



## **Australia and Germany: Commonalities and Challenges in the Maritime Domain**



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- to promote understanding of sea power and its application to the security of Australia's national interests
- to contribute to regional engagement and the development of maritime strategic concepts
- to facilitate informed discussion on matters of maritime security and strategic affairs

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### **Cover image**

German Navy ship FGS Bayern arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia, during its ongoing Indo-Pacific deployment. The Brandenburg class frigate is one of four operated by the German Navy and left its homeport at Wilhelmshaven on Germany's North Sea coast in early August.

# Australia and Germany:

## Commonalities and Challenges in the Maritime Domain

### Introduction

Berlin and Canberra are separated by some 10,000 miles of oceans, continents, hemispheres as well as up to ten time zones. Despite the sheer distance, since 2012, marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, both countries have been united in a strategic partnership via the Berlin-Canberra Declaration. Articulated in terms of strategic unity, the bilateral relationship stems from a mutual commitment “to an active foreign policy, which reflects their shared values and many common interests, and intend to strengthen cooperation [...]”.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the German government has recognized that the Indo-Pacific region has gained in importance in recent years, with the stability of the region increasing in importance for German security and prosperity.<sup>2</sup> On September 2, 2020, the German government adopted its *Indo-Pacific Guidelines*, formally establishing a new framework for German Indo-Pacific policy. In this sphere, Germany sees great value in enhancing strategic dialogue on global political, security and defence issues with Australia.

As such, in June 2021 Australia and Germany convened the second 2+2 Ministerial Foreign and Security Policy Consultations to address key security and regional challenges. It was concluded that “the Enhanced Strategic Partnership (2021) lifted the bilateral relationship to a new level and committed Australia and Germany to broader strategic alignment and joint support for the multilateral system and its institutions.”<sup>3</sup>

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1 Berlin-Canberra Declaration of Intent on a Strategic Partnership 2012

2 Federal Government of Germany, Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific (2020)

3 <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/germany/germany-country-brief>

Germany's Indo-Pacific Policy Guidelines also underpinned the visit of the German frigate "Bayern" - hosted by Australia during its six-month deployment to the Indo-Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

While much is written on German and Australian individual maritime interests, very little exists in the comparative space between the two – particularly focused on the Indo-Pacific. This paper delves into areas of commonality (values, interests, threat perception) between Canberra and Berlin in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain. It seeks to illustrate the overlapping maritime interests and highlight areas of potential maritime collaboration, or areas for enhanced bilateral dialogue, between Australia and Germany.

In order to answer this line of inquiry this paper will give a broad overview of the geographic and strategic environments of both countries and the maritime strategies that are derived from those. Next, the paper will undertake a comparison of these strategic environments, maritime interests, dependencies and threats as well as a comparison of both Fleets and their operational tasks aim to give ideas of how to enhance bilateral collaboration in the maritime domain further.

## **Australia's Strategic Environment**

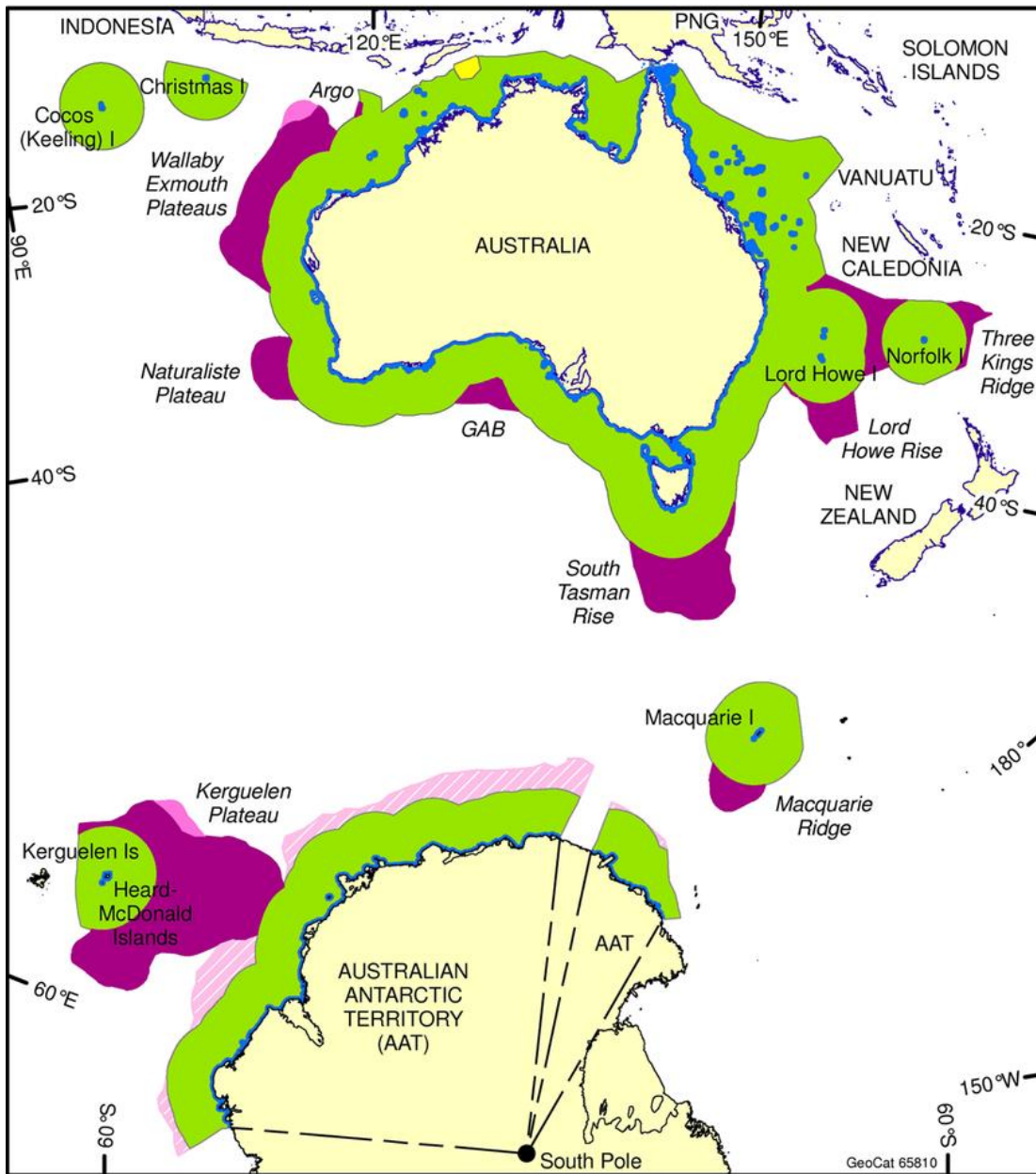
Australia is a nation, a continent, and the world's biggest island. Despite being the geographical size of a major power, it only packs a middle-sized power punch (and political ambition).

Although the country is similar in size to the contiguous United States, given Australia has a population of 25.7 million, it has less than one-tenth of the United States' population.

