

THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIA'S AMERICAN ALLIANCE

James R. Clapper in conversation with Kim Beazley

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Kim Beazley:

Well, thank you very much, Brian Schmidt. That was an introduction which was extremely useful, because it saves me putting out a high level of context before I ask Director Clapper my first question. Thanks for coming out tonight and thanks to the University for providing this venue. I've spent a few happy hours watching some very happy people in this hall. I think we will a little more reflective than is usually the case at graduation ceremonies and the like, but it's a privilege for me to be here with James Clapper.

I spent six years in the Embassy in Washington and I have to say there were people that you came to appreciate very much when you're an Ambassador. I guess there was nobody in the US I appreciated more than James Clapper. We always put down various arguments as to why the alliance we have the United States is in our national interests and the starting point is almost invariably the fact that it gives us a high level of vision of what is happening around the globe, both in terms of sites and also in terms of audibility, and that gives us a level of confidence that we can promptly plan for our security and diplomacy in this region and more globally. Our ability to collaborate with the American intelligence community is critical, and James Clapper led it.

We're going to talk tonight, as the Vice-Chancellor said, about a whole array of issues that arise in contemporary terms. We'll be talking about the current administration, folk in the administration, where that's leading us in terms of ongoing crises that are in our area, but I thought I'd start by asking the Director: how does the United States see Australia? When you look at an ally here, what is there of value to you?

James Clapper:

Well, it's hard to overstate the importance of Australia to the United States and, I guess, before I get into that too much, I ought to just address briefly why does Australia, the United States or any nation enter into an alliance. Essentially, it's because it is in the mutual best interest of the respective parties to that alliance and so, in our case — and, by that, I mean the United States and Australia, it is in our mutual best interest to have that alliance.

Now, my point of view, obviously, has been intelligence. I first came to Australia in 1984 and any number of intelligence incumbencies since then have grown to appreciate the important position that Australia occupies in the larger scheme of intelligence things. I cannot go on into a lot of detail in a setting like this, but I've also seen it and have, I'd like to think, helped expand the breadth and depth of that relationship. It is today flourishing. That's just one aspect, one pillar of that alliance.

Obviously, the military relationship, the diplomatic relationship and the economic relationship, all of which, I think, are among the pillars that make this arrangement and this alliance so important to us. It certainly doesn't hurt at the same time that we share, I think, values and heritage together that draws us ever closer, and there is a long association in the military context between our two countries.

When I departed my position as DNI, Prime Minister Turnbull gave me a memento. I received a lot, but none meant more to me than the memento that the Prime Minister gave me, of a statuette replicating the iconic picture of an Australian soldier carrying over his shoulder a wounded American soldier in New Caledonia, in 1942. It's a great symbol of our alliance. Again, I will say from an intelligence perspective, we derive mutual benefit from that. Australia is a huge contributor to a global perspective, not just here, regionally, but thanks to our joint activities together, Australia is a major player in the global context in that intelligence relationship.

Kim Beazley:

Thanks very much. I just wanted to set that in context, so that folk have a bit of an understanding about how you were situated with regard to us and what was important to you in your interest in being engaged, as well as our interest in being engaged with you. I think what's on the mind of just about everybody here is a bit more contemporary than the history that underpins that, and that is responding to the impact on regional relations, on the bilateral relationship, on American politics of the election to President Donald Trump.

He has come as, shall we say, a surprise package in many features, both of his presentation and his personality. I just wondered if you could give us a bit of an idea — we'll talk a bit more than just one question on this and I'm sure others will have questions, too — about the impact you see him having on what you might call the traditional national security community of the United States. How is he perceived by and related to what we've come to respect enormously of the quality of the Intelligence Community, the national security community more broadly defined than the Pentagon and the like? You've had things to say about that publicly and I've wondered if you'd care to discuss them here.

James Clapper:

Well, clearly President Trump is, shall I say, unconventional. None of our Presidents, certainly in my experience, is quite like he is. He comes to the position rather unfamiliar with the government and how it works and what at least the classical roles of presidents have been. Certainly, I think it's the first time he was ever exposed to any classified information or what the Intelligence Community was doing. Once he became the nominee and as is customary, we started to brief both of the principal nominees before the election. Certainly, after he became the President-elect, those briefings and indoctrinations became more intensive.

