

# **ODA, the Military, and Escalating Dynamics of Containment:**

## **Aspects of the Recent Australian Experience in the Pacific**

*Natalie Lowrey, Aid/Watch | 2021*

**Abstract:** There is a creeping militarization of the aid agenda in Australia. Aid has long been closely associated with Australian military interventions overseas, from Afghanistan to East Timor, from the Solomon Islands to the Philippines. With the closure of AusAID, Australian aid has become more closely integrated with Australian diplomatic and strategic priorities, including its military priorities. Aid is now increasingly deployed to counter what the Australian Government sees as a growing threat from China. A new aid tranche is being used specifically to negate growing assertiveness and political confidence in the region as Australia's Pacific sphere of influence becomes increasingly challenged. For the first time, Pacific countries, acting as a political bloc, have specifically and publicly attacked Australia for its deteriorating climate policies. Some Pacific countries have threatened to move closer to China, accepting conditional loans from the Chinese state. In response, Australia has defended its fossil fuel economy, refused to improve its climate record, and splashed Official Development Assistance (ODA) and military assistance across the region. A key illustration is the use of aid to detain asylum seekers captured by the Australian military and held in offshore facilities in Manus Province, Papua New Guinea. Australia's offshore detention regime has since become a proxy for 'forward defense', not just against refugees but also the perceived strategic threat from China. With the Chinese state seeking access to port facilities on Manus, in 2018 a joint US-Australia military base was proposed for the island and was strongly promoted by the Australian government. The base would be a new departure, clearly demonstrating the deepened inter-weaving of military interests and development assistance in Australia's US-centred strategic posture.

**Keywords:** *Australian Aid, Pacific, Militarization, Neoliberalism, Development Assistance, Refugees*

There is a creeping militarization of the aid agenda in Australia. Aid has long been closely associated with Australian military interventions, from Afghanistan to East Timor, from the Solomon Islands to the Philippines. With the closure of AusAID in 2013, Australian Aid now favours national interest and private finance over the need for real aid. It has become more closely integrated with Australian diplomatic, strategic and military priorities especially as Australia's Pacific sphere of influence comes under increased challenges.

### **Australia's new 'aid paradigm'**

Since the election of a conservative Government in late 2013, the Australian aid program has been radically transformed. Under the Government's 'new aid paradigm' it is difficult to recognize aid as having a meaningful development mandate beyond promoting the private sector and growth. The official purpose of aid is now to promote the national interest, with aid explicitly geared to Australia's commercial, security, and diplomatic interests. AusAid was dissolved into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), with aid fully integrated into Australia's 'economic diplomacy'. Private finance is lauded as the cure-all for poverty reduction and the primary purpose of aid has been transformed into a means of leveraging Australian private interests. Having established its new aid ideology, the Government has cut the aid budget by almost 25%, reducing aid to its lowest level as a proportion of national income since the early 1970s. This recent Australian experience shows the neo-liberal model of aid at work - negating the traditional conception of aid as development assistance and instead enabling a new corporate-state nexus, branded as 'economic diplomacy'.

AusAid's objective up until 2011 was to "assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development, in line with Australia's national interest".<sup>1</sup> For the OECD, Official Development Assistance (ODA) must be "administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective."<sup>2</sup> As with other donor countries, Australian national interests have historically impinged on these primary objectives. However, national interest was always defined as a secondary concern.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Australia (2011). Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra. Retrieved from <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/independent-review-of-aid-effectiveness-2011.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2020) Net ODA. Retrieved from <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm>

With the demise of AusAid in 2013, the declared objective of DFAT’s ‘Australian Aid’ division is quite simply to “promote Australia’s national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction”<sup>3</sup> In official terms, the 'main objective' of Australian ODA is no longer the "economic development and welfare of developing countries" as required by the OECD, but the promotion of "Australia's national interest." All of this poses a very serious question: does Australian aid indeed qualify as ODA?

