

Chapter 9

Australia's Role and Actions in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework

An-Hao Huang

I. Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, many Western democracies and even academics have been optimistic about the phenomenon of China's rise, most believing that bringing China into the global economy would lead to a peaceful evolution of China, which would lead to political reforms toward Western democracies and make it a "responsible stakeholder" in international security.¹ But since the advent of the Donald Trump era, this long-standing Western narrative of coexistence has been replaced by a near-zero-sum adversarial mindset that is no longer the norm in U.S. diplomacy. While the global economic and trade links to the Chinese market have become inseparable, the growing U.S.-China rivalry has created a fundamental security imperative for U.S. ally Australia to choose between democracy and autocracy.

Australia has been the most loyal traditional security ally of the United States in the Pacific. Under the 1951 ANZUS Treaty framework, Australia's defense strategy is virtually tied to U.S. Pacific security policy, and it has volunteered to serve as the "deputy sheriff" of the United States in the Pacific. For this reason, Washington has a deep respect and affection for Canberra. Geographically located between the

* Associate Research Fellow, Division of Defense Strategy and Resources, Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

¹ Andrew Taffer, "Washington Still Wants China to Be a Responsible Stakeholder," *Foreign Policy*, December 29, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/29/washington-china-responsible-stakeholder/>.

Indian and Pacific Oceans in the southern hemisphere, Australia had the concept of the Indo-Pacific region long before the U.S. proposed the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Australia even linked the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean for the first time in 2012 and called it the “strategic arc”.²

Australia’s “strategic arc” of the Indo-Pacific concept stems from Australia’s sense of insecurity and anxiety about its geopolitical location. To ensure national security, Australia has to face challenges from the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, but this is not enough to support Australia’s national security in terms of its relatively limited defense forces. Therefore, the proposed U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy meets Australia’s geo-security needs and strategic vision and strengthens the complementary military and security alliance between the U.S. and Australia.³ The question this paper will explore is, given the continuation of the former Trump administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy and its continued resistance to China, what should be Australia’s role in the current Indo-Pacific strategic framework? What should Australia do?

II. U.S.-Australia Security Relations under the Biden Doctrine

If the Trump Doctrine is based on unilateralism such as “America First” or “isolationism,” then the Biden Doctrine can be described as “alliance first” or “multilateralism.” From the international outlook Biden expressed before and after his election, it is clear that rebuilding the trust of allies in the United States and strengthening their cooperation with the United States will be the central axis of the Biden administration’s diplomatic path.⁴ Faced with the challenge of “strategic competitor” China and Russia, multilateralism will be the basis for the United States to handle international affairs and maintain the international

² Australian Government, *Australia in The Asian Century* (Canberra: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2012), https://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/australia_in_the_asian_century_white_paper.pdf.

³ Huang Enhao, “Chapter 7: Australia’s South China Sea Policy and Actions,” edited by Zhong Zhidong, *South China Sea Security from Multiple Perspectives* (Taipei: Wu Nan Publishing House, December 2020), p. 211.

⁴ Lin Yuli, “Biden to make first US president speech at Munich Security Conference,” *China Central News Agency*, February 12, 2021, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aopl/202102130013.aspx>.

order.⁵ Therefore, the United States will continue to work under the Indo-Pacific framework. Therefore, it is predictable that the United States will continue to deepen its military-security cooperation with Australia under the Indo-Pacific framework. Biden's and Trump's anti-China orientation remains unchanged mainly in China policy. Biden essentially believes that China's attempt to supplant the U.S. in the international arena requires it to be seen as a hypothetical enemy and compete strategically. Compared to Trump, Biden is more flexible in that he believes that China should be "cooperative when it is cooperative, competitive when it is competitive, and confrontational when it is confrontational. The *Economist* called this Biden's "new China doctrine".⁶

