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Securitisation - Turning Problems into Threats

Abstract

'Securitisation' is a post-WW2 phenomenon. It began as part of the expanding struggle between the US and the Soviet Union for pre-eminence during the Cold War, where the US, as a matter of policy, leveraged the full panoply of its state power to prevail over the Soviet Union. As used in contemporary security policy texts, 'security' addresses the freedom from threat to the collective (the state) rather than the equanimity that individual citizens might enjoy. So the connotation of the word 'security' currently has much more to do with the state's ability to defend itself against subversion (in all its forms) and armed attack (in all its forms, including terrorism) and, in the case of totalitarian states, against its own citizens. The external or inter-state focus of 'securitisation' has broadened to include the intra-state dimension: states increasingly leverage their military, para-military and quasi-military capabilities, including commercial enforcement capabilities, to control their own citizens as well as foreign nationals who might be resident. 'Securitisation' both creates and exploits fear. It is the practice that accords significant public danger, menace and threat to politically and socially important issues and accordingly seeks to deal with such issues by employing personal and social controls, enhanced intelligence gathering powers, law enforcement protocols and national military capabilities. Securitisation has the perverse effect of both fomenting and assuaging public fear.

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Introduction

In the domain of international relations, as distinct from economics, 'securitisation' describes policy responses taken in response to problems that are deemed to impact on or be analogous with communal and/or state security. Securitisation relies for its effect on a traditional, though increasingly outmoded, concept of 'security'.

Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the term security has increasingly been defined as the absence of, or freedom from, threat, rather than the 'tranquillity' or 'calm' that the Roman statesman Cicero intended when he coined the word. Security, in common parlance, is the consequence of an effective response to fear or threat, rather than the absence of fear or threat which is the precondition for tranquillity in the societal and personal dimensions.

Securitisation elevates the levels of state intervention in handling issues in a way that displays, emphasises and enhances the power of the state and its control over its citizens. It also may have the perverse effect of both fomenting and assuaging public fear. And because security assets are readily available to government, they can be mobilised quickly and with considerable political theatre. The principal purpose of securitisation is to afford maximum authority and control to politicians, generally to strengthen their political image and power.

To deliver its intended effects, securitisation relies on two messaging techniques that magnify the significance of the issue that government may want to exploit.

First, security is given exceptional status among the various domains of public policy, and an importance out of all proportion when measured against other characteristics of a well-functioning society – health, employment, education, public and social amenity and so on.

Second, securitisation invokes the rhetorical manipulation of issues. Refugees and asylum seekers, for instance, are described as "boat people", "queue jumpers" and "illegal immigrants", which has the effect of both dramatizing the issue and demonising the victims. Suburbs where unemployed or under-employed youths congregate are called "war zones", and the youths in question are called "criminal gangs" and "young thugs". There is scarcely an aspect of indigenous policy and ethnic minority youth law enforcement, for example, that is not subject to both messaging techniques.

Securitisation also encourages a significant, though sometimes subtle, change in the role of those who advise on intelligence and operational matters. Oftentimes, analysts move from their role as objective assessors of evidence to a more ambiguous role where they and their agencies focus instead on the dynamics of threat management, proffering advice on the basis of 'professional judgement' as distinct from a hard assessment of the facts. In other words, securitisation both relies on and promotes the amplification of views and advice

based on professional judgement – a kind of group-authorised subjectivity – rather than an objective evaluation of evidence and data.

BUT IT WAS NOT EVER THUS

US President Franklin D. Roosevelt began his first Inauguration Speech in terms that capture the incapacity of many contemporary governments – paralysis in the face of problems that they can neither comprehend nor resolve. Roosevelt's words reverberate today:

> . . . Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.[1]

Roosevelt understood implicitly that fear is pernicious, sapping the nation's energy while it breeds mistrust and kills the hope that inspires vision. As he said, "when there is no vision, people perish".[2] President Roosevelt's response was to offer a leadership of "frankness and vigor", as he called it, to restore the confidence that "thrives only on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance".

