



BALANCING THE TABLES: CREATING A RESILIENT SOURCE OF NATIONAL POWER FOR AUSTRALIA THROUGH DEFENCE CAPABILITY

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JCSP 49

Exercise Solo Flight

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PCEMI n° 49

Exercice Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE - COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 49 - PCEMI n° 49
2022 - 2023

Exercise Solo Flight – Exercice Solo Flight

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BALANCING THE TABLES: CREATING A RESILIENT SOURCE OF NATIONAL POWER FOR AUSTRALIA THROUGH DEFENCE CAPABILITY

On 08 February 1942, the Japanese military achieved a stunning victory over a British force twice their number to capture the fortress of Singapore. This victory established the Japanese Empire as the dominant power in the Pacific and opened the pathway for them to invade Australia.¹ Despite being isolated, with no confirmed allied military support forthcoming, Australia maintained an attitude of realism as expressed by the Prime Minister Sir John Curtin.

*Britain has fought and won in the air the tremendous battle of Britain. Britain has fought, and with your strong help, has won, the equally vital battle of the Atlantic. She has a paramount obligation to supply all possible help to Russia. She cannot, at the same time, go all out in the Pacific. We Australians, with New Zealand, represent Great Britain here in the Pacific - we are her sons - and on us the responsibility falls.*²

This sentiment of national responsibility was also echoed by the Commander-in-Chief of Australian military forces, General Sir Thomas Blamey who stated that "The defense of Australia must be based on the ability of the Australian soldier to fight and win battles".³ However, despite Australia's realism in needing to defend itself, the nation was still aware that it did not possess sufficient national power to stand alone. At a time of national peril, Australia turned its strategic outlook towards the United States of America (USA). Sir John Curtin expressed this intent clearly by stating "Australia now looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom".⁴ The events of 1942 were fundamental to shaping Australia's subsequent strategic defence outlook and how the nation generates its military capability.

Transitioning to the 21st Century, military capability remains an essential component of national power to be wielded as part of a Whole of Government approach to national defence. For Australia, the issue of whether the nation should generate its military capability from a position of self-reliance remains an ongoing debate across members of the Australian Government, Australian Defence Force (ADF) and academia. Within an evolving global strategic context, Australia's strategic defence outlook and policies are consistently reviewed and contested in a bid to best enable the ADF to generate the military capability it requires. Since Federation, Australia's strategic defence view has vacillated between two lines of strategy.⁵ The first being, a strategy of "self-

¹Alan C. Headrick and Operations Naval War Coll Newport Ri Dept Of, "Bicycle Blitzkrieg: The Malayan Campaign and the Fall of Singapore," (1994).

²John Curtin: 'We are fighting mad', WW2 radio broadcast - 1942," 1942, 2023, <https://speakola.com/political/john-curtin-fighting-mad-broadcast-1942>.

³Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, "The Foundations of Victory: The Pacific War 1943-1944" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the 2003 Chief of Army's military History Conference, Canberra: Army History Unit, 2004).

⁴John Curtin, "The Task Ahead," news release, 1941, <https://john.curtin.edu.au/pmportal/text/00468.html>.

⁵Russell W. Glenn, "Strategic studies in practice: An Australian perspective," in *New Directions in Strategic Thinking 2. 0*, ed. Glenn Russell W (Australia: ANU Press, 2018). 113-115.

reliance,” which proposes that the ADF be built to a point where it can defend mainland Australia, and its area of direct military interest, with a self-reliant capability.⁶ The second strategy is known as "forward engagement," involves establishing a network of international alliances and regional partnerships to drive the generation of (alliance-based) defence capability and, in turn, enhance Australia's defence domestically.⁷ Australia's Defence policy as described in the 2016 Defence White Paper (DWP), positions an alliance with the USA as the center piece of the nation's security and defence planning.⁸ The 2016 DWP also stresses alliances as central to developing defence capability.⁹ Additionally, the policy relates that self-reliance is the highest priority. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity in what self-reliance means in this context.¹⁰ Oppositely, the 2020 Defence Strategic Update reduces the emphasis on alliances while increasing the aspect of self-reliance.¹¹ So, must these strategic concepts continue to be discussed as opposing viewpoints, or is it time formally accept and detail a combined approach?

For Australia to maintain national security and retain its position of regional dominance, it must mature a strategic defence outlook which blends self-reliant and alliance-based defence capability to create a resilient source of national power. To explore this statement, both self-reliance and defence capability will be defined. Due to the broad nature of the strategic defence view articulated within the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, this essay will examine the following areas which affect Australia's defence capability generation being globalization of world economies, great power competition, alliance-based defence capability and self-reliant defence capability. Finally, it will be argued that a mixture of alliance-based and self-reliant defence capability is required to build a resilient source of national power for Australia. Through these aspects it will be clear that defence strategy must be guided by a deliberately designed mix of self-reliant and alliance-based defence capability if the nation is to retain strategic deterrence and a position of regional dominance. To begin, one must first understand a central pillar for protecting Australia, that being defence capability.

