



India and the AUKUS Grouping

This editorial is based on [“India and the Anglosphere”](#) which was published in the Indian Express on 15/02/2023. It discusses the Issue with the AUKUS Grouping and related implications for Asia and India.

For Prelims: Indo-Pacific region, AUKUS agreement, Quad, South China Sea, Applied AI, Quantum Technologies,

For Mains: Global Groupings, Important International Institutions, Bilateral Groupings & Agreements, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

Recently, the **US, UK and Australia have unveiled details of their plan to create a new fleet of nuclear-powered submarines**, aimed at countering China's influence in the [Indo-Pacific region](#). Under the AUKUS pact Australia is to get at least three nuclear-powered submarines from the US.

The [AUKUS agreement](#), which involves Australia acquiring nuclear-powered submarines with the help of the US and the UK, is being praised and criticized simultaneously. It is viewed as a means of strengthening deterrence and stability in the Indo-Pacific. However, **China sees it as a dangerous alliance that the US is building in the area**, along with the [Quadrilateral forum or the Quad](#).

This pact will **trigger multiple strategic consequences for Asia, including India**. However, it is also an opportunity for India to develop a unique set of arrangements with the US and its allies.

What is AUKUS Grouping?

- It is a trilateral security partnership for the [Indo-Pacific](#), between Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS) which was signed in 2021.
- The major highlight of this arrangement is the sharing of US nuclear submarine technology to Australia.
- Its Indo-pacific orientation makes it an alliance against China's assertive actions in the [South China Sea](#).
- It involves a new architecture of meetings and engagements between the three countries, as well as cooperation across emerging technologies ([applied AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities](#)).

What are the Concerns related to AUKUS Grouping for Asia?

- **Regional Security:**
 - The AUKUS partnership has been **perceived as a challenge to the security and stability of the region**, particularly by China. The **agreement includes the sharing of sensitive defense technologies and intelligence**, which has raised concerns about its impact on the strategic balance in the region.

- **Diplomatic Implications:**
 - The AUKUS partnership has **also been viewed as a diplomatic setback for countries** such as India, Japan, and South Korea, which have traditionally been seen as key allies of the United States in the region.
 - These countries fear that the **new partnership will sideline them and reduce their influence in the region.**
- **Impact on Non-Proliferation:**
 - The AUKUS partnership **involves the transfer of nuclear-powered submarine technology to Australia, which has raised concerns about its impact on global non-proliferation efforts.** Some experts have expressed concern that this move could set a dangerous precedent and encourage other countries to pursue nuclear capabilities.
- **Economic Consequences:**
 - The AUKUS partnership has also **raised concerns about its economic implications, particularly for countries such as India that have significant defense industries.** The agreement is expected to lead to increased competition and could potentially impact the ability of these countries to sell defense equipment to Australia.

What will be the Strategic Consequences for India?

- **Strengthening ties with Australia:**
 - With Australia's upgraded scientific and technical capabilities, **there is an opportunity for India to deepen its S&T cooperation with Australia,** which could eventually expand to sensitive strategic areas.
 - This **would enhance India's own technological capabilities** and contribute to regional peace and security.
- **Recognizing the Continuing Global Strategic Salience of Britain:**
 - India tends to neglect the strategic importance of Britain, but the AUKUS deal may boost UK's profile in Asia.
 - **India could explore opportunities for closer cooperation with Britain** on Indo-Pacific security issues.
- **Embracing the idea of an "Anglosphere":**
 - Despite India's difficult past relations with the Anglosphere, the **AUKUS deal has brought enduring geopolitical bonds** between the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand back to life.
 - An Anglosphere is also called the world of English-speaking people bound by common political beliefs, similar legal traditions, and shared geopolitical interests.
 - India could **explore opportunities to expand its ties with the English-speaking world,** particularly in the areas of technology and defense.
- **Developing a Unique Set of Arrangements:**
 - With the US seeking to boost the strategic capabilities of its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, **India has a rare opportunity to develop its own set of arrangements with the US and its allies.**
 - This could **involve closer military cooperation, joint exercises, and intelligence sharing,** among other things.

How can India Safeguard its Strategic Interests?

- **Exploring Opportunities for Collaboration:**
 - India can explore opportunities for collaboration and technology transfer with the AUKUS countries, while also ensuring that its own national security interests are not compromised.
 - India can seek collaborations with AUKUS countries in areas such as maritime security, cybersecurity, and intelligence sharing.
- **Maintaining Balance:**
 - India should maintain a balance between its engagement with AUKUS and other key partners, such as Russia, France, and Japan.
 - India should avoid being drawn into a zero-sum game and strive to maintain strong ties with all relevant countries.
 - This is particularly important given the complex geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific region.

▪ **Strengthening Quad:**

- India should work towards strengthening the Quad, which could provide a counterbalance to AUKUS and help promote a rules-based regional order.
- India should leverage the Quad to promote regional stability and balance of power.

▪ **Ensuring the Interest of Smaller Countries:**

- India needs to ensure that the interests of smaller countries in the region are not overlooked in any engagements with AUKUS. India should take a leadership role in promoting a cooperative and inclusive approach to regional security issues.
- This could involve initiatives such as capacity building for smaller countries in the region and promoting greater regional integration and connectivity.

Drishti Mains Question

How does the AUKUS grouping impact India's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region and what should be India's approach towards this new development?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. The new 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. **(2021)**

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