

# Public Silence, Veiled Action: Climate Change and the Australian Defence Force

– How the Australian Defence Force Has Progressed Climate Change Securitization in a Partisan Political Environment –

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*The views expressed within are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Department of Defence*

## INTRODUCTION

Much has been written and is understood about the science of climate change; what it is, and what some of the potential impacts either currently or into the future may be. This paper takes as fact, and does not intend to argue, the science of climate change,<sup>1</sup> but rather analyzes attempts to securitize or desecuritize climate change within the Australian military spectrum. A detailed study on political influence and climate securitization from 2003 to 2013 was carried out by Michael Thomas, in which he concluded:

*the Australian military was generally found... to act in response to and following the direction of the (incumbent) political party.<sup>2</sup>*

However, on June 12, 2019, the Chief of the Australian Defence Force (CDF) made a speech to the National Security Management Symposium (NSMS) in which it is argued that he made a significant move towards securitizing the issue of climate change. This was at a time when the Government of Australia and the Australian Prime Minister were yet to securitize the issue. This paper aims to answer the following question: why did the CDF decide in 2019 to make a climate change securitizing speech against such a partisan political backdrop?

The theory of securitization is used as the analytical framework for this paper, as a means to differentiate between when a speech might be a

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<sup>1</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. Global climate science research is assessed by IPCC who identifies the strength of scientific agreement across different areas and highlights where further research is required. A multitude of IPCC reports on climate science are available at [www.ipcc.ch/about](http://www.ipcc.ch/about).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Thomas, “Climate Securitization in the Australian Political-Military Establishment,” *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1, February 2015, p. 102.

routine action as opposed to an escalatory non-routine action. Using securitization theory allows this paper to build on Thomas's previous research, whilst setting a benchmark of what can be considered a significant action amongst the more mundane or routine bureaucratic actions of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). This paper explores briefly the recent political history of climate change securitization in Australia, including recent attempts at securitization through a senate inquiry, in order to 'set the scene' of the speech. It then investigates the speech itself, and the audience of the speech, along with the specific climate change actions of the ADF since Thomas's published study to the present. Analysis of specific actions and events occurring both internal to and external to the ADF prior to the 2019 speech is undertaken to determine whether these events had a direct or indirect influence in the making of the speech.

There have been several papers that have been critical of the ADF's level of climate action, but external to Thomas's study, literature regarding the Australian military securitization related to governmental actions has been scarce. Therefore, this paper focuses on the period from 2013 onwards, only detailing prior actions where historical context is important. In particular, beyond

a recent North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) article and some Australian news reporting,<sup>3</sup> there has been very little publicized in relation to the CDF speech and what this means for the ADF and Australia.

This paper concludes that the CDF, recognizing the potential future threat to the ADF based on legal opinion, was in favor of climate action within the ADF. However, apparent inaction or delayed action by responsible departments within the ADF caused the CDF to attempt to securitize climate change through the 2019 speech in order to bring about action. It not only draws conclusions on the reasons for the CDF speech, but aims to understand if the CDF statement constitutes a shift in ADF stance on climate change, reviewing what actions were undertaken by the ADF in the lead-up to this statement, and how this relates to the current political spectrum. This paper also explores whether the actions taken can be deemed a sufficient response given international expectations and external pressures, and how climate securitization may provide non-traditional avenues for international security cooperation.

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<sup>3</sup> Camille Fourmeau and Reiner Zimmerman, "Can Military Forces Do It All? – Climate Change, A National Energy Security Issue for Australia and It's Defence Force," *Energy Security: Operational Highlights*, Vol. 14, Art. 3, NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence, 2020; Melissa Clarke, "Climate Change Could Stretch Our Capabilities, Defence Force Chief Speech Warns," *ABC News*, September 25, 2019.

# 1            **SECURITIZATION THEORY**

## 1.1           **A Tool for Analysis**

Within International Relations studies, securitization theory is the process of transforming an issue into a ‘security’ problem, to the extent that extraordinary measures may be used to resolve such an issue, such that ‘*securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization*.’<sup>4</sup> It is acknowledged that there is ideological connotations associated with securitization theory,<sup>5</sup> however this paper will not evaluate the merit of securitization as a theory or process, but uses securitization simply as an analysis tool to evaluate the significance of the speech by the CDF, amongst other speeches and actions that have been made in a similar time frame. There is a multitude of different theories that can be used as a basis to analyze the speech made by the CDF, however, Thomas’s aforementioned study carefully analyzed ADF actions and CDF speeches under the lens of securitization, using the Copenhagen School (CS) and Paris School (PS) theories. Therefore, using these theories as a structural base allows for continuity, building on Thomas’s research to focus only on CDF speeches and other actions since Thomas’s study.

The CS securitization model, discussed in more detail below, was the primary model used to further evaluate speech acts that were made by relevant members of the Australian military or political spectrum from 2014 onwards. However, examination of actions taken by the Department of Defence since 2013, detailed later in this paper, demonstrate that the CS definition is deficient as a stand-alone model to describe the situation in Australia, as it fails to capture non-speech acts which may contribute to an effort to securitize climate change. For this reason, a second securitization

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<sup>4</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> There is much debate over the use of securitization theory in international relations, and the theory itself carries significant negative connotation, because to securitize something is to elevate the issue beyond that which would be dealt with through a normal political process. This runs the risk of having disproportionate attention and resources focused towards an issue without going through correct process, resulting in a failure of normal politics. It is emphasized that this paper does not agree or disagree with the theory of securitization, nor does it make judgment on the use of securitization in international relations. For further reading on Securitization theory, and the discourse around its use see, for e.g.: Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*; Jürgen Scheffran, Michael Brzoska, Hans Günter Brauch, Peter Michael Link, and Janpeter Schilling eds., *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict: Challenges for Societal Stability*, Springer, 2012; Paul Roe, “Is Securitization a ‘Negative’ Concept? Revisiting the Normative Debate over Normal versus Extraordinary Politics,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2012, pp. 249-266.

model, PS, is also used.

## 1.2 Copenhagen School

One of the most cited theories with regard to security studies is the CS discussed in detail in *Security: a new framework for analysis (1998)*, whereby it is suggested that securitization is the act of presenting an issue

*...as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure.<sup>6</sup>*

In particular, the CS defines a ‘*speech act*’ as a securitizing move, made by a ‘*securitizing actor*’ to elevate a ‘*referent object*’ where

*...it is the utterance itself that is the act. By saying the words, something is done.<sup>7</sup>*

That said, CS is careful to delineate that although a securitizing move may have been made, securitization only occurs if the issue is accepted as being securitized by the audience.<sup>8</sup> In a later chapter, titled ‘*The Environmental Sector*’, the authors discuss two separate agendas of environmental security, being the scientific agenda, and the political agenda. Whereas the scientific agenda typically makes assessments on the level of threat based on academic standards, the political agenda, influenced more by short-term events, determines the level of threat based on whether the ‘*presumed urgency is a political issue.*’<sup>9</sup> As such, the authors conclude that environmental issues are typically politicized rather than securitized when being dealt with by governments.<sup>10</sup> Whilst not explicitly written, the CS model assumes a top-down approach to securitization of an issue, where a securitizing actor makes a securitizing speech act which is then acted upon (securitized) by an audience.

