

CALFS PODCAST – SUMMARY OF SESSION 2

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0:00

LEON YOUNG: Well g'day! and today we're looking at Session 2 for the Chief of Army's Land Forces Seminar and this session was on about *Land Power and Countering Violent Extremism* where we had Major General Adam Findlay start the proceedings followed by Lieutenant General Batista from the Philippine Army. Then after a short break we were - had the honour of having Katja Theodorakis from ANU speaking about us and the enemy and some really good perspectives on how we view ourselves and how we are influenced by cognitive biases, and we finished up with Duncan Lewis. And today with me I have Lyndal Thompson and Cate Carter and we're just going to quickly cover what we saw and what we heard over this session. Yeah, and I guess for me, one of the biggest things was the similarities to yesterday particularly with Adam Findlay's - with General Findlay's start where he talked about - made it very, very clear that relationships are the most important capability in counting extremism and he also backed it up with a second quote or finished his talk with that *trust was capability* and that really reinforces the message from yesterday - I'm not really sure how you saw that as well.

LYNDAL THOMPSON: Yeah, I picked up on the word 'trust' as well, because it's something that we discussed yesterday - that those relationships are all about trust, and that it's a long game, and I think that was reiterated today - is that it takes a long time to build the trust in order for us really to get, if you like, interoperability across nations, across agencies.

LEON YOUNG: Very much so.

CATE CARTER: Yeah, I think there was a need to answer the question, 'what can we do now to counter violent extremism?' and I think the messages that came through from all of the speakers was that there needs to be a short-term loop and a long-term loop, and the long term one is building relationships and not losing them and cultivating them generationally. And then the short term loop was looking at thinking creatively about different functions and functional

areas of land forces that can assist the other agencies in this - in these sort of domestic relationships in some of this counter insurgency and counter extremist relationships.

LEON YOUNG: Absolutely! In fact it was brought home by General Batista's message or when he was talking about his experiences in Marawi and particularly it was all about building the trust within the population and not only countering or eliminating the threat but also rebuilding that population in a supportive manner and you saw the messaging, not only through the campaign but also post campaign continuing as well. And Cate, you talked about the creative thing and it reminded me of one of them - I think one of the gems out of General Batista's talk, where he talked about his innovation loop and he said '*innovation was innovative C4 - to apply, to observe, to assess, then back to innovation again*' but C4 rather than a standard C4. I say that we often use here, he said that his innovation criteria rests on these four things: one was common sense, the second C was critical thinking, third was creativity and the last one was correct time, which I thought was a really nice gem out of there just to see how they were applying the innovation in a very tactical way but also gilded a lot of very positive results. But I'm more interested as well about Katja's talk. It felt really dense, but I think there's a lot in there I'm sure. Lyndall if you could...?

LYNDAL THOMPSON: Just quickly, actually going back to what you were just talking about; what struck me about, I guess, the C4 and the innovation cycle, is it actually shows great self-reflection for his Army because it's actually an action learning cycle that you use in education a lot, so it was actually pleasing to see that. And then I think Duncan talked about the need to bring our to bring collective intelligence to strategy, and I think that fits in well with that model of, I guess, active learning, and I think that's something that again then ties into not just using tactical response but using strategy, because that's where you get the strategic thinking coming in is through the use of intellect and reflective cycles.

4:39

LEON YOUNG: Yeah absolutely, I mean we're seeing a common thread across all of these, particularly with violent extremism, that *the problem becomes the narrative* - is that you can't - I think it was in - might have been in Katja's comments, where we're talking about 'you can't kill the idea'.

CATE CARTER: That's right. You can neutralise the Caliphate, but you can't neutralise the idea.

LEON YOUNG: That's right, and the narrative continues and therefore it's so important about messaging, so this really becomes the problem. And so whilst we recognised that the means to counter that is through information operations, what I really liked about General Batista's talk was identifying that they had to adapt, and this is how they were adapting to that, to that problem at hand.

