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AUKUS

THE RISE OF MINILATERALISM?

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THE CENTRE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

AUKUS: The Rise of Minilateralism?

The subject of this report is the newly formed alliance between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America which would allow the sharing of sensitive data pertaining to nuclear submarine technology between the countries. The primary recipient of this information would be Australia, which would benefit from the USA and UK's advanced military know-how.

This report aims to analyse the arising implications of such an alliance through three main lenses: geopolitics, international law, and global security. An analysis of the alliance through geopolitical considerations unfurls the interplay between the three signatory countries and their primary allies and rivals, most notably India, Japan, the European Union, and Russia. Since the primary goal of the treaty is to exchange nuclear data, international legal scholars are watching any developments with keen interest so as to prevent nuclear proliferation and mitigate the risk of another war. Finally, the unabashed alliance of some of the world's most advanced military powers poses unique threats to the global security landscape, particularly in light of the tensions between the global East and West.

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SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Its Inception and Current Challenges

Raghav Dua

Introduction

Today because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is witnessing an unprecedented fragmentation of the international landscape. The pandemic drove countries apart. Decline of multilateralism, geopoliticization of trade and technology, and a rise of minilateralism are some of the defining features of the post-pandemic world. The rise of China is another pertinent issue. Countries are increasingly making economic decisions based on geopolitical considerations rather than purely economic or commercial reasons. A case that illustrates this is the Resilient Supply Chain Initiative. Further as a result of international fragmentation many minilaterals have emerged like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), QUAD Plus, BIMSTEC, AUKUS (Australia, US, UK Trilateral Security Pact), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, and the East Asia Summit, India's 2+2 Defence and Foreign minister-level dialogues with the United States, Japan, and Australia. Indo-Pacific has emerged as the 'hub' of geopolitical activity in recent times. This paper aims to introduce the reader to the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, the USA's approach to the region, and the rise of minilateralism.

The term 'Indo-Pacific' is a geopolitical construct usually traced back to the works of Karl Haushofer, a 20th century German geopolitical scholar. It came into wide use after Prime Minister (PM) Shinzo Abe's famous speech to the Indian parliament in 2007 where he referred to 'the confluence of the two seas' – namely the Pacific and the Indian oceans – as the Indo-Pacific. In geo-spatial terms, the Indo-Pacific can be understood as the interconnected space between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean roughly ranging from the eastern shores of Africa to the western coast of the United States. However, this characterization is highly contested.¹

Traditionally, the Pacific and the Indian oceans have been regarded as two separate entities, but this integrated approach to understand Indo-Pacific as a whole is a result of growing interconnectedness and interdependence of the two oceans owing to the

¹ Udayan Das, "What is the Indo-Pacific?," *The Diplomat*, July 13, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/what-is-the-indo-Pacific/>

forces of globalization, intensification of trade, and changing geopolitical equations.² It is widely regarded as the “epicentre of global politics and economics [as] 60% of the world’s population, 2/3rds of the global economic output, and more than half of global trade transiting through its maritime waters.”³ It contains “the most crucial sea routes and the most populous nations fuelling high energy demands on its rims and a stretch encapsulating finest global commons.”⁴ Therefore, the current geopolitics and future competition in the region is only natural.

Indo-Pacific has gained traction in strategic discourse; mainly due to three factors: The Rise of China, increasing strategic importance of India and the relative decline of the United States. The term Indo-Pacific has replaced the term Asia-Pacific. In the last decade, U.S. realized that “Asia-Pacific” was inadequate to meet its changing geopolitical objectives in Asia, for two main reasons: (1) China’s growing presence in the region, and (2) to include India in the regional security architecture and the affairs of ‘Maritime Asia’.⁵ The term ‘Asia-Pacific’ included “Northeast and Southeast Asia, the Pacific islands and terminated at the Melaka straits, excluding India.” This was not sustainable anymore as it wanted India to be a regional net security provider. This led the U.S. to initially expand ‘Asia-Pacific’ to the “Indo-Asia Pacific,” highlighting the geo-economic importance of the region. But President Trump changed it to “Indo-Pacific,” to focus exclusively on the security dimension.⁶

The major stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific are: the QUAD Partners, France, ASEAN, China, and – considering the geopolitical environment – Russia.

² Ibid.