## 1.3 Paris School

Another school of thought regarding securitization is PS, which is a sociological view describing securitization as a process occurring within and as a result of circumstances such that it can:

*...be designed or can emerge out of different practices, whose initial aim was*

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<sup>6</sup> Buzan, et. al., *Security*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-74.

*not in fact to create a security problem.*<sup>11</sup>

As summarized by Angela Oels, the PS thus examines securitization as dynamic practices occurring by security professionals below the threshold of exceptionality, directing attention towards routine practices (such as development of policy roadmaps) to produce some level of securitization.<sup>12</sup> Using the PS as a means to examine the actions that were taken within the ADF allows for a focused lens to be placed on those actions which would not necessarily be considered a performative ‘speech act’ under the CS definition, and thus consider beyond the main scope of Thomas’s study if securitization had indeed occurred at lower levels within the ADF.

## **2 POLITICAL ACTIONS IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **2.1 The role of partisan politics in shaping Australia’s climate change securitization**

When Tony Abbott, then leader of the Australian Liberal Party, was elected Prime Minister (PM) of Australia in September 2013, he did so having made a “pledge in blood” to repeal Labor’s Carbon Tax Scheme as the first order of business.<sup>13</sup> This election result brought to an end the Australian Labor Party’s six years of rule during which time it had briefly attempted to securitize climate change by framing it as a threat requiring immediate action.<sup>14</sup> The Abbott government successfully repealed the Carbon Tax as promised, introducing a ‘Direct Action’ policy which was criticized by some as inadequate and unfeasible.<sup>15</sup> On September 14, 2015, Malcolm Turnbull became the PM after an internal party leadership challenge, however, this didn’t result in a change in climate policy as Turnbull maintained the ‘Direct action’ policy.<sup>16</sup>

Scott Morrison took over as PM in August 2018. Of all the media releases and statements made by Morrison related to climate change, none

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<sup>11</sup> Thierry Balzacq ed., *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, Routledge, 2010, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Angela Oels, “From ‘Securitization’ of Climate Change to ‘Climatization of the Security Field: Comparing Three Theoretical Perspectives,” in Scheffran et al., eds., *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict*, pp. 185-207.

<sup>13</sup> Michelle Grattan and David Wroe, “Abbott’s Blood Oath to Repeal Carbon Tax,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 13, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas, “Climate Securitization in The Australian Political-Military Establishment,” p. 108.

<sup>15</sup> Craig Mark, “Towards the 2016 Australian Election: From the Abbott to the Turnbull Coalition Governments,” *The Otemon Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 41, 2015, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

were a securitizing move, as the issue was never presented as an existential threat that required urgent action beyond standard procedures.<sup>17</sup> Generally, Morrison used a careful selection of vocabulary when referring to climate change so as to not securitize the issue, referring to *disaster resilience*<sup>18</sup> or *climate adaption*<sup>19</sup> as just some examples. Furthermore, Morrison persisted in assuaging the Australian public that Australia already had sufficient climate change policies and that the Labor Party's policies (which had emissions reductions targets close to double that of the Liberal Party) were costly and dangerous.<sup>20</sup> Due to the disparity between the two political parties, the 2019 Australian election was widely dubbed 'the climate change election',<sup>21</sup> and it was an election that Morrison and the Liberal Party went on to win with a convincing margin. Thus, at the time of the CDF speech, the governing party for whom the ADF is responsive to had made no attempts to securitize the climate issue and, on the converse, had largely held power on the premise that it was a non-issue.

## 2.2 Senate Inquiry

On June 14, 2017, the Australian Senate referred the matter of "Influences of Climate Change on National Security" to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by December 4, 2017.<sup>22</sup> The Inquiry had 70 respondents including the ADF,<sup>23</sup> and it could be considered that the ADF statement was designed to elevate the responsiveness of the audience (in this case the Government through the Senate).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> PM Scott Morrison, Media Releases, January 1, 2017 to August 16, 2020, [www.pm.gov.au/media](http://www.pm.gov.au/media), accessed August 16 2020.

<sup>18</sup> PM Scott Morrison, Keynote Address to Asia Briefing Live – The Beliefs That Guide Us, November 1, 2018, [www.pm.gov.au/media](http://www.pm.gov.au/media), accessed August 16 2020.

<sup>19</sup> PM Scott Morrison, Media Release – Drought Support for Gippsland, February 24, 2019, [www.pm.gov.au/media](http://www.pm.gov.au/media), accessed August 16, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Carol Johnson, "The 2019 Australian Election," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, November 2020, p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Bennister and Simon Obendorf, "The 2019 Australian Election: Quiet Australians, Daggy Dads and Climate Change," *Political Insight*, September 2019, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Senate Official Hansard*, No. 6, June 14, 2017 pp. 106-107, [parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/hansards/1f8dd540-5ae1-427d-859d-6140a5a671d6/toc\\_pdf/Senate\\_2017\\_06\\_14\\_5148\\_Official.pdf?fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/hansards/1f8dd540-5ae1-427d-859d-6140a5a671d6/toc_pdf/Senate_2017_06_14_5148_Official.pdf?fileType=application%2Fpdf).

<sup>23</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (hereafter SSCFADT), *Implications of Climate Change for Australia's National Security Final Report*, Parliament of Australia, May 17, 2018, [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/Nationalsecurity/Final\\_Report](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Nationalsecurity/Final_Report).

<sup>24</sup> Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, *SSCFADT Inquiry into the Implications of Climate Change for Australia's National Security*, August 2017,

There were 11 recommendations from the Senate inquiry, of which three were specifically directed at the ADF, and four were cross portfolio responses relevant to Defence.<sup>25</sup> These recommendations, along with others made by the Senate Committee and the summarized conclusions demonstrate climate change was considered a security risk worthy of taking action outside standard procedures based on the near-term threat it posed. However, at the time of writing, the Government was yet to table a response to this report, which would be the required next step in order to potentially implement the recommendations. One might assume that this is simply a timing issue, however, a review of all 12 inquiry reports that were submitted to Government by the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee in the time frame between 2016 and 2019 reveals that 9 reports had a government response tabled within 1 year (over half were tabled within 6 months).<sup>26</sup> The failure of the Government to as yet table a response suggests that for all the effort placed into the Inquiry, from a CS perspective, it was a failed securitization act as the audience required to securitize the issue has not recognized such a need. Notably, of the recommendations made to the Department of Defence, to date none have been carried out in full.

### 3 DEFENCE ACTIONS RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE

#### 3.1 The ‘Speech Act’

On June 12, 2019, the CDF, General Angus Campbell, delivered a speech to the NSMS, and while the exact contents of the speech are unknown due to the closed nature of the symposium, the draft speech released by the CDF indicates that several securitizing statements were made which drew a correlation between climate change and the threats it posed. The draft speech stated:

*Today there is no doubt that climate change is a threat to security<sup>27</sup> and climate*

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[www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/Nationalsecurity/Submissions](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Nationalsecurity/Submissions).

