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| |  | | --- | | Each week, some of our Councillors and interns share a selection of articles, analytical pieces, videos and podcasts about what is happening in the world of international affairs. This week, our Councillors explore various perspectives on Russia's war in Ukraine and the role of China in the upcoming Federal Election.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by Councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |

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| |  | | --- | | A picture containing red, auditorium  Description automatically generated | | [**China and the Federal Election**](https://johnmenadue.com/australia-is-still-in-fear-of-china/)  China relations have featured in the election campaign, which is rather unusual. The Liberals say that Labor is soft on China and Labor counters by accusing the Government of botching relations with the Solomon Islands, who have signed a security treaty with the PRC. Although Solomons Prime Minister Sogavare has denied that the treaty was timed to disrupt the Australian election, whatever the case, the development is clearly a major concern and deserving of some informed analysis. There has been a lot of press comment on the significance of the agreement, from which I recommend two short posts in the current affairs blog Pearls and Irritations by former Director General of the Office of National Assessments Geoff Miller, [***Ukraine, India, China and Australia: A Khaki Election?***](https://johnmenadue.com/ukraine-india-china-and-australia-a-khaki-election/) and [**Australia is Still in Fear of China**](https://johnmenadue.com/australia-is-still-in-fear-of-china/). Hamish McDonald, writing [**in the Sydney Morning Herald**](https://www.smh.com.au/national/from-china-to-climate-and-covid-does-australia-really-care-for-the-pacific-20220429-p5ah34.html?ref=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_source=rss_feed), considers what Canberra’s handling of the Solomons’ security agreement reveals about the priorities and performance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and security agencies. He makes the point that a definite commitment by the government to action on climate change would do a lot to boost relations with Pacific Island neighbours. Bernard Keane and Clinton Fernandes in a piece in Crikey on 29 April titled [**Seeing Signs: Intelligence Chiefs Dig Deeper on Solomons Debacle**](https://www.crikey.com.au/2022/04/27/solonons-debacle-intelligence-chiefs-dig-in-deeper/) analyse what they call a major intelligence failure that Andrew Shearer, current head of ONA, admits goes back more than a decade. University of Adelaide's Professor Joanne Wallis and Dr Czeslaw Tubilewic, [**writing in The Conversation**](https://theconversation.com/saying-china-bought-a-military-base-in-the-solomons-is-simplistic-and-shows-how-little-australia-understands-power-in-the-pacific-180020)[**,**](https://theconversation.com/saying-china-bought-a-military-base-in-the-solomons-is-simplistic-and-shows-how-little-australia-understands-power-in-the-pacific-180020) says that Canberra does not understand power dynamics in the Pacific Islands and denies the commonly-held view that China “bought” a military base in the Solomons. China’s foreign affairs spokesperson Wang Wenbin (as might be expected) has said the framework agreement is “normal exchange and cooperation between two sovereign and independent countries.”  Image credit: [**Joe and Margy**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/joemargy/9791223223/in/photolist-fVdzxv-4yfhUK-4hCEbH-FxSppN-FPPbNY-25at3H2-FVG9FU-FPPax1-FPPaoo-FxSofJ-FXZ2Vn-FxSpp7-FPPaAN-FVG9C7-FxSpoW-FS8fJ4-FVG8EA-FxSo5o-FPPbm5-FXZ3Ye-FS8gGM-F3Jc5k-FxSpmb-F3xvvS-FVG9hC-cTfC8J-kwrL3c-26PauTi-81rQMx-2ka8vGp-FPPbSL-FVG9Cs-2kBfNxi-2mWSFym-2mJeWpk-FPPb7C-F3xv4j-FS8fYH-dScbBF-FxSoRo-FS8gCP-FXZ3ZB-6J3qKe-F3JaRZ-FxSoay-FxSomf-2mRRWjf-FVG8KL-F3xvg3-F3JaJ4) | |

