

CALFS PODCAST – SUMMARY OF SESSION 1

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Recorded at the Adelaide Convention Centre, 4 Sep 2018

0:00

LEON YOUNG: Well, welcome! Today with me I have Dr Charles Knight, Cate Carter, Dr Lyndal Thompson; and we want to talk about the first session on the Chief of Army Land Forces Seminar. That first session was *The Indo-Pacific in the Region of Global Connection* and we had speaking there, we had a great, rich selection of speakers. We had - it was opened by the Chief of Army - Rick Burr quickly followed by the Minister - the new Minister for Defence, the Honourable Christopher Pyne, and then we had the Commander of the Sri Lankan Army, General Mahesh Senanayake and followed by Michael Shoebridge from ASPI who we were all well aware of, and the Acting Deputy Secretary of the Strategic Policy and Intelligence, Mr Tom Hamilton. So, I guess what we want to talk about today guys, because we've just sat through all those great presentations, I wonder if there were any common themes?

1:14

CATE CARTER: I think there were some themes that came out with all the speakers and the first one was that there is a threat to a rules-based order. The phrase 'rules based order' was mentioned by all the speakers and I think particularly in the Chief of Army's speech the idea of the threat to the rules-based order is that the actions of the ADF and partners must be governed by moral, legal and ethical considerations, and I - that's a new kind of theme emerging that I haven't heard before, and so I think, I think, you know there was the idea of paradigms being thrown out. Another thing that came out was the importance of international cooperation and I think the recognition that one of the characteristics of the region is that there are many bilateral and multilateral organisations already, and that there is a tradition in the region of international partnerships and building relationships.

2:17

LEON YOUNG: Relationship building – yeah exactly. I saw them - all speakers - talk to both. In classic, and I guess, military templating, both the challenge for the Indo-Pacific, and then

what the response could be, and the challenge was, as you said Cate, characterised very much by both complexity of the region but also the challenges to the rules-based order. I wondered Lyndal, if you had any comments on, particularly the rules-based order part?

LYNDAL THOMPSON: I think one of the things that came up for me in the context of that is the - what were they calling it - the power competition, and how that is affecting rules-based order, because we're getting I guess, very powerful nations who are perhaps very much through being autocratic, moving away from the idea of rules-based power. So, there is a role then, to reign, I guess 'reign them in' if you like, through a democracy that has those I guess, moral ethical and rules-based approaches.

LEON YOUNG: Yeah, sorry, I'll go quickly to you Charles, but I know Tom Hamilton has specifically said that *the stability in the region is linked to the relationship between China and US* – and I think that, that really pulls together what a lot the other speakers had alluded to when they talked about the great nation or the great powers. Charles?

CHARLES KNIGHT: You mentioned democracy: I don't think that was a particularly strong message there. I think what I heard was messaging about values and the inference that they were they were an engagement tool, so our leaders have been talking about values in the Australian military for a long time because that's who we are. Now it's '*and it's also very useful*' and that was the kind of new message I heard coming through.

CATE CARTER: Yes, it was... it was quite confronting in a way that Michael Shoebridge said *two things we've got to deal with the challenges is one - identify the challenges you can deal with, and the second one was be honest about the challenges that you are going to be difficult or impossible*. And that, that seemed to be acknowledging that not everyone's playing by the same rule book, in fact some people haven't got a rule book at all, and so that we need to pick our battles.

LEON YOUNG: In fact, I really liked Michael's presentation, particularly, whilst a lot of it was not particularly new, he had a very good way of pulling together those eight significant trends that were really driving the complexity and the challenges in the Indo-Pacific, and then he lightly touched on the opportunities that are available to us. So, I think, you know, if anyone's interested in what those trends are, they really should listen to his speech, because that was

fantastic, to do that. But I wondered, if you guys don't mind, just to pull in the, I guess, the response part that the Chief of Army started up, in my opinion, is one of his opening quotes, was that *the Army is joint by design because that is where we need to be*. And I think when he said 'joint' whilst we often see it as 'joint services', I think it's far greater than that. I'm wondering if you guys had an opinion on that?

5:34

CATE CARTER: I think something I got out of the Chief of Army's message that I thought was remarkable was that he said we need to *maintain utility across the full spectrum of conflict* and he talked about humanitarian disaster relief and Defence Aid to the Civil Power. And I think that was interesting in his, you know, one of his first official big public presence since he's become the Chief of Army, that he needed to reiterate that because I think that's lost - the whole spectrum of conflict argument has been debated in terms of Army capability, and I think he brought that back in.

CHARLES KNIGHT: I'd sort of comment differently. I was having a quick chat with the Chief of Air Force before the event and he said to me - five years ago, if the chief of the Air Force had decided to come to the Army conference is, his staff would have said, 'why are you going, Sir?' and that was quite revealing and it says a lot about the change of atmosphere and tempo across Defence, as well as the reaching out by Army.

LEON YOUNG: Absolutely, and it goes with the Airpower conference earlier this year, where we saw a lot of cross-Service participation and speakers as well. I think, on that, 'joint by design' not only speaks to the Services but I think what I was alluding to, was brought out by the Honourable Christopher Pyne in his talk where he really talked about partnership and this is what you were talking about before, Cate, where it's about a lot of the response, and where we can deal with that complexity in those changes was about the partnerships. And I think, you know, Chris Pyne certainly started that conversation in this room and I heard it echoed a number of times across the presenters. I'm not sure if that's what you saw as well.