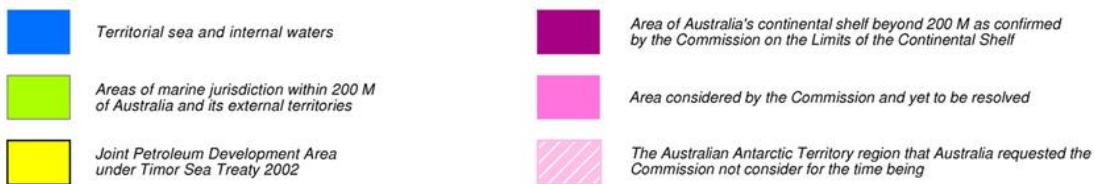
Furthermore, only a fraction of Australian territory is populated and this is mainly concentrated around the coastal areas.

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4 Ibid



## AUSTRALIA'S CONTINENTAL SHELF JURISDICTION



Note: The areas of continental shelf depicted to the north-west of Australia reflect the terms of the 1997 maritime boundary treaty with Indonesia which has not yet entered into force.

1 nautical mile (M) = 1852m

Copyright © Commonwealth of Australia, Geoscience Australia (2008)

Figure 1: Australia's maritime jurisdiction, Geoscience Australia 2008

As an island, Australia doesn't share a land border with any other country, and its only maritime borders are with the smaller island nations of Timor-Leste, the outer islands of Indonesia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the French territory of New Caledonia. The country is bordered by three key oceans: the Pacific in the east, the Indian Ocean in the west and the Southern Ocean to the south. Its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covers an area of 8.148.250 km<sup>2</sup> and maritime jurisdictional area – making it one of the largest in the world, amounting to more than 14 million km<sup>2</sup> (almost twice the size of mainland Australia).<sup>6</sup>

Australia's strategic environment can be broadly divided into two main regions. First, the “nearer region”, which encompasses Australia’s borders and offshore territories, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Pacific Island Countries and maritime South East Asia.<sup>7</sup> Australian strategic interests sit around ensuring they are not a source of threat, and that no major military power has access to bases in their neighbourhood from which to project force against Canberra.<sup>8</sup>

Arguably, Australia considers this region as its ‘backyard’, where it directly exercises its political, economic, and security influence. In this “nearer” region, Australia has also created a network of defence capabilities, deepening its ties with neighbouring countries. Here, it conducts specialist training, personnel exchange, regular naval exercises, aerial surveillance, and donation of search and rescue vessels.

The second main area of Australian strategic interest is the wider Indo-Pacific region – with a horizon expanding from India's southern tip all the way across to Hawaii - as any hostile forces would have to operate in this area to sustainably project force against Australia.<sup>9</sup> At the centre of this region sits Australia along with South East Asia. The concept of the “Indo-Pacific” breaks

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5 Tewes, Rayner and Kavanaugh, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade: A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy, p. 2-3.

6 Australia Maritime Doctrine, RAN Doctrine 1 – 2010, p. 21

7 Defence White Paper 2016, Commonwealth of Australia, p. 39

8 Australian Maritime Doctrine, Commonwealth of Australia 2010, p. 41

9 Ibid.

down the artificial idea of East Asia and South Asia as two separate strategic settings, making people recognize that Australia is an integral part of the region, not peripheral to it.<sup>10</sup> This region also contains Australia's main economic and political interests, as it is home to the majority of its economic and security partners.

### ***Australia's reliance on the seas***

Australia and the Indo-Pacific region are in a period of significant economic transformation, leading to greater opportunities for prosperity and development.<sup>11</sup> Rising incomes and living standards across the Indo-Pacific are generating increased demand for goods and services. By 2050, almost half the world's economic output is expected to come from the Indo-Pacific.<sup>12</sup> Vital trade and energy routes for Australia and many of its most important economic partners transit the Indian Ocean.<sup>13</sup> Today, over 99% Australia's imports & exports by volume and over 79% by value are dependent on shipping.<sup>14</sup> Australia is a leading exporter of iron, coal and unwrought lead, the second largest exporter of aluminium ores, and the third largest exporter of copper and zinc ores.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of imports, Australia's transport fuels import dependency grew from around 60% in 2000 to over 90% by 2013. By 2022, Australia's reliance on liquid fuel imports had increased to over 95%.<sup>16</sup> Australia's vulnerability extends beyond liquid fuel stocks, with fertilisers as well as other goods vital for Australia's survival. Thus, the stability of the rules-based global order at sea

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10 Rory Medcalf, "In Defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's New Strategic Map" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 4 (2014): p 472.

11 Defence White Paper 2016, Commonwealth of Australia, p. 14

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid. p. 61

14 Protecting Australian Trade, Australian Naval Institute & Naval Studies Group University of New South Wales 2020, p.3

15 Australian Maritime Safety Authority - Annual Report 2020-21

16 Protecting Australian Trade, Australian Naval Institute & Naval Studies Group University of New South Wales 2020, p.6

and Australian Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) are essential to its security, economic vitality and prosperity. These lines are vulnerable to disruption. The first weakness is that part of these routes pass through major choke points.<sup>17</sup>

The majority of oil imported to Australia is refined in Singapore, which acts as a conduit between oil extracted in the Persian Gulf and importers of refined petroleum in the rest of Asia. This means that Australian petroleum must pass through three major strategic choke points to reach the country: the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Malacca between the Malay peninsula and Indonesia, and then through the Strait of Sonda in Indonesia, before it can reach Australian territory. Due to Australia's reliance on SLOCs, decisive outcomes in a campaign against Australia could be achieved at sea and not necessarily ashore and not necessarily proximate to the Australian continent.<sup>18</sup>

During the early post-Cold War period, the regional maritime environment remained a relatively benign highway for Australia's energy and mineral exports to Asia and crucial imports. Today, Australia is increasingly confronting a contested maritime environment with many regional players' maritime forces expanding and improving considerably.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, several of these actors have exhibited a desire to use their newfound strategic weight to reshape aspects of the existing international order to better align with their perceived national interests.<sup>20</sup> Australia's maritime domain is also an attractive arena for criminal activity: from people smuggling and human trafficking, terrorism, transnational, organised crime and the illicit movement of prohibited goods and commodities.<sup>21</sup>

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17 Royal Australian Navy, *Australian Maritime Doctrine* (2010), p. 23

18 Vice Admiral Ray Griggs: "Australia's Maritime Strategy", *Australian Defence Force Journal*. (190): p. 5-10.

19 Defence White Paper 2016, Commonwealth of Australia, p. 49 f.

20 Prof. Adam Lockyer, Justin Burke, Yves-Heng Lim, Fred Smith, *The Indo-Pacific Endeavour - Reflections and Proposals for Australia's Premier Naval Diplomacy Activity*, *Sea Power Soundings* Issue 19 (2020) p. 4.

21 Australian Government *Civil Maritime Security Strategy*, p. 13.



Australia's strategic environment has deteriorated more rapidly than anticipated when it handed down its 2016 Defence White Paper. The White Paper noted the Indo-Pacific is at the centre of greater strategic competition, making the region more contested and apprehensive and military modernisation in the region has accelerated faster than envisaged.<sup>22</sup> And confidence in the rules-based global order is being undermined by disruptions from a widening range of sources. The White Paper argued major power competition has intensified and the prospect of high-intensity conflict in the Indo-Pacific is less remote than in the past. The conduct of 'grey-zone' activities has also expanded in the Indo-Pacific. These activities involve military and non-military forms of assertiveness and coercion aimed at achieving strategic goals without provoking conflict. In the Indo-Pacific, these activities have ranged from militarisation of the South China Sea to active interference, disinformation campaigns and economic coercion.<sup>23</sup>

A central issue for Canberra remains that Australia's strategic environment delicately balanced between an over reliance on seaborne trade for its economic growth and its enduring incapability to protect it. Australia's geographic size does not match the population. Its 25.7 million citizens are just not able to support a Defence establishments and a Navy alone, is not capable of protecting its security and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific alone. It needs partners.

