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AUSTRALIA-US/EAST ASIA RELATIONS

THE DONALD DICHOTOMY: US LEADERSHIP WITHOUT THE LEADER

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The uncertainty generated by President Donald Trump has made Australia cling ever tighter to the US alliance. The Trump effect hit Canberra within days of Trump taking office. The phrase “shock and awe” springs to mind – rendered in the alliance realm as “shake and appall.” The first phone conversation between Trump and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull was a version of “shake, rattle and roll.” Canberra wants to play nice with The Donald, and say nothing publicly that is critical of the president. The template for the Australian approach was on display early when the president withdrew the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The Turnbull government expressed great regret at the decision but said nothing about the man who’d made it. While striving not to affront the president, Australia’s language about China has become shriller. Tongue-tied by Trump, Canberra gives stronger voice to concerns about China. Turnbull has referred to the “dark view” of a “coercive China” seeking Asia domination. Stern words about China’s threat to the rules-based system serve a dual purpose: speak to Beijing about the value of the system while implicitly pleading with the US not to abandon what it has built and policed – and mightily profited from.

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The Donald dichotomy

Donald Trump has caused a profound shift in the way Canberra thinks about a US leader, but not yet about US leadership. Call this The Donald dichotomy – seeking US leadership without the leader. Australia confronts an “America First” president who is sceptical of alliances and the international economic system the US created. Canberra is shaken by Trump’s view of alliances as lousy, zero-sum deals (US spends the dollars and gets zero from allies) and the economic and trade picture he paints using protectionist, mercantilist hues.

Australia seeks to Trump-proof the alliance with multiple layers of history and commitment. The art of this effort – and the discipline in its execution – is to lavish praise on the US while saying nothing negative about Donald Trump: stress US leadership, downplay the US leader. The strains in the dichotomy are obvious. The discipline is dressed with great swathes of affection for the alliance. If Canberra can’t say much nice about the 45th president, it talks of the wonderful things the US has done in the past and could do in the future. While a shaky template for building policy, it helps structure the speeches and statements. What Trump believes and what he wants to discard has become a subtext for foreign policy statements by the Turnbull government in 2017. Without naming Trump in many cases, Australia argues against the president by emphasizing the arrival of Asia’s new order, the deep foundations of the Australia-US alliance, the central role the US still has in Asia, and the vital interests of Australia (and the US) in a rules-based international order.

As an example of how Australia is dealing with The Donald dichotomy, a speech by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop in July on [“Trump and Asia”](#) (although the official title of the speech was “Address to 2017 Economic and Social Outlook Conference”) sets the tone. Her starting point was a simple statement of the sense of shock and shake: “The election of President Donald Trump in November 2016 raised concerns as to whether our international rules-based order would continue to be the bedrock for peace, stability and prosperity.” To dismiss that appalling concern, Bishop looked beyond Trump’s *Twitter* account to “analyse and respond to decisions and actions.” Then Bishop mounted the argument for the alliance and the

US role in Asia, directing it at the administration rather than the president:

Australia’s values and interests align more closely with those of the United States than virtually any other nation. While the bilateral relationship is mutually beneficial, America’s global leadership remains firmly in Australia’s national interest. We are working to ensure that the new administration is fully aware of the importance of our alliance and, of course, its broader global leadership role. In prosecuting Australia’s foreign policy, we must balance the need to pursue our interests and promote our values. They are generally mutually reinforcing, although it can lead to tensions at times. Our interests are in open markets and free trade, the maintenance of peace, prosperity, security, and stability.

Trump on the telephone

The initial shake-rattle-and-roll moment came just after the president’s inauguration, in a phone call between Trump and Turnbull in January. The policy focus of the call was Turnbull’s effort to get Trump to stick with an agreement that the US take up to 1,250 refugees from Australian detention centers on the South Pacific island of Nauru and Manus in Papua New Guinea. Asylum seekers hoping to reach Australia by boat are transported to the camps, to prevent them reaching Australian soil. Under the exchange agreed with the Obama administration, Australia would accept Central American refugees living in Costa Rica.