³ “Foreign Secretary’s remarks at the ORF-NMF-KAS Symposium on Potential for Indo-European/German cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.” Ministry of External Affairs, January 21, 2022. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34767/Foreign+Secretary+Remarks+at+the+ORFNMFKAS+Symposium+on+Potential+for+IndoEuropeanGerman+cooperation+in+the+IndoPacific#:~:text=India%20sees%20the%20Indo%2DPacific.for%20All%20in%20the%20Region>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gurpreet Khurana, “What is the Indo-Pacific? The New Geopolitics of the Asia-Centred Rim Land,” in *Geopolitics by Other Means: The Indo-Pacific Reality*, ed. Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola (Milano: ISPI, 2000), 13-33.

⁶ Ibid.

The USA's Vision of the Indo-Pacific

US advocates for a Rules-based order in the region. An order in which countries respect the sovereign independence of each other, believe in peaceful resolution of disputes, free and reciprocal trade and adhere to international law and norms. The foundations of the US approach to Indo-Pacific can be found primarily in these three documents:

(a) National Security Strategy, 2017: The strategy recognised China as a 'Revisionist Power' and recognised the on-going competition in the region "between free and repressive visions of world."

(b) Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, 2019: the report published by the US Department of Defence (DOD) in June that year, highlighted Indo-Pacific as the "priority theatre" for the department. It also emphasized the need for close cooperation with allies and partners to counter China. Earlier in 2018 it had also renamed US Pacific Command to US Indo-Pacific Command highlighting India's importance as one of the key partners in the region.

(c) Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision, 2019: published by the US State Department in the month of November, it spells out various dimensions of the USA's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision. It specifically highlighted India's role and recognised the growing need for infrastructure development. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) dominates this arena. The document also described certain alternative programmes.⁷

These three documents serve as the foundation on which US vision is built. In Geospatial terms, the USA recognised the Indo-Pacific as ranging from the "West Coast of the United States to the Western Shores of India."⁸ This has been revised in the new Indo-Pacific Strategy released in February this year. It now includes the region between the Pacific coastline of the USA to the Indian Ocean with emphasis on "Northeast Asia, South East Asia, South Asia and Oceania- including the Pacific islands."⁹

⁷ Cleo Paskal, "Indo-Pacific strategies, perceptions and partnerships," Chatham House, March, 2021. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/03/indo-Pacific-strategies-perceptions-and-partnerships>

⁸ Girish Luthra, "The new US Indo-Pacific Strategy: Balancing continuity with new and evolving environment," Observer Research Foundation, March 13, 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-new-us-indo-Pacific-strategy/>

⁹ Ibid.

Furthermore, it aims to modernise the existing regional security alliances with Australia, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand, strengthen the QUAD and other emerging partnerships, and explore QUAD working with ASEAN. It lays special emphasis on aligning its approach with the NATO and EU, but only makes a passing reference to AUKUS. In addition to this, the new strategy which is cognizant of the economic and security linkages in the region, “introduces an economic and trade agenda, with an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.”¹⁰

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework which is essentially the “centrepiece” of USA economic strategy towards the region was proposed by President Biden in October 2021. It will be based on four pillars: “(1) fair and resilient trade (encompassing seven subtopics, including labour, environmental, and digital standards); (2) supply chain resilience; (3) infrastructure, clean energy, and de-carbonization; and (4) tax and anti-corruption.”¹¹

The Indo-Pacific, as mentioned above, is a contested concept. We had seen earlier how USA changed its perception of the geographical extent of the region. Each country has its own criteria for defining the region. USA, for example has excluded Africa from its Indo-Pacific vision, whereas, countries like Japan, India and France have acknowledged its importance. Similarly, each country has its own priorities for the region. For Example, Nuclear non-proliferation is one of the topmost priorities for Japan because of the North Korean threat. It should be noted that while FOIP is famously perceived as a USA policy, it is indeed a Japanese initiative.

