



## The Rudd Government's Evolving National Security Agenda

This *National Security Practice Note* identifies the Rudd Government's evolving national security agenda.

The next parliamentary sitting should see the release of two key documents which will determine Australia's national security agenda for at least the next 10 years.

The first is the National Security Strategy Statement.

The starting point for this, as with all national security strategies around the world, will be that the first priority of government is the protection of its sovereignty, interests and people.

The Strategy is extremely likely to highlight that Australia is facing a broad and complex range of traditional and non-traditional threats. Traditional threats include major state conflict, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, espionage and trans-national crime, while non-traditional threats include resource security, uncontrolled mass migration, fragile states pressures, economic shocks, pandemics, social disharmony, and food and energy security. To make the threat landscape more complex, none can be addressed in isolation as many are interconnected.

As a consequence of this, the Strategy will probably state that the old divisions within national security policy are no longer relevant. Specifically, the distinction between external threats, which were the responsibility of diplomats and soldiers, and internal threats, which were the tasks of police and emergency responders, is irrelevant. This is because a threat external to Australia is just as likely to have a domestic component within Australia due to the globalization of people, technology and ideas.

It is also now meaningless to conceive of government agencies in terms of those responsible for national security and those who are not. Now all agencies

have some role to play. A case in point is preventing homegrown radicalization. While intelligence and law enforcement agencies have an obvious role in prosecuting those intent on criminal behaviour, other agencies such as education, health, immigration and transport can all make significant contributions to the de-radicalisation campaign by tackling inequalities, discrimination and alienation which may be contributing factors to the problem.

The Strategy is also expected to highlight the need to engage numerous non-government groups in society in order to enhance national security. While governments will continue to use a whole-of-Australian Government approach to developing policy and operational unity, increasingly a whole of nation approach involving business and communities will be required to actually reduce the risk of the threats.

At the international level, security will be advanced by Australia working with a range of multilateral, bilateral, and ad-hoc coalitions to advance issues. These groupings will increasingly involve business and NGOs. This will be a big cultural challenge for most agencies as they see these groups as service delivery agents and not policy and operational partners. Government will increasingly give particular attention to preventing conflict, and the stabilisation and reconstruction of states that are fragile, failing or collapsed. This involves providing more resources to addressing the underlying drivers of conflict and instability such as poverty, inequality, inadequate governance and a lack of market economies. The Strategy may note that this will not be simple nor quick. In many cases the conditions that lead to conflict and instability are gradual and extremely complex. This means there is plenty of opportunity for delay and prevarication, and that any solutions require an incredible amount of policy consistency for at least a decade.

Domestically, security will be advanced by Australia working in partnership with all elements of society, and specifically by focusing on resilience and an 'all-hazards' approach. Resilience is the ability of individuals, organisations, communities and society to resist and bounce-back quickly from shocks. Creating resilience makes society stronger and more self-reliant. All-hazards is an approach where emergency preparation and response is based around addressing the full range of likely natural and man-made hazards being faced, rather than just the top few.

The second document will be the Homeland and Border Security Review. The review was led by the former Defence Secretary Ric Smith and it was handed to the government recently. The review makes recommendations about improving the roles, responsibilities and functions of organisations involved in homeland and border security arrangements. Although the Review's terms of reference were never made public, it is hoped that an unclassified version of the Review will be publicly released.

One of its key conclusions will probably be that an Australian homeland security department is not required because the existing coordination mechanisms and effectiveness of homeland and border security efforts are adequate. Forming such a department was semi-official Labor policy when it was in opposition. The Labor election commitment of establishing the Office of National Security has already been implemented and the Review would probably recommend that the second part of the commitment, to establish a National Security Advisor, be implemented.

The Review will probably also address the many inadequacies in national security which has arisen since the 2001 terrorist attacks. Areas for improvements include increased information sharing between governments and between governments



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and industry, the lack of legislation governing Border Protection Command arrangements, and the unclear division of responsibilities for counter-terrorism between the Attorney-General and his junior minister. Likely areas for change includes ways to build a consistent and coordinated security policy approach across agencies, the merging of the numerous watch offices, improving capability development processes for disasters, and modifying the different command structures for national terrorist incidents and non-terrorist incidents.

Assuming the predictions above are accurate, what these two documents reflect is a more balanced and nuanced, middle power national security approach that does not over-emphasise the terrorist threat.

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