### ***Australia needs allies***

Up until the fall of Singapore in 1942 by the Japanese, the United Kingdom provided maritime security in exchange for Australian participation in the British Empire's conflicts. The Boer war, Gallipoli and the French trenches in the First and Second World Wars all saw the sacrifice of Australian troops in foreign campaigns. But the reliance on British Imperial power was no longer

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22 Australian Government, 2020 Defence Strategic Update, p. 3

23 Ibid., p. 5

a feasible alternative.<sup>24</sup>

After 1942, the rising power in Asia and the Pacific became the United States (US). Washington and Canberra's World War II relationship was based on America's need for an 'unsinkable' forward operating base in the Pacific theatre, and Australia provided just that. The United States-Australia alliance formally dates back to September 1951 with the signing of the ANZUS Treaty.<sup>25</sup> This treaty provides a formal basis for US-Australia relations. However, the terms of this partnership did not change much from that of Australia's ties with the British.

In the World War II (WWII) era, Australia worried about Japanese expansion in the Pacific, but today, Canberra is concerned with the rise of the People's Republic of China. For many Australian analysts, China is viewed as the emerging hegemonic power in the Pacific region, challenging the status quo established after World War II.<sup>26</sup> Chinese military build-up across all of its services, but especially of its blue water amphibious, C2 and missile capabilities, creates the perception of assertive Chinese posturing, in particular to other medium regional powers like Australia and Japan.<sup>27</sup>

Beijing's aggressive policy towards the East and South China Seas (inclusive of territorial claims, coercive trade practices, meddling with internal politics, and even the use of cyberattacks) portrays Beijing as defying the regional established order, values of democracy, free trade, and market economy. These values are considered in Canberra but also in Tokyo, New Delhi and the majority of ASEAN's member capitals, as pivotal to regional economic growth and national security.

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24 Gordon Greenwood, Norman Harper, "Perspectives on Australian Foreign Policy", *Pacific Affairs* 48, no 1 (1975): p. 88-91

25 Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2016*, p. 121

26 Rory Medcalf, "Australia and China: understanding the reality check" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 2 (2019): p 113.

27 Thomas Speckmann, "Die Seemacht des 21. Jahrhunderts", *Die Seemacht des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Cicerone, no. 6 (2021): p. 67 ff.

## *Australia's Strategic Partnerships*

ANZUS remains a cornerstone of Australia's security architecture today. Of course, the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance, also comprising Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the US, plays a significant role too.

Chinese growing military power is considered capable of exerting increasing coercive influence in the region. Chinese blue water navy build-up, in particular of its submarines and amphibious fleets, are seen as an ominous sign to the security of US regional partner's SLOCs.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, during WWII the Pacific and the Atlantic were the 'hunting grounds' for Japanese and German submarines. The disruption of logistics and supply lines from the US was a fundamental strategy for crippling the Pacific war and the western front Allies' efforts.

If China were to reach such capabilities, it would spell disaster for Australia's seaborne supply and communication lines in times of conflict. Apart from conventional military build-up, there was also a scale up in grey-zone activities related to China. These grey-zone activities include the use of paramilitary forces, militarization of disputed features and territories, and the use of political and economic influence for coercive means.

However rocky contemporary China-Australia ties might be, the two countries have a deep interrelated economic and cultural exchange. Canberra's biggest trading partner is China, accounting for almost 28% of its export and 21% of its imports in 2020<sup>29</sup>. In less than 20 years, Chinese trade with Australia experienced a growth of 1860% and Chinese students have over the years flooded Australians universities. In response to a stronger China and to balance out its strategic needs Australia is consistently pursuing a containment strategy towards China, in which it relies on regional security partnerships and ties to the US as a global regulatory power.

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28 James E. Fanell, "China's Global Navy", Naval War College Autumn 2020, p. 17 ff.

29 Source: Trade and Investment at a glance 2021, Australian Department of Trade Tourism and Investment

AUKUS, a trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK and the US announced in 2021, is considered a product of this reliance on allies and partners.<sup>30</sup> In announcing the partnership, AUKUS leaders resolved, "to deepen diplomatic, security, and defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region" and ultimately emphasized "interoperability."<sup>31</sup> Additionally, Australia is engaged in a partnership with India, Japan and the United States – the Quad. The Quad is a diplomatic network of four major democracies in the Indo-Pacific region committed to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient. It is a key pillar in Australia's foreign policy and complements Australia's other bilateral cooperation, such as the *Special Strategic Partnership* with Japan and a *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership* with India and broader ecosystems of multilateral cooperation, such as with the United Nations.<sup>32</sup> Australian ties with ASEAN are strengthening, with the 2021 establishment of a *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership*.

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30 Bertil Wenger, Sophia Brook, "Australien, AUKUS und die Auswirkungen der Kündigung des australisch-französischen U-Boot Projektes", Konrad Adenauer Stiftung 10.2021

31 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aukus/>

32 <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/quad>

## Germany's Strategic Environment

At the global level, the Federal Republic of Germany is a medium-sized country, both geographically and demographically.<sup>33</sup> Located in Central Europe it essentially enjoys some of the best geography (in economic terms) and worst of geography (in military terms) all at once. Germany is bordered by Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark.



Figure 2: Administrational map of Germany, Mapsland 2022

<sup>33</sup> Federal Government of Germany, White Paper 2016, p. 23.

The defence of the German homeland has always been the main task of the German armed forces. Situated at the centre of Europe and at different points of history finding itself surrounded by potential enemies, there were always only two options for Germany in conducting this defence of its soil: to make it happen either inside or outside of the homeland.<sup>34</sup>

The south of the country is defined by its mountainous terrain that is partially dominated by the Alps while the north exists of flat terrain and borders the Baltic and North Sea's. Yet perhaps the most distinguishable geographic feature is the dense concentration of navigable waterways. Germany hosts at least seven major rivers that are commercially navigable and they play an enormous role in the geoeconomics prospects of the country. Together with smaller tributaries, they allow for the cost-effective transportation of goods into the German inlet and link major population hubs to the North Sea and Baltic Sea. Then there is the Danube in the South, which connects the industries city of Munich to the Black Sea. However, much like the rivers the Heartland does not form a single unified compartment.

Between the late 10<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the territories of today's Germany were the heart of the Holy Roman Empire a collection of small kingdoms, principalities, duchies, and city-states. This led to the development of multiple seats of political and economic power that achieved unity in 1871. Even then, national unity remained a fragile concept. Following the disastrous fallout of WWII, the Germans were once again divided. This time however along the parameters of the Cold War. The situation lasted until 1990 when modern Germany finally reunified.

Today, Berlin is the most populous city and holds of the most political power in the country. However, in addition to the capital there are political and economic seats of power in Düsseldorf, Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Munich and Hamburg.

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34 Gerhard J. Klose, *The Weight of History: Germany's Military and Domestic Security*, Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall 2005), p. 37.

## *Germany in the centre of Europe*

Germany's location in the heart of the North European Plain has often led to conflicts with its neighbours. For all its advantages Germany finds itself in between present and historical powers including the Dutch, French, British, Italians, Austrians, Danish, Swedes, Poles and Russians. South Germany is relatively secure but in the North, the country is exposed to multiple fronts in the flat terrain of the European Plain. Germany's main geographic challenge is preserving its territorial unity and maintaining a political balance between regions within the country.

