



ACFID Submission Defence White Paper 1 October 2008

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) represents Australia's overseas aid and development sector. Its member agencies implement the bulk of Australia's substantial non-government humanitarian and emergency responses. Their primary source of funding is the Australian public. ACFID members operate in 140 developing countries. Unlike the ADF and AFP, they typically have been present alongside local partners in these countries for decades and will continue their humanitarian and development work there over some decades to come. This provides them with a valuable and distinctive set of relationships and knowledge that has largely not been taken into account by Australian security policy makers.

ACFID welcomes the White Paper as a critical opportunity to assess the emerging global and regional security landscape and Australia's role in responding to this. The White Paper could assist the Government to shift from a security policy framework, which is narrow by comparison with most North American and European counterparts, to a more comprehensive and nuanced one. Such a modernised policy framework would draw more substantially on expertise from across those federal agencies which have hitherto not had a significant role in influencing defence policy settings. It could create the basis for a smart whole-of-nation approach. That would enable the Government to benefit from the ideas and expertise of relevant actors from outside Government.

ACFID commends the Prime Minister, Minister for Defence and other Ministers for acknowledging that, while the world order has changed significantly, Australia's approach to security has not.¹

It is, therefore, timely to rectify particular weaknesses in Australia's security policy framework.

Wars are no longer mainly traditional, inter-state conflicts. War and conflict have become far more complex. As a result, Australian security policy planning needs to develop a modern, multi-dimensional response to conflict prevention, stabilisation and conflict resolution and the links between these and poverty eradication. This would enable the Government to develop a holistic approach to security policy.

One consequence of the current policy framework relates to ADF operational decisions about its civilian activities in conflict zones. In recent years, field commanders have been given authority to implement a range of new activities which have the effect of blurring humanitarian space. Such activities could include building societies by assisting with the erection of community buildings, providing food and health services. These programs are intended to win the 'hearts and minds' of local citizens. However, they also have direct consequences in blurring community

¹ ACFID refers to, among other statements, remarks made by the Prime Minister in his speech to the RSL on 9 September 2008, by the Minister for Defence in his speech launching the White Paper, 22 February 2008 and in his address to ASPI on 18 March 2008 and also by the Attorney-General in his speech to the Security in Government Conference on 16 September 2008.

perceptions about the separation between the roles of foreign military forces and humanitarian workers.

It is crucial to get the balance right between the role of the military and that of the humanitarian relief agencies in the highly politicised and contested environments of the fragile states and conflict zones we operate in together.

This issue has been a feature of OECD ministerial level dialogue about Security Sector Reform since the mid-1990s. It has yet to be reflected in Australian policy. The Australian Government needs to manage its risk more effectively on crucial humanitarian space issues. Interaction, ACFID's counterpart agency in the USA, reported 33 deaths of member agency workers in 2007. Many of these arose from the unintended blurring of humanitarian space.

ACFID recommends inclusion of the concept of 'human security' into the emerging security strategy. Such a move will greatly enhance efforts changing the current Government security doctrine. Human security complements state security, enhances human rights and strengthens human development. Japan and Canada have already comprehensively integrated it into their foreign policy agendas.

ACFID respects the interest within the ADF to improve civil-military capacity, voiced most recently by the announcement of the opening of the Asia Pacific Centre for Civil-Military Cooperation. We welcome the appointment of Major-General (Ret'd) Michael Smith, as Executive Director of the Centre, his experience in and knowledge of civil-military issues will be of great benefit. We are concerned, however, that CIMIC has lacked high-level influence on overall doctrine development in relation to civilian operations. For example, CIMIC had limited involvement in planning for the ADF's last deployment to East Timor.

ACFID welcomes the recommendations from the 2007 Senate Committee Inquiry into Peacekeeping Operations that the ADF should draw on ideas from outside government and initiate that process. ACFID specifically urges the Government to establish a dialogue with the NGO sector on these policy issues.

ACFID welcomes the proposed creation of a national security advisor position. Such an office has the potential to rectify weaknesses in the security policy framework and particularly to promote a modern, whole-of-nation approach. ACFID believes that regular engagement with Australia's key non-government agencies should be included.

As part of an enhanced risk management strategy, ACFID urges the Government to implement a bona fide consultative process beyond government agencies. This would directly enhance the quality of policy advice to Ministers. It would also ensure that Ministers were more fully aware of the significant and expanding role of Australian non-government agencies in conflict and post-conflict situations.