



# Perspective: AUKUS-Geopolitical Impact

## Why in News

Recently, a new [trilateral security partnership AUKUS](#) was announced between **Australia, UK** and **USA** for the [Indo-Pacific](#) region.

## Key Points

- **Nuclear Submarines to Australia:** As part of this initiative, **Australia will acquire nuclear-powered submarines** with help from the UK and the US.
  - This step is significant because the **US has only shared nuclear submarine technology once** before, with Great Britain in 1958.
- **China's Response:** China, expectedly, has **strongly criticised AUKUS** and the submarine deal as promoting instability and stoking an arms race.
- **Areas of Cooperation:** This alliance is considered to be the **most significant security arrangement** between these three nations.
  - AUKUS will also involve the sharing of cyber capabilities, [applied AI](#), [quantum technologies](#) and undersea technologies.
- **US' Solace to India:** The US has meanwhile briefed India on this new trilateral pact stressing it will not detract from either the bilateral cooperation with India or multilateral ones like QUAD.

## The AUKUS Partnership

- **Relevance of AUKUS:** The main purpose of the partnership is to share the nuclear submarines so that Australia can **become one of the six nuclear submarines operating nations** in the world (including India).
  - It couldn't have been done under the existing alliance arrangements as nuclear sharing has been kept in very tight partnership between the UK and USA.
  - The [QUAD](#) represents an implicit understanding between the four countries but there is **no official military relationship** between them.
  - The western-pacific has essentially a **non-Chinese security structure** for US' bilateral military alliances.
    - However, it doesn't have any multilateral structure for those allies to defend each other against China.
  - NATO is also focussed mainly around Western Europe; the Indo-Pacific region is quite large for any such military alliance.
- **A China-Centric Move:** Australia has **shifted its long-standing policy against having nuclear submarines** and the UK and US have also shifted from their long-standing policy of sharing nuclear technology with only each other.
  - The reason for this is that they have a **common assessment around the systemic challenge from China** and it requires this much tighter accelerated capability of trilateral partnership.
  - It is much of a digital trilateral arrangement as a lot of the capability improvements and increased deterrence of China will come out of the digital parts of this arrangement.

- **Discontent of European Allies:** The European allies of the three countries have **not been happy** about this new trilateral partnership.
  - **France has ordered the recall of its ambassadors** to the US and Australia **accusing them of betrayal** by negotiating defence partnership with the U.K. without informing European allies.
    - The EU has also announced its own strategy to boost political and defense ties in the Indo-Pacific.
  - **Cause of France Discontent:** Australia had signed a \$90 billion submarine contract with France to procure its nuclear submarines; so **it had an enormous impact on the French economy.**
- **Non-Inclusion of Other Five Eyes Nations:** The [Five Eyes alliance](#) is an intelligence-sharing arrangement between the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
  - New Zealand has a long-standing policy of not allowing nuclear-powered warships to enter its waters.
  - Canada has also not expressed any interest in obtaining a nuclear submarine.

## Impact on India

### Significance

- **Powerful Allies Equals Powerful India:** The AUKUS partnership strengthens the QUAD and **gives more weight to important partners like India, which provides** the military balance in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Strengthening QUAD:** AUKUS will also accelerate the capabilities of the QUAD in fields like cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, Quantum technology and advanced missiles.
  - It also opens up opportunities for cooperation in these areas for India and Japan.
- **Net Positive Against China:** Any alliance or partnership that benefits the multilateral structure opposed to China is a **net strategic positive for India.**
  - China's aggressive response to AUKUS is a sign for its benefit to India.

### Concerns

- **Change of Power in Indo-Pacific:** A worry for India is that the U.S. is now promoting a security partnership with its English allies which India is not a part of.
  - It might possibly **upset the balance of power in the region**, and **set off new tensions to India's east** while substantial turbulence in India's west is caused by the [recent change of government in Afghanistan](#).
- **Crowding of Nuclear Submarines:** The deal could eventually lead to a **crowding of nuclear submarines** in the eastern Indian Ocean, **eroding India's regional pre-eminence.**
  - The Indian Navy presently dominates the space, but its conventional underwater capability has been shrinking.
- **Skepticism About Loyalties:** It raises the question, "what the future might hold for India".
  - France, a big [NATO](#) ally to the US and Australia, considers this partnership as an act of betrayal.
  - The chances are likely for the two countries to look up to their own advantage if a similar condition arrives in future that involves India.

## Way Forward

- **India and Its Navy:** India operates only one indigenously-built [Submersible Ship Ballistic Missile Nuclear - INS Arihant](#) after returning the [Submersible Ship Nuclear - INS Chakra](#) on lease from Russia.
  - Following the AUKUS partnership, India may persuade France in a deal for procuring the nuclear attack submarines. It would **fill up a huge gap in India's naval capacity.**
- **Bolstering Indo-France Relations:** As a major Indo-Pacific power, France is an important part of the regional security calculus.
  - The recent setback from Australia may **spur France to focus afresh on partners such as India.**
    - Also, India must strike a balance between continuing imports and implementing the

all-important **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in defence manufacturing.

- **Faster Multilateralism:** Minilateral partnerships including the QUAD and AUKUS should **add more partners to their alliance in the near future.**
  - For instance, Taiwan and South Korea can be brought into QUAD when assistance is needed in the field of [semiconductors](#), electronics, telecommunication or information technology.

## Conclusion

- In tandem with the US and the UK, **Australia is all set to play a more robust role in ensuring peace** and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- In absence of any giant alliance specifically for the Indo-Pacific region, partnerships like AUKUS are likely to come into play.
- Meanwhile, **India can look forward to France as a possibly bigger ally**, especially when the latter has had a setback from its own allies.
  - The two now have a **better chance at mutually cooperating**, economically as well as for ensuring security in the Indo-Pacific.

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