As Roosevelt confronted the disaster of the Great Depression, he recognised that his first and overarching task was to restore confidence in the face of an existential threat, not just to the US economy but to the global economy. Roosevelt called out the greed, stubbornness and incompetence of "the unscrupulous moneychangers" that stood indicted in the court of public opinion, and demanded "a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments" and "an end to speculation with other people's money".

So Roosevelt embarked on 'The New Deal', a suite of public policy reforms, public works projects and relief programs that not only set the US on the road to recovery but positioned it to defeat the global security challenge that Pearl Harbor delivered catastrophically. Roosevelt did not announce a 'war on poverty', a 'war on unemployment', a 'war on inequality', a 'war on greed' or any of the other rhetorical but otherwise empty expressions that work to securitise wider policy domains. Roosevelt offered systematic solutions to address systemic problems. He did not address financial corruption by simply arresting and gaoling the "money changers". He did not address unemployment by arresting and gaoling the unemployed for homelessness or vagrancy. He did not address urban and rural poverty by increasing the number of police to patrol affluent suburbs and protect the wealthy.

Roosevelt did not 'securitise' the economic and social problems of the US by turning them into confected security issues and blaming the victims of the Great Depression. Rather, he displayed vision and leadership by crafting policies to address the causes of the global economic collapse rather than the symptoms.

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[1] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1933
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp
[2] The catastrophic bushfires that affected Australia between September 2019 and February 2020 are symptomatic of the lack of vision among international leaders – a lack of vision that causes people to perish.

Roosevelt advocated an approach to government and governance totally out of tune with the laissez-faire, amoral and anomic preferences of many present-day governments. The international community is overwhelmed by disruption fed by cynical leaders, the resurgent nationalism that so many of them seem to favour, the resultant economic, political and social instability, and a return to ideologies that were discarded for the untold damage they inflicted on entire populations in earlier times.

SO, WHAT'S CHANGED?

The first response of many contemporary government leaders is to securitise national problems. Issues that may be either causes or consequences of anxieties within the community are portrayed as existential threats demanding military or quasi-military responses. The language employed to inflate risk is always replete with hyperbole and rhetoric, and the solutions offered are usually couched in the confected language of urgency and over-reach. "Operation Sovereign Borders", for instance, remains Orwellian for both its confected language and its ability to dramatise the policy response while dehumanising and demonising the targets of the policy. By acting thus, governments bolster their political control and normalise the marshalling of resources to strengthen military, quasi-military and law enforcement authorities.

Of course, the sad truth is that, in too many countries around the world, citizens want to be protected **from** their security forces rather than being protected **by** them. Australia's democracy is mercifully free of that phenomenon – so far.

Yet governments around the world, Australia, the UK and the US included, have displayed a growing tendency to securitise international terrorism and refugee flows — neither of them existential threats to the nation — by generating public fear, militarising our national responses and demonising ethnic communities.

This tendency to securitise issues reflects a deeper problem. The intensification of major power competition and the regional challenges it poses – particularly in the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent, Central Asia, South East Asia and China for that matter – is increasingly seen through a narrow security prism premised on the inevitability of a military response. Hence the inter-state and the intra-state dimensions of securitisation converge.

What the citizens need, and what governments need to re-assert, is a whole-of-nation approach that maintains a positive focus on building a fair, stable and prosperous domestic and international order. Of course, government must have the ability to respond militarily if the state is subject to armed aggression so as to meet its responsibility for the safety of its citizens against armed attack. But military power should never be assumed since, as Hans Morgenthau pointed out over seventy years ago, diplomacy is the strongest element of state power.

We shall revert to this below.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AUSTRALIA?