<sup>25</sup> SSCFADT, *Implications of Climate Change for Australia’s National Security Final Report*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>26</sup> Australian Parliament House, *SSCFADT Completed Inquiries and Reports, 2016-2019*,

[www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/Completed\\_inquiries/2016-19](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Completed_inquiries/2016-19), accessed August 16, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Department of Defence, *Chief of the Defence Force Draft Speech to Regional Security Management Symposium*, June 12, 2019, pp. 1-19, [www.video.defence.gov.au/FOI/Docs/Disclosures/009\\_1920\\_StatementOfReasons](http://www.video.defence.gov.au/FOI/Docs/Disclosures/009_1920_StatementOfReasons)

*change in itself won't cause conflict – but impact on human security and survival perhaps will.*<sup>28</sup>

Going on to state:

*If predictions are right climate change will have serious ramifications for ADF. For some Pacific Island Countries climate change is an existential threat.*<sup>29</sup>

To date, this appears to be the most consequential statement made by the CDF related to climate change securitization, and it can be argued the statement does not remain politically neutral. The liberty to make political comment or display perceived political bias is not afforded to members of the ADF due to their requirement to remain politically neutral.<sup>30</sup> The importance of this convention cannot be understated, as it underscores the principle that in a democratic nation (such as Australia), the military must remain apolitical. The public confidence in a military focused on serving Australia's interests impartially is put at risk when statements are made that do not follow the Government direction of the day, or appear partisan, as was the case with the CDF's speech. One need look no further than recent political media engagements in both Australia and the United States where involvement of the military, inadvertent or otherwise, caused significant public comment and debate.<sup>31</sup> Certainly, the role that politics has played on climate change discourse is one of the crucial findings of Thomas's research,<sup>32</sup> and is supported by an observation of Cheryl Durrant, the former Defence Director of Disaster Preparedness:

*Certainly the last three Chiefs of Defence Force that I worked for were proactive when it came to climate change. However, they were also exceedingly conscientious of their requirement to be politically neutral.*<sup>33</sup>

Using the CS school as a means to analyze, this was not the first time

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-IR.pdf, Partially released under Freedom of Information 009/19/20, accessed August 16, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-12.

<sup>30</sup> Department of Defence, *Military Personnel Policy Manual*, AL5, 2017, p. 481.

<sup>31</sup> see e.g., Tom Bowman, "When Political Partisanship and the Military Collide," NPR, June 17, 2020, [www.npr.org/2020/06/17/878587105/when-political-partisanship-and-the-military-collide](http://www.npr.org/2020/06/17/878587105/when-political-partisanship-and-the-military-collide), accessed September 9, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Thomas, "The Securitization of Climate Change: Australian and United States' Military Responses (2002-2013)," *The Anthropocene: Politics-Economics-Society-Science*, Vol. 10, 2017, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Former ADF Director of Preparedness and Mobilisation Cheryl Durrant, Interview by author, Telephone, October 26, 2020.



General Campbell made moves towards securitizing the issue. In 2016, as then Chief of Army (CA), General Campbell addressed the CA Exercise in Adelaide where he stated that with regard to climate change causing instability and the implications for military:

*(While we) don't actually know for certain where the problem of climate change will take us... those questions are immediately relevant.<sup>34</sup>*

While the language used within General Campbell's speech at the CA exercise borders on securitization from the viewpoint of the CS, it is important to note the audience of this speech was internal, that being the Australian Army. A look at actions undertaken by the ADF in a later section of this paper show that while new climate policies and actions were undertaken after this, there was already a number of processes in train indicating the address, whilst not failed securitization, may have served only to reinforce actions already occurring under a PS examination.

### **3.2 The Audience of the 'Speech Act'**

The NSMS is a conference hosted by The Institute for Regional Security (IRS), geared towards mid-level career professionals aspiring to higher level positions within the ADF and national security organizations, and aimed at improving strategic policy advice provided to Government.<sup>35</sup> In particular the 2019 event was focused on the impacts of climate change to regional and national security, aiming to equip attendees with skills to address this security challenge.<sup>36</sup> This audience is what makes the CDF's speech more the exceptional, as it was delivered not just to members of the ADF, but also to external government attendees. Based on the IRS description of the symposium, it can be reasonably expected that these attendees hold positions that allows them to shape and influence the government's direction on climate change. Therefore, the CDF speech can be analyzed under the CS framework as an attempt to elevate the issue in the mind of the audience, such that they may in future securitize climate change within governmental strategic policy. Whether the CDF speech has been a success or failure is

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<sup>34</sup> Anthony Bergin, "A changing climate for land forces," The Strategist, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), September 19, 2016, [www.aspistrategist.org.au/changing-climate-land-forces/](http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/changing-climate-land-forces/).

<sup>35</sup> The Institute for Regional Security, "National Security Management Symposium," The Institute for Regional Security website, [kokodafoundation.wildapricot.org/page-1858642](http://kokodafoundation.wildapricot.org/page-1858642), accessed September 17, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> The Institute for Regional Security, "2019 National Security Management Symposium – Climate Change: Impacts on National Security," The Institute for Regional Security website, [kokodafoundation.wildapricot.org/event-3375137](http://kokodafoundation.wildapricot.org/event-3375137), accessed September 17, 2020.

difficult to evaluate noting the NSMS attendance list is not publicly available, however, understanding why the CDF may have sought to securitize the issue external to the ADF will be explored in the following sections.

### 3.3 Policy actions from a 2013 reference point

Using 2013 as a reference point based on Thomas's analysis,<sup>37</sup> the year prior the ADF had undertaken a study on climate change induced sea level rise, flooding and erosion at select ADF sites,<sup>38</sup> and in 2013 they also established the Global Change and Energy Security Initiative.<sup>39</sup> Since then, the ADF has introduced a Climate Change and Security and Energy Literacy Course, first piloted in 2015 and since conducted every year for select members of the ADF.<sup>40</sup> The ADF has also updated the Global Change and Energy Security Initiative, appointed a Defence Climate and Security Advisor (2016), conducted an assessment inclusive of adaption and planning strategies on the impact of climate change induced sea level rise, flooding and erosion at Defence sites,<sup>41</sup> and published a Strategic Policy Statement on Climate Change Resilience,<sup>42</sup> all prior to the CDF's securitizing speech.

