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(From John Piper, DFAT officer 1953-83, ANU 1988-1998. Prompted by very helpful visit to AIIA NSW Branch visit by DFAT A/S last week, and reflections on earlier version "In the national interest").

Understand you plan a very comprehensive coverage of issues presenting national bi-partisan perspectives, but the following are rather concentrated personal concerns which your drafting group have certainly thought about.

Title "Australia's Foreign Policy perspectives" ?

Introduction no doubt bringing out major changes over the last ten years.....Rise of China, other powers, extension of open global economy, G 20, concerns over Islamic extremism, climate change, possible pandemics. Network of institutions supporting global co-operation, our continuing alliance with the US and closer integration with the Asian-Pacific region. Current high degree of political bi-partisanship on key foreign policy issues.

Paper should high-light economic and technological changes which must be addressed and absorbed, and the Australian community needs to be heavily engaged in recognising and responding to these challenges and in defending our national interests. The run down in our foreign policy clout in terms of missions, personnel and policy, aid and program capacities is deplorable for which both major parties must take the main responsibility. The same could be said of our refugee responses but I would not be surprised if this issue were ignored or skated over with some homilies.

The white paper should be forthright in defending the institutions and "rules" which have served us well in relation to global co-operation, international trade and the resolution of disputes. Where member states are defending interests such as maritime claims based on earlier historic circumstances and decline to accept the contemporary ground rules Australia has a strong interest in differences being resolved through peaceful negotiations and not military trials of strength e.g. differences with China over sovereignty claims in the South China Seas.

Australia should pull its weight in responding to security challenges, but not under-estimate the value of working closely not only with our closest allies but with regional countries such as Indonesia, in advocating and underlining patiently and co-operatively the benefits of widely-recognised existing provisions such as the right of innocent passage. In short while continuing to strengthen our self-reliance and traditional alliances we must continue to work for more effective global institutions e.g. UN reform. Without a high degree of global co-operation security and economic development will be threatened so we need to hone our multilateral as well as our bilateral skills.