**Transcript**

***Professor Nick Bisley – The least distrusted power***

The past thirty years in Asia have been a period of unprecedented peace, stability and economic growth. One of the questions that a lot of people ask is “Why has Asia been so peaceful?” Prior to that period, so the period after World War II through to mid-1970s, Asia was one of the most bloody parts of the world, the Vietnam war, the Korean war with millions killed. From the mid-1970s onwards however it’s been a period of absolute, almost tranquillity and with that has come remarkable economic growth. The normal answer to that question “Why has Asia been so peaceful for the past 30 years?” is normally given as because of America. America have 100,000 troops in the region, it’s the unquestioned pre-eminent military power and is thought to be their kind of peacemaker in chief. What my research is looking at is whether that proposition is in fact true. Is it the case that America’s presence in the region for the past thirty years is the thing that has made the difference? What I am looking at is whether in fact while that is important, whether in fact it’s the decisions and behaviour of Asian states and their desire to be much more inwardly focused and less concerned with fighting ideological and territorial battles that is in fact the reason for the region’s period of remarkable peace. Because if that is the case, if it is that America is not in fact the key to regional peace, then the kind of transformation that we are seeing in the world and in Asia in particular, that is where America is becoming less powerful, less militarily capable on the back of its significant economic problems then we probably have less to worry about than people think.

It’d be nice to say it would change the world but what I am hoping to do is to provide sound findings that will be able to make meaningful contributions to policy planning for both Australia but also for the region as to how we can manage the coming 50 years to ensure that they are as peaceful as the past 30 years. Asia, as well know, is in a period of very considerable change. China is rising. India is rising. America is on the wane in many people’s minds and historically these are periods of power transition that have been very, very dangerous and there is a great deal of uncertainty in the region on how to manage it. What I’m hoping to do through this research is to provide, you know, some empirically sound, theoretically strong findings that can help provide better answers to the “How do we make Asia, the Asian century a peaceful century?”