

**Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee  
Inquiry into opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with France**

**Submission by the National Security College, Australian National University**

**Background to this Submission**

This submission by the National Security College, Australian National University (NSC) to the Committee principally addresses issues on enhancing political, security and defence cooperation between Australia and France and options for enhancing strategic cooperation, including in the Indo Pacific region and through multilateral fora.

For some years the NSC has been involved in promoting strategic dialogue and cooperation between Australia and France. In January 2018, the NSC organized the Australian delegation to an India-France-Australia trilateral dialogue in New Delhi. This involved officials and experts from the three countries to discuss enhanced strategic cooperation between those countries.

Among other things the trilateral dialogue included discussions on a proposed project to map environmental risks in the south of the Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean, to help to understand and anticipate the security consequences of climate phenomena and propose areas of enhanced cooperation among like-minded partners. In May 2018, the project was endorsed by Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and French President Macron in their vision statement on the Australia-France relationship.

The NSC was subsequently commissioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to deliver the Australian side of this project relating to the Eastern Indian Ocean and the area south of Latitude 60°S (Southern Ocean/Antarctica).

The Australian project team, which included Dr Anthony Bergin and Dr David Brewster, then undertook extensive consultations with the Australian marine science community and other specialists in environmental security, including hosting workshops in Canberra, Hobart and Perth. These experts were asked to identify likely future environmental security issues and then assess the likelihood of their occurrence and the likely impact of the threat.

In April 2019 the results of the Australian project were published in a report titled: *Environmental security in the eastern Indian Ocean, Antarctica and the Southern Ocean: A risk mapping approach*. A copy of the NSC's environmental security report is available at: <https://www.sadf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Environmental-security-in-Eastern-Indian-Ocean-1.pdf>

This submission is in large part based on work undertaken by the NSC in connection with the Risk Mapping report. The authors would be willing to provide evidence to the Committee on this submission.

## Submission

In coming years, there will be considerable opportunities – and indeed, expectations – for enhanced cooperation between Australia and France to address multiple security challenges in the Indian Ocean and Southern Ocean/Antarctica. Australia and France, together with India, are among the leading states proximate to this region and often have the strongest capabilities to respond to a range of threats. It makes eminent sense for Australia and France – and where possible, other partners such as India – to cooperate in addressing those threats.

This submission briefly summarises key environmental security threats in the Eastern Indian Ocean and Southern Ocean/Antarctica and sets out Risk Assessment Matrices in respect of those threats. It then provides a list of detailed recommendations for the future cooperation between Australia and France in connection with environmental security in the Eastern Indian Ocean and Southern Ocean/Antarctica.

The Indian Ocean region faces a wide range of transnational security challenges, particularly related to environmental stresses and the impacts of climate change. This may cause significant economic, political and strategic disruption among the many highly vulnerable states in the region. The Southern Ocean/Antarctica also faces considerable environmental problems.

At the same time, the geopolitical environment in the Indian Ocean/Southern Ocean/Antarctica is changing and becoming more contested than it has been for many decades. The future regional order, at least in the Indian Ocean, is likely to be more multipolar and unstable than at any time in the modern era. This is the result of several geopolitical changes that are occurring more or less concurrently, including the relative decline in US military predominance, the rise of India and China as major Indian Ocean powers and the activities of several middle powers.

Importantly, the consequences of major power competition and a more militarised strategic environment can easily become intertwined with transnational environmental security issues. The NSC's environmental security report discusses in detail several instances where those interactions have occurred in the past, and the likelihood of it occurring in the future.

The report provides an enhanced foundation to inform policy decisions about the allocation of national resources, identify opportunities for cooperation between Australia and France and suggest priorities.

The report also assesses the likelihood and consequence for major potential disruptions; details on cross-cutting sources of disruption and possible triggers for concerted attention and future implications of emergent issues/threats and escalated responses (including likely cascading and compounding impacts if threats are not addressed).

### ***Eastern Indian Ocean***

The geopolitical environment in the Indian Ocean, including the eastern side of the Indian Ocean, is changing and becoming more contested than it has been for many decades. Climate change and other human interactions with the environment also create an additional series of environmentally related threats. Environmentally related threats and geopolitical threats also have the potential to negatively interact, leading to the further deterioration of the security environment.

Both Australia and France are important maritime powers in the Indian Ocean. As the region becomes more multipolar they will likely find themselves playing an increasingly active role in addressing a range of traditional and non-traditional threats.

The NSC's Risk Mapping report discusses the assessed importance of issues arising from the following identified threats and challenges to maritime security in the eastern Indian Ocean:

- seabed mining
- maritime smuggling of goods
- terrorist attacks on shipping, maritime infrastructure or the marine environment
- disruption/illicit access to undersea cables
- shipping accidents
- marine pollution
- piracy
- significant declines in marine-based tourism
- unregulated population movements
- declining marine living resources
- growing competition for fish resources
- interdiction of maritime trade by state actors
- natural disasters/extreme weather events

The risk assessment matrix below for the Eastern Indian Ocean details these identified issues across the scales of minor or negligible importance to higher order critical issues of significant importance.