The erosion of aid which once expressed development solidarity and a sense of public responsibility in the face of global needs has been discredited by successive Australian governments who have sought to direct aid for political and commercial purposes including the favoring of Australian-based International Development Contractors; promoting trade agreements; creating a market in climate offsets; and, most controversially, counted refugee detention as ODA.<sup>4</sup> Australian aid is now little more than an adjunct to private interests and diplomatic objectives. The overall effect has been “damaging [to] the integrity of the aid program ... making it look like a piggy bank ripe for raiding”.<sup>5</sup> The Government’s 'new aid paradigm' dovetails with populist anti-aid rhetoric, and has contributed to the erosion of public confidence, which, in turn, makes it easier to cut the aid budget.

**AUSTRALIA'S NEW 'AID PARADIGM'**



*Source: AID/WATCH*

<sup>3</sup> DFAT (2016) Australia’s Aid Program. Retrieved from <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/pages/australias-aid-program.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Negin, Joel, (October 30, 2012). Aid and the Pacific Solution II: issues and questions, *DevPolicy Blog*. Retrieved from <https://devpolicy.org/aid-and-the-pacific-solution-ii-issues-and-questions-20121030/>

<sup>5</sup> Morris, M. and Newton-Howes, J. (June 3, 2015). Where Australia's case for aid went wrong – and what we can do to rebuild', *Dev Blog* 3 June. Retrieved from <http://devpolicy.org>

## Australian Aid and ‘Militarization of the Mind’

Understanding the militarization of the Australian aid agenda implies an understanding of an increasingly militarized Australia and a growing ‘militarization of the mind’. The language of war has become the new norm. This ‘militarization of the mind’ has infiltrated all parts of Australian society. For a generation, federal governments have funded an intense program highlighting the importance of our military history. Perhaps the most concerning feature of the spreading militarization is the deliberate targeting of school children with free, professionally developed curriculum material including films, books, CDs and posters including subsidies that are provided for trips to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.<sup>6</sup>

Amongst the talk of sacrifice and beating of the ‘khaki drum’,<sup>7</sup> there is little mention of killing and even less reflection and assessment of the bloodshed imposed on distant countries in Australia’s name, some of whose citizens have fled for their lives making long and dangerous journeys to seek asylum on Australian shores only to be detained indefinitely. The Australian national self-identity refuses to recognize the severe repercussions of military force, instead it is justified and represented as the ‘defense of freedom’, a ‘just war’, or ‘wars against unspeakable *Others*’. The tragic irony of all of this rhetoric on the ‘glory of war and militarization’ in the context of the Australian Colonial Project is the lack of recognition that Australia has a black Indigenous history - an unrecognized conquest of, and war against, First Nations peoples of the land that became called Australia, the Australian state built on the theft and invasion of First Nations lands<sup>8</sup> and the genocide of the oldest living culture on earth. It is, therefore, not surprising that the intersecting issues of racial, social, economic,

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<sup>6</sup> Reynolds, Henry, (September 25, 2014). Militarization marches on. *Inside Story*. Retrieved from <https://insidestory.org.au/militarisation-marches-on/>

<sup>7</sup> Daley, Paul, (February 1, 2018). Beating the khaki drum: how Australian identity was militarised. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2018/feb/01/beating-the-khaki-drum-how-australian-identity-was-militarised>

<sup>8</sup> Henriques-Gomes, Luke, (January 26, 2020). 'Pay the rent': Invasion Day rallies around Australia protest against 26 January celebrations, *The Guardian*. Retrieved at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/26/pay-the-rent-invasion-day-rallies-around-australia-protest-against-26-january-celebrations>

gender, environmental and climate *injustices* are embedded in Australia's so-called aid program, particularly with the rise of neoliberalism.

Hundreds of thousands of Australians have protested against involvement in wars including Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. However, Australian governments appear to go to war with an ease that is both unusual and dangerous in a democracy. They have suffered no penalty for sending troops overseas regardless of the outcomes. Meanwhile, any criticism of war is seen as a cowardly attack and "the prestige of the armed forces shields the politicians from legitimate scrutiny".<sup>9</sup> This militarization of the mind, and of Australian history, is having other consequences including the militarization of the Australian police force and the rise of the 'warrior cop' exported through military aid. Police officers in many western countries like Australia and the US now dress like paramilitaries; special police units are being trained and organized along military lines<sup>10</sup> and issued with military-grade weapons<sup>11</sup> to be used against their own citizens staging peaceful protests.