A summation of the changed state of ADF climate change actions since 2015 is observed at Table 1. For consistency, this table has used an identical climate action matrix (column 2) as was used in the 2015 Climate Council Report Comparison,<sup>43</sup> and shows the UK, US and ADF comparison of 2015 as reported by the Climate Council (column 3 to 5). The update to the table by this author is the ADF 2020 column (column 6), which is a comparison only against ADF 2015 actions using, where possible, the same scoring system. On the table green indicates an action that has been implemented or is underway, yellow indicates a partial response, and red indicates either there has been no action, or, no evidence of action is publicly available. The table has not been

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<sup>37</sup> See fn. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Chris Barrie, Will Steffen, Alix Pearce, and Michael Thomas, *Be Prepared: Climate Change, Security and Australia's Defence Force*, Climate Council, 2015, p. 53, [www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/fa8b3c7d4c6477720434d6d10897af18.pdf](http://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/fa8b3c7d4c6477720434d6d10897af18.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> AECOM, *Adaption + Planning Strategies: Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change Induced Sea Level Rise, Flooding and Erosion at Selected Defence Training Areas and Ranges — Stage 2 Executive Report*, June 14, 2018, released as Department of Defence, Disclosure Log, Item 8 of Freedom of Information (hereafter FOI) Request No. 264/18/19 (hereafter FOI 264/18/19), March 26, 2019, [www.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/foi/264\\_1819\\_Documents.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/foi/264_1819_Documents.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Department of Defence, *Strategic Policy Statement – Climate Change Resilience*, September 2018, pp. 1-6, released as Department of Defence, Disclosure Log, Item 5 of FOI 264/18/19.

<sup>43</sup> Barrie, et. al., *Be prepared*, p. 66.

updated to reflect any change in the state of US Department of Defense (DoD) or UK Ministry of Defence (MoD). Shown this way, the table is a quick and easy way to assess what actions had been carried out by 2015, and what has been done since, demonstrating the increase by the ADF in climate actions which could be considered securitization under the PS framework. However, many of these actions are not well publicized, and when analyzed with a CS lens, would not meet the conditions for securitization.

### 3.4 Deployments and increased operational tempo

Beyond looking at policy actions, there have also been over 13,800 ADF members deployed since 2014 for either a Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) or Defence Aid to the Civil Community (DACC) mission<sup>44</sup> possibly resulting from climate change. These roles have included evacuation, firefighting, flood preparation, airlift support and supplies, and disaster cleanup and recovery in response to: Tropical Cyclones; Typhoons; Bushfires; and flood events, both within and outside of Australia. This is an average of about 2000 personnel committed annually, not to mention the vast physical resources that are also typically deployed, such as ships, aircraft, and equipment. This aid often comes at significant cost (such as the \$4.95 million AUD in aid provided following Tropical Cyclone Marcia).<sup>45</sup> When one considers that typical force generation considerations require a '3 for 1' system 'raise, train and sustain' cycle, meaning that for every unit deployed, there is typically always one unit in a regeneration position (maintenance, leave etc.), and one unit under training in preparation for deployment, this actually means an average 6000 personnel committed annually to climate change related activities. This is over 10% of the ADF permanent workforce.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Figure taken from a review of media releases and annual reports. Minister of Defence, Media Releases, [www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases](http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases), accessed August 16, 2020; Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Reports, 2013/14 – 2018/19*, [www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/](http://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/), accessed September 17, 2020.

<sup>45</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2014-2015*, Vol. 1, October 9, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Based on ADF headcount provided in Australian Department of Defence, *Annual Report 19-20*, September 21, 2020, p. 116, [www.defence.gov.au/about/information-disclosures/annual-reports](http://www.defence.gov.au/about/information-disclosures/annual-reports).

**Table 1. Amended Climate Council Comparison of Military Action on Climate Change**

A COMPARISON OF MILITARY ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE					
Potential Effects of Climate Change On:	Military Climate Action Checklist	US DoD 2015	UK MoD 2015	ADF 2015	ADF 2020
Military Planning and Operations	Incorporated and mainstreamed climate change into National Strategic (Military) <b>planning</b>	Green	Green	Yellow	iii
	Shown leadership by appointing a Senior military authority as Climate Change <b>planning officer</b>	Green	Green	Red	iii
	Published a Climate Change Adaption <b>Strategy</b>	Green	Green	Red	iv
	Participating member of Interdepartmental/Interagency Climate Change <b>Working group</b>	Green	Yellow	Yellow	v
	Analysis of Climate Change impacts on military base locations and base capacity (force <b>posture</b> )	Green	Green	Red	Red
	Analysis of Climate Change impacts on how military is organised for combat missions, stabilisation operations and disaster relief (force <b>structure</b> )	Green	Green	Red	vi
Military training and testing	Analysis of Climate Change risks to <b>military training</b>	Green	Yellow	Yellow	vii
	Analysis of Climate Change impacts on <b>individual readiness</b>	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
	Analysis of Climate Change impacts on the preparedness of military to responds to <b>operations and emergencies</b>	Green	Green	Yellow	viii
	Analysis/inclusion of Climate Change in military doctrine (e.g.; disaster relief doctrine or aid to civil community)	Yellow	Green	Green	ix
	Analysis of health impacts of Climate Change on <b>military forces and operational areas</b>	Green	Red	Green	x
Military Estate	Mandated renewable energy targets for <b>military bases</b>	Green	Yellow	Red	xi
	Conducted Risk assessment of sea level rise and <b>inundation on military bases</b>	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Conducted a risk assessment of climate affected extreme weather events on military bases	Green	Green	Red	xii
	Implemented 'Green' building codes and <b>energy programs across military bases.</b>	Green	Green	Green	Green
Military Acquisition and Supply Chain	Mandated fuel and energy efficiency goals in purchase of major military hardware and <b>platforms (e.g.; use of bio-fuels and hybrids)</b>	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
	Analyzed Climate Change risks to critical civilian infrastructure and workforce and resultant impact on military infrastructure, <b>operations and training.</b>	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
	Sustainable Procurement practices implemented (e.g., energy efficient civilian vehicle fleets, energy efficient lighting, heating, waste reduction strategies etc.)	Green	Green	Green	Green
<b>Key</b>	<b>Implemented/underway</b>	<b>Partial Response</b>		<b>No action or evidence found</b>	

Be Prepared: Climate Change, Security and Australia's Defence Force by Chris Barrie, Will Steffen, Alix Pearce and Michael Thomas (Climate Council of Australia). Amended by author to include new column ADF 2020, with updated comparison conducted against ADF 2015 column with evidence at end notes.

This level of commitment is certainly recognized and planned for within the ADF through the CDF Preparedness Directive released annually which dictates the level of readiness required for individual defence units to meet required roles.<sup>47</sup> However, it has also been acknowledged by the ADF that:

*The current most likely forecast climate changes may require higher levels of commitment that may create concurrency pressures for Defence from as early as the middle of the next decade, or earlier if climate change related impacts on security threats accelerate.*<sup>48</sup>

## 4 DIRECT PRECIPITATING ACTIONS LEADING TO SPEECH

### 4.1 Landmark legal ‘Hutley Opinion’

In 2016 the Centre for Policy Development, a leading think-tank in Australia, along with the Future Business Council, commissioned barrister Noel Hutley SC, to provide opinion on corporate directors’ duties with respect to climate change. The subsequent Memorandum of Opinion (henceforth referred to as the opinion) that was authored found:

*It is conceivable that directors who fail to consider “climate change risks” now could be found liable for breaching their duty of care and diligence in the future.*<sup>49</sup>

This opinion was further expanded upon in 2019, taking into account advances in financial reporting frameworks to state the risk for directors has increased since the 2016 opinion release.<sup>50</sup> While the opinion’s scope

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<sup>47</sup> Air Vice Marshal Hupfeld, Head Force Design, cited from Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, Commonwealth Australia Senate, “Implications of Climate Change for Australia’s National Security,” *Official Committee Hansard*, March 20, 2018, p. 21, [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Hansard/Hansard\\_Display?bid=committees/commsen/adbb763e-5e4d-49e4-a9fd-2269a6d16ac0/&sid=0000](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=committees/commsen/adbb763e-5e4d-49e4-a9fd-2269a6d16ac0/&sid=0000); Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, para. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, para. 17.