The U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, declassified in January 2021, emphasizes that China is unilaterally changing international norms, regional order, and democratic values, while the United States seeks to defend the values of a free and open Indo-Pacific region that allies and partners can share. Furthermore, maintain a rules-based international order. While regional states (Australia, Japan, and India) have their Indo-Pacific ideas, the document emphasizes U.S. support for allied and partner engagement and complementary capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region to address China's military threats and economic challenges. The document also places considerable emphasis on Australia's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific, not only in terms of strengthening U.S. capabilities and cooperation in the framework of the Indo-Pacific strategy but also in Australia's security role in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD).⁷

The Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, released by the White House National Security Council on March 3, 2021, defines China as the only country with the comprehensive economic, diplomatic, military, and technological

⁵ Yang Mingjuan, "Bidenism Emerges, Always Cooperate with Allies," *China Central Radio*, February 20, 2021, <https://www.rti.org.tw/news/view/id/2092225>.

⁶ "Biden's New China Doctrine," *The Economist*, July 17, 2021, <https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/2021-07-17>.

⁷ "U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific," *The White House*, January 5, 2021, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>.

capabilities to challenge the existing open international order.⁸ To offset China's global challenge, the United States has placed greater emphasis on its security commitments to its allies. For example, in April 2020, Australia's public call for an investigation into the origin of the COVID-19 in China led to Chinese discontent and the subsequent imposition of trade sanctions against Australia. In an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald* on March 16, 2021, Kurt Campbell, director of the National Security Council's Indo-Pacific coordinator, said Beijing must improve Australia-China relations before U.S.-China relations can improve; The United States is not prepared to upgrade bilateral relations and reach separate agreements with (China) when its close allies are under economic threat.⁹

In recent years, China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative to provide financial assistance to South Pacific island nations to build critical infrastructure has caused Australia to feel doubly concerned about regional security. Under the Indo-Pacific strategic framework, the U.S. and Australia have emphasized the need to enhance security cooperation with allies, expressed a strong stance against China's military expansion into the South Pacific and looked to the multilateral security cooperation framework to keep China in check. In terms of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the first summit meeting of U.S., Japanese, Australian, and Indian leaders on March 12, 2021, was an essential exercise of the Biden administration's emphasis on international multilateralism. The joint statement of the meeting put forward the "spirit of quadrilateral dialogue" and discussed the importance of issues such as "the East and South China Seas," "maritime security," "democratic values," and "the rule of law and freedom of navigation and overflight."¹⁰ Although the statement did not explicitly refer to the threat of China, nor did it address the issue of military cooperation, the four countries have formed a joint effort to address the

⁸ "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance," *The White House*, March 3, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

⁹ "US Shows Solidarity with Australia over China Trade War," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 16, 2021, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/us-shows-solidarity-with-australia-over-china-trade-war-20210316-p57ba2.html>.

¹⁰ "Leaders of the United States, Japan, India and Australia Issue a Joint Statement on the 'Spirit of Four-way Dialogue,'" *Radio France Internationale*, March 13, 2021, <https://www.rfi.fr/cn/政治/20210313-美日印澳四國領導人發表聯合聲明，談四方對話精神>.

threat of China.

III. Australia's Role in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy

On the premise that the U.S.-Australian military security alliance is the central pillar of Australia's national security, Australia's strategic planning and security practices in the region are still mainly oriented towards the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, despite Australia's own Indo-Pacific security concept. As a result, Australia's military and foreign policy actions in the region can often be seen in its official white papers. The following explores Australia's military and diplomatic roles in the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy from Australia's recent defense and foreign affairs white papers.