CATE CARTER: And SOCAUST Adam Findlay also echoed that in his talk when he said *we have a constantly evolving threat so the need for us is to evolve* and I think that links in with the messages of transformation from yesterday's themes. And I was just going to say too that the other echo from yesterday was the repeating of the idea of a rules-based order and rule of law. So I think there were more grand ideas in this session (and we'll get into Katja's one in a moment where most of them were), but one of these grand ideas was the idea that all the dominance of that theme of we have a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, was kind of unseated by the introduction today of the idea *that the adversary is not playing to a rules-based order* and that we can't bring in 'like' with 'not like'. So, we can't defeat - we can't even respond to a lawless and anti-rules-based order with a rules-based order: it just doesn't fit. So, this is where we have to get into the idea of not profiling an adversary and having some more cultural understanding.

LEON YOUNG: Yeah, and that directly leads into Katja's point of view where we're looking at how we imagine the enemy has been very - almost polarised, and that we pit them against the rules-based order as you were talking about Cate, and that they're effectively, they're an anti-rules-based order, therefore they don't have rules. Well that's, as Katja pointed out, that is absolutely *not* the case and the messaging that certainly the Islamic extremism has embodied through the jihadism that she talked about, very much see themselves as being the ethical way - almost have the moral right to remove the world of the 'decadent West' who're actually corrupting the 'pure way', and so they already have their own vision of a rules-based order which is being counted or which the West is removing.

7:17

CATE CARTER: I thought that *polarised identity construction* was very interesting because it talks to the issue of, rather than understanding - there was the 'know thy enemy' theme that came out, and rather than understanding an adversary; projecting one's own views of that adversely construct onto one. But there was another interesting quote that she said, and I won't quote but paraphrase: that '*Occidentalism leads to dehumanisation of the enemy*' and yet at the same time she was advocating for a cultural understanding of the enemy. So there was immediately that ambiguity in the way that we appreciate the threat.

LEON YOUNG: Yeah that's right, I think we'll have to read her paper because there's a lot in her talk which wasn't immediately obvious when we're just listening at home as the audience. While we're trying to decipher some of the terms she was using before trying to contextualise them, but the idea that you talk about - identity dynamics - I think really struck home for me, and that it's not that we polarise our enemy into a single identity and not understanding that it's - it is dynamic by nature and therefore it will morph - it *will* change, and the narrative that we're fighting - the idea that we are fighting also changes how long the time is that report is not as solid.

LYNDAL THOMPSON: Something I thought that Katja was getting at, is that, well there were a couple of things, and one of them is that, when I was listening to it, there was very much the sense that we're actually both convinced of the same message of our moral high-ground but we're just using it differently. And I think part of what her talk referred to, was the idea of, I guess, emotional Islam and that in, I guess, the West - the broad term - we tend to rely on facts and figures and this is why we're doing it and those sorts of things. Whereas Islam is very much appealing to hearts, and you can see that through the use of the media that they're using which - poetry! I mean, we would never really think to use poetry as an information tool but because of that, there's that cultural aspect to it, that understanding a cultural aspect of the role of poetry and romanticism, which for us you know, almost stopped at William Blake and Wordsworth.

CATE CARTER: Katja put up an interesting source, that we will link to on our website, which was a book by Thomas Hegghammer: '[Jihadi Culture: the Art and Social Practice of Militant Islamists](#)', and I think that'll be a really useful resource for understanding some of this different ways of the ultimate battle space is over belief narratives and a way of viewing the world and

different ways of expression of the world too, and perhaps we come from a polarised way of expressing as well.

LEON YOUNG: That's right, but I do want to take issue with what you're saying Lyndal, about almost, that you know, you're almost saying that the Western point of view is that the hard logic and quite rational way of doing business, whereas the Islamic one is becoming a more emotional one. But I wonder if you're misreading, you know, we talk about consumerism we talk about, you know, the Western pop culture which is permeating and has permeated through most of these worlds and in fact, is not some of this extremism almost a reaction to that? and because they're saying - because their moral high ground is that they're saying that this Western influence is permeating and degrading and eroding their own value-based system and therefore this is a reaction to that. So, I'd actually say that, that they're seeing our 'being Western' it is almost an emotional attack on their society.

LYNDAL YOUNG: That not that not being my field of expertise... it is, I mean, is emotion [a] way of life necessarily? I guess in saying that it's an emotional response, you can say it's an emotional response to an emotional attack, but one interesting point I think, I think it was Katja made, is that there is - there can be this anti-American consumerism but that's not necessarily leading to the violent extremism, so I think that also talks to that point about...