Berlin has dealt with this dilemma in different ways over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The objective to keep Paris and Moscow "at bay" has remained the same. Modern Germany and France have dealt with their mutual problem by interlocking themselves in European institutions. Just six years after WWII ended the European Coal and Steel community formed a bond between the industries of France and Germany.<sup>35</sup> The succeeding institution the European Economic Community (EEC) improved upon those ties by adding a diplomatic layer and when Germany reunified in the 1990s policymakers from both nations together with other EEC member states rolled out a common European monetary policy.

When the Eurozone came out in full force in 2000 it quickly became an indispensable market for German industries. This dependency reassures France and Germany of their security concerns in the European Plain. This understanding is a geopolitical objective that must be maintained because it allows Berlin to secure its Western flank. The East side however, which faces Russia is a more complicated matter. Eastern Europe and the Balkans have always been a large strategic threat to both the EU and Russia. The region's critical importance can be explained by its geography.

Continental Europe can be broadly split in half with the mountainous terrain dominating the southern region namely the mountain chains of the Pyrenees in the West, the Alps in the South

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<sup>35</sup> [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59_en)

and the Urals in the East. In comparison, the Northern region of continental Europe is dominated by low lands. Here the most important geographical feature to Europe's core is the North European Plain. This is essentially an uninterrupted expanse of flat land stretching from France's border with Spain all the way deep into Russia's central Asian territory.

Historically this plain has featured as the prime invasion route between Russia and Europe and has played decisive roles in the outcomes of some of the region's largest conflicts most notably the failed conquests of Russia by Napoleon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Germans in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Important battles that shaped the balance of power in Europe have been fought here.

Today, this area has an equally important role in shaping Europe. The flatlands that previously saw countless battles now enable large-scale production of crops and in the movement of vast amounts of people and goods among the EU member states. These plains from Paris via Berlin to Warsaw hold the majority of the EU population and European GDP. Since the end of the WWII, the Western Plains between France and Germany have experienced unprecedented peacetime now that it is firmly within the EU. However, the Eastern side of these plains remain at the forefront of the strategic concerns and considerations.

In 2004, 10 new member states joined the EU of which 80 percent were Eastern European countries. Militarily this decade also saw a large expansion of NATO influence in the region. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, several new Eastern European countries wanted to join NATO and EU including all three Baltic States. As a result, the EU and NATO expanded their boundaries east of their 1980s front line. This brought both EU and NATO borders directly in contact with Russia. From Russia's perspective, the expansion of Western influence in the Eastern European region is the realization of centuries of fear and anxiety about the security of their western borders.

On its Eastern flank, NATO has proven to be of great value for Germany. While the EU has allowed Germany to deal with France, NATO has allowed the German leadership to reduce



hazards from the Russian side. This distinct situation explains why Berlin has traditionally operated as a strong advocate of the expansion of the EU and NATO into the former Warsaw Pact nations and the Baltic States. The more the EU and NATO expand the more secure Germany gets because by encouraging European integration Berlin gains political, legal and economic advantage across much of the European Plain. This in turn creates an effective 'buffer zone' between Germany and Russia. However, EU and NATO expansions have also led to a deterioration of relations with the Kremlin in the last two decades. The recent invasion of Ukraine starting in 2014 with the occupation of Crimea and parts of Eastern Ukraine demonstrate Russia's intent on halting the expansion of Europe and NATO's influence.

Economically, Germany's sophisticated infrastructure network with its access to seaports and the country's central location in Europe practically guarantees that German industrial and agricultural surpluses enjoy much lower transportation costs. This gives the government in Berlin a competitive edge in trade - one reason why Germany is the third largest exporter in the world.<sup>36</sup> Roughly, a third of Germany's exports head for member states within the Eurozone. Should the market collapse it would trigger a massive internal crisis within Germany and that is why modern Germany seeks to maintain a political alliance with France and a balance of power in Europe to preserve peace and keep markets open for trade. Berlin's efforts to keep the EU closely integrated amidst the current geopolitical and economic crisis are in line with this strategy.

### ***Germany, NATO, and EU***

The framework conditions of German foreign and security policy are determined by the mandates of the constitution "to promote world peace as an equal partner in a united Europe", to obey and strengthen international law, to settle disputes peacefully and to integrate Germany

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36 World Trade Organization, World Trade Statistical Review 2021, p. 58

into a system of collective security. German security policy is guided by the conviction that security under today's conditions cannot be guaranteed by one state alone. All global problems, conflicts and threats of this century can only be solved together. No one - not even the strongest state - can do this single-handedly. Germany's security is inextricably linked to that of its allies in NATO and the EU.

The transatlantic alliance is vital to the security of Germany and Europe. Only together with the US, can they effectively defend themselves against the threats of the 21st century and guarantee a credible form of deterrence.<sup>37</sup> The Bundeswehr is also deeply integrated into alliance structures and the deployment of forces generally takes place in multinational frameworks of NATO, EU, UN, OSCE, and ad-hoc coalitions. For this reason, the current and future capabilities of the Bundeswehr are very much linked to NATO and EU planning goals.<sup>38</sup>

The function as a framework nation in security, defence and armaments policy cooperation, in operations and in multinational capability development underline Germany's willingness to take on more responsibility and leadership.<sup>39</sup>

The EU stands for political stability, security, freedom and prosperity in Germany and in its member states as a whole.<sup>40</sup> Within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Germany participates together with other EU member states in peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention, and in the strengthening of the international security. It is an integral part of the EU's comprehensive approach towards crisis management, drawing on civilian and military assets. NATO is the foundation of Europe's collective defence, particularly through military means.

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37 Federal German Government, White Paper 2016, p. 49

38 German Ministry of Defence, Konzeption der Bundeswehr 2018, p. 6

39 Federal German Government, White Paper 2016, p. 68

40 Ibid. p. 70

After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, there was a strategic re-orientation in Europe and the transatlantic alliance and NATO and the EU have moved even closer together.

## Commonality in the Maritime Domain

Today's international order is under stress. The EU's Strategic Compass released in 2021 describes it as an era of growing strategic competition, complex security threats, direct attack on the European security order and crisis in multilateralism.<sup>41</sup> This deterioration can be felt worldwide and means that adjustments must be made by Governments to defence policy, capability and force structure.

Indeed, in its 2020 Defence Strategic Update, Australia concluded that confidence in the rules-based global order is being undermined by disruptions from a widening range of sources. Major power competition has intensified and the prospect of high-intensity conflict in the Indo-Pacific, while still unlikely, is less remote than in the past.<sup>42</sup> The rise of China and re-emergence of Russia as powerful military actors and their efforts to reshape the world according to their own visions has placed increasing pressure on the global security framework.

The spectrum of international security threats without a doubt spills over into the maritime environment. The return of strategic competition between great powers and the corresponding investment in high-end military capabilities<sup>43</sup> creates new perils and challenges for both Germany and Australia. For both Germany and Australia, China is the largest trading partner and a necessary one to address global challenges. This certainly does not make the overarching security situation any easier.

Great power competition is clearly visible in the increasingly contested maritime domain.<sup>44</sup>

Crucially, the maritime domain offers plentiful opportunities to engage in activities short of

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41 Council of the European Union, Strategic Compass (2021), p. 5.