He, of course, was very sceptical about the Intelligence Community assessment that we produced and published on January 6th, recounting the extensive and egregious Russian interference in our political process. I think he took great exception to it, principally because he was very sensitive about anything or anyone that would question the legitimacy of his election or the veracity of it, and so that assessment represented a challenge, I guess, to him. It resulted in his characterizing the Intelligence Community as Nazis, which none of us appreciated very much.

[laughter]

I had occasion to call him about it and he, amazingly, took my call. I tried to appeal to his higher instincts about the national asset he was inheriting in the US Intelligence Community. I may have rendered a great service by departing. He since replaced two other principles, John Brennan, Director of CIA and myself and in, I think, a very regrettable manner replaced a distinguished public servant, James Comey. We were three of the four people that briefed him at Trump Tower on the 6th of January about that report.

That's just up-close and personal my own encounters with him, which I have to say weren't really positive. I think, as was indicated in the introduction, I've worked for every President and toiled in the trenches of intelligence for every President since, and including, John F. Kennedy. I've been a political appointee in both the Republican and the Democratic administrations. I've spent 34 years in the military, so my natural instincts are loyalty for the President, particularly in his capacity as Commander Chief, and this is the first time I've ever had an occasion to question that.

I think that my impression here, after being here for a week, is that perhaps there's too much preoccupation with some of the things he says, particularly with respect to the impact on the alliance and the pillars of that alliance, which as I indicated, I think are much more transcendent, much more prominent than the transitory occupant of the White House and I think people get overwrought about that.

I will say, in fairness to President Trump, that I had the honour and privilege of attending the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral Sea in New York City and President Trump was there with Prime Minister Turnbull. It struck me that he was clearly on a mission to mend fences. He gave an excellent speech. This was a teleprompter taped speech — I much prefer the teleprompter President Trump than the tweeting President Trump.

[laughter]

I think he said and did all the right things and also acknowledged the importance of the alliance but, in the end, Australia must do what it needs to do in its best national interest, and I trust and hope that Australia will see that there is still tremendous value in that relationship, because of these pillars, whether it's military, intelligence, economic, or diplomatic, or whatever. Our two countries, in my view, are just inextricably bound. I think those deep, long-lasting, pervasive relationships will be sustained and will not be all that affected by so many other instances that come out of the White House.

Kim Beazley:

It's a point that, I think, is very worthwhile to make. You can look at the alliance in a couple of layers. There is a layer now, really since the 1960s more than the 1950s or even 1940s, of intense military engagement, in terms of supply of equipment, quality equipment, embedded personnel, intelligence area we've already discussed, now investment. I mean the last time we have figures it's about \$860 billion American

investment in Australia in all the areas of economy, increasing in that year, 2015, by \$80 billion, which is more than the total stock of Chinese investment, for example, at \$75 billion. But even more important now for us is Australian investment in the US, which now stands at \$600 billion and the earnings of Australian companies in the United States are four times the value of Australian exports to the United States. I mean, this is a totally different relationship now from what it was 20 or 30 years ago. That's that level.

The other level, the level of officialdom, the exchange that takes place on a day-to-day basis between a president and a prime minister, while not the basis of the alliances, it's often what actually gets the attention of the public more than the underlying reality. I was just thinking, you did mention it, we are not really familiar here because it's not very much within our gaze, the character of the relationship with Russia, but that is, of course, the centre of the current investigations and concerns that are afflicting Congress and the broader American public. What impact, do you think — and it's hard to make a judgment about this, but from your seat-of-the-pants assessment, what impact do you think that the various activities identified as of Russian origin had on the outcome of the election?

James Clapper:

Well, that's a key question. We, the Intelligence Community, could not make a call on that. We don't have the authority, the capability, the expertise to assess what was the impact on the electorate of the Russian machinations. It's my belief that it had to have had impact when you consider the magnitude of what they did. Russians have a long track record of interfering in elections, theirs and other people's, and we have documentation on Russian attempts to influence our elections going back to the 1960s, but never ever had we ever seen anything like this that was as aggressive and multidimensional as this one was.