When the *Washington Post* gave an [account of the call](#) in February, it quoted Trump as fuming: “This is the worst deal ever.” The *Post* reported that Trump informed Turnbull that he had spoken with four other world leaders that day – including Russian President Vladimir Putin – and this was “the worst call by far.”

Trump, who one day earlier had signed an executive order temporarily barring the admission of refugees, complained to Turnbull he was “going to get killed” politically and accused Australia of seeking to export the “next Boston bombers.” Many of the people held on Nauru and Manus come from Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia, countries listed in Trump’s order temporarily barring their citizens from entry to

the US. A special provision in the Trump order allowed for exceptions to honor “a preexisting international agreement,” a line inserted to cover the Australian deal.

After the *Post* story, Turnbull said “these conversations are conducted candidly, frankly, privately.” The final shred of secrecy was shed in August when the *Post* published the [transcript](#) of the Trump-Turnbull conversation. It’s a record of a tough 24-minute exchange. Trump rails against Obama’s deal as Turnbull pushes to maintain the agreement. And despite his anger, Trump re-commits. At one point, Turnbull argues that “There is nothing more important in business or politics than a deal is a deal.” Turnbull tells Trump the US must maintain the deal even if it does little of what was agreed: “You can decide to take 1,000 or 100 [people]. It is entirely up to you. The obligation is to only go through the process.”

Near the abrupt end of the call, Trump complains that he’ll be seen as a “weak and ineffective leader in my first week... This is a killer.” Turnbull responds: “You can certainly say that it was not a deal that you would have done, but you are going to stick with it.”

Trump replies: “I have no choice to say that about it. Malcolm, I am going to say that I have no choice but to honor my predecessor’s deal. I think it is a horrible deal, a disgusting deal that I would have never made. It is an embarrassment to the United States of America and you can say it just the way I said it. I will say it just that way. As far as I am concerned that is enough Malcolm. I have had it. I have been making these calls all day and this is the most unpleasant call all day. Putin was a pleasant call. This is ridiculous.”

Turnbull: “Do you want to talk about Syria and DPRK?”

Trump: [inaudible] “this is crazy.”

Turnbull: “Thank you for your commitment. It is very important to us.”

Trump: “It is important to you and it is embarrassing to me. It is an embarrassment to me, but at least I got you off the hook. So you put me back on the hook.”

Turnbull: “You can count on me. I will be there again and again.”

Trump: “I hope so. Okay, thank you Malcolm.”

Turnbull: “Okay, thank you.”

And then, as the transcript aptly states: “End of call.”



1 On the telephone to Malcolm Turnbull – worst deal, worst call (Flickr)

After the [Trump-Turnbull telephone turmoil](#), Australia’s Foreign Minister Julie Bishop zoomed to Washington for talks with Vice President Mike Pence. The White House [readout](#) on that February meeting was a no-harm-done statement of alliance boilerplate: “The two reaffirmed the strong alliance between the United States and Australia and committed to maintaining the close ties of friendship between our two countries. The vice president thanked the foreign minister for Australia’s multifaceted partnership with the United States around the globe.”

When Pence visited Australia in April during an Asia-Pacific tour, the vice president [committed](#) to the “strong and historic” alliance while affirming that the Trump administration would [honor](#) the refugee deal: “Let me make it clear, the United States intends to honor the agreement, subject to the results of the vetting processes that now apply to all refugees considered for admission to the United States of America. President Trump has made it clear that we will honour the agreement. It doesn’t mean that we admire the agreement.”

The telephone acrimony framed the first tuxedo-plus-smiles meeting between Trump and Turnbull, in New York in May. To mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, the president and prime minister met on board the *USS Intrepid*, now a museum moored on Manhattan’s West Side. History has many uses.

As the glittering event on the World War II aircraft carrier showed, the shared memory of a vital moment of war can be used to burnish an alliance. Or it can bring leaders together. Whatever the shake and shock, the Trump-Turnbull relationship now has its *Intrepid* moment to balance the telephone tempest.



2President Trump and Prime Minister Turnbull meet in New York.