The Rise of Minilateralism

The failure of both regional and global multilateral institutions has prompted the rise of Minilateralism. A minilateral can be defined as a small grouping of like-minded nations working towards achieving a similar set of objectives. They have three major advantages. First, like-minded nations have similar diplomatic objectives which makes cooperation much easier. Second, countries can adjust the minilateral grouping in accordance with the diplomatic objective that they want to achieve. If they want to focus on neighborhood economics, technology, or on issues like climate change, trade, investment etc; anything is possible.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Matthew P. Goodman and Aidan Arasasingham, “Regional perspectives on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework,” Centre for Strategic and International Studies, April 2022. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/220411_Goodman_IPEF_Regional_Perspectives.pdf?EaiXVytJ9iXGoMnYVuXZ_Wa13mHrFY_dh

The third advantage of a minilateral grouping is its agility. The response time of the grouping can be very quick. It is far easier to agree on a common position among limited number of countries. Minilaterals have risen rapidly in the Indo-Pacific. QUAD is a classic example. Another example is the Malabar exercise. Earlier, these exercises were mainly a bilateral between USA and India. Japan joined the exercises for the first time in 2015 raising its level to a USA-India-Japan trilateral naval exercise and today to a quadrilateral exercise among QUAD partners.

Their common vision to “uphold freedom of navigation, and open seas, unimpeded lawful commerce in international waters, and respect for international law”¹² drives this exercise. Other minilaterals like India-Australia-Indonesia and India-Australia-France trilateral have also emerged. Another, important example is the AUKUS alliance between Australia (AU), the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). These three countries came together to form a trilateral security partnership aimed at “helping Australia deploy nuclear power submarine in the Pacific region....This will equip the Australian Navy to protect its assets far from its shores.”¹³

Conclusion

It is highly unlikely that the rise of China will be peaceful, if its current activities are any indication. Its growing influence, of which the Solomon Islands deal is a recent example, is a threat to a rules based order in the Indo-Pacific. This coupled with its growing relations with Russia, courtesy of the West, present an unprecedented threat which is likely to materialise soon. It is vital for QUAD and other like-minded partners to shift their focus back on the Indo-Pacific and commit to strong minilateral partnerships.

¹² Rajeshwari Pillai Rajagopalan, “Explaining the Rise of Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific,” Observer Research Foundation, September 21, 2021. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/explaining-the-rise-of-minilaterals-in-the-indo-Pacific/>

¹³ Manu Pubby. “AUKUS Programme: An Explainer,” The Economic Times, September 23, 2021. <https://m.economictimes.com/news/defence/aukus-programme-an-explainer/articleshow/86282058.cms>

The AUKUS Pact

Naval and Cyber-Security Cooperation

Aditi Maurya

Introduction

On 15th September, United Kingdom and the USA signed a trilateral security pact named AUKUS with Australia to assist the latter in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines by sharing technological know-how. A joint statement released by the AUKUS nations said, “We will foster deeper integration of security and defense-related science, technology, industrial bases, and supply chains. And, in particular, we will significantly deepen cooperation on a range of security and defense capabilities”.¹ The nuclear technology uses 93-97% uranium to build the submarines which increases their submersion time and optimizes refuelling, allowing the submarine to be stealthier. However, the countries while increasing their joint capabilities assure that they, “will help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region”.

The region has increasingly gained significance because of intense trade activities and simultaneous economic rise of China which contests the West in dominance. Taking Chinese advancement into consideration and emerging trends in the Pacific, the initial focus areas of the cooperation have been outlined into cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technology and additional undersea capabilities. Focusing on sharing deep information and technology, the pact exploits the loophole in United Nations Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons which exempts naval reactors from nuclear restrictions. This is a key controversy surrounding this pact considering it is a wrong step towards a right direction.

Cooperation Thus Far

Australia, UK, and the United States recently convened the initial sessions of the AUKUS Trilateral Joint Steering Groups, which were constituted as part of AUKUS' governance structure after the pact was signed on 15th September, 2021. On 9th and 14th December, the Joint Steering Group for Advanced Capabilities and the Joint Steering Group for Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program met.² Both

¹ “Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS.” 2021. The White House. September 15, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aukus/>.

² “FACT SHEET: Implementation of the Australia – United Kingdom – United States Partnership (AUKUS).” 2022. The White House. April 5, 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing->

meetings were held at the Pentagon. The delegations reaffirmed the Leaders' vision that was laid out in September 2021 and discussed the intensive work underway across the governments and the significant progress made in the three months since the announcement of AUKUS. The sessions were productive, and the participants specified next measures to keep the implementation on track. Participants in the Joint Steering Group on Advanced Capabilities recognised potential for collaboration on a variety of important capabilities and technologies throughout the conference. The participants in the Joint Steering Group meeting on Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program reaffirmed the trilateral commitment to put Australia's capabilities into service as soon as practicable. Later the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement (ENNPIA) was enforced on 8th February, 2022, enabling AUKUS partners to share naval nuclear propulsion information trilaterally. Seventeen trilateral working groups met multiple times work to discuss cooperation areas.

