

Gareth Smith

*Australia desperately needs to invest in non military ways to resolve tension and conflict.*

Australia is in a unique strategic situation being bordered by the Indian and Pacific oceans. The US is not alone in "pivoting" towards the Pacific which is rapidly becoming a military hotspot given the struggle for dominance between China and itself. Nuclear India has an impressive blue water navy with which it is projecting military force and, given its tension with both Pakistan and China (nuclear powers), threatens regional stability. Australia in concert with the US, as usual, adopts a bellicose response to China and phrases like "the drums of war" are aired from the citadels of power.

Australia is uniquely placed to establish a southern hemisphere equivalent to SIPRI which would be a bi-regional resource centre for non-violent conflict resolution, peace research, human rights and humanitarian law. Having such a centre would broadcast Australia's commitment to non-militaristic problem solving and would be a resource to which regional nations could make recourse. It would offer mediator's services to nations in dispute and inform government on ways to build confidence and trust and how to achieve negotiated settlements. The current Afghan debacle and that of Iraq before it should hammer home the fallacy of resorting to military "solutions".