The term defence capability can be defined in numerous ways. For example, a helicopter offers a capability to defence, as does the pilot. Defence capability is described suitably in the Defence Capability Handbook of 2014 as “the effects provided by a system of interlocking and interdependent Fundamental Inputs to Capability (FIC).”¹² Those inputs describe defence capability as being derived from a combination of central elements extending from personnel through to command and management. For the purposes of this essay, defence capability is the sum of the ADF capabilities that contribute to national power. National power consists of all means available to the government in its pursuit of national objectives. These means are categorized by

⁶The Defence of Australia 1987, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987).1.

⁷Paul Dibb, ‘The Self-Reliant Defence of Australia: the History of an Idea,’ 13.

⁸2016 Defence White Paper, (Canberra: Defence Publishing, 2016). 15, 44.

⁹Ibid., 13.

¹⁰Ibid., 33.

¹¹Department of Defence, 2020 Defence Strategic Update, (Canberra 2020). 4, 7 & 25.

¹²Defence Capability Manual, (Canberra: Defence Publishing, 2021). 11-13.

diplomatic, informational, military and economic (DIME).¹³ Defence capability is therefore considered as the military elements that contribute to national power. It is important to consider that Australia's Strategic Defence view will incorporate other aspects of national power producing a synchronized DIME effect. If defense capability is defined as the sum of the ADF capabilities that contribute to the military element of national power, then what does self-reliance mean in the context of generating these capabilities?

A self-reliant defence of Australia was originally defined in the 1987 Defence White Paper titled *The Defence of Australia*. The paper outlines that a strategy of self-reliance is based on the "ability to defend ourselves with our own resources."¹⁴ Self-reliance as it pertains to this essay is the ability to produce and sustain the defence capability from within Australia's domestic resources. This includes being self-reliant with regards to the following FIC; personnel, major systems, supplies, facilities and training areas, and support.¹⁵ Through the combination of defence capability and what constitutes self-reliance, it is clear that the generation of defence capability from a position of self-reliance involves a significant undertaking for any nation.

GLOBALIZATION

Commencing in the 19th Century, driven by inventions such as the telegraph, steamships, and railroads, the world underwent a period of diminishing distances and perceived national boundaries of the globe giving rise to globalization.¹⁶ Globalization as a concept, encompasses many different facets inclusive of economies, cultures and populations.¹⁷ Following World War II, the USA implemented a revised economic framework during the Bretton Woods Conference, this ushered in an accelerated period of international growth and trade, driving the process of globalization. The framework reduced tariffs and other trade barriers creating economic opportunity for countries to interconnect and rebuild following the destruction of World War Two and positioned the USA as the world hegemonic economic power.¹⁸ The groundwork for a hyper connected contemporary global economy was set through the Bretton Woods Agreement, however, it ceased in 1971.¹⁹ Within this essay, globalization is viewed as "the increasing internationalization of markets for goods and services, the financial system, corporations and industries, technology and competition."²⁰ The Department of Defence 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper articulates that through globalization, Defence has been able to

¹³Department of Defense, "Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, Department of Defense dictionary of military and associated terms," (Government Printing Office Washington, DC, 2001), 112.

¹⁴The Defence of Australia 1987, Short.1.

¹⁵Defence Capability Handbook (Canberra 2014), 2-3.

¹⁶Measuring Globalisation, "OECD Handbook on Economic Globalisation Indicators," (2005). 16.

¹⁷"What Is Globalization? And How Has the Global Economy Shaped the United States?," updated 2022, 2019, accessed 08 April, 2023, <https://www.piie.com/microsites/globalization/what-is-globalization>.

¹⁸Jörg Bibow, "'King dollar' forever? Prospects for a New Bretton Woods," *Review of Keynesian Economics* 10, no. 4 (2022).

¹⁹Globalization: A Framework for IMF Involvement, (2002).

²⁰Globalisation, "OECD Handbook on Economic Globalisation Indicators." 16.

develop, procure and sustain defence capabilities that it would otherwise be unable to obtain.²¹ The F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter (F-35 JSF) program is an example of this. The creation of the F-35 JSF required multiple nations to invest in the resourcing and development of a defence capability (major system) providing, “an affordable avenue to acquiring a fifth-generation fighter, technical knowledge such as stealth, and industrial opportunities for domestic firms.”²² Australia is one of the nations that has benefited from the multinational works completed to design and build the F-35 JSF. However, as the world transitions from the post-World War Two power and economic hegemony of the USA, a new period of strategic competition is occurring, significantly impacting the functionality of globalization.