On March 7, Prime Minister Morrison declared Australia's intention to build a future submarine facility on the east coast of the country to facilitate the basing and disposition of future nuclear-powered submarines, which will work alongside the country's existing submarine base in Western Australia. National Security Advisors from the three allies met online to discuss AUKUS progress and provide guidance for the future of the trilateral cooperation on 10th March, 2022. The nations have agreed to determine their pathway by March 2023 to assist Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability.

The AUKUS partnership began with two parallel lines of effort: AUKUS providing Australia with a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability as soon as possible, while upholding the highest non-proliferation standards and advancing military capabilities to promote Indo-Pacific security and stability. The factsheet released by the United States government spoke of the efforts in multiple areas for cooperation like information exchange, AI, Quantum, nuclear stewardship, undersea capabilities etc. However, the cooperation has excluded other nations in the South China Sea conversation and helped Britain bridge to South Asia.

The Collins-class submarine fleet's life-of-type extension will begin in 2026 in South Australia, according to Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who also confirmed that full-cycle docking will continue at Osborne.³ According to the government, up to \$6.4 billion would be invested in these projects. When the Collins-class submarine

room/statements-releases/2022/04/05/fact-sheet-implementation-of-the-australia-united-kingdom-united-states-partnership-aukus/.

³ Vavasseur, Xavier. "Australia Confirms Life-of-Type Extension for Collins-Class Submarines." Naval News, 19 Sept. 2021, www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2021/09/australia-confirms-life-of-type-extension-for-collins-class-submarines/#:~:text=Australia.

HMAS Farncomb enters its next full-cycle docking in 2026, it will be the first to get a life-of-type extension. In addition, starting in 2024, the Australian government will spend up to \$5.1 billion on enhancements to the Hobart-class destroyer combat management system at Osborne.⁴

The Royal Australian Navy is acquiring up to 9 of the UK's Type 26 frigates in recent years, allowing national defence forces to operate together more than ever before.⁵ Their military have also participated in joint training exercises, notably the Royal Gurkha Rifles. The HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier, along with US personnel and equipment, has been sent to the Indo-Pacific region and the Carrier Strike Group conducted a series of drills with like-minded countries, notably Australia, to improve interoperability.⁶

The AUKUS and its Colonial Legacy

AUKUS is based on Anglo-American strategic alliances and colonial legacies that have long tried to both profit on and compete with China's regional power while ignoring the interests of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceania's nations and peoples. The British Western Pacific Territories (BWPT) were established in 1877 to consolidate Britain's presence in the Pacific, whereas US dominance dates back to Abraham Lincoln's secretary of state William Henry Seward, who saw the Pacific as central to the quest for a US 'empire' that could control world markets.⁷ The US then took possession of Alaska, Midway Islands, Hawai'i, the eastern islands of Samoa, Guam, the Philippines, and in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico and Cuba. While determining the Indo-pacific significant in defining regional affiliations and identities themselves, they ignored the nations with the most stake in it. A similar legacy is being followed in AUKUS, where Britain is being linked closely to its colonial legacy to Australia. While the move is welcomed, United Kingdom must first make the reasons for its entrance in the Indo-Pacific dynamics clear by outlining foreign policy considering the military orientation of AUKUS.

⁴ ---. "Australia Starts Tender to Upgrade Hobart-Class Destroyers Combat Management System." *Naval News*, 26 Oct. 2020, www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2020/10/australia-starts-tender-to-upgrade-hobart-class-destroyers-combat-management-system/. Accessed 8 May 2022.

⁵ Bahtić, Fatima. "BAE Systems Sends UK's Type 26 Frigate Design Data to Australia." *Naval Today*, 23 Nov. 2021, www.navaltoday.com/2021/11/23/bae-systems-sends-uks-type-26-frigate-design-data-to-australia/. Accessed 8 May 2022.

⁶ Beale, Jonathan. "HMS Queen Elizabeth: Why Is a UK Aircraft Carrier Going on a World Tour?" *BBC News*, 21 May 2021, www.bbc.com/news/uk-57195317.