In Australia's case, the fear of fear itself prompted the promotion of a military-styled and para-military-backed Operation Sovereign Borders to address refugee arrivals and border management more broadly. In the lead-up to the 2001 election, the Howard government securitised the MV Tampa incident, deploying armed Special Forces troops to control unarmed refugees rescued from a sinking vessel.[3] Little more than a month after the Tampa incident, HMAS Adelaide intercepted a disabled Indonesian fishing vessel (SIEV 4) carrying over 200 asylum seekers, initiating what became known as 'the children overboard affair', or "A Certain Maritime Incident". This was also securitised, with the Government falsely claiming that refugees had thrown their childeren overboard in order to force Australian authorities to accept them into the country.[4]

These incidents prompted legislation to exclude asylum seekers from landing in Australia (principally by excising points of entry from the Australian Migration Zone), principally on the grounds that people seeking asylum were a national security threat to Australia's sovereignty, and that some of the asylum seekers might have been terrorists.[5] Then-Defence Minister Peter Reith leveraged his earlier remark that boatpeople could provide a pipeline for terrorists to say that "it is irrefutable that part of your security posture is your ability to control your borders".[6]

The securitisation of the refugee issue led to a build-up of defence resources in northern Australia, and enhanced aerial surveillance of Australia's northern waters by the RAAF and private contractors. Immigration and customs border controls that had worked well for decades were suddenly found to be defective, and in need of a more overtly paramilitary character. Even Customs officers' white uniform shirts were subsequently replaced with black shirts to make them look more intimidating.

The fear of fear itself resulted in the appearance of black-uniformed Border Security personnel not only at our airports and ports, but on our inner-city streets, as part of an expanded law enforcement character assigned to our national immigration and border

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[3] See Alex Reilly, "Australian politics explainer: the MV Tampa and the transformation of asylum-seeker policy", The Conversation, 27 April 2017 https://theconversation.com/australian-politics-explainer-the-mv-tampa-and-the-transformation-of-asylum-seeker-policy-74078

[4] For a full account of this incident, see *A Certain Maritime Incident*, Senate Inquiry Report, 23 October 2002 https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Former_Committees/maritimeincident/report/index

[5] For an excellent analysis of the sovereignty issue, see Katherine Gelber and Matt McDonald, "Ethics and exclusion: representations of sovereignty in Australia's approach to asylum-seekers", *Review of International Studies* (2006), 32, pp. 269-89 https://www.jstor.org/stable/40072138?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents The securitisation aspects of refugee flows is well covered by Michael Pugh, "Drowning not Waving: Boat People and Humanitarianism at Sea", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2004, 17/1, esp. pp. 55-6, https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/17/1/50/1557490

[6] See Geoffrey Lee Martin, "Australia closes door on boat people", The Telegraph (UK), 24 September 2001 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/1341469/Australia-closes-door-on-boat-people.html

control functions. Operation Fortitude, for instance, the misconceived joint Victoria Police-Border Force operation planned for August 2015, was widely seen as law enforcement-paramilitary targeting of ethnic communities.[7] It was.

And, more recently, the footage of camouflaged police officers with automatic laser-sighted weapons confronting indigenous children at Don Dale in the Northern Territory[8] should be of concern to all Australians, not just the First Australians. Domestic law enforcement agencies have progressively become more militarised as they have become more Americanised – police constables routinely carrying side arms, tasers, truncheons and hand cuffs, all on clear display, to inject that "little bit of fear" of police as advocated by the NSW Police Commissioner, Mick Fuller.[9]

The operations of Australian police services has become more intimidating, whether in detaining a mentally ill disabled pensioner,[10] responding to peaceful demonstrations and protests, such as occurred outside the Prime Minister's residence in Kirribilli,[11] or maintaining law and order at music festivals where strip searches, including of juveniles, has become ever more common.[12] Indeed, terms of art such as 'proactive policing' may mask the implicit securitisation of law enforcement. And where 'proactive policing' is managed by the imposition of quotas – the number of 'proactive policing' interventions whereby members of the public are stopped, questioned, searched and/or detained – quite fundamental questions of legitimacy and legality arise.[13] When specific communities and ethnicities are singled out for special attention, as so often happens with Indigenous, Asian, Muslim and African communities, securitisation begins to morph into racial discrimination. This form of securitisation is a direct assault on human rights.