IMPACTS OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

With the recurrent global cycle of nations rising and falling in power there is a new era of great power competition ensuing as the hegemony of the USA is challenged. Countries such as China, Russia, and India are directly competing and actively vying for influence and dominance on the global stage.²³ This competition is characterized by economic, technological, and military rivalries, and it has significantly implicated the functionality of globalization.²⁴ Globalization under a rules-based order (RBO) has facilitated the rise of emerging economies and created opportunities for interconnectivity and growth.²⁵ However, the current great power competition challenges some of the key assumptions of globalization. For example, the trade war between the USA and China has disrupted global supply chains and increased prices for consumer goods, as both countries impose tariffs and other trade barriers on each other. These trade wars have had a ripple effect across the global economy, affecting not just the USA and China, but also other countries that rely on global supply chains.²⁶ Great power competition is also playing out in the technology sector, as the USA and China engaged in a battle for dominance over emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.²⁷ This competition holds significant global implications, as the winner will attain major influence over the future direction of technological development and innovation, providing that nation with a strategic advantage. In addition to these economic and technological challenges, great power competition holds military implications.

²¹Department of Defence, 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, (Canberra 2017).5-6.

²²Congressional Research Service, F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program, (Federation of American Scientists 2022). 2-3; Department of Defence, 2016 Integrated Investment Program, (Canberra 2016). 11; Department of Defence, 2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan, (Canberra 2018). 148.

²³ Mark Balboni et al., *Mission Command of Multi-Domain Operations: A US Army War College Student Integrated Research Project*, Army War College Carlisle Barracks (2020); Rory Medcalf and James Brown, *Defence Challenges 2035: Securing Australia's Lifelines* (2014). 5.

²⁴Medcalf and Brown, *Defence Challenges 2035: Securing Australia's Lifelines*. 5-7

²⁵2016 Defence White Paper, Short. 14-15.

²⁶ Eugenio Cerutti, Gita Gopinath, and Adil Mohommed, "The Impact of US-China Trade Tensions," 2019, <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2019/05/23/blog-the-impact-of-us-china-trade-tensions>.

²⁷Satoru Mori, "US Defense Innovation and Artificial Intelligence," *Asia-Pacific review* 25, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2018.1545488>.

Under a recognition that the world is again experiencing great power competition, countries are investing heavily in their defence capabilities, and there is a growing risk of conflict between major powers.²⁸ Any perceived conflict will have dire consequences for globalization as it will disrupt global trade and supply chains, leading to a retreat from globalization as countries focus on protecting their own interests.²⁹ Despite the risk posed by great power competition, it is important to note that globalization is not necessarily doomed. While great power competition presents significant challenges, it also creates opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. The competition can also encourage countries to work together to address common concerns, such as climate change and improving military capabilities, while finding ways to manage tensions and reduce the risk of conflict.³⁰ Some of the key assumptions surrounding global interconnectivity and economic interdependence are being challenged as great power competition impacts globalization.³¹ This has been observed through the vulnerability of some countries to the vagaries of others. However, globalization and shared national initiatives are not necessarily at their end. Countries can still find ways to cooperate and tackle shared challenges while leveraging opportunities for innovation and growth.³² The future of globalization will depend on how countries manage tensions and navigate the current great power competition. With the correct strategies and policies, globalization can still thrive in the years to come. Australia has experienced both the benefits of globalization and great power alliances, in addition to the challenges of being left by key partners in times of conflict. As a result, Australia has oscillated between a self-reliant and alliance-based approach to defense capability.

ALLIANCE-BASED DEFENCE CAPABILITY

Australia's Defence White Papers have undergone significant changes since the release of the 1976 DWP, which aimed to create a self-reliant defence capability for the nation.³³ Subsequent white papers, including those released in 1987, 1994, 2000, 2009, 2013, and 2016, have adapted to the changing global environment and have moved away from an emphasis on self-reliance while seeking to retain it as a core tenet. This direction has led to the current position where the Australian Government has lost clarity in its approach to generating defence capability.³⁴ The most recent 2016 DWP is fundamental example of how the Australian Government shifted its defence capability foundation onto

²⁸Ali Wyne, "Great-Power Competition Isn't a Foreign Policy," *The Washington quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2022.2090763>.

²⁹Defence, Short 2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan. 52.Force Design Division, Future Operating Environment 2035, (Canberra 2016). 8.

³⁰Seng Boey, Peter Dortmans, and Joanne Nicholson, Forward 2035, (Defence Science and Technology Organisation, 2014). 17.

³¹TV Paul, "The Specter of Deglobalization," *Current History* 122, no. 840 (2023).

³²Medcalf and Brown, *Defence Challenges 2035: Securing Australia's Lifelines*. 5-6.