In a commentary for the US magazine *Foreign Affairs* – headlined [“Down and Out Down Under –Australia’s Uneasy American Alliance”](#) – the head of a Sydney think-tank, the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Michael Fullilove, said Australians saw Trump’s behavior in the January phone call as both appalling and revealing: “Australians are not delicate flowers. They have been known to use rough language. The problem was not the phone call itself but what it represented. It crystallized broader concerns about Trump’s worldview, which may have significant consequences for Australian interests and for Australian foreign policy in the coming years. It is conceivable that Trump’s presidency may push Australia away from the United States.”

The US-Australia alliance

“In this brave new world we cannot rely on great powers to safeguard our interests.”
Malcolm Turnbull, Singapore, June 2, 2017

“If there is an attack on the United States by North Korea, then the ANZUS Treaty will be invoked and Australia will come to the aid of the United States just as if there was an attack on Australia, the United States would come to our aid.”
Malcolm Turnbull, Canberra, August 11, 2017

Australian government pronouncements argue implicitly about the meaning of Donald Trump while explicitly averring the future of the alliance. The Donald dichotomy was on full display when Malcolm Turnbull mused that Australia couldn’t rely on “great powers” to care for its interests, and that the US alliance was no “straitjacket” on Australian foreign policy. The prime minister made those points in one of his major Asia speeches for 2017, addressing Singapore’s [Shangri-La Dialogue](#) in June. Here is a fuller version of his great powers thought: “In this brave new world we cannot rely on great powers to safeguard our interests. We have to take responsibility for our own security and prosperity while recognising we are stronger when sharing the burden of collective leadership with trusted partners and friends. The gathering clouds of uncertainty and instability are signals for all of us to play more active roles in protecting and shaping the future of this region.”

The founder of Turnbull’s Liberal Party, Robert Menzies, coined what became a famous alliance phrase, describing Australia’s reliance on its “great and powerful friends” (first Britain, then the US). Contemplate the moment, then, when one of Menzies’s heirs hinted that Australia couldn’t quite rely on our great and powerful friend. In Singapore, Turnbull’s embrace of the US came with tacit Trump cautions: “Our alliance with the United States reflects a deep alignment of interests and values but it has never been a straitjacket for Australian policy-making. It has never prevented us from vigorously advancing our own interests. And it certainly does not abrogate our responsibility for our own destiny.” Contrast that moment of alliance caution with Turnbull’s [“joined at the hip”](#) alliance pledge in August when tensions with North Korea were building. The prime minister said in any conflict between North Korea and the US, the ANZUS treaty would be invoked and Australia would join the fight.

After a phone conversation with Vice President Pence on North Korea’s threats, Turnbull said Australia would [stand with America](#):

The United States has no stronger ally than Australia and we have an ANZUS agreement and if there is an attack on Australia or the United States, then each of us will come to the other’s aid. So let’s be very clear about that – if there is an attack on the United States by

North Korea, then the ANZUS Treaty will be invoked and Australia will come to the aid of the United States just as if there was an attack on Australia, the United States would come to our aid. And you would remember on 9/11 when the United States was attacked, John Howard invoked the ANZUS Treaty and Australia came to the aid of the United States. We stand together as we have done for generations.

Australia's Donald dichotomy was addressed by Chairman of the US Senate Armed Services Committee Sen. John McCain in a [speech in Sydney](#) in May:

I realize that I come to Australia at a time when many are questioning whether America is still committed to these values. And you are not alone. Other American allies have similar doubts these days. And this is understandable. I realize that some of President Trump's actions and statements have unsettled America's friends. They have unsettled many Americans as well. There is a real debate underway now in my country about what kind of role America should play in the world. And frankly, I do not know how this debate will play out.