1. The Role of Military Alliances

Australia's 2016 Defence White Paper, published in 2016, notes that the United States has dominated the prosperity and rules-based global order of the Indo-Pacific region for the past 70 years; for Australia, which relies on open shipping lanes and diverse trade partners, maintaining stability and prosperity is critical to Australia's national interests.¹¹ The White Paper, The White Paper, sets out three fundamental strategic defense interests: first, to ensure a secure and resilient Australia; second, to ensure the security and stability of Australia's neighbors, such as Southeast Asia and the South Pacific; and third, to stabilize the Indo-Pacific region and the rules-based global order. In this White Paper, Australia predicts that developments in U.S.-China relations will pose serious economic and security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region by 2035. In this regard, Australia must continue to work with the United States and its partners in the Indo-Pacific region to strengthen its national interests by ensuring the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific.

¹¹ Department of Defense of Australian Government, *2016 Defense White Paper* (Australia: Department of Defense, 2016), pp. 13-14.

As you can see from the aforementioned White Paper, Australia attaches great importance to the security of the Indo-Pacific region and its neighbors. If we look at Australia's security perspective in the context of the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategic framework, we can see that Australia is an essential country in the southern part of the U.S. "second island chain" of defense and is a critical anchor force in the chain; it is clear that the U.S. and Australia share common security interests in the second island chain. As Chinese naval forces continue to expand into the South Pacific, the security of the Second Island Chain is already being challenged. Once Chinese military forces break through the Second Island Chain and extend to the Third Island Chain, this will not only challenge U.S. security but will also pose a direct threat to Australian security. Therefore, defending the second island chain within the framework of the U.S.-Australian military alliance, especially in the vicinity of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, is an issue for Australia's national defense strategy and highlights Australia's pivotal role in the Indo-Pacific strategy.

Given Japan's historical experience of invading Australia from the northeast during World War II, Australia attaches great importance to the northern part of its territory from the Indonesian Islands, Papua New Guinea, and then the Solomon Islands, an essential link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, which Australia calls the "inner arc" strategic space. This geography is Australia's "main strategic area of interest" in the face of the threat from the north. It is imperative to Australia's defense and security and the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy and an essential hub for the U.S. military in the South Pacific to fill the Pacific force gap, especially in the deployment of warplanes and warships. In order to counterbalance China's strategic military expansion into the South Pacific, U.S.-Australia cooperation using Australia's geostrategic depth will not only effectively enhance Australia's regional defense range but also increase the flexibility of U.S. forces to enter and exit the Indo-Pacific region.¹²

In addition to Australia's existing military alliance with the United States, on September 15, 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States

¹² Huang Enhao, "Australia's Strategic Plan for Strengthening 'Internal Arc' Defenses," *Taipei Forum*, April 15, 2020, http://www.taipeiforum.org.tw/view_pdf/593.pdf.

announced the formation of the Australia-UK-U.S. Security Partnership (AUKUS).¹³ The first military security alliance in the international community since the end of the Cold War, the AUKUS is part of the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, with the primary goal of helping Australia build a fleet of at least eight nuclear-powered conventional submarines. In addition, of course, the alliance includes military intelligence, quantum technology, and cruise missile procurement (the announcement of the new alliance was followed by the cancellation of an arms sales contract with France to build 12 conventional submarines).¹⁴ Although establishing the Australia-UK-U.S. Security Partnership is not explicitly aimed at China, it marks a shift in Australia's security perspective and the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy from a defensive to an offensive one. The aim is to counterbalance China's military expansion and threat.

2. The Role of Diplomatic Alliances

If the U.S.-Australian military alliance was established for defense and intelligence cooperation, then the U.S.-Australian diplomatic relationship exists to build the international security environment. Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, published in November 2017, refers to the Indo-Pacific region as "a region that spans the East Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and connects Southeast Asia, encompassing India, North Asia, and the United States".¹⁵ This definition coincides with the Japanese "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond" concept¹⁶ and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy Report¹⁷ in terms of geostrategy. First, countries should strengthen dialogue and resolve disputes peacefully in accordance

¹³ "UK, US AND Australia Launch New Security Partnership," *Prime Minister's Office*, September 15, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-us-and-australia-launch-new-security-partnership>.