³³Department of Defence, Australian Defence, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services, 1976).

³⁴"Defending Australia: a History of Australia's Defence White Papers," 2015, https://www.apf.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1516/DefendAust; Peter Edwards, "Defence White Papers after 40 years," *The Strategist* (2016). <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/defence-white-papers-at-40/>.

an alliance-based approach, yet mentions self-reliance twice and expresses it as the highest priority.³⁵ The 2020 Defence Strategic Update muddles the strategic direction further by reducing the emphasis on alliances and outlining greater steps towards self-reliance.³⁶ Despite recent limited clarity, Australia has demonstrated a history of successful defence capability arrangements as observed through the ANZUS Treaty with the USA and New Zealand. Other examples include the Five Power Defence Arrangements with Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. These alliances have been crucial to enhancing Australia's defence capabilities and strengthening its position of regional dominance and aided the nation in maintaining security on its regional trade routes. However, disadvantages exist to sourcing defence capabilities through alliances, such as becoming overly dependent on an ally for a critical capability, which could potentially put the nation's security at risk.³⁷ Additionally, alliances can be complex and difficult to manage, particularly when disagreements ensue over strategic objectives or military operations. Alternatively, Australia might enter a conflict outside of its regional interest in a manner similar to Afghanistan. Despite this, Australia has shown capacity to strategically map its alliances to meet its needs.

Over the last 20 years Australia's defence capability has benefited greatly from incorporating a forward strategy and collaborating intimately with international allies. One of the most notable recent developments in Australia's defence strategy is the formation of AUKUS, a three-way strategic defence alliance with the United Kingdom and the USA.³⁸ Initiated in a bid to support Australia's advancement into nuclear-propelled submarines, AUKUS also focuses on improving joint capabilities, technology sharing and interoperability in the Indo-Pacific region.³⁹ This alliance is critical to Australia's defence strategy providing the country with a host of new capabilities, including cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities.⁴⁰ Through AUKUS, Australia is realizing technologies and defence

³⁵Richard Brabi-Smith, "Four principles of Australian defence policy," (2013).

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/four-principles-of-australian-defence-policy/>; Rob Bourke, "The Economics of Defence Industrial Self-reliance: Defining and Monitoring the Priorities," (2021). <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-economics-of-defence-industrial-self-reliance-defining-and-monitoring-the-priorities/>; 2016 Defence White Paper, Short. 33; Nick Bisley, "Australia's strategic culture," (Washington, DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2016). https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/special_report_60_australias_strategic_culture_december2016.pdf. 10

³⁶James Goldrick, "Defence Strategic Update 2020: A first assessment," (2020).

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/defence-strategic-update-2020-first-assessment>.

³⁷Ibid., 115-116.

³⁸Richard Marles, "AUKUS Defense Ministerial Joint Statement," news release, 2022, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/statements/2022-12-08/aukus-defense-ministerial-joint-statement>.

³⁹Ashley Townshend, "The AUKUS Submarine Deal Highlights a Tectonic Shift in the U.S.-Australia Alliance," *Carnegie* (2023), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/03/27/aukus-submarine-deal-highlights-tectonic-shift-in-u.s.-australia-alliance-pub-89383#:~:text=The%20deal%20consists%20of%20three,multibillion%2Ddollar%20pledge%20by%20all>.

⁴⁰Government of the United States, "FACT SHEET: Implementation of the Australia – United Kingdom – United States Partnership (AUKUS)," news release, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/04/05/fact-sheet-implementation-of-the-australia-united-kingdom-united-states-partnership-aukus/>.

capabilities it could not self-develop in a timeframe benefiting the challenges of the current great power competition.

An example of an alliance-based major system being obtained under the AUKUS agreement is the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines. This major system directly shapes Australia's strategic defence capability and solidifies the nation's strategy of deterrence and regional dominance. To rapidly generate this defence capability the United States is providing Virginia Class submarines along with FIC components to accelerate Australia's ability to operate nuclear submarines. Delivery of Virginia Class submarines will commence from 2030 and these will be superseded by a jointly developed Australian and United Kingdom AUKUS Class submarine utilizing American combat systems. The first AUKUS Class submarine is scheduled for delivery to the Royal Navy in 2038 and the Royal Australian Navy by 2040.⁴¹ For Australia to transition from a non-nuclear state and then independently design, build and operating a world leading nuclear submarine in the given timeframe is inconceivable.⁴² The decision to pursue nuclear-powered submarines through the AUKUS agreement has been a matter of national importance for Australia, representing a significant departure from the Country's prior plans to acquire conventionally powered submarines. However, the AUKUS Class submarine, much akin to the F-35 JSF, will require support through global supply chains to both procure and sustain the necessary FIC. Questions also exist over how much sovereign control Australia will have over the submarines given the technology and FIC support involved.⁴³ Furthermore, Australia will only acquire eight nuclear-powered submarines which is a small fleet given the extensive geographical area they must patrol and the primary adversary they are designed to face.⁴⁴