Regionally, Australia has a history of inter-weaving military interests and ODA enforced by an Australia-US alliance. Australia has participated in and helped legitimize US extra-judicial military interventions including the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, which was defined as 'illegal' by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in September 2004,<sup>12</sup> and with associated illegal renditions.<sup>13</sup> The US-Australian surveillance facility at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs, has been instrumental in more than 7,000 extrajudicial drone killings across

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<sup>9</sup> Reynolds, Henry, (September 25, 2014). Militarization marches on. *Inside Story*. Retrieved from <https://insidestory.org.au/militarization-marches-on/>

<sup>10</sup> Melbourne Activist Legal Support, (December 2019). The Policing of IMARC Protests. *Legal Observer Team Report*. Retrieved from [https://melbourneactivistlegalsupport.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/2019-12-07\\_imarc-legal-observer-report.pdf](https://melbourneactivistlegalsupport.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/2019-12-07_imarc-legal-observer-report.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Melbourne Activist Legal Support, (March 24, 2018). #NotWithYou: Why more weapons for Victoria Police is a Very Bad Idea. Retrieved from <https://melbourneactivistlegalsupport.org/2018/03/24/notwithyou-why-more-repressive-weapons-for-victoria-police-is-a-very-bad-idea/>

<sup>12</sup> MacAskill, E. and Borger, J. (September 16, 2004) 'Iraq war was illegal and breached UN charter, says Annan', *The Guardian* (UK), 16 September. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq>

<sup>13</sup> Fisher, M, (2013) 'A staggering map of the 54 countries that reportedly participated in the CIA's rendition program', *Washington Post*, 5 February. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/02/05/a-staggering-map-of-the-54-countries-that-reportedly-participated-in-the-cias-rendition-program/?utm\\_term=.d6bad77f9594](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/02/05/a-staggering-map-of-the-54-countries-that-reportedly-participated-in-the-cias-rendition-program/?utm_term=.d6bad77f9594)

non-combatant countries.<sup>14</sup> The US justification for such attacks, ‘outside of an active battlefield’, has been widely challenged,<sup>15</sup> including by the International Committee of The Red Cross (ICRC).<sup>16</sup> Despite these concerns, Australia has become ever more closely aligned with the US military. For instance, Australia hosts a new ‘rotational’ base for 2,500 US Marines in Darwin<sup>17</sup> and participates in the yearly Talisman Sabre war games held in Rockhampton in Central Queensland, a bilateral combined Australian and US military training activity. Australia is also the second-largest recipient of US arms<sup>18</sup> behind Saudi Arabia, and Australia may be complicit in war crimes by arming and providing military support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen who have been starving civilians, bombing hospitals and blocking humanitarian aid as tactics of war.

Australia’s foreign policy framework continues to prioritize the US alliance above regional Asia Pacific engagement, as well as pursuing corporate interests at the expense of public interests. Australia has not assisted in strengthening effective global responses to the global crises that we face, whether climate, food, financial or humanitarian crises. The policy has actively sought to change global norms by breaking or sidestepping them, and the approach has been profoundly short-sighted. Norm-breaking by Australia and its allies have legitimized norm-breaking by others.