Sen. McCain said the US needed patience and understanding from Australia as well as its commitment to common interests and ideals. That request for continued commitment is being heeded, according to surveys of Australian thinking. The [annual Lowy poll](#) of Australian international sentiment found Australians dislike Donald Trump but have accepted he's in power, and they remain wedded to the alliance as crucial to Australia's security. The Lowy Institute commented on its 2017 findings:

“Before the November 2016 US election, Australians were extremely wary of the idea of a Donald Trump presidency and almost all of them would have preferred Hillary Clinton to win. However, they have swiftly come to terms with the reality of the Trump administration. Almost half of Australian adults said last year that Australia should distance itself from the United States if someone like Mr Trump were elected, but this year's Poll shows that Australians' affinity

with America and Americans remains intact, and support for the US alliance is rock-solid.”

The Lowy Institute reported that support for the alliance had rebounded, with 77 percent (up six points since 2016) saying the alliance relationship is either “very” or “fairly” important for Australia's security. Only 29 percent of Australians said “Australia should distance itself from the United States under President Donald Trump.” The number who said Australia should remain close to the US under President Trump is 65 percent (up 14 points from last year's 51 percent who said “Australia should remain close to the US regardless of who is elected US President”). However, Trump remained unpopular: 60 percent said he caused them to have an unfavorable opinion of the US (although nine points fewer than said the same about George W. Bush in 2007).

A survey of [America's role in the Asia Pacific](#) by the Asian Research Network – conducted in March – looked at responses to Trump in Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea. It found that Australians increasingly see China as having the most influence in the Indo-Pacific region (72 percent). More than half of Australians (62 percent) perceive US influence in the next five years as negative under President Trump. Despite this, most Australians (71 percent) still see the US as the global “rule setter” and the majority of Australian respondents (93 percent) believe in the Australia-US alliance, trusting that the US would come to Australia's aid in a crisis.

The alliance was at the heart of a Canberra speech in May by Defence Department Secretary [Dennis Richardson](#) on the final day of his 48 years as a public servant. Richardson had served as international affairs adviser to the prime minister, secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ambassador to the United States, and head of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. Richardson called for clear-eyed analysis of the alliance rather than an emotional reaction to Trump. The retiring secretary said Trump had “raised questions about the continued relevance and value of our alliance with the United States and the question of ‘independence’ in policy.” In answering those questions, Richardson said [ANZUS](#) was created in 1951 as a strong Australian initiative, embraced by a “somewhat reluctant” US. Since then, he said, Australian governments had

“generally been pragmatic and hard-headed in weighing alliance considerations on matters of peace and war. Understanding this is critical at a time when it is all too easy to opportunistically suggest that Australia lacks policy independence.”

Richardson said the alliance had proved remarkably resilient and adaptable: “It is, at the very least, as relevant in a multipolar world as in a bipolar one. And no other global power, current or prospective over the next 50 years, has a set of values and interests more closely aligned with Australia’s, than the United States.” The retiring defense secretary has long offered a simple formula to contrast Australia’s relationship with China and the US: “friends with both, allies with one.” The formula will continue to work, Richardson said, because “any notion that the growth in our relationship with China requires a recalibration of our relationship with the US is, in my view, inconsistent with the facts, and lacks logic or purpose.”

China as frenemy

In an unscripted aside during drinks at a public event in October, 2016, Malcolm Turnbull labeled China as both friend and enemy. When asked about China, the prime minister replied: [“You mean our frenemy.”](#) The Oxford dictionary defines a [“frenemy”](#) as “a person with whom one is friendly despite a fundamental dislike or rivalry.” The “frenemy” line ranks with the blunt assessment of Australia’s previous leader, Tony Abbott, who said Australian policy toward China was driven by [“fear and greed.”](#) Just as Abbott’s candid remark to Germany’s Angela Merkel eventually got into the newspapers, so Turnbull’s off-the-cuff assessment was revealed by the *Australian Financial Review*. The paper claimed the moment of candor demonstrated Australia’s [hardening attitude to its largest trading partner](#). The *Review* said that in his two years as prime minister, Turnbull had shifted from being a “panda hugger” to a “China hawk.” In foreign policy speeches in 2017, Turnbull and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop have offered evidence to support the idea that Australia’s China view is less hug, more shrug and tug. Key factors driving the tougher stance are:

- Concern at China’s role in the breakdown of the “rules-based global order.” The fear about fraying rules was

the central theme of Australia’s 2016 [Defence White Paper](#). (See last year’s Australian [Comparative Connections](#)).