As the RBO is disrupted through great power competition it will impact the effective nature of global supply chains that have been built through globalization, posing a threat to Australia's defence capabilities. The benefits associated with globalization, such as reduced acquisition timeframes and costs for the defense industry, as well as reduced domestic warehousing by leveraging the "global warehouse," are vulnerable to any breakdown in the RBO.⁴⁵ Despite the threats posed to global supply chains, Australia's Future Logistics Concept 2035 forecasts that economic globalization will likely continue to increase in the near term with a continued reliance of defence capability on them.⁴⁶ In fact, by Australia maintaining engagement in the international community it assists in creating interoperability with alliance partners, while supporting furtherance of

⁴¹Marles, "AUKUS Defense Ministerial Joint Statement."; Anthony Albanese, "Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS," news release, 2023, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/joint-leaders-statement-aucus>.

⁴²Michael Shoebridge, "What is AUKUS and What is it Not?," *ASPI Strategic Insights* 166 (2021). 3-4.

⁴³Peter Lee, "Fears AUKUS will undermine Australia's defence sovereignty are misplaced," (2023). <https://theconversation.com/fears-aucus-will-undermine-australias-defence-sovereignty-are-misplaced-202607>.

⁴⁴"The Australia-United States defence alliance," Parliament of Australia, 2022, 2023, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook44p/AustUSDefence.

⁴⁵2016 Defence White Paper, Short. 44-45.

⁴⁶Department of Defence, Future Logistics Concept 2035, (Canberra 2014)., 5.

the RBO.⁴⁷ Furthermore, it is through these alliances that FIC aspects relating to improved access to the “global support networks, infrastructure, logistic enablers, capabilities and technologies” can be achieved.⁴⁸ Through ongoing alliance arrangements Australia can continue its support for the RBO which has facilitated its national security and economic growth.⁴⁹ From this it is apparent that economic globalization is central to Australia’s capacity to generate competitive defence capability. For the nation to build and sustain the 2020 Force Structure Plan, major systems such as the F-35 JSF are critical and forward engagement remains necessary.⁵⁰ However, significant risk exists for generating and sustaining defence capability through pathways associated to economic globalization when pursuing resilient national defence capability.

The strategic exposure presented through global supply chains offers the most existential threat for Australia’s ability to generate defence capability from its alliances. The risk posed by over reliance on the global network was highlighted by the impact of COVID-19 which demonstrated to Australia how vulnerable it had become.⁵¹ The concern now placed on the risks associated to global supply chains is reiterated throughout the Department of Defence’s current strategic documentation such as; 2016 DWP, 2020 Defence Strategic Update, and Forward 2035.⁵² The Defence Industrial Capability Plan and ADF Concept for Future Logistics specifically identify that global supply chains are a vulnerability due to their susceptibility to disruption.⁵³ Indeed, the global supply chain impacts numerous elements of FIC such as supplies, industry and support.⁵⁴ Returning to the example of the F-35 JSF: the aircraft is manufactured in the USA, supplies in the form of repair parts come from either the US or Europe and the fuel used is refined offshore and shipped to Australia. This example illustrates that without self-reliant defence capability, Australia's national security would be solely dependent on global supply chains, which are vulnerable to disruption or interdiction at geographical chokepoints that the supply chain must transit to deliver goods. However, given the advanced military capabilities of Australia's primary adversaries, it is necessary for the ADF to possess advanced platforms such as the F-35 JSF to maintain a competitive edge and a position of deterrence against them. Despite the need for an alliance-based approach, relying on major systems that depend on a limited number of global logistics networks for development and sustainability carries significant risk.

⁴⁷Division, Short Future Operating Environment 2035. 3

⁴⁸Department of Defence, ADF Joint Logistics Enterprise Strategy 2016-2021, (Canberra 2015). 11.

⁴⁹2016 Defence White Paper, Short. 40. Paul Dibb, "Why we need a radically new defence policy," (Barton: Newstex, 2018).

⁵⁰Australian Government, 2020 Force Structure Plan, (Canberra 2020).

⁵¹Ian North, Concept for Future Logistics, (Canberra: Defence Publishing Services, 2020).15.

⁵²2016 Defence White Paper, Short; Defence, Short 2020 Defence Strategic Update; Boey, Dortmans, and Nicholson, Short Forward 2035. 27-28.

⁵³Defence, Short 2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan. 52. North, Short Concept for Future Logistics. 15

⁵⁴Defence Capability Manual, Short. 12-13.