But perhaps the most extraordinary example of the securitisation of social issues was the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response initiated by the Howard government, and

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[7] See 'Controversial Australian Border Force visa checks, Operation Fortitude cancelled", ABC News, 28 August 2015 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-28/operation-fortitude-cancelled/6733008

[8] See Stephanie Zillman, "Don Dale CCTV footage of police aiming weapons at youth detainees draws mixed reaction", ABC News, 15 January 2019 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-15/don-dale-cctv-footage-leak-michael-gunner-says-police-doing-job/10714322

[9] See Heather McNab, "NSW Police chief defends strip searches", The Canberra Times, 18 November 2019 https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6496743/nsw-police-chief-defends-strip-searches/?cs=14231

[10] See "Melbourne police captured on video taking down disability pensioner", ABC News, 3 April 2018 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-03/melbourne-police-on-video-taking-down-disability-pensioner/9591006

[11] See Isolde (Izzy) Raj-Seppings, "I'm the 13-year-old police threatened to arrest at Kirribilli House protest. This is why I did it", The Guardian (Australia), 21 December 2019 https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/commentisfree/2019/dec/21/im-the-13-year-old-police-threatened-to-arrest-at-the-kirribilli-house-protest-this-is-why-i-did-it

[12] See Lily Mayers, "NSW Police asked 15yo to expose himself as part of festival strip search, inquiry hears", ABC News, 3 December 2019 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-02/nsw-police-strip-searched-25-children-at-festival-inquiry-hears/11756902

[13] See Pallavi Singhal and Angus Thompson, "'Systemic unlawfulness': 88 per cent of NSW Police searches found nothing", The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 February 2020 https://www.smh.com.au/national/systemic-unlawfulness-88-per-cent-of-nsw-police-searches-found-nothing-20200214-p540t4.html?btis

subsequently continued by the Rudd government. At the instigation of the then-Minister for Indigenous Affairs, himself a former army officer, the government appointed a serving Major General to head a task force to deal with the recommendations of a Northern Territory inquiry into child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities. Enabling legislation, *The Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*, was rushed through the national parliament, and subsequently amended four times by the Rudd and Gillard governments. Securitisation is not the preserve of coalition governments alone.

Ten years later, the ABC's then-indigenous affairs editor Stan Grant described the intervention as a "dark time" for indigenous people,[14] imposing controls that were seen by many, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as a violation of human rights.[15]

While the emergency intervention may have been well-intentioned, it was a tactical response to a long-term strategic issue for Indigenous Australia – the restoration of dignity and recognition to people who had been alienated and dispossessed. It is far from clear that the intervention delivered the results it promised. Indeed, many First Australians in the Northern Territory claim that it failed.[16] And to judge by the most recent Closing the Gap report, Indigenous disadvantage remains entrenched.[17] The securitisation of disadvantage does not help, and actually exacerbates the problem.

And maybe it is just fear itself that continues to persuade Coalition governments to generate panic and urgency in legislating additional powers for the police and security agencies, powers that further constrain the civil liberties of the community as each bill is railroaded through the Parliament.

"Hyper-legislation", as University of Toronto professor Kent Roach termed it[18], is a key feature of Australia's approach to securitisation. As at 30 September 2019, Australia had enacted 82 anti-terror laws extending from the retention of meta-data by telecomunication companies to the revocation of citizenship from dual nationals convicted of terrorism

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[14] See Stan Grant, "A decade on from the NT intervention, the 'torment of powerlessness' lives on", ABC News, 21 June 2017 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-21/stan-grant-a-decade-on-from-the-nt-intervention/8638628

[15] See Linda Briskman, "Australia's wake up call from the UN: Yes, we're a racist country", *The Conversation*, 31 May 2011 https://theconversation.com/australias-wake-up-call-from-the-un-yes-were-a-racist-country-1506

[16] See Paddy Gibson, "10 impacts of the NT Intervention", *SBS NITV News*, 21 June 2017 https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2017/06/21/10-impacts-nt-intervention

