

Transcript: Peter Underwood Peace & Justice Lecture

'Can Diplomacy Work?'

16 June 2016

Presented by Dr Stephen FitzGerald

Nelson, thank you for inviting me to give this lecture. I think it's great that Friends' is honouring Peter Underwood in this way, and I'm very grateful to be part of marking his legacy.

I must say it's a long time since I stood on a stage at Friends'. I think the last time I was about 5 or 6, in a class play. It was Alice in Wonderland, and I was the mad hatter! Some people might say that explains a lot about my life, and they may be right. But today we're not going to talk about madness - except for war, which is a special kind of madness for which the world has yet to find an enduring cure.

One question, Nelson, you suggested might be valuable to explore is: can diplomacy work? And that's the thread through what I have to say today, but with a lot of excursions into other things including who makes international rules. And some history, because history is the most important of all subjects in understanding the issues of diplomacy and war and peace. At the end of this lecture, I'll come to the biggest current challenge to diplomacy and peace for Australia - the contest between the United States and China.

Because it is now possible, although not yet probable, that America and China will go to war, through brinkmanship on both sides, or miscalculation. If that happens, it is possible that Australia will find itself at war with China, through Australia's present unwise commitment to America's foreign policy goals rather than to our own national interests. If that were to happen, it would damage our economy, and also create division in society, possibly quicken and broaden the rise of race politics, and perhaps encourage the kind of right-extremism we see now in Europe. And it would diminish our capacity to influence events in our region through diplomatic means.

But first, to Peter Underwood. He was a friend at university. We were in different faculties, but we partied together and even collaborated in a takeover of the University Revue - I did the production and some of the acting and he did the box office and took the money and it was the most financially successful Revue ever, up to that time.

I think Peter would have made a good diplomat. Not that some people would have thought that, from their reaction to his Anzac Day speeches, in which he

challenged the glorification of war and said we had to question the causes of war, and how we got involved, and ask what are the alternative means of resolving conflict. For me, that speech was a landmark national statement, and a huge encouragement at a time of nationwide wallowing in nationalistic, militaristic sentiment about Australia at war. Peter was attacked, by people who seem not to want to ask these questions, for fear of what they might reveal, or who prefer glorification and the gloss and the fairy stories that go with it.

Diplomacy and Truth

Peter didn't become a diplomat of course. But I did. From the outside, it seemed both glamorous, and high-minded and serious. On the inside, it's sometimes all of those things, although a lot of it is also mundane and routine. A diplomat, after all, is still a public servant, just one who happens to work in an overseas service. But it can be an exciting profession, if you're interested, with lots of challenge and lots of fun including living in foreign countries. There was once an expression - no longer in everyday use - to describe staying in a foreign country. This was 'to lie abroad', the word 'lie' in the sense that we say a ship lies offshore or lies at anchor. But of course, to lie, now as in the past, also has the meaning 'to tell a lie'. A 17th century English diplomat Sir Henry Wotton used this expression with its double meaning in a statement which has since become much quoted: "An ambassador is an honest gentleman sent to lie abroad for the good of his country." His meaning then, and its invocation now, suggests that the practice of diplomacy is essentially about lying.

I'm afraid it sometimes, or perhaps often, is. But what I want to say is that to be effective, diplomacy must be about truth. In the pursuit or preservation of peace or the prevention of war (and diplomacy is often about other things), governments and diplomats must face the truth, tell the truth and act on the truth. The more they depart from this principle, the less effective will diplomacy be. And if an individual diplomat lies to a foreign counterpart and the lie becomes known, as sooner rather than later it usually does, that person will no longer be trusted and their diplomacy will be ineffective.

Truth and Fairy Stories

Here's an anecdote about truth and fairy stories. I was at kindergarten at Friends', and up to the end of junior school. In kindergarten, every morning first thing we sat in a circle and listened to a piece of classical music. And a piece that has stayed with me was Peer Gynt – beautiful, evocative music by the nineteenth century Norwegian Edvard Grieg, composed for a play by his fellow countryman Henrik Ibsen, based on a traditional fairy story. Our teacher told us stories from