11:30

CATE CARTER: And a good link to that with the anti-Americanism was *does anti-Americanism and anti-Israeli equal anti-West?* was the lovely mirror point from General Batista's presentation and the logo of the joint force which represented both Christian and Islamic symbols, and the idea there was this was a bit of an information campaign to the Philippine own force and people, that this was not a fight against Islam.

LYNDAL THOMPSON: That was very clever I think, and very necessary given the ethnic diversity in the region and the religious diversity and the, what struck me was the very strategic I guess, action of maintaining cultural and religious artefacts - deliberately not targeting them with that strategy of acknowledging heritage as well as acknowledging diversity of religion and ethnicity.

LEON YOUNG: Absolutely, and I think it comes back down to the title of this session. I mean *Land Power and Countering Violent Extremism* is now we need understanding, I guess, with a lot of views on how this is occurring, and you know, how does land forces - what place do they play? and I think Duncan Lewis was quite clear on that - at the moment it's been, you know, you're not the lead, but you absolutely provide - and are pivotal in being able to provide - a lot of support - both at the hard edge, but also in the intelligence and the logistic side of it as well.

CATE CARTER: Yeah, that was interesting and I think, I think those supporting functions of Army are able to support similar functions in the other agencies; but I think, the message that's come through here, and it's kind of assumed away, is that land forces have access to people at all levels in Indo-Pacific countries to make relationships. So, you know you might sort of think, oh yeah - you know, make relationships and maintain them, and that's not at the elite level: that's at every level. And, and Australian land forces, as opposed to the Australian public, let's say, have great access and opportunity to be able to do that, and I think he was saying, '*do it now, do it often, everyone do it*' because that's the foundation of what comes afterwards.

13:50

LEON YOUNG: It's certainly becoming the common trend now because the two sessions is it is to build, you know, one of the most useful paths for certainly pre-fight for Army is to build those relationships and, and leverage it, because I think as General Findlay quite aptly said, or quoted, you, '*you just can't surge trust*' which means you can't just buy it off the street: you have to actually build that over a long period of time. And that's where the Army can and can really, or land forces can certainly contribute. But also as Duncan Lewis quite rightly pointed out, you've got to train and, you know, train for the most challenging, so you can then play down a level if you need to, and provide those niche capabilities.

LYNDAL THOMPSON: Two terms that really stood out to me is the idea of 'soft cooperation' which and which often in, I guess, a department like the Department of Education we talk about soft power because education is often used in free-trade agreements or memoranda of understanding as a bit of a leverage tool where the parties can actually give and take something, so the idea of that soft cooperation with the other term I heard of the 'human dimensions of war' and where the Army can contribute and as a social scientist, the human dimension is very much a focus of how we're looking at ideas such as, such as innovation and looking at what is the human dimension of this? not the technical capacity or the, the processes, but the human

dimension; so that soft power - that soft - those soft tools that are starting to come through as, I guess, a rhetoric-in-action in, in this session.

LEON YOUNG: Yeah, that's fantastic. Aah...

15:45

CATE CARTER: That's right – a necessity. One more thing that I thought was interesting was coming out now - I like to look for contradictions in ideas - and there was certainly one that, that Duncan Lewis talked about when he talked about the huge information domain – the information dominance - there was a contradiction between 'awareness' and 'secrecy', so the idea is that people have the facility to receive huge amounts of information constantly, so then there's a lot more awareness - there's a vehicle there for extremist ideas to be shared...

LEON YOUNG: Accelerated anxiety.

CATE CARTER: Everyone gets accelerated anxiety through it, but then there's secrecy, so he was talking about encryption and that means that on one hand, ideas can be disseminated over a great distance and to a great number of people; but at the same time they can be targeted by protecting them from certain people and certain agencies through encryption. So, I just think that's an interesting contradictory idea about how messages of extremism spread.

LEON YOUNG: Absolutely! and looking forward to hopefully seeing these some of these messages reinforced or even contradicted in the next couple of sessions. Note that we have *Generating Land Power through Partnering* is coming up next with the, with the pleasure of Major General Bilton; the PNGDF CDF, General Toropo; the Deputy Secretary Caroline Miller and Glen Dunbier from the New Zealand Police as well is talking. Looking forward to it! and thank you for your comments.