly deny that the Communist Party tries to control foreign students studying in Australia.

The ABC can reveal deputy ambassador Cai Wei and first secretary Liu Wei hosted roughly a dozen first-term Opposition MPs and senators at the Chinese embassy in October, where a "robust" discussion took place about Beijing's activities in Australia.

The meeting took place just days after Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) secretary Frances Adamson used a rare public speech to urge Australian universities to better protect themselves from the rising influence of the Chinese Communist Party.

Read more: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-16/chinese-diplomat-hosted-labor-mps-to-discuss-communist-influence/9329278>

10. IMF worried over Pacific islands' debt to China

16/01/2018

David Uren

The Australian

The International Monetary Fund is concerned Chinese aid to developing countries is laying the ground for a future debt crisis, saying some recipients of Chinese loans linked to aid projects face unsustainable debt burdens.

IMF deputy managing director David Lipton said yesterday that China was taking on an important role in the developing world by providing the funding to develop infrastructure through President Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative.

"This could benefit dozens of countries, but there are concerns about the debt that countries are taking on to finance this undertaking," he told a forum in Hong Kong yesterday.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/imf-worried-over-pacific-islands-debt-to-china/news-story/5cefb272b76db27f5c53ae589013e39f>

11. Chinese property buyers disappear in 'perfect storm'

17/01/2018

Su-Lin Tan

Australian Financial Review

Major Chinese developers have warned that the decline in foreign buyers in the residential property market has reached critically low levels as taxes and credit restrictions all but collapse demand.

They said foreign buyers have dwindled to as low as 1 per cent of off the plan sales, down from close to 40 per cent two years ago, and as a result the total residential market could shrink by up to 20 per cent.

The countrywide increase in penalties on foreign buyers - South Australia was the latest state to introduce a 7 per cent surcharge on January 1 - at the same time as banks slash lending and China imposed more capital controls have kept foreign buyers away.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.afr.com/real-estate/chinese-property-buyers-have-disappeared-20180116-h0j2wb>

12. As China pushes censorship on B.C. students, democracy falls back

17/01/2018

Terry Glavin

National Post

Though this article covers a case in Canada, a similar situation could arise in Australia.

It's a story about the way the Beijing regime bullies people far beyond its borders, with a few amusing twists and several disgusting instances of corporate cowardice, but it begins innocently enough, with a 28-year-old student at the University of British Columbia and a post he put up on Twitter last Wednesday.

Shawn Zhang, a Peking University alumnus who came to Canada on a student visa two years ago to study law, posted an image of the Tibetan flag below a tongue-in-cheek announcement on the Twitter account of Friends of Tibet, a solidarity group based in India that keeps an eye on China's brutal occupation of the exiled Dalai Lama's Himalayan homeland.

Zhang immediately found himself swept up a frenzy that had gripped Chinese authorities a few days earlier and had quickly escalated into a manic bonspiel of website blocking and webpage scrubbing willingly performed by several corporations in order to expunge descriptions of Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan that had hurt the ruling Communist Party's delicate feelings.

Read more: <http://nationalpost.com/opinion/terry-glavin-as-china-pushes-censorship-on-b-c-students-democracy-falls-back>

13. Joining China's new silk road will help fast-track Australia

18/01/2018

Stephen Loosley
The Australian

At a security dialogue in Beijing a few years ago, one of our Chinese hosts asked me what I thought of the proposed One Belt, One Road initiative. I responded positively, looking at what the proposal could mean for China's western regions in terms of economic development, and then beyond that to Central and South Asia, and ultimately to Europe.

My interlocutor nodded in agreement.

"Yes," he said. "This is our Think West strategy. Think East is not going so well." Then he burst into laughter.

So much for tensions in the East and South China seas.

The question that arises for Australia is what our relationship to the Belt and Road (as it now is) ought to be. Australia has excellent opportunities this year to set down three markers in our foreign and national security policies that simultaneously affirm our interests and focus our energies on our economic future while demonstrating a greater confidence in our national security arrangements. By so doing we would contribute markedly to regional security and a peaceful environment in the Indo-Pacific.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/joining-chinas-new-silk-road-will-help-fasttrack-australia/news-story/c06e5c6200364f938873c663db29f8ba>

14. Dalian Wanda nears sale of its Circular Quay project to another Chinese buyer

18/01/2018

Jing Yang de Morel & Emma Dong
Australian Financial Review

Billionaire Wang Jianlin's Dalian Wanda Group is close to reaching an agreement to sell two Australian luxury property projects – one in Sydney and one on the Gold Coast, according to people familiar with the matter.

The buyer is of Chinese origin, said two of the people, who asked not to be identified because discussions are private.

A deal could be announced in the coming days, the people said. Beijing-based Wanda declined to comment on Wednesday.

The sale would be part of a wave of disposals Wanda has signed in recent months to raise money amid rising Chinese government scrutiny of how it financed overseas investments over a decade of expansion into luxury real estate and entertainment from Sydney to London and Hollywood.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.afr.com/real-estate/commercial/development/dalian-wanda-nears-sale-of-its-circular-quay-project-to-another-chinese-buyer-20180117-h0k246>

15. Malcolm Turnbull shifts language to praise China during Japan trip

18/01/2018

Kirsty Needham
The Sydney Morning Herald

Malcolm Turnbull has softened his rhetoric on China, Australia's largest trading partner, as Australia seeks closer defence ties with its strategic rival Japan.

In Tokyo on Thursday Mr Turnbull praised Japan for its political stability and adherence to the international rules, and highlighted "our burgeoning defence cooperation" and shared values.