In addition to the infamous hacking of the Democratic National Committee, there were an intensive campaign to promulgate fake news by the Russians, which many other news outlets in the United States, either wittingly or unwittingly, picked up and thus amplified, social media trolls — those who were paid to implant false social media items, many of which went viral, a very intensive and sophisticated and slick propaganda campaign by RT, the Russian television network, which is predominantly funded by the Russian Government, and there is a close connection between the Chief Executive of the RT network and President Putin. This was a very aggressive campaign, but we couldn't actually say empirically what effect it had on

the election itself. Intuitively, it had to have an effect. The only thing we said in our assessment was that we saw no evidence of messing with the voter tally. We didn't see any evidence of that.

I think the other point is that, of course, Russians must be very pleased, must be very gratified with the results — their first objective was to sow discord, disruption, doubt in our political system and they certainly succeeded in doing that well.

Secondarily, there was a very strong animus — personal animus — against Hilary Clinton by Putin himself. In fact, he had great animus towards both Clintons: former President Clinton and former Secretary Clinton. In her case, held her responsible for what he felt was an attempted caller revolution in 2011 to bring about regime change, although it was given really to him, so a very strong animus towards the Clintons.

Then, as the campaign wore on and where it appeared that there might be a chance for then candidate Trump to become President-elect Trump, he started getting aboard. Of course, their preference would be for someone like him, who was a businessman, somebody they thought they could negotiate with and someone who would not be pushing hard on human rights, for example. Even in the later stages of the campaign, where the polls indicated that Secretary Clinton was going to win, their objectives then turned to how to undermine a potential Clinton presidency, so they were kind of innovative, and creative, and agile as the campaign wore on, and they just looked for opportunities to take advantage of.

As the former Director Comey indicated in his hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee, they will be back, they're going to go on the heels of their success here, they are emboldened to be even more aggressive, and so I think we can look forward to attempted interference in our election process as a standard feature of Russian behaviour.

Kim Beazley:

Carrying the Russian point a bit further, one of the interesting comments I saw assigned to Secretary Tillerson when he was asked at the recent AUSMIN meeting, he was said to have remarked to Australian officials that, really, the President was continually suggesting to him that he hoped he would find ways of building a better relationship with Russia as a primary objective. It's interesting. I mean, not a lot of Australians realise that the Russian economy is the same size as the Australian economy. Ours is going up and theirs is going down. With that and with the

population that has to be supported by it, they've got, really, quite an extraordinary outreach.

Some of it is legacy, of course, from a different era. The Soviet Block used to be about seven percent of global GDP. I think Russia is a bit under two percent of GDP now — the Block, of course, was a bigger entity — but looking at the sort of threat that they might pose, beyond just the politically-interfering, what do you see as the main developments in their capability? Can they sustain that level of potency, if you like, on global strategic issues? You did mention a few items that they focused on — perhaps you might just elaborate a little on that.

James Clapper:

Well, for one, of course the Russians have shown that they can leverage a particular capability of theirs that goes back to the Soviet era. My own view is, if you're sitting in Putin's chair, looking out long-term, Russia's prospects aren't all that great, starting with the demographics. Its population is actually shrinking over time and, of course, that has impact on the number of military age males that are available. They have challenges with respect to life expectancy, higher infant mortality rate and an AIDS epidemic, high rates of alcoholism and, importantly, an economy that is disproportionately dependent on one commodity, which is oil. As the price of oil fluctuates, that has direct impact on their economy and when they program a budget, say \$50 a barrel of oil, and it's only \$35, it has a huge impact on the long-term economy.

They have tremendous infrastructure challenges. It would be very difficult for the Russians to wage a two-front war, say in the Far East and Europe, because of their underdeveloped infrastructure. Nevertheless, the Russians have embarked on a very aggressive and, for my money, disturbing modernisation of their strategic nuclear weapons, notably a new generation of land-mobile, intercontinental ballistic missiles and a new generation of submarines, carrying sea-launch ballistic missiles, long range. By the way, just for good measure, they're also in active violation of the INF Treaty.