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| |  | | --- | | A couple of people walking on a sidewalk next to a wall with graffiti  Description automatically generated with low confidence | | **Ukraine and the Bomb**  Before gaining its independence in 1991 Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union and was host to elements of Moscow’s strategic nuclear strike. It is estimated that the weapons then located on Ukrainian territory amounted to the world’s third largest nuclear armory. What if Kiev had been able to keep these weapons? [**John Mearsheimer**](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/1993-06-01/case-ukrainian-nuclear-deterrent), a prominent US authority on international security, argued in 1993 that it should. In the wake of the current war in Ukraine, Mearsheimer argues that If Ukraine had nuclear weapons Russia would have been deterred from invading. Australian scholar Maria Rublee has labelled this speculation as a [**fantasy**](https://www.iiss.org/blogs/survival-blog/2022/03/from-the-archive-ukraine-a-fantasy-counterfactual); the nuclear weapons in newly-independent Ukraine were not Kiev’s to keep and Moscow would never have left them there. Their repatriation to Russia was strongly encouraged by the United States among others. A home-grown nuclear weapons program in Ukraine was never really on the table: Kiev had too few resources and too many competing priorities   But states around the world might read the situation differently. States more able to build nuclear weapons than Ukraine, and which depend on alliance guarantees for protection – examples in our region are Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – might take away the message that, in certain circumstances, those you depend on can be deterred from extending support. Despite generous NATO assistance for Ukraine and regardless of appeals from Kiev, the Western allies have made it clear that they will not push involvement to a level that risks war with Russia. So no boots on the ground or planes in the air – things that many commentators think would make a real difference in resisting Russian aggression. NATO is not obligated to support Ukraine because the latter is not part of the Alliance, but has deemed that it is in its interests to do so. Its caution about pushing involvement too far is prompted by the understandable fear of nuclear war, which has influenced Western responses to aggression as far back as Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.   So, what might a state in Ukraine’s situation do? It might be tempted to develop nuclear weapons of its own – a deterrent that it alone can brandish. And there would be nothing new about this reasoning, which has featured in the thinking of all of the world’s existing nuclear powers. But this is a frightening prospect and one that would undermine the relatively successful global structure of nuclear nonproliferation.   Image credit: [**Duncan C**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/duncan/51949971868/in/photolist-2n9DbJ9-2n68xQo-2hD92gt-2nfi2ST-2n8PcLD-2ncimkJ-2n5Ejxh-2n8o44w-2n6eUrS-2n8wXff-2n9pZj5-2n6aDwx-4g4veA-5oUxiT-5oUxFk-5oYQf5-2n7Vk34-5oYPPm-5oUxHF-5oYQh3-MY4tiv-7LGSrC-7LGSLY-7LGRtW-XSmjv-7LGRLN-7LCU2i-7LGQVL-7LCVzc-7LGSR5-9EBxPe-2hN34JV-2hBiLHE-2n5xcre-2nb3e75-2hMrhPn-2n6bWmf-2n6Af9T-2m8Qdki-2n8p2Gg-2n9EUdk-2nfRPsK-2naZGGe-Bu1Zd1-LRYPuq-riRFUS-GtDVx1-2n6EjUt-2n7yHdS-bu6tjA) | |

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| |  | | --- | | These articles were selected by Dr Bob Howard. Bob researches aspects of the history of international relations in the twentieth century, with special reference to developments in international security. He is an honorary associate and former lecturer in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney and has written extensively on international relations, international security and Australian politics. | |

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| |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Drew Beacom. Drew is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Advanced Studies (International and Global Studies) at the University of Sydney. Drew has spent the past year as a councillor on the University of Sydney Student Representative Council, holding the position of Environment Officer, and is currently a delegate to the National Union of Students. | |

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| |  | | --- | | * Writing for The Strategist, Jack Norton [**analyses**](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/china-solomons-deal-politically-illiterate-if-beijing-wants-better-ties-with-australia-rudd/)former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's address concerning the recent China-Solomons security deal, particularly noting the future political complexities precipitated by the current situation. * On the Council for Foreign Relation's podcast The World Next Week, James M. Lindsay and Rob McMahon [**discuss**](https://www.cfr.org/podcasts/federal-reserve-committee-convenes-us-leads-un-security-council-and-more)the impacts of the US Federal Reserve raising interest rates, the US assumption of the presidency of the UN Security Council, and Japan’s recent changes to its security and defence policies in light of its Constitution Memorial Day. * Mucahid Durmaz and Murtala Abdullahi, writing for Al Jazeera, [**consider**](https://www.aljazeera.com/podcasts/the-inside-story-podcast)the advent of private armies in African conflicts, noting the prevalence of influential mercenaries on a continent where armies are increasingly unable to curtail the orbit of armed groups. * Writing for The Diplomat, Raymond E. Vickery Jr. [**analyses**](https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/india-us-relations-and-the-jaishankar-doctrine/) the recent "2+2 Dialogue" between the United States and India, highlighting the lack of attention paid to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the historical context that is shaping current foreign policy. * In The Interpreter, Kirsten Han, [**explores**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/death-penalty-singapore-s-growing-abolition-movement) the rising popularity of the abolition movement in Singapore in the aftermath of the execution of Nagaenthran K Dharmalingam, who was executed in spite of his cognitive impairments and a popular campaign to pardon him. * Writing for The BBC, Nick Marsh [**discusses**](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-61295238) the divisions that persist within Sri Lankan society, as citizens of all religious backgrounds unite against the current Rajapaksa Government. | |

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| |  | | --- | | **Get involved!**  We're committed to keeping conversations about international affairs going, so get involved in our Letters to the Editor section!  Each week, we publish letters from our subscribers about what they think of the issues we’re discussing.  You can take part in the conversation by emailing us with your comments on each edition's articles. There are just a few simple guidelines: letters should be no more than 100 words in length, and should only be about the previous edition's articles. Please include your name and affiliation, and a mobile number (which won't be published). If you are a university student, please include your university and current degree.  Send all letters to the editors at [**aiianswletters@gmail.com**](mailto:aiianswletters@gmail.com) by Wednesday at 5pm Sydney time for the chance to be published in the following fortnight's newsletter. | |

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