- China’s coercive behavior in the South China Sea.
- China’s espionage and cyberattacks on the Australian government and business.
- China’s efforts to influence Australian domestic affairs through [Chinese Australians](#) and through donations to political parties. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the counter-espionage agency, has cautioned Australian political parties about the dangers of accepting millions of dollars in donations from [two billionaires](#) with links to the Chinese Communist Party.

In his Singapore [Shangri-La Dialogue speech](#), Prime Minister Turnbull warned of the “dark” prospects Asia would face from a “coercive” China. He challenged China to strengthen the regional order as it reaches for greater strategic influence:

Some fear that China will seek to impose a latter day Monroe Doctrine on this hemisphere in order to dominate the region, marginalising the role and contribution of other nations, in particular the United States. Such a dark view of our future would see China isolating those who stand in opposition to, or are not aligned with, its interests while using its economic largesse to reward those toeing the line... A coercive China would find its neighbours resenting demands they cede their autonomy and strategic space, and look to counterweight Beijing’s power by bolstering alliances and partnerships, between themselves and especially with the United States.

Turnbull’s Singapore speech enlarged on the China fears expressed in a March lecture, also in Singapore, delivered by Foreign Minister Bishop (entitled [‘Change and Uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific’](#)). Bishop depicted China “rising as an economic partner and geo-political and geo-strategic competitor with the US and other nations.” And she claimed that China does not have the values Asia’s system needs: “The

importance of liberal values and institutions should not be underestimated or ignored. While non-democracies such as China can thrive when participating in the present system, an essential pillar of our preferred order is democratic community.”

The strategic challenge China poses is underscored for the Australian polity by a growing understanding of the scope of China’s cyber and espionage attacks on Australia. The euphemisms about unfriendly foreign activity are being replaced by discussion of what China is doing and what it means. In his farewell speech as Defense Secretary, [Dennis Richardson](#), put it this way: “It is no secret that China is very active in intelligence activities directed at us. And it is more than cyber. That is no reason to engage in knee jerk anti-China decision making or to avoid seeking to build a stronger relationship with China. It is simply the world in which we live.” Richardson pointed out that China “keeps a watchful eye on Australian-Chinese communities and effectively controls some Chinese language media in Australia.”

At the Hamburg G20 Summit in July, Prime Minister Turnbull used brief bilateral talks with China’s President Xi Jinping to argue that China had key responsibility for dealing with North Korea’s nuclear escalation. Turnbull told journalists that his message to Xi was that “China has the ability to bring North Korea to its senses in a way that nobody else can, absent military force, and they should take that responsibility and act. It is very clear that escalation is becoming increasingly dangerous and China has the unique ability to take action.”

Trans-Pacific Partnership

Can you express a US institutional vision for the economic future of the Asia-Pacific without the US being a member? Can you create an enhanced trade structure to buttress the US strategic role in the Asia-Pacific if the US opts out of that trade pact? The answers to those questions should be clearer within months as the region struggles with the formation of a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) without the US as a partner. On his fourth day in office, President Trump signed an executive order formally withdrawing the US from the TPP. The [Washington Post](#) reported: “The order was largely symbolic – the deal was already essentially dead in Congress – but served to signal that Trump’s tough talk on trade during the campaign will carry over to his

new administration.” Dead for Trump and dead for Congress – yet the effort is on to give the TPP a fresh life for the remaining 11 nations that negotiated the trade partnership with the US.

The first top-level Australian response to the US withdrawal in January was a phone conversation between Prime Minister Turnbull and Japan’s Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, on a TPP without the US. Turnbull’s [initial response](#) to the president’s action was to look beyond Trump, both in the US and in Asia:

President Trump has said America will not proceed with the Trans-Pacific Partnership. You have to recognise that his Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, has been a long-time advocate for it. The Republican Party in the Congress have been strong supporters of the TPP. So it is possible that US policy could change over time on this as it has done on other trade deals. There is also the opportunity for the TPP to proceed without the United States and I’ve had active discussions with other leaders as recently as last night with Prime Minister Abe about that. We believe in trade.