"The strategic logic that is driving our countries to work more closely on defence and security is only getting stronger as the regional environment becomes more dangerous and challenging. We are looking to deepen our engagement not reduce it," he said at a business lunch.

Mr Turnbull rode with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in a helicopter to the Japanese Ground Self Defence Force Narashino training area, where they inspected a United States Patriot anti missile system and Australian-made Bushmaster military vehicles used by Japan.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/malcolm-turnbull-shifts-language-to-praise-china-during-japan-trip-20180118-h0kjba.html>

16. Caught In A Crossfire: Chinese Students Abroad And The Battle For Their Hearts

18/01/2018

Eric Fish

SupChina

Chinese international students face a number of pressures while studying overseas as the PRC government vies for their loyalty. This article emphasises that international students have diverse views and identities, and are not simply proxies for the PRC and its agenda. In September 2017, China Matters [published a policy brief](#) on the challenges surrounding Chinese international students in Australia.

When 22-year-old Chinese student Langou Lian looks back at her decision to study in the United States, there's one influence that sticks out: the Disney Channel movie *High School Musical*.

"I hated Chinese education," Lian says, remembering the high-pressure test-centered schooling in her native Sichuan Province. *High School Musical* presented an alternative: a carefree atmosphere where even adolescent students are independent, free to speak their mind, and have a palette of social activities to choose from.

But after she arrived in the U.S., that rosy Hollywood image became complicated. "The one word that describes my impression of America before coming is *freedom*," Lian says. "[But] after I studied here for a while, I started to kind of understand American society. My impression went from good to bad."

Read more: <http://supchina.com/2018/01/18/caught-in-a-crossfire-chinese-students-abroad-and-the-battle-for-their-hearts/>

17. Relationship with Thailand is model China wants for Australia

19/01/2018

Zhou Bo

The Australian

When Malcolm Turnbull suddenly switched from English to Mandarin to invoke a Chinese slogan — a famous saying of Mao Zedong — that “the Australian people stand up”, it clearly showed that something had gone wrong between Australia and China. The day before, December 8, Beijing had expressed shock after the Prime Minister singled out China as a focus for concern and cited “disturbing reports” about Chinese influence in Australian national affairs.

Canberra’s angst over a rising China and a decaying Pax Americana is not even thinly disguised. In November, Australia’s first foreign policy white paper in 14 years claimed that “the US has been the dominant power in our region throughout Australia’s post-Second World War history. Today, China is challenging America’s position.”

While underlining the US’s diminished share of the world economy and contrasting that with China’s rapid increase, Canberra vows anyway that Australia will continue strongly to support US global leadership.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/relationship-with-thailand-is-model-china-wants-for-australia/news-story/b70406d4704c9715968c204c86626aa7>

18. Pacific nations want China's aid -- just ask them

19/01/2018

Cheng Jingye

Australian Financial Review

The recent allegations made by the Australian Minister for International Development about China's aid to the Pacific island countries are both groundless and irresponsible. The comments are also naturally disputed by countries such as Samoa, PNG and Fiji, and have even attracted quite some criticism in Australia.

As the largest developing country in the world, China has been – all along – committed to providing all possible assistance to other developing countries

within the framework of South-South cooperation. This is a key demonstration of China's role as a responsible major power.

In providing foreign aid, the Chinese government always attaches no political strings, and fully respects the wishes and needs of the recipient countries. Moreover, our assistance aims to produce win-win outcomes. In the meantime, China often takes into account the debt-paying ability and solvency of recipient countries, so avoiding creating too high a debt burden to recipient countries. All relevant projects have been conducted with careful feasibility studies and market research, so that they deliver the desired economic and social benefits.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.afr.com/opinion/columnists/chinas-aid-is-good-for-pacific-island-nations-20180117-h0k41p>

19. Canberra looks for new bridges over troubled waters

19/01/2018

Euan Graham

The Straits Times

While concerns about US leadership under President Donald Trump dominated the headlines over the past year, 2017 will be remembered as the year that foreign policy came home to roost in Australia, amid mounting concerns about Chinese interference and influence operations.

There is, to be sure, more to Australia's foreign and security policy than steering a course between the region's behemoths. But the US-China dynamic increasingly insinuates itself in Australia's surrounding region, and overshadows much of what Canberra does and thinks about.

Australia's foreign policy and security environment is coming under combined challenge from an emboldened, more powerful China, as well as new uncertainties about the commitment and leadership of the United States in Asia.

Read more: <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/canberra-looks-for-new-bridges-over-troubled-waters>

20. Sydney Airport strengthens China links as passenger numbers continue to soar

19/01/2018

**Samantha Bailey
The Australian**

A lift in the number of Chinese travellers passing through Sydney Airport last year has prompted two Chinese airlines to increase the frequency of their flights to Sydney.

The number of Chinese nationals travelling through Sydney Airport leapt 17.3 per cent in 2017, after jumping 17.6 per cent the prior year.

Tianjin Airlines, operating out of Tianjin near Beijing, will begin servicing its Tianjin-Zhengzhou-Sydney route all year round from January 30. Meanwhile, Hainan Airlines, which operates out of Hainan in China's south, will run its Haikou-Sydney route twice weekly year round from the end of January.

"Sydney Airport now serves 17 mainland Chinese cities which represent almost 90 per cent of all travel on the China-Sydney route," the airport's chief executive Geoff Culbert said.

Read more (Paywall): <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/companies/sydney-airport-strengthens-china-links-as-passenger-numbers-continue-to-soar/news-story/b3810aadac668f4c818546ca9586f4e6>