

# Interaction Australian Delegation

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1. **A delegation from the** Australian Defence Intelligence Organisation had an interaction with the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS) on 14 Mar 2013. The Australian Delegation comprised of the following:-

Mr Michael Hutchison – A China Analyst, served in ISAF for six months.

Mr Dougal Stewart – An Af-Pak Analyst, served in the Australian Army in E Timor and Afghanistan.

2. Lt Gen (Retd) AS Kalkat, SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, Director Emeritus CENJOWS having introduced the faculty of CENJOWS brought out the shared history between India and Australia as part of the same empire. He emphasized that though we got our independence without firing a shot, we did contribute a lot of blood in World War II. Referring to Donald Howis book the lucky country the Director Emeritus pointed out that Australia was a very smart country which has used its natural resources and its location to keep away from the problems of the world. Stressing on having shared concerns as also disagreements relationship between India & Australia have been close.

3. It was also clarified that CENJOWS is an autonomous think tank and enjoyed considerable academic freedom and views expressed by scholars are not necessarily views of the Govt.

4. During the interaction the following emerged:-

China's Strategy for the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.

5. It was brought out that every country perceives China's clout in a different way – economic, maritime etc. countries separated by oceans have a different perception. India sees it a little more differently, having the longest land borders with it, China presents a clear and concrete threat in that context, in terms of intrusions in areas disputed.

6. Countries in the region were increasingly becoming economically dependent on China and China's depends on the IOR to maintain the flow of resources. Appreciating India's concern, Australia wanted the region to be governed as per international law. Australia feels that India will play an important role in the IOR hence they were looking forward to a constructive engagement. China, they felt, was looking to tap natural resources and its flow in the area hence their eagerness to control the SLOC. China was prone to overlook rules thus denying a level playing field to others. They opined that China believes in flying the flag in the region regularly thereby establishing presence which would eventually lead to establishment of rights. Viewing China's long term goals in the Pacific; it first seeks to resolve issues in the China seas and the IOR where it is wary of extra regional involvement like India and US in the region.

7. The Chinese strategic culture has been defensive as exemplified by the Great Wall but at the same time no nonsense is tolerated on the other side. Their action in the South China Sea fits the pattern. They seek bilateral resolution because they fear being outnumbered in any multilateral forum. The Chinese, known for their doggedness look 30-50 years towards a goal with mid course reviews. Their aim is to achieve economic clout by 2015 and then look beyond.

8. China has identified its vulnerabilities and is contemplating viable actions. While its involvement in Gwadar, Hamantota and Sitwey and the recent planned development of airport at Maldives are commercial in nature, nuclear submarine bases in the IOR would be very vulnerable. The Gwadar pipeline is expected to be completed in 10 years and it would take another ten to create a land link and that too through a disturbed area. In this 20 year horizon China's naval strength needs to be assessed.

9. On issues of naval blockade in the IOR during in a conflict situation, it emerged that China has been progressing on land pipelines from Kazakhstan and Russia and has been building up strategic reserves for 90 days. In context of short duration conflicts, as is wont to happen, the blockade will have little effect.

10. It also emerged that with decreasing US dependence on Middle East oil the Arabs would be looking to China for their oil exports. The issue therefore needs to be addressed in the context of reaction of the Arab world to the blockade.

Prospects of Afghanistan Stability Post-2014.

11. It emerged that there was a need to shed the fixation of dates and focus on the major events during the period which would be deinduction of US troops. What will be left behind would be

the crux and apparently, not even the US have finalised the papers yet hence we are confined to conjectures and wishful thinking but it needs to be viewed realistically. India has ancient borders with Afghanistan – today it may not be so but is too close for comfort. There are routes to India via the Northern Areas.

12. Questions were raised on the credibility of the political and administrative establishment vis-a-vis the local people. Strong tribal bonding, coupled with alarming rates of desertion of ANA and police (with weapons) and recent statements of President Karzai on American hobnobbing with other factions in the run up to the elections are not very encouraging signs. The Afghan Govt will almost certainly be a coalition with the Pak backed Taliban hence the loyalty of the ANA would be in question.

13. On the issue of India's role/support it was brought out that infrastructural support/aid was not palatable to Pakistan – boots on ground would be blasphemy. India has no direct link with Afghanistan - Iran being the only viable alternative. India has constructed a road from Chabahar to the Afghan border just to service the aid to Afghanistan, being the second largest donor. India has aided in education, medical, hydro electric power generation and training of military and police personnel – presently it can do that much and no more.

14. On the reluctance of the ISAF countries to bring Iran to the table, despite its stakes, by virtue of having the second longest land border with Afghanistan, the guests were non committal. It emerged that given the uncertainty and ambivalence of major power, any call on the future of Afghanistan, at present would be in the realm of “glorious uncertainties”.

Pakistan Military and Counter Insurgency Operations.

15. The following were flagged during the discussion:-

16. Pakistan is fighting for survival. The fundamentalist organisations are the creation of Pakistan – a handiwork of the ISI which have come to haunt them now. The CI operations are not going as Pakistan would like it to go for the following reasons:-

(a) The rouge organisations have been supported by the ISI

(b) The kith and kin of the Pakistani soldiers are involved on the other side hence there is a hesitancy in the rank and file to act against them

(c)The Pakistani establishment will carry out minor operations and let the US drones do the rest.

(d)The on going CI operations in Pakistan are not leading to a conclusive end.

(Proceedings recorded by Col (Retd) AK Singh, Secretary, CENJOWS

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