



Mains Practice Question

Q. The newly tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario. (250 words)

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Approach

- Start with briefly explaining the tri nation partnership AUKUS and how it is aimed at countering China in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Discuss if it will supersede the existing partnerships like Quad in the region .
- Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario.
- Conclude suitably

Answer

The heads of government of Australia, the UK and US announced the formation of a trilateral security pact, to be known by the acronym, AUKUS, the nuclear coalition, which has ignited unprecedented French fury.

Without naming China, the US President announced that **“in order to deal with rapidly evolving threats,”** the US and Britain would share, with Australia, intelligence and advanced technologies in areas like artificial intelligence, cyber-warfare, quantum computing and nuclear submarine construction.

Impact on Indo-Pacific Realm/QUAD

- There is concern that AUKUS could leave a deep scar on US-EU relations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and weaken the international coalition in the Indo-Pacific.
- France had cancelled a scheduled meeting of the foreign ministers of Australia, France, and India at the UN.
 - In the last couple of years, the trilateral has become an important element in the emerging Indo-Pacific architecture. But the cancellation of the meeting is a blow to the trilateral engagement.
- It is not clear whether the QUAD and AUKUS will reinforce each other or remain mutually exclusive.
 - There are some beliefs that the “Anglosphere nations” — which share common cultural and historical ties to the UK — inspire more confidence in each other.

Impact on India

- India Excluded: The creation of the AUKUS is an attempt to send a stronger message to China. However, China's description of this alliance as an “exclusionary bloc,” should be food for thought for two members of the Quad/Malabar forums — India and Japan — who have been excluded from the new grouping.
- New USA Partner to Lead in Indo-Pacific:
 - Some major milestones in the Indo-US security relationship have been: Signing of the pathbreaking Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement, in 2008; launching of the Defence

Technology and Trade Initiative in 2012; accord of the status of “Major Defence Partner” by the US Congress in 2016; grant of Tier 1 status to India, enabling export of high-technology items; and institution of “2+2 talks” in 2018. Signing of the fourth and last of the key “foundational agreements” in 2020, was supposed to have eliminated the final impediment to closer defence cooperation.

- But AUKUS may be the beginning of a shift in the US policy which is about finding a new partner to lead in the Indo-Pacific region i.e. Australia.

Chinese Reaction

- China called on countries around the world to oppose “hegemony and division”. China opposed acts that undermine the international order, create confrontation, and create division under the banner of so-called rules setting.
- China has proceeded to create artificial islands, and to convert them into fortified air bases.
- Even more aggressive has been China’s conduct along the Sino-Indian border, where it has used massive military deployments to stake claims to large tracts of Indian territory, leading to a conflict in mid-June 2020.

Way Forward

▪ India Needs to Remember the Following:

- One is to remind France, Australia, the UK and US of the shared interests in securing the Indo-Pacific and the dangers of letting the current quarrel undermine that larger goal.
- The other is to highlight the region’s vast requirements for effective deterrence in the Indo-Pacific; and that there is enough room for the US, UK, France, and Europe to collaborate with Indo-Pacific partners in overlapping coalitions to develop high technology and defence-industrial cooperation in all the areas highlighted by AUKUS — effective underwater capabilities to AI, quantum computing and cyber warfare.

India’s interests lie in deeper strategic cooperation with France and Europe as well as the Quad and the Anglosphere. India’s diverse relationships in the West must be deployed in full measure to prevent a split in the Indo-Pacific coalition.

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