SELF-RELIANT DEFENCE CAPABILITY

Self-reliance, in the context of defence capability, refers to a country's ability to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity without relying on external assistance. The strategic rationale for self-reliance is to ensure that a country can defend itself against threats to its national security without relying on external assistance.⁵⁵ Self-reliance is also important for countries to maintain their independence and sovereignty when deciding how they will employ their militaries. For Australia, the necessity of attaining nationally self-reliant defence capability has been ingrained in the national mindset since the 20th century, with events such as the fall of Singapore and Indonesia Confrontation influencing its importance. The Indonesian Confrontation is particularly relevant to the current status of Australia's key alliance with the USA, as it contextualizes how even close allies may step back from supporting when it opposes their interests.⁵⁶ When it comes to defence capability, there is also a concern about whether an ally may withdraw their support for a critical military system if they disagree with how Australia intends to employ it or has employed it.⁵⁷ Therefore, it is critical that Australia has sovereign control over key strategic components of its national defence system.

Over the last decade, Australia has experienced several significant events that have highlighted the importance of self-reliant defence capability. The trade dispute with China and the impact of COVID-19 have both demonstrated the need for Australia to have a strong and independent defence strategy. As a result, the Australian government has started to set the conditions to expand the range of self-reliant defence capability available to the nation yet narrowing its strategic objectives.⁵⁸ Narrowing Defence's strategic objectives will permit greater clarity for the Defence Enterprise and Defence Industry to support future defence capability needs. The Australian Government has further clarified its needs and commitment to supporting self-reliant domestic growth through various plans, including the 2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan, the More Together: Defence Science and Technology Strategy 2030, and the Defence Export Strategy.⁵⁹ These central policy documents outline how Australia is expanding its defence capability by investing in the development of new technologies and providing support to targeted sectors to ensure their viability.

Another means by which Australia can improve its self-reliant defence capability is through increasing its investment in national and Defence infrastructure. This includes

⁵⁵Stephan Frühling, "Australian defence policy and the concept of self-reliance," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 5 (2014); Defence, Short Australian Defence.

⁵⁶Frühling, "Australian defence policy and the concept of self-reliance." 535; Glenn, "Strategic studies in practice: An Australian perspective." 109.

⁵⁷Bojan Pancevski and Elena Cherney, "Berlin Won't Allow Exports of German Tanks to Ukraine Unless U.S. Sends Its Own," *The Wall Street Journal* 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/berlin-wont-allow-exports-of-german-tanks-to-ukraine-unless-u-s-sends-own-tanks-officials-say-11674069352>.

⁵⁸Government, Short 2020 Force Structure Plan. 9.

⁵⁹Defence, Short 2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan; Department of Defence, *The More, Together: Defence Science and Technology Strategy 2030*, (Canberra 2020); Department of Defence, *Defence Export Strategy*, (Canberra: Defence Publishing, 2018).

not only the construction of new military bases and installations, which has committed to in the country's north, but also the development of advanced domestic logistics and supply chain systems.⁶⁰ As observed through the Ukraine war, Russia has actively targeted Ukraine's logistics key supply nodes and routes such as railway hubs. Currently, Australia's main interstate heavy road and railway networks are limited to single lines between some states and territories, particularly within the Northern Territory.⁶¹ A similar situation exists for Australia's underwater cables which connect to the international community. Currently, there are two primary hubs at Perth and Sydney, creating known vulnerable points for easy targeting by an adversary through either kinetic or cyber-attacks.⁶² Investing in national infrastructure and enhancing Australia's national power across the DIME can result in more resilient and flexible defence capability, that is capable of responding to a wide range of scenarios. Building a strong and self-reliant defence capability is not only a matter of investing in new technologies and infrastructure. It dictates a strong and capable workforce. Such a workforce demands investiture in the education and training of Defence personnel and creating a culture of innovation and excellence within the ADF. The nation recently announced plans to expand the ADF personnel by 30% by 2040, making it the largest expansion of the ADF since the Vietnam War.⁶³ The workforce expansion is reflective of the identification that the previously assessed strategic warning period has disappeared under the increasingly uncertain global environment and it will also allow the ADF to increase its self-reliant defence capability capacity.⁶⁴ The combination of advancements across all these elements of defence capability FIC means that Australia is growing the capacity to increase its position of self-reliance.

Given Australia's past interest in self-reliance, it has a history of designing, building and operating military systems generated through self-reliant defence capability. Throughout the 20th and 21st Century, Australia successfully fielded numerous military systems based off self-reliant defence capability such as: the Commonwealth Air Corporation Boomerang fighter aircraft, the Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle and the Jindalee Over-the-Horizon Radar. Recently, Australia has refocused heavily into developing its own defence industry and capability to further self-reliance. This is evident

⁶⁰Thomas Morgan, "Federal government commits \$3.8b to Australia's northern bases after Defence Strategic Review," *ABC News* 2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-04-27/government-billions-northern-australia-base-upgrades/102270952>.