Australia’s ratification of the TPP is on hold. In February, the Australian Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee reported on its [inquiry](#) into the TPP. The committee recommended that Australia should defer binding treaty action until the future of the TPP is clarified.

When Malcolm Turnbull met [New Zealand’s Prime Minister Bill English](#), in February, the two leaders agreed to work to deliver a TPP without the US. New Zealand joined Japan in leading the push. In May, New Zealand followed Japan’s lead and formally ratified the TPP – the first two nations among the original 12 nations to ratify. If a TPP covering all 11 nations isn’t achievable, a smaller version of TPP is being discussed, with five members – Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Brunei. With that as a “core” grouping, the effort is to bring other TPP members on board. The preference of this core is to retain the agreed terms of the TPP; an attempt to re-negotiate risks unravelling what was agreed in the negotiations that ran from 2008 to 2015.

In May, in Hanoi, ministers of the remaining 11 TPP countries – Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam – met to discuss the TPP, on the margins of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting. The ministers reaffirmed the “balanced outcome and the strategic and economic significance of the TPP,” highlighting its “principles and high standards” for regional economic integration. They agreed to assess options to bring the agreement into force quickly. Senior trade officials are preparing an assessment to be completed before another meeting of the TPP ministers to coincide with the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in November. The May statement of the 11 TPP countries kept the door open for Trump – or some future US administration – to think again about the agreement, expressing a “vision for the TPP to expand to include other economies that can accept the high standards of the TPP. These efforts would address our concern about protectionism, contribute to maintaining open markets, strengthening the rules-based international trading system, increasing world trade, and raising living standards.”

Australia’s Trade Minister, Steven Ciobo, said he’s “hopeful” that alternative arrangements for the remaining 11 TPP countries can be achieved during the November APEC meeting. If Donald Trump attends the Vietnam meeting as promised, he’ll be on hand to see whether the Asia-Pacific can give life to the TPP he rejected. It’s an appropriate metaphor for the way Australia is approaching The Donald dichotomy – embrace the US for its role and vision, even if that embrace can’t extend to the US president.

CHRONOLOGY OF AUSTRALIA-US/EAST ASIA RELATIONS

MAY – AUGUST 2017

Sept. 21, 2016: Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visits New York for [UN General Assembly](#) and [President Obama's summit on refugees](#).

Oct. 6, 2016: Australia and the US announce a deal to end the negotiating deadlock over who will pay for [facilities for US Marines training in Darwin](#).

Oct 12, 2016: Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong addresses the Australian Parliament.

Oct. 28, 2016: Australia and Indonesia hold their annual foreign and defense ministers meeting in Jakarta, focusing on counterterrorism and the potential return of foreign terrorist fighters.

Nov. 7, 2016: PM Turnbull announces a review of Australia's intelligence agencies.

Nov. 13, 2016: Australia announces a refugee swap deal with the US. The US agrees to accept some of the boat people refused entry by Australia, being detained on the Pacific island of Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island. In return, Australia is to accept South American refugees from a Costa Rica processing center.

Nov. 23, 2016: PM Turnbull gives Parliament a counterterrorism statement.

Dec. 14, 2016: Commander of US Pacific Command, Adm. Harry Harris, announces that *F-22 Raptor* fighters will operate out of northern Australia from 2017.

Dec. 20, 2016: Australia and France sign a A\$56 billion agreement to build the world's largest diesel-electric submarines in Adelaide.

Jan. 4, 2017: Head of Indonesia's Armed Forces, Gen. Gatot Nurmantyo, announces military activities with Australia are suspended because of offensive material on Indonesia in educational material used at a Perth military base where Indonesian Special Forces train. The announcement is rolled back within a week.

Jan. 9, 2017: Timor Leste scraps a seabed oil and gas treaty with Australia, as part of Dili's campaign to redraw the maritime boundary with Australia.

Jan. 14, 2017: Japan's Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visits Sydney and meets Turnbull on approaches to the new Trump administration.

