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Australia's policy in Oceania: militarisation and arrogance



In the spring of 2024, the Australian Government adopted the first National Defence Strategy in its history. It is designed to identify completely new approaches to 'protecting the country and its interests'. Over the past decade, the country has been aggressively increasing military construction and has now officially consolidated this process in its course of development. How are Australian military and political ambitions impacting the South Pacific region?

Five dimensions of war

The first thing to catch one's eye in the [National Defence Strategy \(NDS\) for 2024](#) and the Integrated Investment Programme (IIP) of Australia for 2024 are the goals that it sets. It is easy to recognise the handwriting and style of the overseas curators (UK, USA) of Australia. Through the new strategy, the country intends to maintain a global 'rules-based' order together with its partners. These 'rules' are – as always – not deciphered, making them

another reference to the Western view on the world order, reminiscent of ‘dealings through connections’. In addition to ‘rules’ for the whole world, Australia is going to ‘protect its economic ties with the region’ The desire to preserve its privileged position in Oceania and its unequal, neo-colonial relations with weaker neighbours is clearly indicated here.

Among the main risks for Australia are the US-China confrontation, the build-up of China’s power (Australia is concerned about the South China Sea, the East China Sea and the Sino-Indian border dispute despite them being out of its geographic proximity), international conflicts and the ‘volatility’ of the international environment (Russia, Iran and North Korea were not freed from the usual negative remarks), the arms race in the Indo-Pacific region, the ‘strategic rivalry’ of external forces in Oceania, which Australia considers the ‘Pacific Family’. Canberra views itself and New Zealand as the core of this family’s prosperity. The US is designated as the main ally and the trilateral US–British–Australian military bloc AUKUS is painted as the leading international security structure.

The use of Australian territory by its allies for tasks that meet its security vision will be seriously expanded. Finally, efforts to counter any hostile ‘military presence’ on the northern transport routes near the Australian coast will be increased. Not only their territory will be protected, but also their ‘immediate environment’. Also, the “collective security of the Indo-Pacific region” will be accounted for together with its partners, regardless of whether neighbouring states ask for it or not.

The following phrase sounds particularly promising: “An unfavourable strategic balance in the region may increase the risk that Australia and other states, being forced by external circumstances, will lose the opportunity to defend their interests peacefully”. Such an imposition of their military and political superiority, arrogating to themselves the right to make decisions on behalf of the whole region and attempts to finally turn into a pan-Oceanic gendarme with New Zealand as its squire are based on a key component of the Australian military strategy, namely unprecedented modernisation of the army in ‘five dimensions’: on water, on land, in the air, in space and cyber space. This should help repel any encroachments on ‘Australia and its interests’ and ‘respond forcefully if necessary’. To solve this problem, Australia intends to strengthen its military-industrial complex exponentially and make it more self-sufficient and competitive in terms of consistency, technologies, materials and final products. The key feature of the modernization of weapons will be increasing their lethality. In addition, the Australian Ministry of Defence is striving to maximise the combat readiness of all branches of its armed forces.

The dominion's army surpasses all others in Oceania in terms of numbers. An [unprecedented increase in military spending](#) is also noteworthy. In 2015 spending amounted to about \$24 bn, in 2020 to about \$27.3 bn, in 2022 – \$32.3 bn. Such figures are already [among the highest in the world](#), but according to the new strategy, it is planned to increase military spending by more than \$ 50 billion in the period 2024-2034. This is unless, of course, during this time Australia disappears from the face of the Earth as a result of climate change or some kind of global conflict. It is made to seem that this country has no problems other than militarisation, and that numerous [environmental issues](#), forest fires, [mistreatment of refugees](#) and [infringement of the rights of indigenous peoples](#) are occurring on some other planet.

Toxic country

Meanwhile, some of Australia's problems – particularly environmental ones – have actually taken on such a scale that they have long since reached the international level. The most pressing issue is the [threats to the ecosystem of the Great Barrier Reef](#), which Australia refuses to recognise, leading an open conflict with the UN and UNESCO. This is just one of the illustrations of the toxicity (literally and figuratively) of modern Australia in the Asia-Pacific region. The relations of new generations of Australian politicians with neighbouring countries and with the rest of the world are becoming much more toxic.

Australia is part of the pool of Western warmongers, constantly and increasingly [pumps weapons to Ukrainian neo-Nazis](#), finds appropriate partners for its military construction (in addition to the usual suspects, i.e. USA, UK and New Zealand, others like [Germany](#), [Italy](#), [Japan](#), [Canada](#), not to mention [NATO](#) and the [EU](#), are also considered). Not only that, Australia's countless military exercises with its allies are creating increasing tension in the South Pacific. Considering all of the above, there is another problem that does not receive much public attention, but this does not mean it is any less important: Australia regularly exposes its neighbours (the small island states of Oceania) to bullying.

Over the past decades, these countries have suffered much from the local hegemon: [arbitrary imposition of sanctions](#), establishment of [Australian concentration camps for refugees](#) on their territory, [imposition of security agreements](#) directly affecting internal affairs, [pressure](#) on foreign policy issues, [gross violations](#) of international protocol. From the outside, Australia resembles a bully who was not taught in kindergarten that one should not harm those weaker than oneself. The most horrifying thing is that none of the Oceanic states can properly defend themselves against such neo-colonial actions. They have no army, no allies and, most depressingly, no unity among themselves. Perhaps consolidated

actions and solidarity among the countries of the ‘Global South’ could be of help here, but so far this has not been happened. Having no other opportunities to assert themselves in the international arena, Australian politicians use all means possible to show the region who is the boss. It is not difficult to imagine that after all this, no matter what humanitarian handouts Australia gives to its neighbours, a sourness in relations will still remain.

The daughter of a soldier

In the future, perhaps such sourness will inevitably appear in the relations of the Australian administration with other neighbouring regions, particularly with Southeast Asia. The fact is that Samantha Mostyn was appointed the new Governor-General of the dominion, i.e. the highest official of the executive branch and the link between Australia and the British monarchy, on July 1. Her father fought in Vietnam as part of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals on the side of the US. Samantha is very proud of him and mentioned him twice in her acceptance speech.

So Australia is not just proud of its alliance with the main source of instability on the planet – the United States – and complicity in the American wars of the past, but constantly voluntarily and involuntarily turns to this memory and actively gets involved in current conflicts stimulated by the West. This will force the sane part of the world to repeatedly assess Australia’s politics as negative.

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