I heard kind of the same sort of expression of interest on the part of President-elect Trump, about wouldn't it be great if we could have a better relationship with Russia. Yeah, I suppose it would, but the Russians are not interested, in my view, in a positive relationship with the West and certainly not with the United States. They are a global competitor. They want to do as much as they can to undermine our

system, which our leadership is opposed to, they see us as a threat to them, so the Russians are not our friends and, if we can find areas of agreement, where our interests can verge, great, but, as Ronald Reagan once said, "trust, but verify."

Kim Beazley:

I'd like to bring things a little bit closer to home, not much closer to home, because I want to get your views on the Korean Peninsula and, perhaps, settlement of the issues of the nuclear weapons capability of North Korea. It does seem that one issue that's exercised, really, quite a high level of focus on the part the new President. It was said to me that Barack Obama said this is going to be a main problem and that Trump actually does accept intelligence briefings on it and tries to have a conversation about it. He drew a red line.

The red line, which I always think is a very dangerous thing to draw politically, internationally. Unless you actually really intend to follow through by a cross on the red line, you're going to punch someone's head off, so it's an active red line, not just a notional red line. Therefore, one ought to be careful about using red lines, however, the red line that he established was on the capability, which at the moment North Korea does not have, and that is in ICBM, so he said, "No ICBM."

It does seem to me that, if this is going to be incapable of being resolved by Chinese diplomacy, which I strongly suspect it won't be, that maybe there is something there for a freeze or halt to advancing that particular capability in return for other things. I'm just wondering what your perspective on Korea was. Are we getting it right? Should we be somewhere else?

James Clapper:

Well, I do have a somewhat, I guess, contrary and unconventional view on what to do about North Korea. My interest there began when I served there in the mid-1980s as the Director of Intelligence for US Forces in Korea and I've sort of followed developments on the Peninsula ever since. As a consequence, one of my items on my bucket list was some day to visit North Korea. I got to do that in November 2014 and, in a course of retrieving two of our citizens who were at the time imprisoned under hard labour conditions.

I remember, parenthetically, one of the nicest things that *New York Times* ever said about me was rhetorically asking, "Why on earth would you send a DNI, the Head Spy of the United States, on a delicate diplomatic mission like this to North Korea,

especially this DNI?" The *New York Times*' diagnosis for that was, "Well, he's gruff, blunt, a relic of the Cold War, ideal for North Korea."

[laughter]

I've always appreciated that.

[laughter]

Anyway, when I went and engaged with some — I did not meet with Kim Jong-un, but we engaged with some North Korean elite leaders, I was blown away with the degree of paranoia and the siege mentality that prevails in Pyongyang and, as they look out, all they see are enemies. And so, my first authorised talking point that I was given was that "You must denuclearise, before we can have dialogue with you." Well, that's a non-starter.

The North Koreans are not going to give up their nuclear weapons. By the way, neither they, nor we, know whether those weapons will work, but it doesn't matter, because they have created what they want, which is the deterrent and respect which they crave — international recognition as a nuclear power. Point one is they are not going to give up their nuclear weapons. They went to school on Gaddafi. He gave up his weapons of mass destructions and things didn't turn up so well for him, and they took that on.

Secondly, the Chinese are — and this is based on a dialogue I've had with them — probably as frustrated with the North Koreans as everyone else is. They don't like the missiles, the missile tests, they don't like the underground nuclear tests. They don't like all the sabre rattling and all that, but what Chinese dislike even more is the notion of losing their buffer state, so they will put pressure on, my belief is, they will put pressure on the North Koreans to a point, but not so much that they would cause the regime to collapse, because what they oppose even more would be a unified Peninsula, obviously under the control of Seoul, and then they have that on their border along the Yellow River, backed by the United States is a complete anathema of the Chinese. They will pressure, they will leverage, but only to a point.