the play. Peer Gynt seemed to us a romantic and heroic figure, travelling to faraway places and having exotic adventures. But what we didn't know, and at that age wouldn't have understood if we did, is the play was a satire on what Ibsen saw happening to his country, a critique of nationalism, and materialism, and the kind of personal qualities then popularly admired. Despite what seemed to us to be Peer Gynt's romantic nature, Ibsen's Peer Gynt is actually a liar, and an opportunist, described by one producer of the play as 'a charming bastard who deals in both weapons and people' – the latter referring to his trafficking in slaves from Morocco to China. In today's terms, Peer Gynt would also have to be one of the more sexist/chauvinist characters in literature. He gets into a fight at a wedding, steals and runs off with the bride, abandons her, has an affair with a troll and abandons her because she gets pregnant, is joined in the forest by another woman he fancied at the wedding, Solveig, and then abandons her and goes off to North Africa to other affairs and near marriages, and some wars, and then expects Solveig to be still around for him when he returns decades later as a very old man.

The truth as I knew it later is that behind the fairy story and the beautiful music, there was ugliness, violence, slavery, war and death. Don't misunderstand me. This was in no way a deception by my teacher. It was the way the story of Peer Gynt had come down to her generation over the preceding three or four. But my point is, it could be a metaphor for what we see today in world affairs, fairy stories cloaking violence and conflict, in deliberate deception. And it's not just individuals who spin the stories but governments. In 2003, for example, our government went to war in Iraq on the basis of a made-up story and in calculated deception of the Australian people, that Iraq's ruler, Saddam Hussein, had weapons of mass destruction. As I wrote with others in an open letter at the time:

If we cannot trust the word of our Government, Australia cannot expect it to be trusted by others. Without that trust, the democratic structure of our society will be undermined and with it our standing and influence in the world.

Despite the subsequent public revelations that there were no weapons of mass destruction, and the human disaster of that war, the Australian politicians who made the decision have never admitted the lie.

I didn't become a diplomat because of Peer Gynt. But my time at Friends' did influence the way I thought. I still speak of Friends' to others as a wonderful school, the kind you'd like every child to be in. And by the time I left, I'd ingested a deep sense of the rightness of the idea of peace. It was there in the culture of

the school, where peace was a conviction not an ideology, and religion not a doctrine to enforce how other people should behave. It was there in classroom teaching and stories about people working for peace, and in the way the school was run, from the discouragement of aggressive competitiveness in class and in sport to the intolerance (if I can use that word about Friends', because the culture of Friends was the essence of tolerance) – to the intolerance of all kinds of bullying. There was also a degree of gender equality unthinkable even in most other co-educational schools at the time. I was sad that for family reasons I had to leave the school for a secondary education elsewhere.

I became a diplomat twice actually, and the first time I'd just graduated from university, and the day I arrived in Canberra to begin I was told 'you will learn Chinese'. 'What!', I thought. Chinese! It was 1961. I didn't even know anyone who spoke Chinese, never to my knowledge even heard it spoken. And we didn't have diplomatic relations with China so as a diplomat I couldn't go there and use it. But it was the best decision that ever happened to me, because I became a Chinese speaker and specialist in the politics and modern history of China, and it set me on a path of excitement and adventure, took me into that extraordinary culture and its glorious cuisine, once nearly got me killed by Chinese Red Guards, found me in discussion with the famed people who led the revolution that transformed China, and brought me to where I could influence my country's foreign policies. I say, if you have the chance to become immersed in an Asian language and culture, and make yourself a career related to it, grab it with both hands.

Diplomatic Challenge of the Itch for War

However... There always seems to be a however. After about four years in the Department of Foreign Affairs, I ran into an ethical dilemma, of a kind that does, or should, confront most diplomats at some time. Before I joined Foreign Affairs, when I'd been at university in Hobart, a lecturer had raised this with me, asking: what would you do if you found yourself having to represent and defend to other governments and the world a policy to which you were fundamentally opposed? I told him glibly I'd resign, and didn't give it much further thought. But now, as I became expert in China, I came to believe the Australian government's China policy was wrong, and an encouragement to confrontation and conflict. We had refused to recognise the Communist government in Beijing, defying the principle that when a government has effective control of a country, it should be diplomatically recognised as the legitimate government, *whatever its political colour*. We were lining up with America in Cold War ideological and military confrontation of China. We were supporting the defeated opponents of the

Chinese communists, saying they were the government of the whole of China, a blatant fib that we maintained for more than twenty years. Non-recognition of Beijing of course meant non-contact, so with China we had no channel to talk, which is never in your own interests. But worse, by that time we were fighting in a hot war against Communist Vietnam, which Australia's then government said was really China's war and the Vietnamese were Chinese puppets – another fairy story to cover a war. The Vietnamese we were fighting were uncompromising nationalists, who would never have accepted direction or puppet status from the Chinese.