<sup>49</sup> Noel Hutley SC and Sebastian Hartford Davis, “*Climate Change and Directors’ Duties*” – *Memorandum of Opinion*, The Centre for Policy Development and the Future Business Council, October 7, 2016, para. 3.5, [cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Legal-Opinion-on-Climate-Change-and-Directors-Duties.pdf](http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Legal-Opinion-on-Climate-Change-and-Directors-Duties.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Noel Hutley SC and Sebastian Hartford Davis, “*Climate change and Directors’ Duties*” – *Supplementary Memorandum of Opinion*, The Centre for Policy Development, March 26, 2019, pp. 3-9,

and was limited to implications to corporate directors, the significance of the landmark opinion cannot be understated, as following the opinion a series of regulatory changes occurred, including within the Australian Stock Exchange Corporate Governance<sup>51</sup> and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission,<sup>52</sup> not to mention action by large corporations such as the Australia New Zealand bank (ANZ).<sup>53</sup> Most recently, one of Australia's biggest superfunds was successfully sued in the Federal Court of Australia for failing to consider climate change and disclose the risk.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the fact the opinion was limited to corporate governance, there is evidence it was briefed to the previous Vice CDF (VCDF) who, in response to the opinion, noted:

*While there is not specific applicability to the public sector – yet. It is surely coming. This gives us added impetus to ensuring we look at the climate risk issue seriously.*<sup>55</sup>

Further, it was observed that the opinion advice was heeded by the CDF who recognized the potential future risks of inaction:

*There was a noticeable shift in the language used by the current CDF around climate change after two events: the release of the Hutley opinion on fiduciary responsibilities of heads of agency, and a meeting that he had with Ian Dunlop and David Spratt of the Breakthrough Organisation.*<sup>56</sup>

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[cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Noel-Hutley-SC-and-Sebastian-Hartford-Davis-Opinion-2019-and-2016\\_pdf.pdf](http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Noel-Hutley-SC-and-Sebastian-Hartford-Davis-Opinion-2019-and-2016_pdf.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> Governance Institute of Australia, *Climate Change Risk Disclosure: A Practical Guide to Reporting against ASX Corporate Governance Council's Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations*, February 2020, [www.asx.com.au/documents/asx-compliance/gia-climate-change-guide.pdf](http://www.asx.com.au/documents/asx-compliance/gia-climate-change-guide.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Australian Securities and Investment Commission, *19-208MR ASIC Updates Guidance on Climate Change Related Disclosure*, August 12, 2019, [asic.gov.au/about-asic/news-centre/find-a-media-release/2019-releases/19-208mr-asic-updates-guidance-on-climate-change-related-disclosure/](http://asic.gov.au/about-asic/news-centre/find-a-media-release/2019-releases/19-208mr-asic-updates-guidance-on-climate-change-related-disclosure/).

<sup>53</sup> Ruth Williams, "There's Nowhere to Hide: Companies Warned on Climate Risks," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 20, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Slezak, "Rest Super Fund Commits to Net-zero Emission Investments after Brisbane Man Sues," *ABC News*, November 2, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Written Comments Made by VADM Ray Grsiggs, Former VCDF, "FW: Australian Legal Opinion on Director Liabilities for Climate Change Risks," March 19, 2017, p. 2, released as Department of Defence, Disclosure Log, Item 1 of FOI Request No. 417/19/20 (hereafter FOI 417/19/20), April 16, 2020, [www.defence.gov.au/FOI/Docs/Disclosures/417\\_1920\\_Document.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/FOI/Docs/Disclosures/417_1920_Document.pdf), accessed November 3, 2020.

<sup>56</sup> Durrant, Interview by author.

The meeting referred to above was held on November 2018 between the CDF and authors of a climate change report, where the objective of the CDF was to better understand security implications from climate change effects.<sup>57</sup> Following the opinion release, the Australian Government Solicitor also provided legal advice to the Secretaries Group regarding Climate Risk, and while much of this advice is unavailable publicly it is understood that some risks were posed for which the CDF felt compelled to take action.<sup>58</sup> By considering the results of Table 1, which highlight certain inactions by the ADF, against any and all legal obligations that may be required of the ADF as detailed in the Hutley opinion or the legal precedence it set, this demonstrates the strategic reasoning by the CDF to attempt to securitize the issue. The timing of this meeting, along with receipt of advice from the Solicitor General, was prior to the CDF's speech to NSMS, and fits the narrative that these events certainly contributed to the use of the securitizing language by the CDF.

#### 4.2 ADF executive level incoherence

During 2018 there was an internal transition within the ADF of the position of the Defence Climate and Security Advisor (CSA), from the Force Design Division into the Strategic Policy Division (SP Div),<sup>59</sup> although initial advocacy suggested the position was best placed within the VCDF staff or the Chief of Staff Australian Defence Headquarters (CoS ADHQ).<sup>60</sup> During the CSA period at SP Div, it was observed that:

*The decision was made by the Defence Intelligence and Security Committee in late 2018 to transition the Defence Climate and Security Advisor role across to the Strategic Policy Division (SP Div). Within the SP Div there appeared to be a sense of inertia surrounding climate change, whereby based on the current understanding of political will, perceived boundaries were erected that resulted in an unwillingness to take action based on sound science, preventing good*

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<sup>57</sup> AIRCDRE Richard Lennon, "Meeting Brief for CDF – Mr. Ian Dunlop and Mr. David Spratt, Breakthrough Organisation," November 21, 2018, pp. 1-3, released as Department of Defence, Disclosure Log, Item 7 of FOI 264/18/19.

<sup>58</sup> Samantha Higgins, "Secretaries Board Meeting Dot Point Brief – Secretaries Group on Climate Risk Report," September 28, 2018, pp. 1-2, available from Department of Defence, Disclosure Log, Item 2 of FOI 264/18/19.

<sup>59</sup> AIRCDRE Richard Lennon, "Decision Brief for VCDF – Management of Climate Change in Defence," August 14, 2018, pp. 1-4, released as Department of Defence, Disclosure Log, Item 13 of FOI Request No. 264/18/19.

<sup>60</sup> COL Ian Cumming, "Dot Point Brief for VCDF – Climate and Security Advice," August 7, 2018, pp. 1-3, released as Department of Defence, Disclosure Log, Item 11 of FOI 417/19/20.