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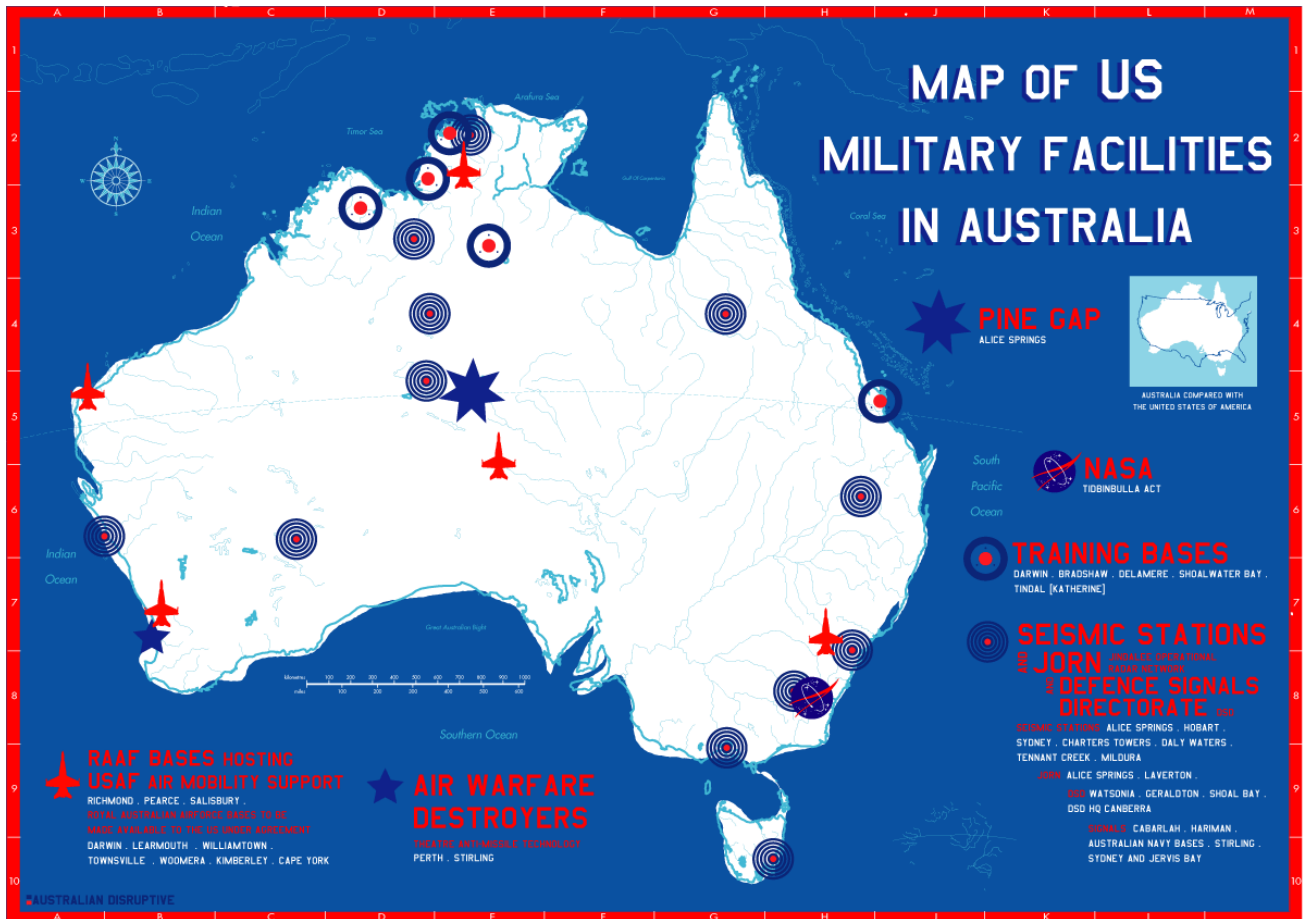
<sup>14</sup> Trembath B. (September 23, 2016) ‘Pine Gap: Secretive spy base’s role in drone strikes putting Australia in danger, expert warns’, *ABC News*, 23 September. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-23/pine-gaps-actions-could-endanger-australian-security/7872190>

<sup>15</sup> Reuters (April 30, 2012) ‘White House: US drone killings legal to combat threats. Retrieved from [www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/30/us-obama-drones-idUSBRE83T0TN20120430](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/30/us-obama-drones-idUSBRE83T0TN20120430)

<sup>16</sup> ICRC (2013) ‘The use of armed drones must comply with laws’, Interview with the ICRC President, P. Maurer. Retrieved from <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/interview/2013/05-10-drone-weapons-ihl.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Rollo, S. and Lea, T. (April 24, 2016) ‘As US Marines arrive in Darwin, Australia must consider its strategic position’, *Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/as-us-marines-arrive-in-darwin-australia-must-consider-its-strategic-position-20160422-goco5s.html>