⁷ Geiger, Jeffrey. "AUKUS: Recalling Legacies of Anglo-Saxonism and Muffling the Voices of Island Nations." *E-International Relations*, 25 Sept. 2021, www.e-ir.info/2021/09/25/aukus-recalling-legacies-of-anglo-saxonism-and-muffling-the-voices-of-island-nations/.

A Precursor to QUAD

The news of the Australia-UK-US came just before the 24th of September QUAD Summit which is the Quadrilateral Dialogue between U.S., Australia, India, and Japan. The trilateral pact has also raised suspicion about US and Australian commitment to QUAD and both the countries will need to address their role and intention being a part of QUAD. The AUKUS brought Britain more closely into the Indo-Pacific; and its high militaristic nature seems to shadow QUAD and its initiatives to bring peace and cooperation to the Indo-Pacific. While QUAD being a non-militaristic collaboration holds a majority of Indo-Pacific nation members, AUKUS has granted Australia rights to being a member of the nuclear club of only six world powers—the US, UK, France, China, India, and Russia. While it might work more in favour of countering China in the Indo-Pacific, India and Japan could never be part of AUKUS given India and Japan's aversion to nuclear military security pacts. Members of QUAD will need to maintain dialogue to ensure the continuance of cooperation through the quadrilateral so that the treaty does not fizzle out as it did in 2007. Nations will need to engage with each other to not lose sight of their collective objectives.

Conclusion

Data sharing and cross-jurisdictional collaboration will make AUKUS formidable, but it will also present some significant problems as sensitive data-sharing is a daunting enterprise. Perhaps more troubling is the expeditious procurement timeframe whereby Australia is set to gain this technology only by 2040s. By then it is possible that the nuclear propulsion system might be rendered obsolete considering rapid technological advancement being made globally. It is expensive and utilizes loopholes to function which has raised a few eyebrows wondering what the intentions of the partner nations are. Considering that Australia will see another election in 2021, it is yet to be seen how the deal would pan out under the successor government if Morrison is not re-elected. AUKUS might damage US-EU ties and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as weaken the multinational Indo-Pacific coalition. France was also left angered as Australia cancelled submarine deal which resulted in France calling off a scheduled meeting of the foreign ministers of Australia, France, and India at the United Nations.⁸ While it is unclear whether the QUAD and AUKUS will complement each other or compete with one another, geopolitical situation in the Indo-pacific is bound to change due to the military nature of AUKUS.

⁸ Sep 24, Indrani Bagchi / TNN / Updated:, 2021, and 09:34 Ist. n.d. "Australia: Fuming France Cancels Meet with Australia, India | India News - Times of India." The Times of India. Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/fuming-france-cancels-meet-with-oz-india/articleshow/86468090.cms>.

MINILATERALISM

A Comparative Study of AUKUS and Other Blocs

Hardika Dhanpuri

The 21st-century global phenomena to ‘look east’ has changed the focus of the world. This strategic spotlight has increasingly been directed towards the Indo-Pacific. With eastern nations rising in both economic and military power, the competition to influence and consolidate the new region has intensified. This competition is not limited to traditional superpowers like the USA and Russia but also regional contenders like China and India. The evolving nomenclature from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific signifies the growing importance of the region. The Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as a continuous space have been called the Indo Pacific. It is an interconnected and interdependent region with great potential due to rising trade and globalisation. Harboursing over 64% of the world's population, the Indo-Pacific conducts 50% of global trade via its maritime domain and contributes to 62% of global GDP. Currently, ‘Indo Pacific Strategy’ is a part of multiple nations' foreign policies including the USA, France, etc.

A Changing Strategic Landscape

Managing Indo-Pacific security effectively has become one of the most important requirements for maintaining global peace and stability. The region has a clutter of alliance systems having both legitimate and illegitimate partners from over the world, which has led to an overcrowding of competing interests. To overcome this system's fault in the Indo Pacific, nations are opting for ‘Mini-lateralism’. It is a new strategic alignment aimed at easier consensus building and better interest-based groupings of nations. This creative mini-lateralism has the potential to alter the format of strategic partnerships forever. Its exclusivity, flexibility, and functionality make it fit for the fast-paced world that we are in. ¹Bhupinder Singh and Sarah Teo argue that minilateral arrangements occupy the space between bilateralism (both the US- and China-led) and broader regional multilateralism (such as the ASEAN), involving three to nine countries and are rather “exclusive, flexible and functional in nature.” We can call it the ‘modern-day blitzkrieg technique’ but for cooperation. This has led to new partnership security mechanisms in the region.