*governance on the issue.*<sup>61</sup>

This observation that SP Div were more inclined to create climate policy and actions they believed followed the intentions of the incumbent Government, as opposed to following the direction and intent of the CDF, is supported by Durrant:

*The politicization of the issue within the Strategic Policy Division caused a level of strategic incoherence. Within Defence, climate change action was supported at the very top, and within lower levels (and younger generations). The incoherence appeared to occur at the senior executive level (EL2- SES 2/06-08) where there was an apparent mismatch between maintaining supposed political optics and acting on CDF intent.*<sup>62</sup>

As a result of this incoherence a decision was made within SP Div to remove the role of Climate and Security Advisor shortly after the transition, after which there was no Climate and Security Advisory role held within the ADF. The timing of this event was prior to the CDF speech, and given the high likelihood that the audience of the speech consisted in part of members of SP Div it is not unreasonable to propose this was a precipitating cause of the securitizing language used within the speech.

Since the speech, Defence has established a small Policy and Strategy Team, designed to:

*Meet emerging government requirements and...strengthen and align the implementation of climate risk mitigation, adaption and resilience measures.*<sup>63</sup>

There is no publicly available documentation with regard to this team, however when viewed using the CS paradigm, the establishment of this team suggests the audience to the CDF speech act were listening, and took action, hence successful securitization.

## **5 INTERMEDIATE PRECIPITATING INFLUENCES TO THE SPEECH**

### **5.1 General comparison with other militaries**

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<sup>61</sup> Former Defence Climate and Security Advisor COL Ian Cumming, Interview by author, Telephone, October 27, 2020.

<sup>62</sup> Durrant, Interview by author.

<sup>63</sup> Climate Policy and Strategy Team Director Bryden Spurling, Email correspondence, Department of Defence, October 6, 2020.



Recently there has been increased literature surrounding military responses to climate change, and in some cases comparisons of those responses in terms of perceived effectiveness.<sup>64</sup> As discussed, Table 1 was originally published by the Climate Council of Australia (modified in this report to account for recent ADF actions), and compared climate actions of the ADF unfavorably to both the US and UK Defence Department and Ministry respectively.<sup>65</sup> Taken as a snapshot comparison, increased climate activity has occurred within the ADF since 2015, but based on publicly available information, it is evident even in 2020 the ADF still falls behind the UK and US DoD when using the Climate Council analysis methodology,<sup>66</sup> and more action could be taken. This has left the ADF open to criticism, with a report released by the Centre for Policy Development stating that:

*Australia has not integrated climate security considerations into... defence strategic frameworks. Indeed, Australia has been unique among developed states because of the absence of a climate and energy security discourse.*<sup>67</sup>

A more recent and comprehensive comparison was the World Climate and Security Report released in 2020, which compared the militaries of twelve countries. The countries analyzed were Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Jordan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States. In concluding, the report stated:

*With regard to the approaches and experiences of other countries, the proactive posture of France stands out... New Zealand can also be referred to as an early mover... The UK, Finland, the Netherlands and Canada are relatively ahead of the curve... Jordan is very experienced when it comes to the ability to operate in hot and water-scarce regions... Sweden and Germany have some forward*

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<sup>64</sup> see, for e.g. Michael Brzoska, "Climate Change and the Military in China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 68, No. 2, March 2012, pp. 43-54; Louise van Schaik, Dick Zandee, Tobias von Lossow, Brigitte Dekker, Zola van der Maas, and Ahmad Halima, *Ready for take-off? Military Responses to Climate Change*, Clingandael Report, March 2020, pp. 1-102, [www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/PSI\\_Ready\\_for\\_takeoff.pdf](http://www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/PSI_Ready_for_takeoff.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Barrie, et. al., *Be prepared*, p. 66.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Sturrock and Dr. Peter Ferguson, *The Longest Conflict: Australia's Climate Security Challenge*, Centre for Policy Development, June 2015, p. 31, [cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Climate-Change-and-Security-Paper-FINAL.pdf](http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Climate-Change-and-Security-Paper-FINAL.pdf).

*momentum on the issue,*<sup>68</sup>

Conversely, the report found:

*Australia and the U.S. seem most severely affected by extreme weather events aggravated by climate change, and continue to address climate risks to military equities, but have slowed down actions due to political changes.*<sup>69</sup>

A related report which provided an overview of the military case studies used in the World Climate and Security Report also included Norway at a similar level to Sweden and Germany, and drew similar conclusions for the remainder of the militaries studied, particularly noting the Australian government political stance and resultant reluctance to take action.<sup>70</sup> These findings, similar to emission comparisons discussed in the next section, leave the ADF at risk of reputational damage.

## **5.2 Emissions comparisons with other militaries**

Aside from the critical statement made within the general comparison reports, there was also a table within both reports that displayed Defence Sustainable Energy Targets from the 12 nations for three categories, namely Greenhouse (GHG) emissions, Fossil Fuel, and others. While Australia displayed an 8% reduction in GHG emissions in 2019, compared to the other nations this number stands out as being well below other entries, with a notable absence of a future target value. In contrast, France set 2030 reduction targets of 40% for both GHG emissions and Fossil Fuels, and half their vehicular fleet being electric or hybrid by 2030.<sup>71</sup> Whilst viewed unfavorably to at least 6 other nations that have set targets on the table, it may be considered that the ADF's 8% reduction in GHG emissions is a positive start. However, when analyzed as a year-on-year average since 2011, it is evident this is not an annual trend as can be seen in Figure 1. ADF GHG emissions have been above the 2011 level every year until the 2018/2019 report where for the first time they reached parity with 2011, and in latest reporting have again shown a 10% increase from both last year

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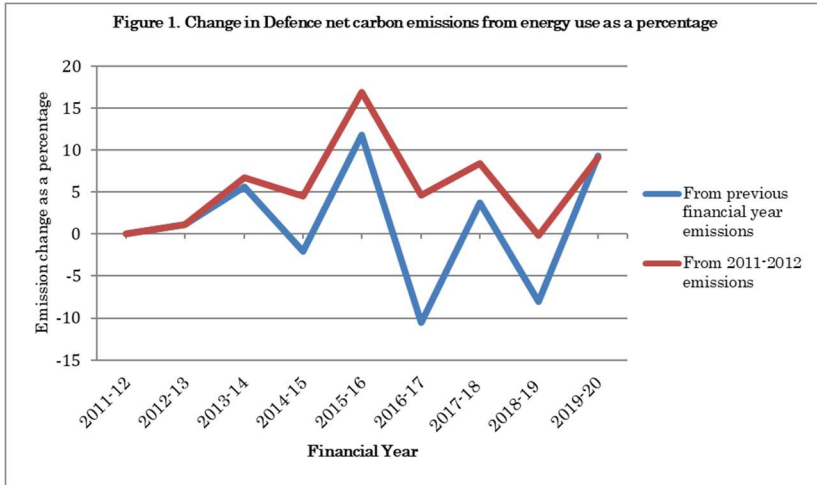
<sup>68</sup> Expert Group of the International Military Council on Climate and Security, *The World Climate and Security Report 2020*, Center for Climate and Security, an institute of the Council on Strategic Risks, February 2020, p. 145, [imccs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/World-Climate-Security-Report-2020\\_2\\_13.pdf](https://imccs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/World-Climate-Security-Report-2020_2_13.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>70</sup> Van Schaik et al., *Ready for take-off?* p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

and 2011.<sup>72</sup> This is an area where the ADF remains open to criticism, and while the reputation of the ADF may not be the primary driver for climate securitization, it is an intermediate consideration for the CDF that should not be ignored, particularly when no forward progress is evident in this area since 2011.