<sup>18</sup> Australia now world’s second-biggest weapons importer behind only Saudi Arabia: analysts



Source: Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition<sup>19</sup>

The militarization of Australian Aid has been closely associated with Australian military interventions including East Timor, the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, and the Philippines. In 2012 AID/WATCH was involved in the Senate inquiry into Australia's aid program to Afghanistan. In the four years to 2011, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) spent USD 215 million of Australia's aid budget in Afghanistan, with only USD 37 million being spent on actual development projects.<sup>20</sup> The pressure brought about by the inquiry forced the ADF to admit that about 80% of its "aid" spending, including the costs of military checkpoints and force protection, did not meet OECD guidelines on official development assistance. More recently, in 2017, the US-AUS Military aid for the Philippines under "Operation Augury" –

<sup>19</sup> Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition, (2020). US Bases in Australia. Retrieved from [http://www.anti-bases.org/campaigns/NMD\\_PineGap/Map\\_of\\_US\\_Military\\_Bases\\_in\\_Australia.html](http://www.anti-bases.org/campaigns/NMD_PineGap/Map_of_US_Military_Bases_in_Australia.html)

<sup>20</sup> AID/WATCH (November 12, 2012), Submission to Inquiry into Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan. Retrieved from <https://www.aidwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AIDWATCH-Submission-to-Senate-Inquiry-on-Afghan-Aid-2012.pdf>

another example of a quasi-military undertaking or ‘creeping militarization’ veiled in a cloak of secrecy and a calculated lack of accountability – prompted many observers to ask whether “US-Australian military aid to the Philippine government has facilitated its crimes against humanity against its own people.”<sup>21</sup> The increased volume of military aid globally has raised the issue of aid militarization, where security and defense-related assistance has outpaced the provision of economic and anti-poverty assistance. Aid militarization blurs the distinction between military operations and social development and poverty alleviation initiatives and is being directly related to human rights abuses.

### **Australia’s “Pacific step-up” challenged**

Aid is increasingly deployed to counter what the Australian Government sees as a growing threat from China. A new aid tranche is being used specifically to negate growing assertiveness and political confidence in the region as Australia’s Pacific sphere of influence comes under increasing challenge. For the first time, Pacific countries, acting as a political bloc, have specifically and publicly attacked Australia for its deteriorating climate policies. Some Pacific countries have threatened to move closer to China,<sup>22</sup> accepting conditional loans from the Chinese state. Australia has defended its fossil fuel economy, refused to improve its climate record, and splashed ODA and military assistance across the region.<sup>23</sup> At the Pacific Island Forum in Fiji in 2019 ‘recriminations and shouting’ took place between pro-coal Australia and low-lying island nations who are frontline to the threats from climate change as Australia proceeded to push for a watering down on climate language in the Forum’s final communique.<sup>24</sup> Foreign Minister of Vanuatu, Ralph Regenvanu tweeted, ‘Can we stop militarizing the Pacific please?’<sup>25</sup> It is unknown where this will leave Australia’s

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<sup>21</sup> Parameswaran, Prashanth, (August 31, 2017). New Australia Military Terror Aid for the Philippines? *The Diplomat, Asia Defense*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/new-australia-military-terror-aid-for-the-philippines/>

<sup>22</sup> Lyons, Kate, (August 17, 2019). Fiji PM accuses Scott Morrison of ‘insulting’ and alienating Pacific leaders, *The Guardian*. Retrieved from

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/16/fiji-pm-frank-bainimarama-insulting-scott-morrison-rift-pacific-countries>

<sup>23</sup> Matsumoto, Fumi, (August 29, 2019). Rising seas and anger: Pacific islands slam pro-coal Australia, *Nikkei Asian Review*. Retrieved from <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Environment/Rising-seas-and-anger-Pacific-islands-slam-pro-coal-Australia>

<sup>24</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, (August 2019). Fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum Funafuti, Tuvalu 13 – 16 August 2019 *Forum Communiqué*. Retrieved from

<https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/50th-Pacific-Islands-Forum-Communique.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Newton Cain T, (August 30, 2019). Australia shows up in Tuvalu and trips over the *East Asia Forum*. Retrieved from <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/08/30/australia-shows-up-in-tuvalu-and-trips-over/>