What to do? I was the only person in our service with a command of spoken and written Chinese and steeped in the politics and history, and I understood our government needed these skills. But while I made several attempts to press different views, I was too junior to have any influence on policy, and they barely took any notice. The only course I saw for me was to get out and try to do something about it in other arenas. So I resigned, went to the ANU to do a PhD, and became an activist in the anti-War movement and the public debate about China and Asia that raged in the second half of the 1960s. And in that arena, I was able to have the influence on policy that I could not have on the inside.

What does this say about the ethical challenge for diplomats? Well, that diplomats should follow the truth and their conscience. Some in my position might have acknowledged the same truth, but their conscience might have led them to stay in the service until they could become senior and influential enough to have some impact on policy. And that is valid too, and ethical. Ethical choices are often between two goods. But our diplomats today face serious ethical challenges relating to government policy on a range of issues, from asylum seekers to our bullying of tiny East Timor, and in my view they have a special responsibility to challenge government policy from within, or resign.

But this does lead me to another point, that for the professional diplomat interested in peace and alternatives to conflict, if you want to challenge and influence government policy this is often a struggle against the odds, because the reflex of many in government is to reach for the gun. Australia actually has had a track record in the past in making and contributing to peace, but it also has 'form' in the itch for war. Nothing like America, mind you. The United States has been at war somewhere on the planet in 226 of the 243 years since its founding in 1776. That's 93% of those years.

If you look at this year's Australian budget, you can see how we skew our priorities. Defence gets \$32.4 billion and Foreign Affairs or DFAT, \$7.4 billion. OK,

we can agree, it costs more to maintain an army than a diplomatic service. But over several governments, Australia has actually slashed the budget of DFAT. A major external study has identified what it called a diplomatic deficit in DFAT - meaning our diplomatic network is seriously overstretched and hollowed out and the capacity of our diplomats to do policy and diplomacy is severely inhibited. And our funding for overseas aid, an important instrument of peaceful diplomacy, is falling alarmingly – slashed last year by 1 billion and this year by another 224 million. Yet a few weeks ago we found it possible to make a forward commitment to an elastic \$50 billion for 12 new submarines.

It's hard for diplomacy when governments set their faces against peace, and this has been with us throughout history. One of the sadder episodes in modern times was the First World War. From the very beginning the casualties were unimaginably huge, and by the end of that four and a bit years' war there were 17 million dead including 7 million civilians, and another 20 million wounded. Now, over the course of the war, there were 26 credible opportunities for a negotiated peace by diplomats and others, an average of about six a year. But despite these diplomatic efforts from people in all the major combatant countries including Germany, these opportunities failed because they were rejected, ordered to cease or were otherwise thwarted by war parties in the respective governments, including Britain. One of the most wretched examples, not long before the end, was when the Lutheran Archbishop of Sweden convened a conference of church leaders to try to stop the war, and most Anglican bishops in Britain actually opposed the initiative, and the British Foreign Secretary declared that anyone who attempted to go to the conference would be denied a passport.

When the International Rules Aren't International

The First World War brings me to China. At the end of that war, China refused to sign the Peace Treaty. A principal reason was that the victorious powers – Britain, France, the US and their allies – were intent on making rules and drawing boundaries as they saw fit. In the Middle East we're still living with the terrible consequences of their decisions. And in the case of China, which had supported the allies against Germany, they took the parts of China that two decades earlier had been ceded to Germany by the old Imperial Chinese government and gave them to Japan. You can't say that this caused what happened in China and Japan over the next decades. But it certainly encouraged the war parties in Japan, who later invaded China, attacked America at Pearl Harbour and became the enemy in the Second World War of the powers who gave Japan these Chinese territories at the end of the First. And in China, the terms of that Peace Treaty provoked a popular uprising, which in part prompted the founding of the

Chinese Communist Party, which then fought its domestic rivals and Japan through appeal to nationalist anger over this and similar examples of foreign humiliation, and which seized power in 1949 and established a communist government, which is why we, Australia, decided to have no diplomatic relations with China for 23 years.