Produced by the author based on data compiled from: Defence Estate and Infrastructure Group, Greenhouse Gas Emissions – summary prepared for Senate Estimates Ministerial Brief, provided by Director Environmental Resource Management and Sustainability, November 02 2020.

### 5.3 Defence White Paper

The 2016 Defence White Paper makes mention of climate change and its potential impact (with a special focus on the South West Pacific) no less than six times.<sup>73</sup> A broad summation of the Defence White Paper with respect to climate change is that it may lead to instability within the South Pacific, for which Australia should be prepared to support the resilience building of affected nations, and respond in times of crisis. It highlights the possible impacts of climate change and future requirements on the ADF Defence estate footprint, although this is considered at a timeframe beyond what could be defined as securitization under the CS framework. The Defence White Paper highlights climate change as a security issue, but does

<sup>72</sup> Defence Estate and Infrastructure Group Greenhouse Gas Emissions Summary, provided to author from Director Environmental Resource Management and Sustainability by private correspondence, November 2, 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2016, pp. 16-102, [www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/](http://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/).

not elevate it to an existential threat requiring immediate action, and certainly from a CS viewpoint, it does not securitize the issue. Depending on interpretation, it does provide an overarching framework under which securitization may take place, and should certainly be considered as a key strategic driver for policy and actions taken with respect to the ADF's South-west pacific engagement.

#### 5.4 Pacific Environmental Security Forum and the Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Environmental Security Forum (PESF) is the United States Navy Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) annual forum to explore solutions to environmental security issues throughout the Indo-Pacific region, inclusive of climate change related security issues '*that can critically impact theatre security*'.<sup>74</sup>

Since its inception in 2012, the ADF has participated in the PESF every year, sending only one delegate in 2012,<sup>75</sup> and rapidly increasing representation such that the following year the ADF hosted the event and presented or moderated many of the sessions.<sup>76</sup> The participants and audience of the PESF is largely Indo-Pacific countries, many of whom are members of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), which is a political and economic policy organization comprising 18 member nations including Australia, designed to foster collaboration and support political conversations and initiatives between governments. Along with the 18 member countries, there are 18 dialogue partners, including Japan, which engage at a ministerial level.<sup>77</sup> Recent statements from the PIF include the Boe declaration in 2018, which demonstrates the extreme importance that member nations place on climate change:

*Climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific.*<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Pacific Environmental Security Forum, [pesforum.org/about.html](https://pesforum.org/about.html), accessed September 14, 2020.

<sup>75</sup> US Pacific Command and Republic of Indonesia, *Regional Environmental Security Forum*, 2012, [pesforum.org/docs/2012/IDN\\_ESC\\_book\\_for\\_PRINT.pdf](https://pesforum.org/docs/2012/IDN_ESC_book_for_PRINT.pdf), accessed September 14, 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Department of Defense and US Pacific Command, *Pacific Environmental Security Forum Agenda*, 2013, [pesforum.org/docs/2013/2\\_AUS\\_PESF\\_agenda.pdf](https://pesforum.org/docs/2013/2_AUS_PESF_agenda.pdf), accessed September 14, 2020.

<sup>77</sup> Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat, *The Pacific Islands Forum*, [www.forumsec.org/who-we-arepacific-islands-forum/](http://www.forumsec.org/who-we-arepacific-islands-forum/), accessed September 14, 2020.

<sup>78</sup> PIF Secretariat, *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, September 5, 2018, [www.forumsec.org/2018/09/05/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/](http://www.forumsec.org/2018/09/05/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/), accessed September 14, 2020.

And, furthering this statement in 2019:

*We need to act now. Our survival, and that of this great Blue Pacific continent depend on it. Climate change is the single greatest threat to our Blue Pacific region. All countries, with no caveats, must agree to take decisive and transformative action.*<sup>79</sup>

Taking into consideration the emphasis that the PIF places on climate change as a significant security threat, ADF Engagement at forums such as PESF, alongside the ADF's annual Indo Pacific Endeavour exercise<sup>80</sup> is strategically imperative. Noting one of the ADF strategic defence objectives is to shape the environment through activities such as defence diplomacy and co-operation within the Indo-Pacific region,<sup>81</sup> securitizing climate change to bring forth action is a form of soft power diplomacy that can only serve to benefit the ADF, and thus the Australian Government.

## CONCLUSION

This paper considered the climate speech delivered by the CDF in 2019, and analyzed why it was given during a period of strong politically partisan climate change discourse in Australia. After a brief analysis of the theory of securitization and what it intends to achieve, a detailed look at the speech along with other ADF actions was conducted to determine if it meets the definition of securitization. Following this an analysis of events leading to the CDF speech was undertaken to determine whether they had a direct or indirect effect on not only the CDF speech, but also on the timing of the speech. The thesis assessed the changes underway since the study done by Thomas, and the political background that may have shaped these changes. Similar to the findings of Thomas,<sup>82</sup> due to the apparent lack of change

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<sup>79</sup> PIF Secretariat, *Blue Pacific's Call for Urgent Global Climate Change Action*, May 15, 2019, [www.forumsec.org/2019/05/15/pacific-islands-forum-statement-blue-pacifics-call-for-urgent-global-climate-change-action/](http://www.forumsec.org/2019/05/15/pacific-islands-forum-statement-blue-pacifics-call-for-urgent-global-climate-change-action/), accessed September 14, 2020.

<sup>80</sup> Indo-Pacific Endeavour is an annual ADF exercise focused on strengthening Australia's contributions to humanitarian and security efforts in the Indo-Pacific region. More information on the exercise is available at [www1.defence.gov.au/operations/indo-pacific-endeavour](http://www1.defence.gov.au/operations/indo-pacific-endeavour).

<sup>81</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence Strategic Update*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, p. 26, [www1.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020\\_Defence\\_Strategic\\_Update.pdf](http://www1.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020_Defence_Strategic_Update.pdf).

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, "Climate Securitization in The Australian Political-Military Establishment," p. 259.

within the Australian political spectrum (both with regard to the leading political party, and the partisan nature of climate change), it appears the ADF leadership has remained reticent to publicly securitize the issue. This remained true at the time of the CDF speech, as it is apparent that the speech given by the CDF was not intended to be a public speech, but rather, given under Chatham House rules.<sup>83</sup> This paper concludes that, while reticent to publicly securitize the issue, the CDF was in favor of enhanced activity around climate change, stimulated further by the potential future risk to the ADF that could be surmised from the Hutley Opinion. However, by 2019, the evident lack of action in this direction by the SP Div, who was responsible for such change, was enough to prompt the CDF to make a securitizing speech that could encourage such action to occur. Adding to any frustration around a lack of action, it is concluded that CDF acknowledgment of the strategic benefits of climate action in fostering Australia's pacific relationships, and the ADF's international standing as a 'climate responsible' military also played a secondary role in motivation for the speech.