“Pacific step-up” which was highlighted in both Australia’s 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper<sup>26</sup> and 2016 Defence White Paper<sup>27</sup> as one of Australia’s highest foreign policy priorities with the slogan ‘Stepping-up Australia’s engagement with our Pacific family.’<sup>28</sup>

There is also a debate in Australia surrounding the country’s response to China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Australia has resisted signing a memorandum of understanding with Beijing on the belt and road, stating it preferred not to engage in generalities. But there was little hesitation in signing one with the United States to “support infrastructure investment” in the Asia Pacific region. In July 2019 the Australian government announced the AUD 2 billion (USD 1.38 billion) Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP)<sup>29</sup> which proposes to use grant funding combined with loans to support the development of high priority infrastructure. In April 2019 Australia's Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC) was also given a name change and granted more resources and power to support investment in the region, including through a new Trilateral Infrastructure Partnership between Australia, the US, and Japan. Both the establishment of the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility and the EFIC reforms raise several questions and concerns,<sup>30</sup> namely the implications for the aid program for Australian Official Development Assistance (ODA) and whether this will be the end of the Australian Aid program. Other concerns include a high degree of non-concessional loans; lack of transparency; corruption; environmental and social impacts; undermining good governance; and putting Australia’s interests first.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2017). Stepping up our engagement in the Pacific, 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. Retrieved from <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/foreign-policy-white-paper/chapter-seven-shared-agenda-security-and-prosperity/stepping-up-our>

<sup>27</sup> Australian Government, Department of Defence (2016). 2016 Defence White Paper, pp126-127 Retrieved from <https://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2020). Australia’s Pacific Engagement: Stepping-up Australia’s engagement with our Pacific family. Retrieved from <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Pages/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement.aspx>

<sup>29</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2020). The Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) will support transformative infrastructure in the region. Retrieved from <https://www.aiffp.gov.au/>

<sup>30</sup> Jubilee Australia, Caritas and UNSW, (2019). *Enter the Dragon: Australia, China and the New Pacific Development Agenda*. Retrieved from <https://www.jubileeaustralia.org/latest-news/new-report-enter-the-dragon>

<sup>31</sup> Howes S and Dornan M, (February 2018). Moving Beyond Grants: questions about Australian Infrastructure Financing for the Pacific. Retrieved from <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019/02/apo-nid224496-1337766.pdf>

## Operation Border Sovereignty and the Dynamics of Containment

The high-technology liberal militarization in the Australian context has distinct characteristics including: increased national defense budgets – the 2019-20 budget provides USD 38.7 billion for defence, equivalent to 1.9% of GDP with a push by both major parties to increase it to 2%<sup>32</sup> for more and better weapons systems; a penchant for use of military force in international affairs; and a draconian approach to immigration and border security Australia's Militarized Borders and the Detention-Industrial Complex – that has been directly violating International Human Rights Law for more than two decades. Australia's refugee policies directly conflict with and undermine global norms on the right to protection from persecution. There are concerns that Australia's border security measures and creation of two classes of refugees, breaches international and refugee laws, most notably the principles of non-refoulement, inhuman or degrading treatment, economic and social rights, and restricting the ability of asylum seekers to reach a territory where they can claim protection under the Refugee Convention. In March 2015, the Special Rapporteur on Torture found that parts of Australia's immigration detention regime violated the Convention against Torture, the United Nations Refugee Agency has criticized Australia's offshore detention policy as inhumane, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein, stated that Australia's policies set a poor benchmark for other states in the Asia Pacific region. For example, in 2015, Australia-style policies of boat turnbacks were employed by Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia in which nearly 8,000 Rohingya and Bangladeshi irregular migrants were stranded at sea.<sup>33</sup>

In 2001, due in part to 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the political rhetoric in Australia on refugees and asylum seekers dramatically shifted from protection to a security paradigm. Legislation divided the 'good refugee' – those who wait in a camp for resettlement – from the 'bad refugee' – those who 'jump the queue' and are 'illegal' coming by boat. Policies since 2001 include the 'Pacific Solution'; 'Operation Relex', the Temporary Protection Visa regime; and the militarised 'Operation Sovereign Borders' in 2013 – a policy