The lesson here is that when you want to make international rules without regard to fairness and the rights and claims of other and weaker parties, in the end you might get outcomes you don't like.

By the way, there's a lovely story about the chief Chinese representative at those peace talks, the Foreign Minister Wellington Koo. At a dinner during the talks, he was seated beside someone who, not knowing he was a fluent English speaker with a PhD from Columbia University in New York, patronised him in Pidgin English. "You velly good today?" "You can usee kniffee forkee?" "You likee soupee?" Dr Koo apparently smiled and nodded but did not reply. It happened that Dr Koo was the dinner speaker, and he gave a speech in perfect English, came back, sat down and said to his neighbour "You likee speechee?"

Diplomacy Can Make a Difference: The Case of China

What I've said about the struggle faced by diplomacy, however, should not be taken as a counsel of despair. Whether from inside or outside government, diplomacy is *always* worth the effort and it *can* make a difference, from the ceasefire that has held uneasily in the Korean Peninsula for 63 years, to the recent almost successful diplomacy in Syria.

A good example in modern Australian history was in fact with China, when China was the feared enemy, and we were fighting in Vietnam to stop China, our government said, from 'coming down' to get us. In 1971, then Leader of the Labor Opposition, Gough Whitlam, defied the pro-war government, opposition from senior diplomats in Foreign Affairs, resistance within his own party, some public cries of treason, and the risk to his own political future, and went to China and actually talked with the Chinese. I was not then a diplomat. I went with him as his China Adviser.

Our meeting with the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai, was memorable for the fact that it was so normal, so civil. Most Australians at the time wouldn't have thought a conversation with a Communist Chinese leader could be like this. And it worked. Although Whitlam couldn't implement his commitment to diplomatic relations until he won government eighteen months later, this initiative to break

through the war mentality set the course for a peaceful relationship with China over the 45 years since.

I'd never claim that what we did caused the United States to move on China, because it was already moving. But given that we were a US ally, our move was important to the momentum for a global shift to a more peaceful posture towards China.

And here, I want to suggest, whatever you do after leaving school, and whatever your political sympathies, and whether as ordinary voter or participant in our foreign relations in some way, that you support an independent foreign policy for Australia, independent of the US or China or any other Great Power, making our own assessments and decisions in our own national interests and rejecting being dragged into supporting other countries' wars. That's what Whitlam did, and it stuck. He infuriated US President Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger when he publicly denounced what was called America's 'Christmas bombing' of the Vietnamese city of Hanoi. They fumed and fulminated and wouldn't receive Whitlam in Washington for half a year. But in the end they backed down. Whitlam's policy of independence was not only a break with the past but a stand for peace throughout our region.

It also opened up space for his opponent, Malcolm Fraser, to follow suit.

Whitlam had sent me to China as Ambassador – the second time I became a diplomat. And it was from my work in Beijing that I came to understand that in diplomacy you often need to spend at least as much time persuading your own people as those on the other side. Many of our senior diplomats in Canberra were not reconciled to relations with China, and they sought in many ways to undermine the policy of the elected government. The most dispiriting example concerned disarmament. In 1975, after two years of talking, I got the agreement of the Chinese government, which was still testing nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, to begin talks on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. This was torpedoed by officials in Canberra, by the simple expedient of refusing to send a disarmament specialist to Beijing to begin the talks. An opportunity lost, and unrecoverable at that time because of the political turmoil in Canberra that led ultimately to the dismissal of Whitlam and the election of Malcolm Fraser. But a lesson for me, for not putting more diplomacy into persuading my own side.

I didn't know Fraser. When his party had last been in office it was furiously anti-China. But I believed it was critical that Australia not slip back into that mode, and instead maintain the constructive relationship with China we established in 1972. Fraser came to China half a year after he was elected and I spent days in his

company and hour upon hour in close discussion. He arrived, interested in China mainly because it had become the enemy of the Soviet Union. We had to convert that into an understanding of China itself and secure his commitment to the relationship, and we did both.

Fraser sealed the bipartisanship that became the mainstay of Australia's stable, managed, peaceful interaction with this great giant of a country, and it's held firm for four decades, albeit with some wobbliness in the recent past.

