

EMAIL TO THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD – 10 April 2018

Attention: Leigh

Australia must take a very strong stand.

The ACCCI has closely monitored since 2002 Global Economic Relations and the rise of Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin and PRC President Xi Jinping. Their countries separate and collective challenge to US global power is a feature of our era, and it has now reached dangerous levels of brinkmanship in most regions of the world.

From Australia's perspective past political and military certainties in Europe, West Asia, ASEAN, East Asia and the Americas no longer exist with dramatically accelerating political and social instabilities. However, over the last decade the increasing diplomatic penetration of the South West Pacific by Russia and China appears to have slipped the attention of most opinion leaders in this country - until today with the *Sydney Morning Herald* frontpage heading: "Pacific push: China plans military base in Vanuatu". Most China hands would say it was and is inevitable, and has regularly been predicted to little avail. Australia's lifelines to the UK and Europe, USA and Japan, are being cut making self-reliance an absolute imperative.

Can Australia allow uncontested Chinese and Russian military bases in our region whether Vanuatu, Fiji or elsewhere? If not what should be our response? Reciprocity in all our relations with concessions to the less powerful country. Most important a clear and unequivocal statement in opposition should be made by both the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister which is backed up by all the resources at Australia and its allies disposal including military force. To do otherwise is to allow a creeping takeover of the region and to degrade any confidence ASEAN might have in Australia's fortitude.

Australia desperately needs a new narrative based on our evolving cultural identity towards a Republic, and a China Mission plan which enhances our values beyond simply selling the country to the highest bidder.

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