The third is my personal opinion that the United States really doesn't have any viable military options. If we were to pre-emptively attack Yongbyon Nuclear Research facility, for example, or one of the KN-08 sites, without any deliberation on the North Koreans' part, reflexively they would turn loose all their artillery, lined up along the DMZ, against Seoul, a metropolitan area of about 25 million people, which

has a lot of Americans there, too, I'd like to remind folks. They would, as they've threatened on more than one occasion, transform Seoul into a sea of fire.

My view — and this is clearly not company policy, I can assure you — is that, given all these facts, the US, along with others, would have to gain the cooperation support of our Republic of Korea allies. I think we should consider establishing an interest section in Pyongyang, not unlike the interest section we had in Havana, Cuba, in representation of another government we didn't recognise, but at least it afforded a presence and a conduit for communication. There's, I think, great advantage to this. One would be just the physical presence there, which would pay dividends from intelligence perspective — I won't go into detail there, but maybe even more importantly as a conduit for information — information from the outside world, which the North Korean regime fears.

That would open up some dialogue. While we're doing that, we should sustain as much pressure as we can, particularly financial. The North Koreans go to great lengths to finance their activities illicitly through fund companies and the like. They have very complex financial mechanisms to generate revenue. We ought to continue to work on that, to try to pressure them, but I think further isolating the North Koreans, demonising them even more, threatening major conflict or sending in an armada some place, all that sort of thing does is heighten that paranoia and that siege mentality.

Kim Beazley:

I think the audience may appreciate, but you've just heard a statement and that is not the direction necessarily the policy's been pursued but, nevertheless, it's an interesting perspective.

James Clapper:

That's what's so great about being out of the government.

[laughter]

Kim Beazley:

That's a sort of product of our valuable intense study you make of a country or a system when you are a long serving intelligence officer. Now, I'm being given a signal that the time has come for us to receive questions from the audience and I understand that the Vice Chancellor has got a bunch of them. Keep them flowing in

and we started a bit late, so we'll probably finish a bit late and I'll be very happy to take the questions that you've got, Vice Chancellor.

Professor Brian Schmidt:

Great, thank you very much. Thank you everyone for your questions. Obviously, we're not going to be able to get to all of them, but we have some very interesting ones.

The first question is: Australia's intelligence community has grown substantially over the last decade, to meet the new challenges of the 21st century. Do you think there are any aspects of the American intelligence system that Australia would benefit from, for example, a Director of National Intelligence or a Homeland Department? Likewise, could the US system reproduce any strengths of the Australian model, such as the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security?

James Clapper:

Well, I have to do the dutiful statement about my reluctance to inject myself in Australian internal issues, but since you asked.

[laughter]

I did have some dialogue with Steve Merchant, an old colleague and friend, and Michael Estrange, who have conducted the Intelligence Review, which I think is in the final throws of preparation. Obviously, that type of a conversation with me is "Is there an application here for a DNI-like arrangement for Australia?" I said, "Oh, that's a possibility."

One other point I should make before I finish that discourse is that the only reason we have a DNI, the position I occupied for six and a half years, is because of a very traumatic thing for the United States, which was the 9/11 attacks. Were it not for an external stimulus like that, no one in the Intelligence Community, most of all our CIA, would have ever voted for "let's have a DNI". The major changes like that in our system have been occasioned by some traumatic event, where there was a perception of failure.

There hasn't been that situation here, in Australia. You have, in my humble view, a very, very capable intelligence establishment and Australian citizens should take great pride in the confidence and professionalism of the Australian Intelligence

Community, which, as I indicated, your punch is way, way above its weight, in terms of impact with us and particularly in the Five Eyes alliance.

I do think there is merit in having a body or somebody who can look at intelligence as an enterprise and decide on a systematic, routine basis where to make investments and where to make divestments. I think that is one of the strengths in our system. The DNI, who can look at the entirety of the enterprise and try to decide on an objective basis where must we reinvest, where might we take risk. That enterprise view, I think, does have merit.

Another area that is kind of mundane, not very sexy, is IT, which is the nervous system for an intelligence enterprise. Can there be consistencies and efficiencies there? We are moving towards that in our system and it would not have happened without the presence of the DNI. In our system, at least, there does need to be a champion for integration, collaboration, coordination and it has to be on a day-to-day basis and on a systematic basis. To the extent that any of those attributes would be appealing, then in the end Australia has to make its own decisions and not necessarily emulate what the United States have done.