¹ Singh, Bhubhinder, and Sarah Teo. *Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and ASEAN*. London: Routledge, 2020.

It is also reflective of the deep uncertainties that prevail here. After the covid pandemic, nations have been trying to cope via their interpersonal relations where international organisations have failed to do them justice. Another aspect of minilateralism in the region would be to counter the growing Chinese influence in the region; be it via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or the String of pearls or its efforts to monopolise geostrategic ports in the Indian Ocean region. This shift in approach has led to some monumental changes in the course of action adopted by major players.

AUKUS and the Indo-Pacific

AUKUS is born out of Canberra's concerns over growing Chinese influence in the Indo Pacific region and Anglo-American security practices. Concerns regarding stability of the region have found an audience with the United States, Britain, and Australia. AUKUS is a trilateral security partnership between USA, Britain, and Australia that materialised in September 2021. Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and President Joe Biden agreed to figure out the best path for an Australian conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability by March 2023. Partners in the AUKUS program have taken significant steps toward implementation. There are two parallel lines of endeavour. ²AUKUS will supply Australia with a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine as soon as practicable while adhering to the strictest non-proliferation guidelines. These nuclear submarines provide stealth as well as a constant power source for advanced intelligence and surveillance sensors along with cutting-edge conventional warfare capabilities. Second, to support peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, AUKUS will develop and provide cooperative and sophisticated military capabilities.

What makes AUKUS distinct is that it is a purely security-oriented pact, and the partnership is so collaborative that the trilateral alliance is ready to share sensitive technology amongst themselves. Another aspect is that this might make Australia the first country to operate nuclear-powered boats without having a nuclear weapons program. Canberra has stated that it does not intend to develop nuclear weapons, but nuclear-powered submarines are necessary because they have stealth, speed, and indefinite endurance, all of which are necessary to protect maritime interests. The partnership will concentrate on military capabilities, distinguishing it from the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing cooperation, which also includes New Zealand and Canada. While Australia's submarines are the main focus, AUKUS will also include cyber capabilities and other subsea technology, Quantum technologies, Artificial intelligence and autonomy, Advanced Cyber, Hypersonic, and counter-hypersonic capabilities, and electronic warfare.

² McDougall, Derek. "Aukus: Implications for Australia and Other Commonwealth Countries in the Indo-Pacific." *The Round Table* 110, no. 6 (2021): 728–29.

AUKUS is unlike any other existing ‘alliances’ in the region as it is more streamlined, narrow, strategy-oriented, and security-focused. It is part of a shift, away from the alliance system to a more cause-oriented ‘minilateral system’. Moreover, since the AUKUS countries share an anglosphere heritage, they have shared history, culture, and values which enables them to have an unmatched level of mutual trust.

³It also aims to keep an eye on a rising China that has been flexing its military strength in recent years. Sir Stephen Lovegrove, the UK's national security adviser, has stated that AUKUS is more than a submarine class, describing the agreement as "probably the most significant capabilities partnership in the world anywhere in the last six decades." Joe Biden, the US president, has stressed the importance of maintaining a "free and open Indo-Pacific" while also addressing the region's "present strategic context."

⁴Australia is set to gain the most out of this partnership. For a middle power like Australia to secure a seat at the top table with a great power like the United Kingdom and a superpower like the United States is a significant diplomatic victory. The AUKUS agreement and these national defence procurements in the recent past by Australia are a great move to modernise and upgrade its defensive capabilities. However, the long-term repercussions of French fury over the sudden termination of its relationship with Canberra will require careful political attention. The AUKUS nations’ political trust in France has deteriorated. Also, the success of such realpolitik minilaterals will be determined by how resident countries such as France, Japan, and India interact with them. The establishment of AUKUS, particularly the decision to export nuclear-powered submarines (SSN), has evoked a variety of views from America’s East Asian allies. Those who support a balance of power strategy believe that restoring military strength is the only way to stop Beijing’s aggressive and expansionist ambitions. As a result, they see the AUKUS as a significant statement of Washington's commitment and support. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam are among the countries with long-standing enmities with China. India could be included in this category as well. On the other hand, AUKUS would spark a (nuclear) weapons race and will severely worsen tensions in East Asia. Though important for resolving practical concerns and highlighting common ideals, there is a risk that these 'minilateral' actions would heighten Chinese worries of encirclement and lead to geopolitical or economic countermoves.