¹⁴ Media Statement, "Australia to Pursue Nuclear-Powered Submarines through New Trilateral Enhanced Security Partnership," *Prime Minister of Australia*, September 16, 2021, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/australia-pursue-nuclear-powered-submarines-through-new-trilateral-enhanced-security>.

¹⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australian Government, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* (Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017), p. 1.

¹⁶ Shinzo Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond," *Project Syndicate*, December 27, 2012, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe?barrier=accesspaylog>.

¹⁷ US Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*, June 1, 2019, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>.

with international law; second, all parties should promote market liberalization; third, promote inclusive and open economic integration; fourth, ensure freedom of navigation and overflight; fifth, U.S. involvement in regional security and economic affairs remains critical; and sixth, China will play a role in deepening the regional order per the principles mentioned above.¹⁸ In short, while both the United States and China are essential factors affecting Indo-Pacific security, the goal of Australian diplomacy is to maintain an international security environment.

Since 2007, when China first became Australia's largest trading nation, Australia has relied heavily on the Chinese market for its economic and trade development. In 2014, the relationship was upgraded to a 'comprehensive strategic partnership,' and in 2015, the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement came into force and joined the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Australia was optimistic about its relationship with Australia and China at the time. However, because China operates a "sharp power" over Australia, it has attempted to influence the Australian government's decisions, but in June 2018, the Australian government passed the National Security Legislation Amendment Act in response to China's "silent invasion" of Australia.¹⁹ Then, following the COVID-19 outbreak in late 2019, Australia insisted in April 2020 that Beijing should conduct a full investigation into the source of the pneumonia virus. As a result, the relationship deteriorated, reaching a new low since diplomatic relations in 1972.

For Australia, China is an important trading market and diplomatic force in the Indo-Pacific region. Australian diplomacy places great importance on maintaining a region of freedom, openness, and coexistence, as Australia's prosperity, security, and international security environment are interdependent. Despite past friction between the United States and China, Australia does not take sides in its diplomacy to compromise its economic and trade interests. In 2021, following the deterioration of diplomatic relations between Australia and China and building on the close diplomatic cooperation between the United States and Australia,

¹⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australian Government, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, p. 38.

¹⁹ Clive Hamilton with Alex Joske, *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia* (London: Hardie Grant Books, 2018).

Australia had strengthened its diplomatic cooperation with Japan and India under the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. However, it has also expanded its outreach to other like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific, such as Taiwan. Australia's efforts to strengthen diplomatic multilateralism in the Indo-Pacific strategic framework and the issues to be addressed (e.g., anti-counterfeiting, counterterrorism, maritime security, democratic values, infrastructure, cybersecurity, humanitarian relief, disaster preparedness, global epidemic, climate change, among others, raised at the U.S.-sponsored Quadrilateral Security Dialogue Summit on February 18, 2021)²⁰ are consistent with Biden's ongoing promotion of international multilateralism.

On September 25, 2021, Biden hosted the Quadripartite Security Dialogue Leaders Summit at the White House. Although the leaders of the four countries did not mention the threat of China and Taiwan Strait security during this meeting but focused on profound and pragmatic cooperation on COVID-19, climate change, emerging technologies, and cyber security, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has grown in influence on regional security. It has almost become a "security conference" for the U.S. to promote the Indo-Pacific strategy.²¹ In the future, Australia and the U.S. diplomatic alliance will play a more cooperative role in the Indo-Pacific strategic framework and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.

IV. Australia's Strategic Actions in the Indo-Pacific Region

On the premise of strengthening Australia's security in its home territory and internal space, Prime Minister Scott J. Morrison announced on July 1, 2020, the 2020 Defense Strategic Update²² and the 2020 Force Structure Plan.²³ To further

²⁰ "Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Telephone Meeting," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, February 18, 2021, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press3e_000172.html.

²¹ Lin Sen, "The Increasing Influence of the 'Sifang' Mechanism does not Rule out the Possibility of Becoming a Military Alliance in the Future," *Voice of America Cantonese Network*, September 29, 2021, <https://www.voacantonese.com/a/US-china-quad-092821/6249364.html>.