42 Australian Government, 2020 Strategic Update, p. 5

43 According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2022 Global military expenditure rose for the seventh consecutive year in 2021 to reach US\$2113 billion, exceeding \$2 trillion for the first time.

44 Thomas Speckmann, "Die Seemacht des 21. Jahrhunderts", *Die Seemacht des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Cicerone, no. 6 (2021): p. 67 ff.

armed conflict. This includes the clandestine tapping of underwater cables, acts of sabotage against underwater energy infrastructure like gas pipelines (as seen in the Baltic Sea in September 2022), covert intrusions into territorial waters, the steering of refugee flows, and using international law as a weapon of coercion. Maritime forces have an important part to play in countering such hybrid strategies aimed at undermining extant Trans-Atlantic or Trans-Pacific cohesion and international rules and norms.

That is why the maritime domain must remain a central pillar of contemporary military strategy for states like Germany and Australia. Even as defence policy and war fighting has ventured into new operational areas, such as space or cyberspace, warfare at sea continues to be a key area of 21<sup>st</sup> century military strategic thought.<sup>45</sup> The ocean covers some 70 percent of the surface of our planet. They are storage of and a site of production for energy and resources as well as mineral raw materials and a critical source of food. Our oceans are sensitive ecosystems, recreational areas, and evident areas of high security policy relevance for the global community.

The vast majority of global trade is conducted via international shipping lanes, many of them running through vulnerable choke points and bottlenecks. Marine resources such as fishing grounds or natural gas and oil deposits below the sea are still the bedrock of many state economic sectors. Gas and oil pipelines often sit on the seabed, as does the global network of underwater cables connecting the world via the internet and financial systems.

Despite the fact that half a globe is separating Germany and Australia and their geographic start points differ significantly, in a globalized and inter-connected world both countries are facing very similar threats and challenges in the maritime domain. Germany and Australia heavily depend on maritime infrastructures and seaborne import and export of goods, raw materials, semi-finished and finished products. A former Australian Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Ray Griggs

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<sup>45</sup> Sebastian Bruns, *From the North Atlantic to the South China Sea - Allied Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century*, ISPK Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University (ISPK) Seapower Series Volume 4 (2021), p. 5.

notes: "I think the first thing to recognise is that our economic centre of gravity is not the resources in and on the land, nor the manufacturing capacity of our industry. It has always been our ability to trade, the importance of getting imports in – most obviously, in a strategic sense, fuel - and, critically, exports out."<sup>46</sup>

Griggs' point highlights the great reliance on the free and unhindered use of the sea for vital imports and exports. The German merchant fleet is the fifth largest in the world in terms of ship owner nationality and the largest in terms of container ships.<sup>47</sup> Access to the sea and freedom of navigation is vitally important for both countries and SLOC's must be seen as remote critical infrastructure that needs protection. Both Australia and Germany also have in common the reality that neither are able to secure their national external security nor their global SLOC's on their own. In this respect, they also primarily rely on the same strategic partner, the US.

Geopolitical competition in the maritime domain has become a major threat to peace, stability and freedom worldwide. Heightened tensions with Russia already after 2014 and increasing friction between the US and China are being played out in the maritime field. Today, probably the most illustrative examples are the Black Sea where NATO has increased its presence with ships since Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea and the South China Sea, where Beijing's territorial claims clash with Washington's intention to defend the current rules-based order and assert freedom of navigation.

But the new Russian Naval Doctrine released in July 2022 by Putin, which attracted attention in particular through its aggressive proclamation, does not bode well either.<sup>48</sup> Last but not least, Iranian armed forces repeatedly harass shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. However, there are also

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46 Vice Admiral Ray Griggs: "Australia's Maritime Strategy", Australian Defence Force Journal. (190): p. 5-10

47 Sources: UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2021, Fleet ownership and registration.

<https://hbs.unctad.org/merchant-fleet/>

48 Prathamesh Karle, Manash Pratim Boruah: "Russia unveils naval doctrine amid Navy Day celebrations", Jane's Navy International. 08/04/2022, vol. 127/007.

more enduring historical maritime threats to the security of international waterways. State fragility and sub-state conflicts in coastal states or near important straits have externalities, such as attacks on international shipping by pirates, criminal groups or terrorists are clear examples. In addition, climate change is opening up geostrategic competition in new theatres, such as the Arctic and Antarctica, where melting ice caps have increased regional accessibility and brought with it a potential strategic race.

Climate change is a threat-multiplier that is adding to the fragility of vulnerable societies and to the kind of protracted conflicts that ultimately spill over into the maritime domain. The destruction of livelihoods through climate change is likely to become one of the driving factors forcing people to migrate – which is often exploited by human traffickers operating via international waters. Essentially, preserving maritime security remains a central concern for Germany and Australia. However, Germany does not have a maritime strategy, nor does Australia.

Germany's White Paper stems from 2016. It provides the basis for the German government's extant security policy and explains strategic priorities areas of active foreign policy and tasks for the Bundeswehr. The concept of the Bundeswehr (Konzeption der Bundeswehr, 2018), derived from the White Paper, is the overarching document that determines the fundamental lines of Germany's military defence in the long term. In doing so, it lays down the principles, taking into account current political lines of action, and articulates how the Bundeswehr is geared towards the future in terms of concept and planning and how it is continuously modernized. The so called "capability profile of the Bundeswehr" (Fähigkeitsprofil der Bundeswehr, 2018) is an internal planning document that describes in detail the needs of the Bundeswehr as well as the main modernization steps up to the year 2031. These three documents do not constitute a military strategy.

However, this situation does not differ much from the Australian where national security

discourse has been overwhelmingly land-centric.<sup>49</sup> It seems that in both countries a lack of awareness of maritime issues prevails.<sup>50</sup> In both 2016's white papers, the term "maritime strategy" is absent. For Germany, this may be due to the fact that it has traditionally been more of a continental country – with the coast only constituting a comprehensively small geographic area. The Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine outlines the strategic military doctrine of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was handed down in 2002 and there has not seen an update since. It is the authoritative source from which all other ADF doctrine is derived and describes fundamental and enduring security interests, how the ADF contributes to the achievement of Australia's strategic policy objectives and defines the spectrum of potential military operations. Australia's capstone document for the Navy, the Australian Maritime Doctrine, contains the fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of national objectives, comes without a threat analysis and was last updated in 2010. Of course, Australia's 2016 Defence White Paper points out "a secure, resilient Australia, with secure northern approaches and proximate sea lines of communication, is Australia's first Strategic Defence Interest."<sup>51</sup>

When it comes to military strategies in general, modern Germany likes to refer primarily to NATO and the EU in terms of assuring security. However, the NATO Alliance Maritime Strategy (AMS) and the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) were promulgated in 2011 and 2014 respectively. That is why they cannot adequately reflect the realities of the fundamentally altered security environment. The most recent comprehensive description of the security environment remains the EU's Strategic Compass in which all 27-member states adopted their

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49 Vice Admiral Ray Griggs: "Australia's Maritime Strategy", Australian Defence Force Journal. (190): p. 5-10. Also see Vice Admiral Tim Barrett: "The Navy and the Nation", Melbourne University Publishing, 2017

50 Michael Evans, *The Challenge of Australian Maritime Identity*, Quadrant Magazine. Nov 2013, Vol. 57 Issue 11, p. 22-30. See also Carlo Masala and Konstantinos Tsetsos, "Die maritime Dimension der Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik der Europäischen Union und Deutschlands im 21. Jahrhundert", ISPSW Strategy Series: Issue No. 229 May 2013.