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<sup>32</sup> Lowy Institute, (2019). Australian Election 2019: Where the Parties Stand – Defence Spending, *The Issue*. Retrieved from <https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/australia-votes-2019/issues/defence-spending/>

<sup>33</sup> Cooke, Richard, (August 2015) Nope, nope, nope: why Australia won't help the Rohingya, *The Monthly*. Retrieved from <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2015/august/1438351200/richard-cooke/nope-nope-nope>

to stop ‘people smugglers’ and to ‘return the boats’, premised on the idea that Australia is experiencing a national emergency in protecting its border.<sup>34</sup> There were recurring claims about the militarization of Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection, which in December 2017 was dissolved and subsumed into the Department of Home Affairs. This was confirmed in a joint media release in 2016<sup>35</sup> by then Minister for Defence, Peter Dutton and Minister for Defence, Senator Marise Payne stating that "The Australian Defence Force, in partnership with the Australian Border Force (ABF), operate the largest and most capable maritime surveillance and response fleet in Australia's history". Operation Sovereign Borders is now known as a military-led, border security operation veiled in secrecy. Donald Trump's proposed border wall to stop Mexicans from coming into the United States may be frightening, but Australia created its security walls a long time ago called the 'excision of the mainland of Australia from the migration zone'<sup>36</sup> defended with military aircraft and unmanned aerial systems.

As a result of Australia's militarized borders and policies of deterrence, the use of aid has been used in Australian offshore detention facilities in small Pacific island nations. A key illustration is the use of aid to detain asylum seekers captured by the Australian military and held in offshore facilities on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. Australia's bipartisan policy of deterrence of people seeking asylum by mandatory detention has been likened by former Manus detainee, Behrouz Boochani, to a form of kidnapping and forced exile<sup>37</sup>, reinforcing the exclusionist traditions of Australian nationalism. The logic of deterrence enables the denial of basic rights and creates extra-legal status for semi-permanent encampments. Australia's abuses encourage copy-cat actions, in a global bidding war to dehumanize and

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<sup>34</sup> McAdam, J. (2014). Australia and Asylum Seekers, *International Journal of Refugee Law* Vol. 25 No. 3 pp. 435–448, Retrieved from <http://ijrl.oxfordjournals.org/content/25/3/435.full.pdf+html>

<sup>35</sup> Australian Government for Immigration and Border Protection and Department of Defence (2016). ‘Strengthening our maritime capability into the future’ a joint media release - The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Defence. Retrieved from <https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/peterdutton/2016/Pages/maritime-capability.aspx>

<sup>36</sup> Phillips, Melissa, (May 17, 2013). Out of sight, out of mind: excising Australia from the migration zone, *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/out-of-sight-out-of-mind-excising-australia-from-the-migration-zone-14387>

<sup>37</sup> Boochani, B (October 3, 2016). For refugees kidnapped and exiled to the Manus prison, hope is our secret weapon, *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/oct/03/for-refugees-kidnapped-and-exiled-to-the-manus-prison-hope-is-our-secret-weapon>

brutalize refugees and asylum-seekers. Cashing in are multinational, military conglomerates many of whom have substantially contributed to the mass exodus of people from war-torn countries. The Border Security System Market – Global Forecast to 2022 expects that with rising territorial conflicts and geopolitical instability the market will reach USD 52.95 billion by 2022.<sup>38</sup>