CATE CARTER: I thought Christopher Pyne was interesting in his response to one of the questions about the role of Defence industry, and he said that *industry can be used*, (in paraphrase), *that business was a vehicle for relationship building and growing* and so that Defence industry allows us a level of engagement with partners where military-to-military can

only do so much. So that was interesting too, that that once again, the whole of government approach about including industry, which is not necessarily government. So once again it came back to 'building bridges with whatever means possible'.

7:58

LEON YOUNG: Trust. So for me the one word out of this whole session was 'trust' and there's this collaboration, this relationship building...people-to-people relationship about exercises, industry, was all about, you know, increasing transparency, Tom Hamilton talked about messaging through the White Paper - all that came down to the only way we can combat these increased number of risks in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with great power competition increasing, and we heard, I think it may have been Michael, talk about there's great power competition which we really can't influence but we can maintain stability in these turbulent seas I guess, and through what they're doing. And in that case, it was about - it comes out in trust and all these activities build trust between those nations, and if you have the trust and you can then be open to new relationships and get across those intractable differences.

8:56

CATE CARTER: Yeah, and on that message of trust I also heard a message of acknowledging diversity and cultural understanding so that, you know, this has come a long way from us - Australia being 'Sheriff of the Pacific' and having a kind of colonial intervention approach which was perhaps 20 years ago, a practice rather than a policy, and I heard that not so much a unified region but perhaps a culturally diverse region, but maybe uniting against common themes, so that was interesting.

LEON YOUNG: For me, is that it's almost as if we started to grow up a little bit. We used to mimic the great powers in that we wanted to be the sheriff, and that's what we saw so that's what we did. But now we're seeing, well actually, in the region what's successful in our region is collaboration. It's about establishing relationships not about coming straight to the solution straight away, it's about going to all these different forums and Christopher Pyne certainly talked about the scale of utility and the usefulness of those forums, but they are all useful in building those relationships.

CATE CARTER: That's right. I don't think we took a lead nation approach here either.

CHARLES KNIGHT: Yeah, I mean I've been to quite a lot of these and I'm from the late 90s onwards and there was definitely an atmosphere of, you know, 'we are the technological leaders, we're the competence leaders in this - in this land forces space and you know, come and watch how we do it'. Gone completely! there is a...and he's talking about trust and about building relationships, the Minister and other people were saying we need to, we need to reach out and make the connections now. We don't know how those relationships will be used. Build them in an area, you never know when they'll be useful and in what way they'll be useful. It's a constant message.

LEON YOUNG: Absolutely! and it really reflects that there's an idea that's coming around now at the moment, about persistent engagement, and this is reflected in all those speeches, is that international engagement is seen as being one of the key levers that we have... that by continuously being engaged in our region we can - and that's the only way almost, that we can hope to influence the region.

11:01

LYNDAL YOUNG: The term that stood out for me was Australia as an 'activist' in the Army context, and I think it was also talking to that cultural element, and I think as part of one of the questions and answers session there was this idea of asking, waiting for other nations to ask and indicate to us what they needed, and that the other aspect to that is that we learn from, I guess, learning from others when we're assisting them and when we're listening to what they would like in terms of capacity building.

LEON YOUNG: I absolutely agree. So I think what we're seeing here is that, I guess, that the common thread through here was both about understanding of what we mean by 'Indo-Pacific' and the Commander of the Sri Lankan Army was very clear throughout his presentation making sure that we had an understanding of their - how they understood or interpreted the Indo-Pacific. And then Michael Shoebridge also brought out a fantastic map and he defined it using the trades. And then on top of that, we overlay the changes in the landscape which is creating all these challenges in the great power competition certainly came up quite regularly.

CHARLES KNIGHT: I think it's important to look at the tone that the Commander of Sri Lankan Army took because he is a player in one of the few recent unquestioned victories in counterinsurgency and they did it by playing a hard game. But that military or the leadership

that he represents have learned or they've taken that piece and there there's a marked shift in the messaging: 'Okay, put that behind us, but we need to engage, we need to reach out we need to recognise the links' - and some of his slides were emphasising ones we saw from other presenters - you know it's about regional or regional writ large in maritime trade, how does that influence? how do we operate? and his message again was relationship building. And so, you are, coming from a warrior leader, that really counts. We could expect it, you know, we're going to sort of expect that message from Minister Pyne but we're getting it from a very different quarter as well. And that's consistency and that's significant, I think.

13:29

CATE CARTER: It was. He said about this transition from what the people of Sri Lanka have seen the role of the military, to what their fundamental role should be, and he said *we are trying to broadcast to the people that the military is the best partner for peace and prosperity*, so they now have a new role. And I think that speaks to the concept of transformation which is part of the new Army slogan and what the Chief of Army was talking about too - an Army that was able to transform, and we had an example of that given to us.

LEON YOUNG: Yeah that's right. The military was the best partner in reconciliation but perhaps I misheard that, but I absolutely agree on both those points. And to hear it coming from, I guess, Sri Lanka as well as all the others, I think reinforces that point as one the key, I guess, responses that we have is being one of those partners. And I guess he also had another quote which I think being, you know, being in the Army, we all seem to enjoy is that *the peace of the sea depends on the stability, peace and prosperity of the land* and that's something we can influence. And that's where it came from.

So, unless there's any other major points, I think we can close off there and say it was a fantastic session. Looking forward to the next three sessions, you know, this one was particularly about the changes in the Indo-Pacific seen by the great power competition and the large social trend changes which are really being the main response is building trust through relationships and using the Army to really leverage that and also Defence industry. So, thank you and we'll see you next time.

15:21