A Dominant China in our Region

Significantly, one of Fraser's first decisions on his return to Australia was to set up a special Council to promote cultural, scholarly and educational exchange with China. We had recommended this from the Embassy in Beijing, on the basis of the argument that: "there's a national interest in the promotion of ...(such)... exchange. Without this, our relations with China will never be more than superficial, and we'll be damagingly ill equipped to adjust to a China dominant in our region."

Few officials in Canberra accepted our view that China would become dominant in our region, and the head of Foreign Affairs, our chief diplomat, wrote to me, rebuking me for saying so. But it is now fact. What are we to make of this dominant China? Is it a force for peace, or something far less benign?

In my view China – by which I mean probably most (but not all) people in positions of decision-making, power, and influence – prefers to be a force for peace, living within its current boundaries as defined by China, not initiating war, not fighting wars to control resources or topple governments or force change in the political systems of other countries. China certainly wants to be the primary power in our part of the world, not by war against or occupation of other countries, but by the vigorous assertion of what is called soft power. I am also, by the way, very confident that no one in China wants war with Australia.

However, we must not be starry-eyed.

First, China has its own fairy stories. Don't believe anyone who tells you that China has never acquired territory through force of arms. China is the third largest country in the world by territory. It got there, over a period of two and a half thousand years, from a quite small territory in the north to its present size, as often by war as by negotiation or migration and settlement. And don't believe anyone who tells you that China in modern times has never initiated a war. In 1979, China went to war against its former ally, Vietnam – "to teach the Vietnamese a lesson", in the words of China's then leader Deng Xiaoping. Under

the communist government it has also been involved in the Korean War and in border wars with India and Russia, although who actually started those three is in each case in dispute.

Second, and more problematic, is that you can't be 100% confident that some interests in China won't want to pull foreign policy towards a more conflict-oriented posture. Remember that in America, US President Eisenhower, himself a former general, warned on the eve of his retirement in 1961: "we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist." Now, America's relationship with guns, both externally and domestically, is very different from China's. Traditional China in fact, since the Song Dynasty about a thousand years ago, had a disdain for the military. However, there are many actors influencing Chinese foreign policy today, the Chinese military has a size and influence that far exceeds anything in Chinese history, and China does now have something approximating to a military-industrial complex of its own.

Contest Between the US and China

And so, we have the potential for US-China conflict.

In one sense this is about who runs the world, or makes the rules, referred to now as 'the rules-based international order'. Here's what US President Obama had to say about this last year: "The world has changed. The rules are changing with it. The United States, not countries like China, should write them." Note that he doesn't say the United Nations, or even the United States plus its friends or allies. And remember the terms of the peace at the end of the first World War.

From a peace point of view, this is not encouraging, because it's not inclusive, not collective, and leaves different or opposing views unreconciled. If you were sitting in Beijing making China's foreign policy, what would you think? Of course, it's been this way at least since the end of the Second World War, but now China is in a position to object. It's not seeking sole rights for *itself* in making global rules. It just doesn't accept the idea of a US exclusivity, particularly on matters which affect China's economic and security interests.

Beneath this issue of rules, however, there's a more profound contest, and more blunt. It's between the old power, the US, which has been dominant in the world for the past hundred years, and the newly risen power, China, or more correctly the much older power that's made a comeback and is staking a claim to the dominant position it once held in Asia. The contest is not in one sense global, but rather a contest for what is called primacy, on the Asian side of the Asia-Pacific,

where the US has long been the predominant military power, but which China regards as its legitimate sphere of influence – in the same way the US has historically regarded its primacy in North and South America. It's a contest of far greater significance for Australia than faraway Iraq and Syria or our misguided military engagement there.

Neither side seems yet prepared to back away from its claim to primacy and hammer out an accommodation that would allow room for China. This, also, is not encouraging.

While China does not match the US in military might, it is nevertheless a rival to US power in a way the US has never experienced in its history, and the US, for all its protestations that it welcomes China's rise, is determined not to allow China the room it seeks. It has reinvigorated its military alliances with countries in the region including Australia, with intent to contain China; it has excluded China from the recently concluded major region-wide Trans Pacific Partnership in trade; it tried to talk other countries including Australia out of joining a China-sponsored bank dedicated to funding the enormous need for infrastructure in the region's poorer countries; and it is sending warships into Chinese claimed waters, an act it would never remotely accept around its own territorial seas. On the Chinese side, meanwhile, there is a powerful and popular emotional attachment to the story of the one hundred years of humiliation by foreign powers. US pushback against China's ambitions is seen by Chinese in this context, with often militant populist nationalist reactions.