⁶¹Tony O'Brien, "War in Ukraine: Railway lessons for Australia," Journal Article, *News Weekly*, no. 3133 (2023), <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.885582189930386>

⁶²Anthony Bergin and Samuel Bashfield, "Australia must do more to secure the cables that connect the Indo-Pacific," (2022). <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-must-do-more-to-secure-the-cables-that-connect-the-indo-pacific/>; Samuel Bashfield and Anthony Bergin, "Options for safeguarding undersea critical infrastructure: Australia and Indo-Pacific submarine cables," (2022).

⁶³Scott Morrison, "Defence workforce to grow above 100,000," news release, 2022.

⁶⁴"The state of Australia's defence: a quick guide," 2022, 2023, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/anzus-at-70-defending-australia/>.

through initiatives such as the Defence Export Strategy and the Naval Shipbuilding Plan.⁶⁵ The realization of such investment is now visible in nationally developed military systems, such as the MQ-28 Ghost Bat Loyal Wingman Drone. This low-cost, medium-sized drone incorporates Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enable it to fly missions independently or alongside other manned or unmanned aircraft. The capability offered by the Ghost Bat will allow it to fly in support of other aircraft and also complete Joint and multi-domain missions.⁶⁶ The drone's capacity to carry weapons, stealth attributes and untethered AI flight system, has the ability to independently conduct lower complexity mission that would traditionally be completed by the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) fighter aircraft being the F-35 JSF and FA18 Super Hornet. The RAAF only has a limited number of fighter aircraft (major systems), being only 82. Critically, these are generated through alliance-based defence capability. The inclusion of the Ghost Bat, being a self-reliant low-cost defence capability, significantly mitigates the risk of exposing a major system to combat loss and reduces the timeframe for it to be replaced if one of them is destroyed.⁶⁷ Having self-reliant defense capability, such as the Ghost Bat, that can support and offset a major system like the F-35 JSF, significantly enhances the resilience of Australia's defense force. Australia needs to examine its alliance-based major systems further and strategically identify where integrating self-reliant defense capability to offset them is necessary to mitigate risk.

BLENDING ALLIANCE-BASED AND SELF-RELIANT DEFENSE CAPABILITY

Australia's recent strategic outlook update to deter, deny, defeat sees the nation secured through a strategy of regional dominance and deterrence, underpinned by a resilient and leading-edge defence capability. Given that China is currently Australia's primary adversary, it is clear this philosophy cannot be achieved solely through a position of self-reliance.⁶⁸ However, Australia's increased investment into its defence capability FIC will gain it a significantly increased margin of resilience. Estimated costs to achieving a self-reliant defence capability have been placed in the magnitude of a 4% Gross Domestic Product allocation towards Defence, and this GDP percentage was pre-decisional of the AUKUS Agreement.⁶⁹ Historically, defence allocation of GDP has not approached the necessary funding to sustain self-reliance, nor would the nation's public accept this level of spending without being on a total war footing. Oppositely, Australia's history of avoidance towards relying solely on alliance-based defence capability means that the nation will never fully embrace this approach.⁷⁰ Such a source of national power

⁶⁵Defence, Short Defence Export Strategy; Department of Defence, Naval Shipbuilding Plan, (Canberra: Defence Publishing, 2017).

⁶⁶Greg Waldron, "Australian airpower rises to face new geopolitical threats," (2023). <https://www.flightglobal.com/defence/australian-airpower-rises-to-face-new-geopolitical-threats/151377.article>.

⁶⁷Guy Martin, "Loyal Wingman Ready for Global Take Off," *APDR*, 2023, https://asiapacificdefencereporter.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/APDR-Feb-2023_WHOE-MAG.pdf.

⁶⁸Dan Fortune, "Self-reliance: An outdated and unaffordable concept for the ADF," *Australian defence force journal*, no. 193 (2014). 5.

⁶⁹Mark Thomson, "Hard times," (2013). <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/hard-times/>.

⁷⁰Dibb, "Why we need a radically new defence policy." 2.

to achieve Australia's objectives, as outlined through its recent policy will only come from blending of self-reliant and alliance-based defence capability.