Kim Beazley:

Thank you.

Professor Schmidt:

Alright, the next question I think both of you could take a stab at. What do you think happens after the Trump Presidency? Will America continue its 'America First', isolationist approach or will there be a return to a globally re-engaged America?

James Clapper:

What do you think, Kim?

[laughter]

Kim Beazley:

Well, firstly, a good question. Isolationist is not the right word. Unilateralist is the right word. Trump is not an isolationist, but he is displaying tendencies of a unilateralist, that is heavily focused on the idea that there is an American interest that is actually distinguishable from that of a broader community, broader Western

community or broader global community, and that American national interest will be pursued in the first instance.

I do fear that the advent of the Trump Administration has taken off the table a number of aspects of American foreign policy, which, though often mocked in arguments of those who find elements of the policy objectionable, a lot of criticism and a suggestion of hypocrisy, but nevertheless — and, I must say, a set of values which as a defence minister would consider himself a realist often found uncomfortable in exercising it and therefore not very appreciative of it myself, but there it was and it has been the case really since World War II.

The United States has had injected into the global political system a set of concepts and values which actually are important for basic decencies in a system as a whole and in individual countries. The Americans do elevate human rights issues. The Americans do elevate liberal democracies. The Americans have instigated a rules-based order in relation to trade, in relation to global economic exchange. There is a sense for the United States that there is a set of values that they pursue, which while they may be shared in the United States go more broadly than the US. Having those sentiments, it undoubtedly underpins the way in which Americans saw their responsibilities to other people, including ourselves.

The Americans used to cite to say that they thought Australians are rather like them. I always used to say we are nothing like you. You are idealists and you are optimistic. We are pragmatic pessimists.

That is why we follow you in many ways out of idle curiosity, as to where all this is going to actually take us.

[laughter]

The problem with this administration, it's taken, as I said earlier in the introductory remarks, to it having put up that paradigm that I just did, there's a multiplicity of political forces and a multiplicity of countries, which would deny that any reasonable assessment of those standards were being properly met by the United States or anyone else. People are full of Sigmund Freud when they to look at things that the United States impacts on.

Nevertheless, there was basic decency out there and the thing that worries me about the current administration is that it's essentially taken that out of the equation and has moved to an essentially mechanistic exchange-based process of bilateral and

multilateral relationships. What's engaged in here is not a higher principle, but an exchange of interests. I think that it will be possible for the United States to move back from that, but it's going to be hard, because other people are moving to fill the gap and introduce into international relationships other principles that don't necessarily relate to that. Having abandoned it for a few years and then getting back to it is not going to be that easy for the US when that occurs.

James Clapper:

I think it is a key question and it's somewhat of being imponderable as to what's going to happen in our political system. It's all that you can just watch the daily drama. You cannot make the stuff up. There's always some new wrinkle every day, so it's hard to say.

I do think, though, that the imperative of globalisation, which is already upon us, is going to be very difficult to reverse. Sometimes the rhetoric I hear from the administration is as though it could be. Bearing in mind, of course, that the President is playing to his base, which is into this notion of 'America First' and we cannot be bothered with the rest of the world because we have all these issues at home and we've got to bring back coal or some other absurd proposition, I just think the imperatives of globalisation and the pressure of globalisation cannot be reversed.

I think that, frankly, the President is encountering as he actually engages with countries is that the difficulty of extracting the United States, isolating the United States, is almost can't be done. I do think there's a valid concern that, and I agree with Kim here, is this sort of one-off transactional approach to form relations, how long that is sustained and how much permanent damage that could cause what has been the US's traditional role since World War II. There are those in the country, to include many Republicans I have encountered, who believe, maybe optimistically, that what we're going through now will serve as a cathartic. Then, once we get past it, we've had very difficult interludes in our history before and then we came together.