[17] See *Closing the Gap – Report 2020* https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/ and Isabella Higgins, "Closing the Gap report shows only two targets on track as PM pushes for Indigenous-led refresh", ABC News, 12 February 2020 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-12/closing-the-gap-report-2019-indigenous-outcomes-not-on-track/11949712

[18] See K. Roach (2011). Australia Responds: Hyper-Legislation. In *The 9/11 Effect: Comparative Counter-Terrorism* (pp. 309-360). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139003537.006

offences.[19] This is compounded by the demonisation of ethnic minorities, especially from Africa and the Middle East, and the extraordinary claims made by Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton that Melburnians were scared to go out to dinner because of gang violence,[20] are all part of making people fearful and insecure — of creating anxiety for political effect.

Securitisation is also reflected in the 'law and order' campaigns that argue for increased militarisation of police services.

Commenting on this issue, Michael Pembroke, a judge of the NSW Supreme Court, offered a timely reminder when he said that "the mission of the police is not to wage war but to protect and safeguard".[21] Judge Pembroke's comment goes to the essence of what security is all about — the ability of the community to live in peace and harmony, going about their business in the confidence that they can live rewarding, fulfilled and happy lives.

Security is about knowing that you can participate constructively in the economy, earn a decent wage, provide for your family, have access to good education and health services, look forward to a dignified retirement, and do all of these things safe in the knowledge that the government will defend you and your community from foreign interference, foreign aggression and armed attack. Security is 'hakuna matata' – "no worries for the rest of your days" as *The Lion King*'s Pumba would have it.

The 'Canberra Bubble' - The Securitisation of the Landscape

Like Abuja, Brasilia, Islamabad, Naypyidaw, Ottawa and Washington DC, Canberra is a purpose-built city. Its business is government. But unlike most of the other purpose-built national capitals, Canberra's parliamentary landscape is surprisingly securitised. The federal Parliament has been transformed from an open Parliament, where the electors could literally walk across the top of the Parliament, into a Parliamentary fortress, protected by armed police officers with automatic weapons, armed patrols, the display of sidearms within the secure spaces inside the Parliamentary building, and an array of physical security barriers and CCTV monitors.

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[19] See Nicola McGarrity and Jessie Blackbourn, "Australia has enacted 82 anti-terror laws since 2001. But tough laws alone can't eliminate terrorism", *The Conversation*, 30 September 2019 https://theconversation.com/australia-has-enacted-82-anti-terror-laws-since-2001-but-tough-laws-alone-cant-eliminate-terrorism-123521

[20] See Paul Karp, "Peter Dutton says Victorians scared to go out because of 'African gang violence'", The Guardian (Australia), 3 January 2018 https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/03/peter-dutton-says-victorians-scared-to-go-out-because-of-african-gang-violence

[21] See Michael Pembroke, "Increasing militarisation of police invites tragedy", The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 June 2018 https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/increasing-militarisation-of-police-invites-tragedy-20180628-p4zod5.html See also Justice Pembroke's letter to the editor "The role and function of the ADF and civil police", *The Australian Defence Force Journal* no. 203, 2018, p. 9 https://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/ADFJ/Documents/issue_203/ADF%20Journal%20203_web.pdf

Prime real estate close to the federal parliament is dominated by Defence (occupying Russell Hill), the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (overlooking Lake Burley Griffin), the Australian Federal Police (in a building that once accommodated six federal departments and agencies), the Office of National Intelligence, the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the senior executive component of the Department of Home Affairs, and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Treasury and the Department of Finance are also close by.

The applied economics departments, along with the social policy departments, are distributed across the rest of Canberra. This landscape implicitly reinforces the power of the national security establishment in the national subconscious. Moreover, it reinforces government's preoccupation with the security of the state vis-à-vis the security of the citizen. The departments and agencies that help build the deep infrastructure on which an inclusive and strong community rests – education, health, community services, industry and infrastructure – are dispersed and out of sight – and this in one of the world's first federated constitutional democracies.