51 Australian Government, Defence White Paper 2016, p. 33.



shared assessment. This document recognizes the Indo-Pacific as a new centre of global competition, where geopolitical tensions endanger the rules-based order in the region, and put pressure on global supply chains and where the EU has a crucial geopolitical and economic interest in stability and security in the region.<sup>52</sup> However, this document does not represent a maritime strategy in the classical sense, nor is it aimed to do so. It is an overarching document that gives the European Union an ambitious plan of action for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy. However, as defence remains an area of national sovereignty it cannot lay down ways and allocate means to counter the described threats, challenges and goals required for a military strategy.

It is important to recognize that requirements of the German Navy have drastically changed, as Vice Admiral J. C. Kaack the new German Chief of Navy, pointed out after 100-days in office. While it has grown accustomed over decades to engaging in low-intensity operations fulfilling stabilisation or policing missions, the German Navy will have to return to its traditional roles. Washington's pivot to Asia will require Germany and Europe to shoulder more of the burden of counterbalancing Russia and its aggressive foreign policy at sea. On the other hand, Washington is likely to have a debate on how its Euro-Atlantic allies can complement American efforts in the Indo-Pacific either through force projection in the form of naval deployment or through more indirect support for the intensifying US military challenge posed by China at sea.<sup>53</sup> Unlike the UK or France, Germany is currently perceived primarily as an economic power in the Indo-Pacific region. Germany's 2020 Indo-Pacific Guidelines are a fruitful basis for greater engagement in the multilateral, maritime sphere.

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52 EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, p. 10.

53 Sebastian Bruns, *From the North Atlantic to the South China Sea - Allied Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century*, ISPK Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University (ISPK) Seapower Series Volume 4 (2021), p. 6.

## Comparison of AUS und DEU Navies

### *The German Navy*

The German Government redefined the country's security policy in the White Paper 2016 in response to crisis and conflicts in its immediate vicinity. The effects on the German Navy (GN) were no less game changing. National and collective defence is once again the criterion governing equipment, training and operational tasking. While protecting trade and contributing to the protection of sea lines of communication is fundamental, so too is the ability to project power across the spectrum of conflict. However, international crisis management remains equally important.

The GN also needs to be prepared to promote the enforcement of rules and norms of UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) like freedom of navigation - as noted in Germany's 2020 Indo-Pacific guidelines. This is a clear increase of tasking and indicative that years of GN shrinkage are over. The fleet will need to grow again and the GN is already in the midst of a comprehensive modernization process. The German Chief of Navy described the GN's present and future role this way:

"The German Navy will stay regionally rooted and globally committed! Our main area of operation remains the northern flank with the North Sea, North Norway Sea and the Atlantic - with a special view of the Baltic Sea. We adapt to this in terms of equipment, training, leadership and exercise participation. Strengthening the NATO task forces, participating in high-quality exercises and protecting carrier strike groups are in our interest. With our worldwide commitment, we show potential opponent as well as allies and partner with shared values in distress that the German Navy is a versatile instrument that can demonstrate political priorities with little effort, maximum attention."<sup>54</sup>

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54 100 Tage im Amt: "Kursbestimmung 2022", Vice Admiral Jan Christian Kaak 27.06.2022

According to the capability profile of the Bundeswehr 2018, in terms of warships and boats, Germany will continue with investments in:

- Sustainment of six diesel-electric/hydrogen fuel cell U212A submarines and acquisition of additional two enhanced U212 CD submarines in cooperation with the Royal Norwegian Navy by 2034.
- Sustainment and upgrades of four F123 BRANDENBURG class multi-purpose frigates until 2035.
- Acquisition and sustainment of four new F126 class frigates by 2031 to replace the BRANDENBURG class frigate and to regain state of the art ASW capabilities;
- Acquisition and sustainment of 30 SEA TIGER multi-role-maritime helicopters to replace the 22 strong Mk88A SEA LYNX helicopter fleet by 2030;
- Acquisition and sustainment of eight P-8A POSEIDON maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircrafts to replace the seven remaining P-3C ORION aircrafts by 2027;
- Sustainment and upgrades of three F124 SACHSEN class air defence frigates to maintain these as leading-edge air defence warfare platforms including the development of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) Sensor capabilities;
- Sustainment of four F125 BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG class multi-purpose frigates;
- Sustainment of five K130 batch 1 BRAUNSCHWEIG class anti-surface warfare corvettes until 2029 and procurement of five batch 2 corvettes from 2023;
- Sustainment and upgrades of ten MJ332 FRANKENTHAL class mine hunters combined with a drastic increase of anti-invasion-mine stocks;
- Sustainment of six T404 ELBE class tenders and acquisition of five new medium-sized auxiliary vessels (Mittlere Unterstützungseinheit schwimmende Einheiten – MusE) in

order to replace the existing tenders from 2029.

- Sustainment of three T703 BERLIN class fleet replenishment and role 2 afloat ships.
- Acquisition and sustainment of two new T707 class tanker in order to replace the two existing T404 RHÖN class tanker from 2025.
- Sustainment of 18 SEA LION multi-purpose/transport and SAR helicopter.

## *Royal Australian Navy*

The vast area under Australia's maritime jurisdiction mean that when the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) deploys their assets from their home ports - either to a domestic exercise or an operational area - this represents, by the standards of many navies, an expeditionary task. Within days, major units might need to transit from the tropical calm and heat of the dry season in the northern archipelago to the extreme cold and huge seas and swells of the Southern Ocean. These assets must therefore be supported by assured, long-range communication and reliable supply and repair.

The Government generally requires the ADF to perform four principle tasks in which the RAN, with its 15,200 sailors, will play an integral part. These principle tasks include deterring and defeating attacks on Australia; contributing to stability and security in the South Pacific and East Timor; contributing to military contingencies in the Asia-Pacific region; and contributing to military contingencies in support of global security.<sup>55</sup>

Canberra's strategic assessments have also recognised the need for Australia to maintain some credible ability to project military power throughout their primary operational environment and, on occasions, beyond.<sup>56</sup> The 2016 Defence White Paper placed a heavy emphasis upon engagement and urged the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to raise its presence and ability to shape and influence the future political and strategic direction of the Indo-Pacific.<sup>57</sup>

Navy's main answer to this call is the Indo-Pacific Endeavour (IPE). Not only would IPE be a task group, but it would also be a valuable opportunity for Navy – alongside the other two services – to hone their warfighting as a task group.<sup>58</sup> This explains why the RAN is currently in the midst of

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55 Australian Maritime Doctrine, Commonwealth of Australia 2010, p.46

56 Ibid. p. 81.

57 Australian Government, Defence White Paper 2016, p. 118.

58 Prof. Adam Lockyer, Justin Burke, Yves-Heng Lim, Fred Smith, The Indo-Pacific Endeavour - Reflections and Proposals for Australia's Premier Naval Diplomacy Activity, *Sea Power Soundings* Issue 19 (2020) p. 6.

its largest peacetime expansion and the improvements of the ADF's amphibious, strategic lift and offshore sustainment capabilities seen in the last decade.