The language of the speech indicates an attempt at securitization in accordance with the CS theory, but the critical tool to determine the success of such a speech is post speech action. The 2020 Defence Strategic Update is a relatively short document updating the 2016 Defence White Paper. Within this document, climate change is only mentioned once, as playing a part in extreme weather events that compound political instability and friction leading to threats to human security.<sup>84</sup> However, the strategic update recognizes that:

*Disaster response and resilience measures demand a higher priority in defence planning.*<sup>85</sup>

Viewed critically, it may seem this is a poor outcome following the speech, however, when considering the ADF HADR deployments and operational tempo discussed previously, the Strategic Update publicly identifies the need to prioritize disaster response, and goes on to state an expansion in HADR regional operational cooperation.<sup>86</sup> This opens the door further for the ADF to continue engagement with PIF countries, and deepen engagement with partners such as Japan, which has also identified climate

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<sup>83</sup> The Chatham House Rule is widely considered as a framework to encourage discussion within meetings, whereby attendees are allowed to disclose the information from the meeting, but are not allowed to reveal the source of such information.

<sup>84</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence Strategic Update*, p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

change as a critical and urgent security issue within its National Security Strategy.<sup>87</sup>

Establishment of the Climate and Policy Strategy team one year on from the speech, and around a similar timeframe as the publication of the Strategic Update, points to some level of success in securitization. Whether the establishment of this team was a direct result of the speech is impossible to prove, but it is unlikely to be purely coincidental, and the nature of the team points to action beyond standard process.

However, looking beyond the speech, this thesis has highlighted bureaucratic changes already underway within the ADF, some of which were not only prior to the speech but also prior to the publication of Thomas's book. It appears that up until the point of the CDF speech securitization was taking on a PS approach, best described by Oels as successful 'climatization' of the security field.<sup>88</sup> Oels explains this as:

*Existing security practices are applied to the issue of climate change (such as scenario planning studies) and that new practices from the field of climate policy are introduced into the security field (such as risk management, climate modeling).<sup>89</sup>*

Much of what has been done within the ADF is internal, with little publicity beyond ADF bounds, and an utmost care by CDFs past and present to avoid the issue publicly due to partisan politics. While understandable from an apolitical organization, it leaves the ADF with a missed opportunity to use climate diplomacy when building relationships with Pacific Partners as mandated in the Strategic Update and White Paper, at a time when competitors in the region are using climate action to strengthen ties.<sup>90</sup> It also leaves the ADF open to criticism for a lack of action, both domestically and internationally. Certainly, when viewed against other militaries the ADF falls short of 'climate positive' actions in some areas.

Furthermore, when considering the Hutley opinion, there is possible theoretical and policy implications that can be drawn, whereby the ADF may face future legal risk as a result of neglecting to appropriately consider climate risks.

In some respects, the CDF statement does prove to have been

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<sup>87</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2020*, August 2020, p. 474, [www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/wp2020/DOJ2020\\_EN\\_Full.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/wp2020/DOJ2020_EN_Full.pdf).

<sup>88</sup> Oels, "From 'Securitization' of Climate Change to 'Climatization of the Security Field,'" p. 185.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ashley Westerman, "Some Pacific Island Nations Are Turning to China. Climate Change Is a Factor", *NPRWorld*, November 23, 2019.

important. The speech escalated the issue within the SP Div, responsible for ADF climate policy. In addition, to the extent that there is a directed expansion of HADR planning, the issue has been successfully raised within government through the 2020 Defence Strategic Update. However, on the back of arguably Australia's worst bushfire season,<sup>91</sup> it is difficult to determine whether the inclusion of HADR into the Strategic Update was influenced by the CDF speech, or rather, is the result of a normative shift within Australia brought about by the 2019-2020 Bushfires.

Beyond this, only time will tell how successful the CDF's speech has been based on the future actions and direction the ADF may take.

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<sup>91</sup> Lisa Richards, Nigel Brew, and Lizzie Smith, "2019-20 Australian Bushfires-Frequently Asked Questions: A Quick Guide," *Parliament of Australia Research Paper Series*, March 12, 2020, pp. 1-10, [parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/7234762/upload\\_binary/7234762.pdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/7234762/upload_binary/7234762.pdf), accessed January 13, 2021.



## Table 1. References

- <sup>i</sup> Climate change was included in both: Department of Defence, Defence White Paper, pp. 16-102; Department of Defence, *Defence Strategic Update*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, [www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020\\_Defence\\_Strategic\\_Update.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020_Defence_Strategic_Update.pdf).
- <sup>ii</sup> A uniformed member was appointed to the role of Defence Climate and Security Advisor in 2016, this position was more recently replaced with the position of Director Climate Policy and Strategy Team, staffed by a non-uniformed Defence Public servant leading a currently temporary team.
- <sup>iii</sup> A uniformed member was appointed to the role of Defence Climate and Security Advisor in 2016, this position was more recently replaced with the position of Director Climate Policy and Strategy Team, staffed by a non-uniformed Defence Public servant leading a currently temporary team.
- <sup>iv</sup> While a Strategic Policy Statement has been developed, it is not publicly available (redacted version available under Freedom of Information release), Department of Defence, "Strategic Policy Statement Climate Change Resilience," pp. 1-6.
- <sup>v</sup> Defence participates in Australian Government Disaster and Climate Resilience Reference Group. Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, p. 10.
- <sup>vi</sup> The force structure is framed around disaster response and humanitarian aid as opposed to climate change impacts: Department of Defence, *Force Structure Plan*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, pp. 12-104, [www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020\\_Force\\_Structure\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020_Force_Structure_Plan.pdf).
- <sup>vii</sup> AECOM, *Adaption + Planning Strategies*, p. 13.
- <sup>viii</sup> Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, p. 6.
- <sup>ix</sup> Further to references listed in original source, climate change is also included in: Former Vice Chief of Defence Force Ray Griggs, *Future Operating Environment 2035*, Commonwealth of Australia, November 15, 2016, pp. 1-50, [cove.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/08-09\\_0/08/Future-Operating-Environment-2035.pdf](http://cove.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/08-09_0/08/Future-Operating-Environment-2035.pdf).
- <sup>x</sup> Department of Defence, Written Submission 63, p. 6.
- <sup>xi</sup> Mandated targets have not been set however renewable energy is actively promoted in: Department of Defence, *Defence Estate Energy Strategy 2014-2019*, Commonwealth of Australia, May 2014, [www.defence.gov.au/estatemangement/governance/policy/environment/energyefficiency/Docs/DefenceEstateEnergyStrategyV2May14.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/estatemangement/governance/policy/environment/energyefficiency/Docs/DefenceEstateEnergyStrategyV2May14.pdf), accessed November 4, 2020.
- <sup>xii</sup> Only partially undertaken with respect to sea level rise, flooding and erosion. No evidence found for other extreme weather events. AECOM, *Adaption + Planning Strategies*.