The securitisation of the landscape is also reflected in the CCTV and other public monitoring technologies that have appeared across the Parliamentary triangle. Defence is perhaps at the top of the list, with physical security barriers and bollards, movement sensors, omni-directional CCTV monitoring, public address and warning speakers and flashing lights, supported by police response units and private security guards. Within the Parliamentary triangle, too much security seems never to be enough.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO SECURITISATION: NATIONAL CONVERSATION AND INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

Yet people around the world **are** worried about the future. They are looking to history in their efforts to chart a new course.

The two centuries before WW1 saw the entrenchment of war as an integral and necessary activity of states, or at least of the statesmen who ran them. "War", said Clausewitz, "is the continuation of policy by other means", thus asserting the legitimacy of warfare as an essential pillar in shaping international relations.

As Europe stumbled into WW1, President Woodrow Wilson's military advisor Colonel Edward House put his finger on the central problem: "it is militarism run stark mad", he wrote.[22] The complex of alliances that precipitated WW1 was built around the conduct of war, not the preservation of peace, and thus engineered the European cataclysm that House predicted.

Armed conflict may constitute an existential threat to the nation. Nuclear weapons, climate change and pandemics, however, threaten the security of entire national communities and global populations. And the only effective defence against them is collective international action, which is in turn dependent on sustained diplomatic effort.

Zhou Enlai was once quoted as saying "diplomacy is the continuation of war by other means".[23] The sardonic wit of his remark notwithstanding, there is inevitably a link between diplomacy and war. More often, however, war is attributed to the failure of diplomacy, and consequently security is fundamentally about hedging against diplomatic failure. If only it were that simple.

It is evidently a fundamental responsibility of government to defend the nation against external armed aggression and to protect the nation against subversion. A strong defence capability and an effective internal security system are core policy responsibilities of government. But avoidance of aggression in the first place must be the primary objective. That is only achieved when national power and statecraft combine, and that is through diplomacy. Diplomacy is intrinsic to the nation's security and without a constant, dedicated, focused and well-resourced foreign policy, a people's and a nation's security cannot be protected, promoted and sustained.

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[22] Quoted in Annika Mombauer, Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 174.
[23] See Edgar Snow's essay on Chou Enlai, *The Saturday Evening Post*, 27 March 1954

For many nations at present, global uncertainties have generated a querulous and fearful approach to security issues. Some governments have reverted to a Hobbesian preoccupation with protecting themselves from their people, and protecting their people from one another. In other words, they have securitised their nations.

In 1942, President Roosevelt gave expression to the hope that the global community could transform itself from warfare to welfare. He coined the phrase 'United Nations' in the declaration signed by the WW2 allies in Washington on 1 January 1942. Roosevelt did not live to see his vision realised. But from the rubble of WW2 came a new security template that put human security at the centre of global security. And human security is what is ultimately threatened by securitisation.

As the world community came to terms with the devastation and dislocation of two world wars, global leaders began to reflect popular sentiment — there must be a better way for populations to live than under the shadow of war and suffering. So, in the months immediately following the end of WW2, the leaders of the victorious powers, together with several of the neutral countries, came together to establish the United Nations.

The opening sentence of the Preamble captures the spirit of the moment: a determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind". The new common enterprise was to be based on "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". And the means of delivering on this determination was to be the employment of "international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples".

The nation's security is fundamentally a product of two essential factors that work in combination: a strong and buoyant economy; and a cohesive, inclusive, harmonious and resilient society that shares core values and advocates shared national interests.

History does suggest that internal division and economic collapse are often greater threats to national security than external armed aggression. When emergent problems are securitised rather than addressed systemically, the consequent sense of 'otherness' can quickly degenerate into dangerous fractures within communities and societies, which in turn encourage discrimination and erode resilience.

More than anything else, security is a product of the national interest — a concept that is frequently employed, but seldom explained. As Hans Morgenthau argued over seventy years ago, the national interest is defined in terms of national power and identity.