### Risk Assessment Matrix for the Eastern Indian Ocean

Issue/Disruption	<b>A Negligible</b> (no disruptive effects: "business as usual")	<b>B Minor</b> (regional tensions increase temporarily: situation is manageable within existing processes)	<b>C Significant</b> (Conflict is temporary & generally constrained by existing agreements)	<b>D Major</b> (significant disruption: limited to areas)	<b>E Catastrophic</b> (significant widespread disruptions)
<b>1 Rare</b> (most unlikely but might occur in exceptional circumstances)					
<b>2 Unlikely</b> (unlikely to occur without significant change in current circumstances)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of seabed mining</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interdiction of maritime trade by state actors</li> </ul>
<b>3 Possible</b> (can occur in most circumstances in the foreseeable future)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terrorist attacks on shipping, maritime infrastructure or the marine environment</li> <li>Disruption/illicit access to undersea cables</li> </ul>		
<b>4 Likely</b> (will occur in current circumstances)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shipping accidents</li> <li>Marine pollution</li> <li>Piracy</li> <li>Significant declines in marine-based tourism</li> <li>Human trafficking/unregulated population movements</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural disasters/extreme weather events</li> </ul>
<b>5 Almost Certain</b> (already occurs regularly)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maritime smuggling of goods</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Declining marine living resources</li> <li>Growing competition for fish resources</li> </ul>	

### *Southern Ocean/Antarctica*

Both France and Australia look at Antarctica and the Southern Ocean through a strategic lens, focused on supporting and strengthening the Antarctic Treaty System.

France and Australia have adjacent territory in Antarctica: France's Adélie Land bisects the Australian Antarctic Territory. Both nations also possess neighbouring island territories in the sub-Antarctic region; for France, the Kerguelen and Crozet Islands, and for Australia, the Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI). Both countries also assert their rights to the maritime zones around their respective islands, including sections of the Kerguelen Plateau. A delimitation agreement settles the boundary between Kerguelen and HIMI.

The NSC's Risk Mapping report discusses the assessed importance of issues arising from the following identified threats and challenges to maritime security in the Southern Ocean/Antarctica:

- Changes to Antarctic tourism
- Geo-engineering in the Southern Ocean
- Geo-engineering in the atmospheric changes
- Iceberg harvesting
- Whaling in the Southern Ocean
- Pressures from new treaty members
- Offshore drilling and mining
- Threats to the Antarctic Treaty System
- Increased danger and frequency of search and rescue operations
- Ocean acidification

- Displacement of fishing fleets leading to overfishing
- Krill exploitation
- Distant water fishing fleets
- Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing
- Climate change related marine ecosystem effects, including sea level rise
- Climate change impacts on Antarctic infrastructure and accessibility
- Conflict or war due to occupation of Antarctic territory and increasing militarisation

The following risk assessment matrix for the Southern Ocean and Antarctica details these identified threats and challenges across the scales of minor or negligible importance to higher order critical issues of significant importance.

### Risk assessment matrix for the Southern Ocean/Antarctica

Issue/Disruption	<b>A Negligible</b> (no disruptive effects: "business as usual")	<b>B Minor</b> (regional tensions increase temporarily: situation is manageable within existing processes)	<b>C Significant</b> (Conflict is temporary & generally constrained by agreements like Antarctic treaty, CCAMLR)	<b>D Major</b> (significant disruption: limited to areas)	<b>E Catastrophic</b> (significant widespread disruptions)
<b>1 Rare</b> (most unlikely but might occur in exceptional circumstances)	• Whaling in the Southern Ocean	• Iceberg harvesting			
<b>2 Unlikely</b> (unlikely to occur without significant change in current circumstances)			• Offshore drilling		• Conflict or war due to occupation of Antarctic territory and increasing militarisation
<b>3 Possible</b> (can occur in most circumstances in the foreseeable future)		• Geo-engineering in the Southern Ocean • Extreme atmospheric changes (human induced through geo-engineering)		• Threats to the Antarctic Treaty System • Displacement of fishing fleets • Krill exploitation	
<b>4 Likely</b> (will occur in current circumstances)		• Changes to Antarctic tourism • Pressures from new treaty members	• Increased danger and frequency of search and rescue (SAR) operations	• Distant water fishing fleets	
<b>5 Almost Certain</b> (already occurs regularly)			• Ocean acidification	• Climate change impacts on Antarctic infrastructure and accessibility	• Climate change related marine ecosystem change • Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing

In terms of mitigating the consequences of these threats and challenges three broad major needs stand out: developing greater trust between states active in the region; enhanced environmental cooperation; and more effective management of environmental and related security concerns.