Figure 3: The Span of Maritime Tasks, Australian Maritime Operations

On a daily basis, the RAN has between five and ten units permanently at sea and is regularly deployed to:

- contribute to the whole-of-government effort to protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests through surveillance and response in the maritime approaches to Australia (Operation Resolute),

- undergo activities that aims to safely dispose of World War II-vintage explosive remnants of war from South Pacific island nations (Operation Render Safe),
- support international efforts to promote maritime security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East Region (Operation Manitou),
- support whole-of-government responses to natural disasters and humanitarian crises in the region,
- contribute to the multinational effort to enforce UN Security Council resolutions related to North Korea

and more generally to:

- strengthen Australia's engagement and partnerships with regional security forces,
- enhance its regional engagement in the Southwest Pacific in support of the Australian Government's Pacific Step-up initiative
- provide maritime surveillance patrols in critical sea lanes in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea,

According to the Force Structure Plan 2020, in terms of warships and boats Australia will continue with its investments in:

- Acquisition and sustainment of nine Hunter class frigates optimised for anti-submarine warfare, for an increasingly competitive undersea environment;
- Sustainment and upgrades to the three Hobart class destroyers to maintain these as leading-edge air warfare platforms to protect deployed naval forces; build a replacement for the Hobart class destroyer following the completion of the Hunter class frigate build;
- Sustainment and upgrades to the eight ANZAC class frigates to maintain the Navy's strategic edge in surface combatant capability;

- Acquisition and sustainment of 12 ARAFURA class offshore patrol vessels, to enhance Australia's capacity to patrol its maritime territory and near region;
- Procurement of six evolved CAPE class patrol boats to de-risk the transition to the new ARAFURA class from the Navy's ageing ARMIDALE class patrol boats;
- Enhancements to mine countermeasures and hydrographic capabilities through the acquisition of up to eight additional vessels;
- Sustainment of two SUPPLY class replenishment ships;
- Sustainment and capability enhancements to the two CANBERRA class amphibious vessels;
- Design, development and acquisition of two multi-role sealift and replenishment vessels to replace HMAS Choules;
- Acquisition of at least eight nuclear-powered submarines supported by the United Kingdom and US under AUKUS. If Australia built SSNs on a three-year drumbeat, the eighth boat would not arrive until around 2060;<sup>59</sup>
- and acquisition and sustainment of 24 MH-60R Seahawk naval combat helicopters;
- In addition, the Royal Australian Air Force operates 14 P-8A POSEIDON aircraft based at RAAF Base Edinburgh with anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, maritime surveillance and search and rescue being their primary roles.

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<sup>59</sup> Andrew Nicholls, Jackson Dowie and Dr Marcus Hellyer, Implementing Australia's nuclear submarine program, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (Dec 2021)



## Towards an Enhanced GN-RAN Strategic Partnership?

There are many similarities in the challenges that Australia and Germany are facing in the maritime environment. The economic well-being of both nations depends largely on free and secure maritime trade routes. The range of imports and exports Australia and Germany depend on is so vast, the distances over which they must come are so great, the means to attack them are so varied that neither of the both is able to support a Navy capable of protecting its security and economic interests alone. For this, but also for safeguarding national defence, both countries depend on their alliances with the US.

Australia's and Germany's Navies are similar in size, have similar capabilities (primarily defensive in character), and have tactical procedures influenced by the US and NATO. As the navies of medium powers, and have since frequently operated as part of alliance forces, both navies have had no need to develop doctrine wholly from first principles. Indeed, considerably more than armies, almost all modern navies operate from a the basis of shared international doctrine, allowing a level of mutual understanding that also manifests itself at much higher levels of command.<sup>60</sup>

In their strategic documents, both countries maintain a certain level of ambiguity in statements on how articulated security interests and goals are to be implemented and shy away from clear statements about military opponents and how to deal with them. In addition to the socially desirable required restraint, this is probably due in particular to the fact that potential system rivals and military opponents are important trading partners and suppliers of strategic resources at the same time. For Australia, Germany but also the US, China has become the largest trading partner, which is also causing increasing concern due to its hegemonic efforts and military build-up.

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<sup>60</sup> Australian Maritime Doctrine, Commonwealth of Australia 2010, p. 1

The common interest in preserving, defending and strengthening the rule-based order and the associated free and secure access to the sea, which connects continents and peoples, is the linchpin of the common value base and perhaps future increased cooperation taking into account the respective relations with the US.

However, there are also differences facing German and Australian defence strategy. Geography determines armed forces. Germany is and was always more continental in character, whereas Australia's island location led to a more oceanic character. While the RAN accounts for around 20% of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) the GN accounts for just around 7.5% of the Bundeswehr. It is clear that due to limited resources and the spatially separate typical areas of operation, combined operations in the same sea area will remain the exception for the near future.

Of course, while the GN is fully integrated into NATO, the RAN is not part of it. Due to globalization and the resulting dependencies of national economies on international trade routes, safe and secure access to the world's oceans is becoming the focus of foreign and security policy. This increases the importance of naval forces worldwide. Even if Germany, not least for geographical reasons, is a land power that serves the conventional defence of Europe, German foreign and security policy must make greater efforts to do justice to the changed situation on the world's oceans. In this respect, the legitimate question arises as to what contribution the GN can make to the implementation of the guidelines for the Indo-Pacific, e.g. within the framework of increased cooperation with the RAN.

## **Way/s Ahead**

There are good relations between Germany and Australia, but cooperation in the military field has been on a low level to date. The common ground for the GN and the RAN could be the US strategy to contain China's power through multinational cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

This idea is in line with one of the most important principles of German foreign and security policy: the self-commitment to act in a multilateral framework to promote international cooperation worldwide. There also is unity in the conviction that in order to moderate and counter expansive and autocratic tendencies, all available diplomatic, economic, cultural, and military means must be used (Whole-of-Government Approach to Security). Perhaps closer military cooperation might be found in operations, exercises and training, or indeed, in the sphere of defence development and procurement. Some avenues for closer engagement between the RN and the GN are examined below:

### ***1. Common operations***

Germany usually deploys its naval forces within the framework of NATO, EU and UN naval groups and operations and missions, whose areas of operation range from the Baltic Sea, the North Sea into the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Black Sea to the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf. With the RAN overlapping areas of operation have only appeared, apart from rare individual deployments in the Indo-Pacific, in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf in recent times. When dealing with persisting threats in the maritime domain and enforcing the rule-based order and free access to the sea, and given limited availability of ships and boats and limited reach of both Navies: cooperation in operations is most likely to happen through NATO and EU only.

The NATO 2030 agenda agreed by NATO Leaders at the NATO Brussels 2021 Summit seeks to strengthen NATO's global cooperation with like-minded partners, especially with its global partners, to defend the rules-based international order and institutions, to set international norms and standards in space and in cyberspace, and on new technologies and global arms control. NATO's global partners include Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, the

Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan.<sup>61</sup> On 16 November 2022, the Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, held the second Australia-EU Leaders' Meeting in the margins of the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia. They welcomed the entry into force of the Framework Agreement between Australia and the EU, which marks a new milestone in the relationship. Noting the EU's efforts to reinforce naval presence and diplomacy in the Horn of Africa and further into the Indian Ocean, the Leaders agreed to explore options for Australia's participation in Operation ATALANTA in 2023.<sup>62</sup>

The implementation of the EU's Coordinated Maritime Presence in the North Western Indian Ocean and EU's maritime capacity building initiative CRIMARIO, contributing to enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness through information sharing, capacity building and training, in the Western Indian Ocean could also provide opportunities for cooperation. In fact, CRIMARIO II's collaborative approach will focus on enhancing cooperation and complementarity with regional Information Fusion centres, national maritime operations centres, national maritime information sharing centres / joint operations centres, regional actors (IMO/DCOC, UNODC, IOC, ASEAN, IORA, RECAAP), and third countries active in the Indo-Pacific (EU Members States and EU partners such as India, Japan, USA, Australia).<sup>63</sup> However, more fields of cooperation exist below the level of common operations.