The problem in the South China Sea has many levels of complexity, but at one level it expresses this contest, and there are fairy stories about it on both the US and Chinese sides. The Chinese for example say the islands and reefs and shoals and the waters around them are historically China's (which you can only accept with a stretch of the imagination) and that no other country has a legitimate claim (which is not true). China is making submerged reefs into islands with military installations (which would be its right, *if* they were undisputed Chinese territory which they are not).

America, and our politicians and our defence establishment in Canberra, say this is aggressive (it is certainly assertive and in my view unnecessarily provocative but not exactly aggressive), and that China is threatening commercial navigation. There has in fact been no instance of China interfering with commercial navigation in these waters, and it is highly unlikely that there will be because the only major power with a vital strategic interest in freedom of navigation in the South China Sea is China itself. Much of its trade including 80% of its crude oil imports pass through this sea. What it *is* seeking to prevent is incursion by

foreign *military* ships and aircraft, and this is the real reason for America's agitation, because it challenges America's primacy and hitherto unrestricted military passage in these waters.

President Obama wants everyone including China to comply with the the rules of the international order. But the relevant rules here are the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. And the US itself has not signed this convention.

Can Diplomacy Work?

So we have a stand-off, and this is a really tough one for diplomacy, because very large powers like these two are not easily amenable to being negotiated away from determined positions. But I believe there are ways out of the impasse, and these lie with America's friends and allies, *if* they are prepared to be independent. Australia's strong and unquestioning support for America's assessment of China and the US military stance, simply affirms and reinforces Washington thinking. We do have a voice in Washington. It's just that we're not using it in the interests of defusing this contest or pushing ideas and proposals for accommodation. We have a somewhat similar potential on the Chinese side, again if we are independent. The more we are seen to be in the pocket of the United States, the less persuasion we will have in Beijing.

It is a mystery to me why, after Julia Gillard agreed with China to have a strategic partnership, we have never taken that up in any serious way, in the way for example the Germans have with China. We could do worse than work closely with the Germans on this issue. But we have an opportunity closer to home, in Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian countries are as alarmed as we are at the possibility of conflict between America and China, but also as interested as we are in maintaining good relations with both. The Southeast Asians are our natural friends and allies in the diplomacy of US-China relations, but we are not using these relationships to make common cause in conflict prevention.

It is rumoured that in the recent meeting between Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the two agreed they would not allow an escalation into war over the South China Sea. If that is true, it's welcome news. There is ultimately no substitute for getting the leaders of China and America together, as frequently as possible, and that should be an aim of our diplomacy. In all my experience of China, it is at that level and usually only at that level that you can get movement on intractable issues.

If we can help bring that about, I'm optimistic about a peaceful outcome. But I recognise that you have to be concerned at the wild unpredictability of a possible

President Donald Trump – another reason for Australia to keep its independence, and its distance.

Values and Foreign Policy

A final note, on values. We haven't always been exemplary international citizens and we've been involved in wars we should never have got into, but we used to have a pretty good record as a humanitarian and compassionate country, upholding democratic ideals and freedoms and the rule of law. This was why we were sometimes able to take a lead on big international issues like the founding of the United Nations, or peace initiatives as in Indonesia at the end of World War II or Cambodia in 1993. We have lost something of that reputation, not least because of our treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, but also because of back-tracking and double-guessing on climate change, the reduction in our aid, and some of our more undemocratic domestic legislation enacted in the name of security and anti-terrorism. Many thoughtful and influential people in Asia, including many who once looked to Australia as an exemplar, now have a sceptical view of Australia's stand on values. If we don't nurture our values at home, our diplomacy suffers.

This brings us back to truth. The problem of values lies with our politicians, on both sides, who flatly deny there has been any change in the values their policies represent or in external perceptions of Australia, and who reject criticism, for example by United Nations representatives, as an affront. This is fed by a largely values-free media. It's said that 'truth is the first casualty of war'. It can now also be said that truth has become the first casualty of politics. Our task is to wrest our politics away from the spin and the lies and the fairy stories, and back to the values it once had and which I believe most Australians still hold, and then good and effective diplomacy will follow, in the cause of peace.