Risk mitigation in the Antarctic region requires more attention to measures that build confidence amongst countries active in the region, including greater efforts around issues such as search and rescue, expanded tourism, fisheries, cooperative scientific efforts and the impacts of climate change on environmental management.

Australia and France both have a strong commitment to scientific research and environmental protection in Antarctica. Both states have maintained a consistent engagement within the Antarctic Treaty System.

## Submission Recommendations

The NSC's Risk Mapping report provides detailed recommendations for the future cooperation between Australia and France in connection with environmental security threats.

### ***Recommendations for enhanced Australia-France cooperation in the Eastern Indian Ocean***

We make the following recommendations for enhanced Australia-France cooperation in the Eastern Indian Ocean:

1. Australia and France should use their experience in bilateral cooperative fishing enforcement activities in the Southern Ocean to promote similar bilateral or regional cooperative arrangements elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, potentially including in the eastern Indian Ocean.
2. Australia and France should facilitate greater cooperation among regional coastguard agencies. Australia and France should consider joining with like-minded partners to create arrangements for dialogue, cooperation and training among Indian Ocean coastguards. This could include a dedicated facility for professional development of senior coast guard practitioners in the region.
3. Australia and France should work together to promote the establishment of integrated national maritime domain awareness systems in the Indian Ocean, including in countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and the Maldives. Such national systems could then work more effectively with regional maritime domain awareness systems being developed by India and other countries in the Indian Ocean.
4. Australia and France, with the strongest maritime search and rescue capabilities among Indian Ocean states, should coordinate their capacity building efforts among other countries with search and rescue regions in the Indian Ocean.
5. Australia and France along with other key countries, such as India, should jointly develop their training and capacity building efforts in port state control to lift inspection and enforcement rates among Indian Ocean states. This should be coordinated through the Indian Ocean MoU on Port State Control.
6. There is considerable scope for developing framework disaster management arrangements between Australia and France and other key Indian Ocean states. These would create pre-existing coordination mechanisms for responding to disasters using the experience of ASEAN and the FRANZ arrangements among Australia, France and New Zealand in the South Pacific.
7. Australia should promote cooperation with France in high level scientific research alliances relevant to the blue economy and climate change, leveraging where appropriate the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Perth

Programme Office facility for the Indian Ocean. Several areas of potential cooperation in ocean science are listed in this report.

8. Australia and France should join with other like-minded countries to establish an Indian Ocean Environmental Security Forum (IOESF). The IOESF would bring together representatives from military and civilian agencies across the Indian Ocean region to create shared understandings on environmental security threats and help establish habits of dialogue in the field of environmental security.
9. Australia and France could consider working together to promote an international agreement to fill current deficiencies in international law in relation to the protection of the integrity of undersea communications cables.
10. Australia and France should jointly promote future iterations of the 1.5 track India-France-Australia trilateral dialogue as an important step in promoting enhanced strategic cooperation between the three countries.

***Recommendations for enhanced Australia-France cooperation in the Southern Ocean/Antarctica***

We make the following recommendations for enhanced Australia-France cooperation in the Southern Ocean/Antarctica:

11. Australia and France should continue to cooperate in delivering reliable compliance and enforcement in the Southern Ocean to provide surveillance capability.
12. Australia and France should continue to promote multilateral cooperation around sustainable uses of the Southern Ocean and Antarctic regions.
13. Australia and France should cooperate on search and rescue (SAR) planning and work with other countries in the region to foster effective SAR responses.
14. Australia and France should facilitate a regular multilateral search and rescue exercise in the future in around the HIMI/Kerguelen Islands area, the Southern Ocean and the Antarctic continent.
15. Australia and France should jointly examine the management implications of climate change in the Antarctic region, looking at future Antarctic infrastructure, logistics and environmental management, both terrestrial and marine environments and resources
16. As a trust-building measure for Antarctic countries, Australia and France should lead on identifying guidelines for establishing and reinforcing the resilience Antarctic infrastructure that take current and predicted climate changes into account.
17. Australia and France should set an example by including more specialists of climate change on delegations to key Antarctic and CCAMLR meetings.

18. Australia and France should be more active in inspections under the Antarctic Treaty, including joint inspections where practical.
19. Australia and France should be working to advance cooperation in East Antarctic science and logistics, including through pooling of resources.
20. Australia and France should promote cooperation on environmental and resource protection amongst Treaty parties.
21. Australia and France should continue to cooperate on scientific research, such as the recent symposium on the Kerguelen Plateau convened by the Australian Antarctic Division.
22. Australia and France should play an active role in having the CCAMLR Commission/ATCM cooperate with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in understanding the impacts of climate change on the CCAMLR and Antarctic Treaty objectives.
23. Australia and France should consider organising a joint logistics exercise with a focus on environmental management.
24. Australia and France should convene events during climate change conferences to highlight the risks and challenges identified in this report. COP25 in Chile could provide an adequate venue for this.
25. On the basis of this report, Australia and France should identify challenges and issues that warrant further research and cooperation.

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