

# TBD BRIEF #4



## Australia vs China Security Balance

Notes by Harry Tod

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### Introduction

Australia is an island nation which gains security from its isolation and its alliances. Reliant on long-distance trade and surrounded by water, Australia's security is predicated on its joint control over the maritime domain with other nations. However, as a quickly destabilising region threatens Australia's control over the sea and brings conflict closer, Australia has decided to procure a more lethal and responsive defence force under the 2020 Defence Strategic Update. But with threats to Australia being unknown, is our security heading in the right direction?

### Raw Military Numbers

Metrics	China	AUS	AUS & US	AUS, US, JPN, IND ('Quad' Alliance)
Defence budget in USD	\$200b (2014) \$261b (2019)	\$23b (2014) \$26b (2019)	\$710b (2014) \$757b (2019)	\$809b (2014) \$875b (2019)
Principal warships	82	10	131	209
Naval force projection units*	7	3	54	63
Vertical launch cells**	2,296	160	10,652	12,256
Attack submarines	55	6	59	86
Fighter and attack aircraft	933	109	2,663	3,298
Air force multipliers***	176	36	949	1,070
Nuclear warheads	320	0	5800	5950
Cyber Capabilities (ratio)	98	72	US: 100	JPN: 61, IND: 52
Intelligence Capabilities (ratio)	94	87	US: 100	JPN: 69, IND: 60

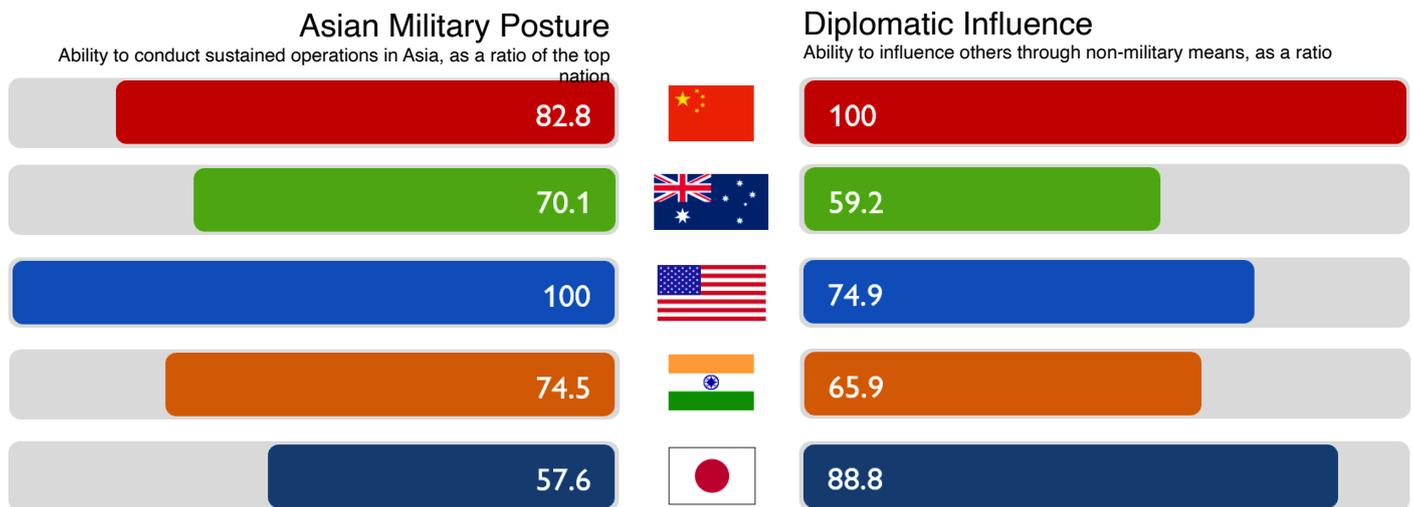
Source: Lowy Institute, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Federation of American Scientists

\* Includes aircraft carriers, landing helicopter docks, and maritime warfare vessels.

\*\* Effectively the number of deployable missiles across all naval assets, which contributes to the bulk of modern naval destructive capability.

\*\*\* Includes strategic transport, aerial refuelling, command and control, and intelligence aircraft which 'boost' the capabilities of other platforms.

## True Capability in 2020



Source: Lowy Institute

## Key Issues

**Chinese Expansionism:** A growing China, especially with an unstable political environment, may seek to aggressively expand its influence or even its territory beyond its current borders. Taiwan, the South China Sea and the Indian-China border are all 'hotspots' from which conflict might arise. Whether China desires to expand beyond its immediate region is debatable, however most agree that China has no interest in largescale territorial expansion akin to Imperial Japan in WW2.

**Decline of the United States:** As the figures show, Australia gains a lot from its military relationship with the United States. A decline in US economic and political power, as well as declining resolve to intervene in foreign conflicts, might leave Australia on its own in a destabilising Asia. This is arguably perhaps offset by the emerging 'quadrilateral' alliance with the US, Japan and India, and also by Australia's many growing bilateral security arrangements with other nations.

**Hybrid Warfare:** In older, conventional conflicts, it was easier to predict how and where an adversary would fight, and therefore how and where to employ military force. However, the rise of Hybrid or 'Grey Zone' Warfare blurs the line between armed conflict and diplomacy, and by extension the line between what is war and what is not. This complicates defence – as hard lining a Hybrid Warfare adversary could be escalatory and unnecessarily risky, whereas taking a less aggressive approach would not be strong enough.

**Future Technologies:** Hypersonic missiles, cyber weapons, and drones are new technologies that are being rapidly fielded by key nations, as they lend considerable asymmetric advantages to the side that uses them. The existence of these new technologies, which have not yet fully matured, complicates the future vision of warfare, making procurement and defence industry building more complex.

**2020 Defence Strategic Update:** Australia's 2020 Defence Strategic Update expresses the need for a more independent and lethal defence force in response to a destabilising region. Key departures from previous defence policy include an interest in procuring naval mines, hypersonic missiles, long-range anti-ship missiles, an offensive cyber capability, as well as a more self-sufficient arms manufacturing industry. These improve Australia's independent area denial capability, giving it the ability to deter and destroy enemy forces before they come into striking range. This differs from the previous anti-access strategy, which was based on the joint control of the air-sea gap between an adversary and Australia, representing a shift in Australian strategic thinking.