The polarising political debate within Australian politics and the media has created much-unfounded fear of refugee and asylum seekers and legislation like the Border Force Act (2015), which place government staff and health professionals at risk of imprisonment if they speak out about human rights abuses in detention. Meanwhile, there have been over a dozen deaths in Australia's offshore detention centers in the past six years, most by suicide including self-immolation<sup>39</sup>. Over 100 men within 2 weeks attempted to commit suicide after the Australian elections in 2019. However, there is an extensive network of refugee and asylum seeker NGOs and advocates among Australian civil society including lawyers, medical professionals, politicians, academics and religious figures, who have been opposing Australia's immigration policies for more than two decades, as seen in actions that swept across the country in early 2016 under the slogan, 'Let Them Stay'<sup>40</sup>; the *No Business in Abuse* campaign<sup>41</sup> that has highlighted corporate complicity in abuses within Australia's immigration system; and more recently in July 2019 where thousands of Australians around the country protested for the release of refugees and asylum seekers detained for six years in Australian offshore detention centers on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea and Nauru.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Markets and Markets, media release (April 27, 2016). Border Security System Market Worth 52.95 Billion USD by 2022, *MarketWatch*. Retrieved from <https://www.marketwatch.com/press-release/border-security-system-market-worth-5295-billion-usd-by-2022-2016-04-27-72033058>

<sup>39</sup> Australian Border Deaths Database, (2020). Monash University, *Border Crossing Observatory*. Retrieved from <https://www.monash.edu/arts/border-crossing-observatory/research-agenda/australian-border-deaths-database>

<sup>40</sup> Hunt, E, Davey M and Wahlquist C. (Feb 4, 2016). Let Them Stay: protesters gather around Australia to prevent the removal of asylum seekers – as it happened, *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/live/2016/feb/04/let-them-stay-protesters-gather-around-australia-to-prevent-return-of-asylum-seekers-to-auru>

<sup>41</sup> Baker R and McKenzie N, (September 18, 2015). Melbourne woman taking on Transfield over children in detention, *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.smh.com.au/business/melbourne-mum-taking-on-transfield-over-children-in-detention-20150918-gippk1.html>

<sup>42</sup> SBS News, (July 20, 2019). Australians protest six years of offshore detention, *SBS*. Retrieved from <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/australians-protest-six-years-of-offshore-detention>

It is not just the militarization of Australian borders, Australia's offshore detention regime has since become a proxy for 'forward defense', not just against refugees but also the perceived strategic threat from China. With the Chinese state seeking access to port facilities on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, US vice president, Mike Pence announced at the 2018 APEC Summit in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea that they would partner with Australia and support the development of the Lombrum naval base, formally the Manus Detention Centre on Manus Island into a joint US-Australia military base.<sup>43</sup> The base would be a new departure, clearly demonstrating the deepened inter-weaving of military interests and development assistance in Australia's US-centred strategic posture. There has been no say for the people on Manus Island about the imposition of the Australian billion-dollar offshore detention center for the past six years that has given them no real or permanent benefits or infrastructure and left their island with a tarnished reputation associated with torture and human rights abuses. It is no surprise local Manusians are also opposed to the establishment of the Australian-US naval base as stated by Manus MP, Charlie Benjamin, *"So when they come and say, 'We want to build a military base in Manus', I say 'I already have experience with you Australians, dealing with asylum seekers, and my people were left out'. I don't want our people to be left out again with this military exercise."*<sup>44</sup>

The question remains, where is Australian aid heading with continued military scale-up in the Asia Pacific region. Australian foreign aid and policy failures demonstrate the nonsensical logic of pursuing naked 'self-interest' in which the aid-industrial complex solidifies vulture capital, aid agencies, 'donor' governments and local cronies who are shored-up by the military but mainly working at the level of policy. Instead, Australia should focus on making the world a safer place through collective and peace security arrangements. It should pursue fair trade arrangements – not market access and 'free trade'. It should be an exemplar of effective climate policy, both in international policy and at home. It should become a beacon for

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<sup>43</sup> Murphy, Katherine (November 18, 2018). America to partner with Australia to develop a naval base on Manus Island, *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/18/america-to-partner-with-australia-to-develop-naval-base-on-manus-island>

<sup>44</sup> Davidson, Helen (July 20, 2019). Australia has 'tarnished' Manus Island and military base isn't welcome, governor says, *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jul/29/australia-has-tarnished-manus-island-and-military-base-isnt-welcome-governor-says>

democratization and self-determination, and enable development rights, not financial freedoms for speculators. It should respect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. And it should recommit to global targets for development aid, and focus Australian aid on addressing local needs, not Australian interests. Such principles would take Australia closer to achieving the goals of peace and security in the region that it claims should be our uppermost priority.

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