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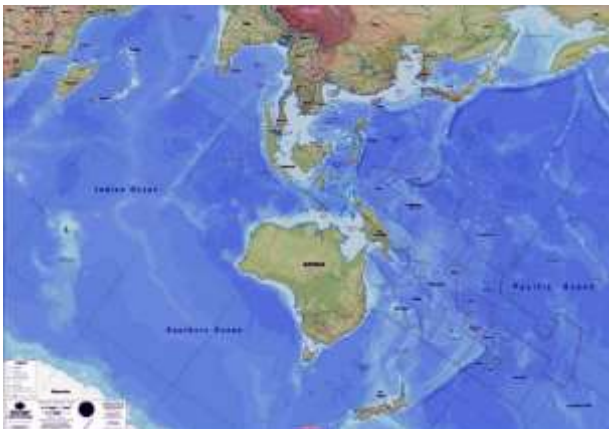
Geopolitica-mente

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AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGIC REVIEW

A new Australian Strategic Doctrine

An island continent positioned at a strategic crossroads in the Indo-Pacific theatre, Australia is preparing to meet the geopolitical challenges of the 21st century through a new edition of the National Defense Strategic Review - colloquially abbreviated as The Review - published in June 2023.



- PHOTO 1 -

An "australocentric" map of the Indo-Pacific theatre which highlights the maritime nature of the theatre itself and the position of Australia as an island-continent. (ADF).

The document made public by the Australian authorities is a disclosed version from which a series of considerations and recommendations of a classified nature have been appropriately expunged; nevertheless, The Review takes on

particular significance also in the light of the political initiatives undertaken, or to be undertaken, by the Labor government led by Anthony Albanese, in office since May 2022. In addition to defining Australian military policy and strategy, The Review aims to identify priorities in defense capability investment and assesses the military force structure needed to meet national security challenges in the decade 2023- 2033 and beyond. The Review is therefore summarized as a long-term strategic vision, necessary to better direct the use of the resources necessary to satisfy the national security requirements for a country like Australia which, in recent times, has been in the limelight for the choices made about military modernization. In this context, investing in partnerships hinged on the Indo-Pacific theatre remains an essential factor to allow Canberra to concentrate on collaborating primarily with the nations of South-East Asia and the Pacific, without however neglecting an expansion towards other important realities such as India and Japan, with which Australia collaborates in the framework of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, better known as the Quad and to which Washington also contributes. It is therefore evident a theater of

action with significant maritime peculiarities that embraces the regions of the Indian Ocean (we must remember the contribution of the Australian Navy to the fight against maritime piracy in the Somali basin), of Southeast Asia (with the Strait of Malacca choke points of vital importance for planetary maritime traffic) and of the central-western Pacific Ocean strip north of the Australian island continent.



- PHOTO 2 -

The amphibious assault ship *Adelaide* is one of the 2 units responsible for power projection, also through support missions to civilian populations affected by disasters (ADF).

The current structure of the Australian military instrument (officially known as ADF, Australian Defense Force) is based on a model that reflects times gone by and which does not adequately reflect an overall requirement suitable for the new strategic context perceived in Canberra. It is therefore necessary to modify the structure of the ADF to make it suitable for responding to threats and risks, to maximize the exercise of deterrence and to provide the political authority with a wide range of military options: according to The Review, this is achieved by evolving the ADF into a truly integrated military tool (Integrated Force) that generates and exploits capabilities and effects

in all five domains identified in the document, namely maritime, land, air, space and cyber.

The operational success of an ADF called to evolve towards an Integrated Force is linked to the development and application of the following capabilities:

- underwater capabilities, through manned and unmanned units, optimized for persistent and long-range intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance (ISR) and strike operations;
- enhancement of integrated capabilities for target designation and long-range multi-domain strike;
- creation of a fully integrated and enabling system for amphibious operations;
- enhancement of multi-domain capabilities for sea denial and sea control operations limited to determining maritime areas;
- ability to create an expeditionary architecture for air operations;
- enhancement of integrated anti-aircraft defense and anti-ballistic missile capabilities;
- creation of a logistics architecture for expeditionary joint operations, characterized by high mobility and strategic depth;
- creation of a theatre command and control architecture enabling Integrated Force operations;
- development of an infrastructural network concentrated in the northern Australian regions enabling the functions of logistical support, deterrence and opposition to external threats.

Significantly, it placed underwater capabilities at the top of the list, with a clear link to the modernization and enhancement of Australia submarine component through the now widely known strategic-political partnership between Australia, United Kingdom and United States, better known as AUKUS. Thanks to it and to

other bilateral agreements between London, Washington and some pro-Western Asian nations, we are witnessing the restoration of a chain of naval bases and support/supply points which, originating in Europe and United States, reaches up to the Far East and evokes in a certain sense the era of maximum expansion of British naval power, now transformed into Anglo-American naval power and to which the AUKUS-SSN underwater construction program could also contribute.



- PHOTO 3 -

The 5th generation F-35A aircrafts in service with the Royal Australian Air Force are assets of the highest value for achieving the objectives set out in The Review (ADF)

In The Review's definition, Australian political and military decision-makers are aware that the objectives to be achieved represent so many ambitions, that they are not free from important risks and that they nevertheless represent significant challenges. Briefly, risks and challenges include understaffing (an issue that requires an entirely new approach to recruiting and retaining skilled personnel), program management (as evidenced by the decision to acquire nuclear-powered submarines after the failure of the "Attack" program in cooperation with France and the long and onerous times of

the "Hunter" program for new frigates) and - key aspect - financial resources.

The Review states that restructuring the financial programming for the decade 2023-2033 requires an investment estimated at 42 billion Australian dollars - equal to about 25 billion euros - in addition to the funds allocated in the "regular" Australian military budget, which the Review does not quantify. Moreover, the document explicitly states that an estimate of all the costs necessary to implement the recommendations contained therein can be made after the decisions taken by the Ministry of Defense in Canberra.



- PHOTO 4 -

Landing operations of an Australian Army LAV-25 rotated aircraft from a Navy landing craft: one of the objectives of the Review is a maximally synergistic Integrated Force.

Basically, there are two key factors in the entire Review - the economic sustainability to achieve

the set objectives and the ability to manage complex programs for new vehicles and systems -, to which one should add an important corollary, i.e. the creation of a suitable industrial frame to ensure at least the technical-logistical support to the sophisticated systems destined to enter into service. These are key factors that hide many risks and pitfalls,

as demonstrated by the problems encountered above all in the field of naval procurement and which at the same time represent stimulating elements that make it interesting to carefully follow the developments of the entire renewal process of the Australian military instrument.

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He was on board both on submarines of the underwater component of the Navy and on board of surface ship. He was subsequently employed at the Navy Headquarter in the General Directorate of Naval Armaments, the General Secretariat of Defence/National Armaments Directorate and the Naval General Staff, in tasks relating to the procurement of naval systems and International Cooperation. In the period 1993-1996 he was assigned to the NATO Headquarters in Brussels, dealing with Military Policy and Force Planning. In the period 2005-2011 he worked at the "Central Office" of the *Organization Conjointe pour la Cooperation en matiere d'Armaments* (OCCAR) in Bonn, dealing with the management of cooperative armament programs and disciplines in the program management sector. He is a well-known writer on naval matters.

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