Jan. 28, 2017: In a phone conversation with President Donald Trump, Turnbull pushes the new administration to implement President Obama's agreement that the US accept asylum seekers Australia is keeping on Nauru and Manus Island. Trump calls it a "dumb deal" and cuts short the phone conversation with Turnbull.

Feb. 10, 2017: A squadron of US Air Force *F-22 Raptors* arrives in the Northern Territory for the largest and longest rotation of fifth-generation aircraft to Australia.

Feb. 21, 2017: Following the telephone clash between Trump and Turnbull, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop heads for Washington for talks with Vice President Pence to reaffirm the alliance.

Feb. 22, 2017: Turnbull announces that next March he will host the first Australia-ASEAN summit.

Feb. 25, 2017: Indonesia's President Joko Widodo arrives in Sydney for talks with PM Turnbull.

Feb. 27, 2017: RAAF's first two *F-35A* fighter jets touch down on Australian soil.

March 7, 2017: PM Turnbull in Jakarta to attend the first leaders' summit of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

April 2, 2017: Mohammad Ashraf Ghani becomes the first president of Afghanistan to visit Australia.

April 8, 2017: Turnbull in Papua New Guinea.

April 10, 2017: Turnbull in New Delhi for talks with Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi.

April 18, 2017: In Darwin, the start of the sixth annual training rotation, involving 1,250 US Marines.

April 22, 2017: Vice President Mike Pence in Sydney for talks with the Australian government.

April 23, 2017: Turnbull visits Iraq.

April 24, 2017: Turnbull visits Afghanistan.

April 24, 2017: China and Australia agree to enhanced cooperation on cyber security.

May 4, 2017: In New York, Trump and Turnbull speak aboard the *USS Intrepid*, in a ceremony to mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea.

May 9, 2017: Australia's annual budget presented to Parliament.

May 29, 2017: US Sen. John McCain visits Canberra and meets Turnbull.

June 5, 2017: In Sydney, Defence Minister Marise Payne and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop host Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis for the annual Australia-United States Ministerial consultations.

June 14, 2017: To prevent a class action going to court, Australia's government agrees to pay \$70 million in compensation to 1,905 asylum seekers detained on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island between 2012 and 2016, plus legal costs estimated at \$20 million

June 20, 2017: Australia's military halts air operations over Syria as a precaution after the US shoots down a Syrian fighter jet.

June 29-July 25, 2017: Biennial US-Australia joint military exercise *Talisman Sabre* is held. More than 30,000 US and Australian personnel conduct their biggest ever joint exercises off the coast of Queensland and the Northern Territory.

June 30, 2017: After 14 years, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands ends. The RAMSI effort to stabilize Solomon Islands, involving Australia, New Zealand and 13 other Pacific countries, cost Australia \$2.8 billion.

July 5, 2017: Turnbull leaves for the G20 Summit in Hamburg, then to Paris to meet French President Emmanuel Macron, and London to meet British officials and the queen.

July 17, 2017: Turnbull announces new laws to allow the Australian Defence Force to deploy forces and even take charge during terrorist attacks on Australian soil.

July 18, 2017: Turnbull announces the creation of a new security ministry, the Department of Home Affairs, to control the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The review of Australia's intelligence services is released.

July 28, 2017: PM Turnbull appoints his chief of staff, Greg Moriarty, as the new secretary of the Defence Department.

July 29, 2017: Australian Federal Police conduct anti-terrorist raids across Sydney over an "advanced" plot to crash a commercial aircraft using a bomb/poison gas device.

Aug. 5, 2017: Three US Marines are killed in an aircraft crash, off the Queensland coast near Rockhampton, during a military exercise.

Aug. 7, 2017: In Manila, the seventh ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Security Dialogue, involving Australia's FM Bishop, US Secretary Tillerson, and Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono is held.

Aug. 14, 2017: Australia and Solomon Islands sign a security treaty for rapid Australian assistance to deal with future natural disasters or civil unrest.

Aug. 29, 2017: FM Bishop says Australia is prepared to expand its supporting role in the fight against Islamic State by sending troops to train and advise counterparts in the Philippines.