²² Australian Government, *2020 Defense Strategic Update* (Canberra: Department of Defense, 2020), <https://www1.defence.gov.au/about/publications/2020-defence-strategic-update>.

²³ Australian Government, *2020 Force Structure Plan* (Canberra: Department of Defense, 2020), https://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020_Force_Structure_Plan.pdf.

strengthen Indo-Pacific security and enhance military interoperability between the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia, Australia participated in the U.S.-led Joint Naval Exercise Malabar-21 (August 26-29, 2021) last year, which is a significant step in strengthening the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.²⁴ In addition, to build a credible/effective deterrence defense force, Australia will invest \$270 billion in long-range anti-ship missiles from the United States. It will also invest in developing polar sonic weapons systems with ranges of several thousand kilometers. In addition, Australia will upgrade its military bases in northern Australia and continue to conduct surveillance and patrol missions in the North Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.²⁵ At present, Australia's strategic vision for strengthening the security of North Australia and the strategic inner arc is as follows:

1. Building a Naval Port in Darwin

As China has confirmed its intention to spend \$200 million to build a sizeable multipurpose fishing port in Daru, a town south of Baniu, China's assistance in building infrastructure there is believed to have a military purpose, thus raising concerns in terms of regional security.²⁶ Moreover, Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia is located near the sea lanes of the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok, and the port is Australia's key gateway to the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, Australia plans to build a multipurpose deepwater port at Glyde Point, approximately 40 kilometers northeast of Darwin, for military or commercial use and the U.S. Marine Corps and large amphibious warships. In addition, the U.S. and Australia have decided to build a joint military port on Manus Island in New Zealand to counteract Chinese military actions in the region.²⁷

²⁴ Sarah Zheng, "China Holds Naval Drills Ahead of US-led Quad Exercise off the Coast of Guam," *South China Morning Post*, August 24, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3146192/china-holds-naval-drills-ahead-us-led-quad-exercise-coast-guam>.

²⁵ Australian Government, *2020 Defense Strategic Update* (Canberra: Department of Defense, 2020), p.12.

²⁶ Zhai Sijia and Yang Shengru, "China's Construction of a Large Fishing Port in PNG Raises Concerns," *Central News Agency*, December 15, 2020, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aopl/202012150271.aspx>.

²⁷ Stephen Dziedzic, "US to Partner with Australia, Papua New Guinea on Manus Island Naval Base," *ABC News*, November 17, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-17/us-to-partner-with-australia-and-png-on-manus-island-naval-base/10507658>.

2. Upgrading the Military Bases in the Northern Territory

On February 21, 2020, Prime Minister Morrison announced a \$1.1 billion upgrade to RAAF Base Tindal, about 300 kilometers south of Darwin in the Northern Territory, with the bulk of the funding to be spent on expanding the runway length for Australian KC-30A multi-role refueling aircraft or U.S. B-52 tactical bombers. Other funds will be used to build a new terminal building, fuel storage facilities, and other critical infrastructure.²⁸ To expand U.S.-Australian military cooperation, Australia announced in April 2021 that it would invest \$747 million to upgrade four military bases in the Northern Territory, including Robertson Barracks, Kangaroo Flats Training Area (KFTA), and the U.S. Air Force Base Tindal. These base upgrades will also allow the Australian Army to conduct closer joint training exercises with the U.S. Marine Corps in Australia.²⁹ For example, the Talisman Sabre, a joint U.S.-Australian military exercise.