## ***2. Common exercises***

The participation of German ships in naval exercises and manoeuvres or the temporarily integration into US/UK lead carrier strike groups (operating in the Indo-Pacific) could be a suitable measure. By continuously ensuring or even expanding its participation at unit level in

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61 [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49188.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49188.htm)

62 [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/australia/australia-eu-leaders%E2%80%99-meeting-2022-joint-press-release\\_en?s=163](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/australia/australia-eu-leaders%E2%80%99-meeting-2022-joint-press-release_en?s=163)

63 <https://www.crimario.eu/en/the-project/rationale-objectives/>

the world's largest multinational maritime manoeuvre RIMPAC, which has been taking place every two years in the western Pacific region under the leadership of the US since 1971, Germany could further underline its increased interest in this region via its Navy.<sup>64</sup>

The GN was represented by mine divers and boarding teams at the 2022 iteration, in which: 26 nations provided 38 ships, 3 submarines, more than 170 aircraft and approximately 25,000 personnel. The exercise is designed to be defensive and strengthens the close cooperation at the tactical and operational level of the US Navy, the US Marine Corps, the US Air Force and its international partners. It covers all dimensions of maritime warfare from large-scale high intensity down to maritime interdiction operations, anti-piracy as well as disaster relief, search and rescue exercises. The operational core is the US Air-Sea-Battle concept, in which Japan, Australia and South Korea are also fully integrated. RIMPAC 2022 saw an Australian contingent of approximately 1,600 personnel, HMA Ships *Canberra*, *Supply* and *Warramunga*, two RAAF P-8A Poseidon aircraft, Mine Warfare and Clearance Diving capabilities, and a Joint Landing Force from the Royal Australian Regiment.<sup>65</sup>

With Germany's participation as an observer in the exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2021 (TS21), the basis for participation in the exercise itself in 2023 has already begun. TALISMAN SABRE is a biennial combined Australian and US training activity often including other allied forces, designed to train respective military force elements in planning and conducting Combined Task Force operations to improve the combat readiness and interoperability. Approximately 17,000 military personnel from seven nations were participating on land, air and sea during TS21.

### ***3. Partnership in warfare training***

Effective multinational cooperation at sea is largely based on technical interoperability and

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<sup>64</sup> The German foreign minister just recently appointed the first special envoy for the Pacific island states.

<sup>65</sup> <https://news.defence.gov.au/media/media-releases/adf-caps-biggest-rimpac-yet>

common procedures. In the Euro-Atlantic theatre, these are defined in classified NATO publications and are often shaped by the US. In contrast, the US and its allies often operate on the basis of other procedures in the Indo-Pacific region. In the case of the US Navy, a picture emerges of two separate navies, one on the east coast, trained in NATO procedures and operating in the Euro-Atlantic theatre, and a differently trained on the west coast for the Indo-Pacific region. Since the US is not only the largest military-strategic partner for Germany and Australia, but also to some extent the pace and standard setter, they have to align themselves with the US when it comes to procedure training and questions of interoperability. As a result, the first question that arises during combined or joint exercises is: what are the procedures and technical standards?

The respective GN and RAN naval operation schools could play an important role here. The Naval Operations School in Bremerhaven and HMAS Watson in Sydney train individuals and Command Teams to prepare for exercises and deployments. A regular exchange of personnel could sharpen mutual understanding of each other's maritime environment and, in the event that German units are deployed to the Indo-Pacific, could ensure better preparation of the command teams. Both schools also have the technology for large-scale synthetic fleet exercises in cooperation with the US and its allies. If interoperability of these systems could be achieved, common procedures could be practised in a simulated environment before the real encounter.

With Germany procuring P8-A POSEIDON aircrafts, both, Australia and Germany will operate the same maritime patrol aircraft. This will automatically generate opportunities for collaboration in training, tactics and capabilities development and procurement.

#### ***4. Personnel exchange and embarkations***

For questions of a more strategic nature, an exchange at the level of the Sea Power Centre Australia (SPC-A) in Canberra, e.g. with the Navy faculty at the Führungsakademie der

Bundeswehr in Hamburg or even between the Ministries of Defence would be an option. The GN could also encourage and invite the RAN to participate in the Advanced Staff Course at the Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr in order to enhance mutual knowledge and understanding of the strategic environment at senior officer's level and to foster networking. This course begins every fall, lasts two years and is open to 100 national and international military participants (primarily from NATO and EU countries). The training enables to understand problems from different perspectives and with scientific methods and to develop solutions. The military leaders plan at the strategic, operational and tactical levels and make appropriate analyses and recommendations on security policy issues.<sup>66</sup>

Cooperation in the training of young officer candidates between the Royal Australian Naval College HMAS Creswell and the Marineschule Mürwik in Flensburg would also be conceivable. Both navies follow very similar training approaches and leadership models. Following basic training, cadets on exchange could acquire academic degrees at the University of the Federal Armed Forces in Hamburg as well as in the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in cooperation with the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Canberra. Of course continued embarkations of personnel on unit level will support a better understanding on how the navies operate on a daily basis in their respective environments.

### ***5. Cooperation on capability development***

Both German and Australian military policy objectives call for new military capabilities, leading both Governments to invest billions in new and improved capabilities. The Australian government's ambitious plan to set up an innovative export-oriented armaments industry in order to modernize the ADF and become a competitive supplier of armaments on the world

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<sup>66</sup> <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/weitere-bmvg-dienststellen/fuehrungsakademie-der-bundeswehr/nationale-und-internationale-stabsoffizierausbildung/generalstabsdienst-admiralstabsdienst-national-igan>

market in the medium term could open up a wide field of cooperation. However, it remains to be seen how AUKUS will affect Australia's decision on future armaments projects (although a closer connection to the US seems certain.)<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, Germany will focus on strengthening a more sovereign European Defence Industry together with France. Our two middle-sized Navies with very similar capabilities in Anti-Air-, Anti-Surface, Anti-Submarine Warfare, Fleet-Support, and Sea-Surveillance and partnered with the US could become more often cooperation partners in research and development and procurement.

## Conclusion

The world's seas are essential to the freedom, safety and prosperity of our societies. At the same time, the maritime security environment has become more complex and faces major challenges. Geopolitical competition and even rivalry in the maritime domain has become a major threat to peace, stability and freedom. The awakened interest of Germany, but also of the EU and NATO, in the Indo-Pacific opens up new possibilities in addressing these maritime threats along the economically important SLOCs in the vastness of the Indo-Pacific region.

Germany and Australia share a strong commitment to their common values, in particular democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a rules-based multilateral order. Despite the limited reach of the GN and the RAN, there are many opportunities for deepening cooperation to deliver actions as part of whole-of-government approaches to maritime security.

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<sup>67</sup> Jahresbericht Australien 2021/2022, German Embassy Canberra