Probably the most dramatic example was our Civil War, which was a terrible time for the country, tore us under and then, eventually, reunited and it was probably stronger for it. Whether we'll go through some epic like that in this case, I think remains to be seen. I do take great stock in what Kim says, who probably understands the United States better than a lot of Americans, and so that's why I wanted to hear what he had to say first.

[laughter]

Professor Schmidt:

China has not been a fleet power since the Emperor dismantled China's fleets in 1433, but does now buy a second-hand aircraft carrier from Ukraine and will have its first home-built carrier operational by 2020, with two more to follow. Given the millions China has spent on dock facilities in Darwin, Fiji and elsewhere, is China's growing ability to project force into the Pacific and the Indian Oceans a 'new normal' and what does it mean for Australia, especially if the United States becomes more isolationist?

James Clapper:

Well, I'm glad you're going to buy some new submarines.

[laughter]

I think what China is doing really shouldn't be viewed necessarily with panic. They are a power, a major power in the world, and certainly they're a maritime nation and it's not unreasonable that they would want to project maritime power. I have a lot more hope in a beneficial, positive, mutually positive relationship with the Chinese than I am with Russians and if their military abilities can be channelled the right way, they could be force for good. I do think it underlines the importance of the United States continuing to be a maritime presence in the Pacific and we certainly would look to Australia to be there with us, as you always have been.

Professor Schmidt:

Alright, I think this will be our last question. You talked a fair bit today about interference in the US election. We didn't talk about what lessons Australia can take from the US experience about foreign interference in our democratic processes, especially in this new, digital age that we're in.

James Clapper:

Well, I think one of the most important things, we in the US Intelligence Community, could do and did do – this is why we wanted to put out an unclassified version of our Intelligence Community assessment. In fact, President Obama directed us to do that, when he tasked us the first week of December to put everything together we possibly could at whatever classification levels we needed,

but also to share with the next administration and with the Congress and, to the extent that we possibly could, with the public.

Point one is education. Our electorate, our public needs to understand what fake news is and it needs to understand what the Russians did to interfere in our system. There are obvious lessons about security on our entire voting apparatus, if you will. It's what we call critical infrastructure, certainly from a cyber perspective securing voter registration rules and voting machines against cyber assault. To me, the two lessons I guess are public education and recognition.

The other thing is — again, this not company policy, but personal perspective — it's my belief that at least in the United States we need an organisation that we used to have and did away with, called the United States Information Agency. We need an organisation like that on steroids, to do counter-messaging — that should not be an activity of the Intelligence Community; it should be separate, to convey the counter-message both against Russia or anybody else who interferes in our system or as a counter-ISIS messaging organisation. That needs to be a fairly robust organisation that has the resources to do this messaging, both foreign and domestic.

Professor Schmidt:

Well, thank you very much. I am now going to call Professor Rory Medcalf, the Head of our National Security College. Rory has been the host of Jim Clapper on his visit and will continue to be here for the next couple of weeks.

Professor Medcalf:

Thanks very much. Thank you, Vice Chancellor. It's been a real pleasure to be here this evening. I think we all came along out of a bit more than idle curiosity, although I think, Kim, that was certainly the line that we'll ponder as we go forward. Look, I think we've been treated and privileged to a really important conversation here tonight.

We've heard about the alliance between Australia and the United States, the enduring pillars of that, and the question of really how strong are those pillars and how can they endure beyond the transient occupant of the White House, as we've heard. We've heard about, I guess, Trump and after. We've taken a tour via Russia and North Korea, to think about global and regional security threats, and challenges and risks and issues. We haven't heard so much about terrorism. We haven't heard so much about some of the other issues that I know that on James Clapper's visit

here he's very interested in speaking about, as well — issues like climate change. We haven't heard a lot about China, but that's had a lot of attention in the Australian policy discourse lately.

The purpose of an event like tonight, I think is a mission of ANU, in addition to research excellence, in addition to teaching, it's about having an impact on the national policy debate, and the role of the National Security College is very much in that space. It's been a real privilege here, to listen to this evening's exchange and to host and to welcome Jim Clapper to ANU and to the National Security College and, of course, to work with Kim Beazley on these issues. I'd like you all now to join me in thanking our speakers.

[applause]