3. Procurement of Long-range Strategic Strafing Bombers

Australia's Department of Defense has been intensely interested in acquiring from the United States the B-21 Raider, a long-range tactical bomber with a range of about 12,000 kilometers, which is being developed by the U.S. Air Force and Northrop Grumman. The B-21 Raider, built by the U.S. Air Force in conjunction with Northrop Grumman, can carry conventional and nuclear weapons.³⁰ While Australia's B-21 Raider acquisition is still under discussion, if the U.S. is willing to sell it to Australia under the Australia-U.S. military alliance, Australia will be able to make up for its lack of long-range strike capability in the air force, as well as extend its strategic defensive reach beyond the Australian mainland to the First Island Chain. In addition, Australia will also develop nuclear-powered submarines under the "Australia-UK-U.S. Security Partnership" framework to extend the cruising and striking range.

²⁸ Paul Dibb, "How Australia Can Deter China," *The Strategist*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/how-australia-can-deter-china/>.

²⁹ Flynn, "Australia to Spend A\$747m on Upgrade of Northern Military Base," *RFI*, April 28, 2021, [https://www.rfi.fr/cn/Asia/20210428-Australia-Military-upgrades-will-cost-A\\$700-million-to-A\\$4.7-billion](https://www.rfi.fr/cn/Asia/20210428-Australia-Military-upgrades-will-cost-A$700-million-to-A$4.7-billion).

³⁰ Paul Dibb, *op cit*.

4. Acquisition of New Types and Development of New Missiles

On February 7, 2020, the United States announced that it had agreed to sell, and Australia would purchase 200 AGM-158C Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) from the United States, worth approximately A\$1.4 billion, with a range of up to 930 kilometers. It can be mounted on the F/A-18 Hornet and F-35A fighters.³¹

In addition, the Southern Cross Integrated Flight Research Experiment (SCIFiRE), a 15-year project signed on November 30, 2020, attempts to jointly develop an air-launched, very-sonic weapon to enhance the Royal Australian Air Force's capabilities.³² In the future, Australia also plans to procure from the United States the latest land-based Tomahawk cruise missiles, boost-glide anti-ship missiles, hypersonic cruise missiles. The Chinese government has also developed the Pershing III intermediate-range anti-ship ballistic missiles.³³ Because these missile systems have a range of about 1,000 to 3,000 kilometers, Australia can effectively consolidate the "inner arc" and compress the threat of Chinese military expansion into the South Pacific.

V. Conclusion

Basically, since the Biden administration, the U.S. strategic planning for the Indo-Pacific has continued to follow the approach of the former Trump administration. However, it seems to be more assertive towards China, and more emphasis has been placed on multilateral diplomatic and military actions to counterbalance China's diplomatic challenges and military threats to the Western Pacific. Since Xi Jinping took power, China has been expanding its military power in the Indo-Pacific region, unilaterally changing the international order,

³¹ Paul Dibb, *ibid.*

³² Wang Guanglei, "Australia and U.S. Jointly Develop Air-launched Episonic Missile to Counter Russian 'China,'" *Youth Daily*, December 2, 2020, <https://www.ydn.com.tw/news/newsInsidePage?chapterID=1293902>.

³³ Paul Dibb, "How Australia Can Deter China," *The Strategist*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.aspirategist.org.au/how-australia-can-deter-china/>.

and operating “war-wolf diplomacy” and “sharp power” around the world, which has caused many democracies around the world to resent and choose to align themselves with the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy in terms of security orientation, even though the lure of China’s vast economic and trade markets remains. In addition, the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategic framework, the defense of island chains in the Western Pacific has become increasingly important to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. The U.S. and Australia share the same view on the direction of regional security. Because Australia is a crucial country in the South Pacific region, its geography not only straddles two oceans but also is located in the southern part of the second island chain, which can be said to be an essential strategic high ground to counterbalance China’s expansion into Southeast Asia and the South Pacific in terms of geostrategy. Finally, the South Pacific region is Australia’s backdoor and the backyard of the United States. Therefore, if Australia can play an excellent diplomatic role in the Indo-Pacific strategic framework to unite the South Pacific island countries and support the construction of the South Pacific countries with like-minded democracies, this will help resist the invasion of Chinese influence in the South Pacific.