Morgenthau got to the heart of the matter:

> Of all the factors that make for the power of a nation, the most important . . . is the quality of diplomacy. All the other factors that determine national power are, as it

> were, the raw material out of which the power of a nation is fashioned. The quality of a nation's diplomacy combines those different factors into an integrated whole.[24]

Because we live in an increasingly interconnected world, the nation's foreign policy is an essential vehicle for delivering the community's economic, social and security aspirations. And if foreign policy, along with economic policy, social policy and defence policy, is the vehicle for giving effect to our national interests, diplomacy is the means by which the nation's foreign policy is transacted.

Diplomacy is also the means by which nations transact their economic, political social and strategic interests in a coordinated way. Diplomacy invites discussion, negotiation and conciliation.

Security, then, is the product of several factors that are deeply embedded in the character and conduct of the national community. It derives from the confidence we have as a nation that we can achieve the following, *inter alia*: protect the people from both aggression and criminal violence; meet the material and social needs of the people; create the public goods that nurture and strengthen the community; maintain community cohesion, inclusion and harmony; build human and social capital; invest in the social innovation necessary for broad community participation in the post-industrial economy; and build and manage the many networks required to sustain all these factors.

To bring each of these factors into effect, the nation must work within and with the broader community of nations. In other words, the realisation of each of these factors requires deep and well-managed connections across the globe. These connections are multidimensional and multifactoral: there is real complexity in the establishment and management of this interconnectivity, and that is the business of diplomacy.

In a disrupted world, the need for a durable diplomacy becomes even more acute. In many respects, the twentieth century was a century of discontinuities. Its first half was profoundly disruptive. The two world wars destroyed empires, kingdoms and nations.

We have also become comfortable and complacent with the strategic leadership of the US, which has played such a normative role in establishing and encouraging adherence to the international rules-based order as part of the global settlement following WW2. This complacency has encouraged conservatives in Australia to adopt a free-riding approach to international affairs whereby Australia baulks from taking the leadership role to which it could and should aspire.

But the systemic resilience of the international rules-based order and the authority of the United States as the global leader are both eroding as the international rules-based order

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[24] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1978), p. 105   https://www.e-ir.info/2013/11/07/phronesis-morgenthau-and-diplomacy/

itself becomes increasingly under attack. What we are facing now is a period characterised by widespread disruption, which means a break-down in the global order. This has profound implications for security of all kinds and at all levels.

The disruption that we currently face is driven by a set of structural factors, ranging from changes in the global balance of power and the return of major power competition, the economic and social inequality of which Thomas Piketty has written, refugee flows resulting from civil war (including climate changed induced civil war) and societal breakdown, consequent ethnic tension in neighbouring countries, the reappearance of nationalism and racism, and the alarming re-emergence of national politics driven by ideology rather than good policy.

To create and protect the kinds and levels of security needed in a time of disruption, Australia needs to recapitalise and re-energise its diplomacy. This is not simply a question of additional budget outlays. Even less is it a question of securitising social issues. Rather, it is more a question of building capacity, that is, the range of skills needed to support an effective diplomacy, and enhancing capability, that is, the agility, dexterity and facility to employ those skills.

CONCLUSION

Securitisation is pernicious, for two reasons: it diminishes the autonomy and dignity of the individual citizen; and normalises the practice whereby the state succeeds in confecting emergency or panic in order to address the symptoms of problems rather than their causes. In a subtle sense, securitisation is anti-democratic, since it uses the instruments of state control over its citizens and other individuals to manage non-defence and non-military problems without engaging the citizens to act in their own interests. In particular securitisation usually involves the use of military, paramilitary and law enforcement and intelligence-gathering capabilities to resolve matters that are fundamentally economic, political and social.

As the Northern Territory Emergency Response and ill-considered initiatives such as Operation Fortitude in Melbourne demonstrate only too clearly, the securitisation of social issues can be counter-productive, exacerbating and prolonging discrimination, inequality and the denial of human rights in the guise of fixing the problem by using defence and police assets and capabilities.

Securitisation reflects an increasingly outmoded concept of security that fails to value human and social capital and their corollaries, human and social security. Far from enhancing the security and well-being of the individual, securitisation renders the individual less secure and, consequently, renders the nation less secure. It is cynical action in search of policy.