Fortunately for Australia, most of the pieces for a deliberately layered and combined defence capability between self-reliance and alliance-based defence capability already exist for the nation. A missing piece of this puzzle is a national policy that directly recognizes and addresses the issue while clearly articulating the subsequent strategic direction. The task of selecting a direction may be challenging, as building consensus among stakeholders can be difficult. Particularly as the Australian Government has only just completed a Defence Strategic Review, which has significantly narrowed the ADF's defence capability focus.⁷¹ To address these obstacles, a mature debate is needed to build a shared understanding of the national security challenges facing Australia and identify shared priorities. A transparent and collaborative approach to developing a strategic defence outlook, combined with a clear and transparent communication strategy, will help Australia maintain trust with its allies and reduce the potential for misunderstandings. A highly relevant national example for Australia is Israel who has developed an adaptive and resilient defence posture, combining home grown self-reliant advanced military technologies with alliance-based capability.⁷² Central to a combined approach is the requirement that Australia continues to develop defence capabilities, such as advanced cyber technologies, unmanned artificial intelligence systems and national infrastructure. Advancements in these fields can act as force multipliers and provide risk mitigation for major systems.⁷³ In continuing to lead technology development, Australia will also bolster its position as an attractive alliance partner and increase the likelihood of accessing advanced military technology as realized through AUKUS, while maintaining its self-reliance.⁷⁴ To enable this, the Australian Government must pursue policies that promote economic and social resilience, such as investing in education and innovation. Policies like these are yet to be fully realized as observed through misalignment in the 2016 DWP and 2020 Defence Strategic Update.⁷⁵ Taking these steps will enable Australia to build a resilient source of national power, supporting its national security and maintaining its position of regional dominance.

In summary, this essay has argued that Australia's defence capability must be generated from a position of strategically combined self-reliant and alliance-based capability if it is to meet the Nation's Strategic Defence view. Defence capability was defined as the sum of capabilities that produce the military element of national power.

⁷¹Australian Government, National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023, (Canberra 2023); Anthony Albanese, "Release of the Defence Strategic Review," news release, 2023, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2023-04-24/release-defence-strategic-review>.

⁷²Efraim Inbar, "Contours of Israel's New Strategic Thinking," *Political science quarterly* 111, no. 1 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2151927>. 41-45 Uzi Rubin, "Israel's defence industries - an overview," *Defence studies* 17, no. 3 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2017.1350823>. 230-237

⁷³Dibb, "Why we need a radically new defence policy."

⁷⁴Chris Watson, "Australia's Military Strategic Challenges – Close to Home," *The Forge* (2021). <https://theforge.defence.gov.au/publications/australias-military-strategic-challenges-close-home>.

⁷⁵Thom Dixon, "Defending Australia in a high-tech future," (2020). <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/defending-australia-high-tech-future>.

Self-reliance was further defined as the ability to defend Australia with its own resources. The complex interdependence of the global economy was explored, highlighting how globalization means that security threats to the RBO can have worldwide impacts, making it difficult for any nation to rely solely on its resources for defense. Australia, as an island nation, is particularly vulnerable to any threats that could disrupt the RBO and have an impact on the global trading system. In this context, alliances and partnerships are essential to supporting national security by pooling resources and expertise with other nations to better address shared security challenges. The resurgence of great power competition was reviewed focusing on how the rise of China, and attempts at expansion by Russia, have made the international system more complex and competitive. The impact of great power competition was examined, indicating how it has stressed the workings of the RBO and exposed Australia as being highly interdependent on global stability for its national security and defence capability. Australia's strategic defence outlook and policies have been shaped by its national history as well as recent global events, reflecting a nation that has been forced to consider and reconsider its approach to national security since World War Two. The nation's experiences with alliances were raised and presented through the example of Australia's relationship with USA, oscillating between intimate and indifferent. Periodical events were shown to have shifted Australia's strategic outlook, with the nation recognizing it could no longer rely solely on primary alliances for defence of the country. The two methodologies that have informed Australia's strategic outlook towards defence were provided as self-reliance and forward engagement (alliance-based). Alliance-based defence provides Australia with access to a wider range of capabilities and resources, enabling the nation to better address complex security challenges. However, the issue of sovereignty over alliance-based capabilities remains a key factor for Australia to consider when choosing which major systems to rely on for its defense. This limitation can impact Australia's ability to act independently in the face of certain security threats, making it necessary to carefully weigh the benefits and risks of sharing control over its defense capabilities with its allies. Although, alliance-based defence allows Australia to access a wider range of capabilities and resources than it could realistically generate on its own. Therefore, while alliance-based capabilities remain necessary for the nation to address complex security challenges, they also necessitate Australia to forgo elements of independence, limiting its ability to act in the face of certain security threats.

Ultimately, a carefully designed mix of self-reliant and alliance-based defence capability is essential to creating a resilient source of national power for Australia. Through striking a balance between self-reliance and forward engagement, Australia can create a strategic defence outlook that is both robust and flexible, enabling the nation to adapt to changing security environments and maintain its security and prosperity into the years to come. Australia must continue to invest in its own defence capabilities while also building strong alliances and partnerships with other nations. This approach will allow Australia to maintain a position of strategic of deterrence and enable regional dominance, while remaining adaptable to the complex security challenges of the 21st century.

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