³ Wuthnow, Joel. “U.S. ‘Minilateralism’ in Asia and China’s Responses: A New Security Dilemma?” *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 115 (2018): 133–50.

⁴ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “Explaining the Rise of Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific,” ORF, September 23, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/explaining-the-rise-of-minilaterals-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific

The uncertainty surrounding the United States, particularly during the Trump administration, spawned a variety of informal coalitions. The inaugural iteration of the Australia-France-India trilateral ministerial conversation took place in May 2021. The September 2020 initiative of India, France, and Australia was founded with the goal of "building on the strong bilateral relations that the three countries share and leveraging their respective strengths to ensure a peaceful, secure, prosperous, and rules-based Indo-Pacific Region." The initiative's goal, according to Arindam Bagchi, is to reach "convergences in our approach to the Indo-Pacific region and to seek methods to expand trilateral collaboration, notably in the marine sector." While working toward an open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific, the three foreign ministers have emphasized the significance of the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful dispute settlement, democratic values, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

India also participates with Sri Lanka, and the Maldives in the Dosti Trilateral Exercise, a 5- day annual coast guard training. The exercise between India and the Maldives began in 1991, with Sri Lanka participating in 2012. According to the Indian High Commission in the Maldives, the purpose of this exercise is to strengthen mutual goodwill, and operational capability, practice interoperability, and build strong cooperation among the three nations' coast guards. This also contributes to the Indian Ocean's tranquil stability. Such drills end up providing a significant boost in further bolstering the diplomatic relations between the countries involved.

Another minilateral relationship is between India, Australia, and Indonesia. It began with the Senior Officials Meeting in 2017 and has since had three engagements. It focuses on a variety of Indo-Pacific developments, including development aid programs, marine challenges, and HADR activities. China's use of force, notably naval incursions into Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone in the Natuna Islands, the border war with India in Ladakh and elsewhere along the India-China boundary, and the use of trade and economic coercion against Australia, have all gotten worse in the recent year. A disputatious China has driven India, and many other countries in the Indo-Pacific to adopt a power-centric and pragmatic approach to moulding the regional order.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is an informal strategic conference made up of four countries: the United States of America (USA), India, Japan, and Australia. This group met for the first time in 2007 at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It is regarded as a group of nations coming together to find common ground in their democratic natures and their desire to cooperate in maritime trade and security. QUAD assists India in resisting Chinese influence, battling post-Cold War diplomacy, ensuring Indian Ocean security, and building a rule-based multipolar world. The Quad's experience highlights two key features of Asia's changing strategic situation. The first is the growth of 'minilateral' ways to resolve the region's significant conventional and non-traditional security issues, such as the North Korean nuclear issue and natural catastrophe threats. The Quad's rebirth in 2017 follows a pattern of growing talks, intelligence-sharing pacts, military exercises, and other forms of collaboration amongst small groupings of governments united by shared interests and ideals. Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the importance of adhering to the UN Charter, international law, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity at the virtual summit of Quad leaders held on 3rd March 2022.

⁵While drawing a contrast between AUKUS and Quad, first off AUKUS is formed by a conventional 'Joint statement' for "enhanced trilateral security partnership" to "strengthen the ability of each to support our security and defense interests" while Quad has been called an informal grouping with no military or security dimension. On the organizational bases as well, AUKUS countries are much more rigorous relationships and Quad lacks such a framework. Additionally, comparing these minilaterals, one must be acknowledged that all of them don't exist to counter each other's effect, rather they exist to enable cooperation more effectively and strategically. QUAD for instance has extended its cooperation, focusing on infrastructure building to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Indo-Pacific region. The reasons for the existence of these lies between material and strategy. They can be focused either on material outcomes/economic outcomes or on strategic/geopolitical outcomes or both. As minilaterals are structurally designed to be more efficient and resilient they aren't 'one solution for all' but strategically oriented. The aim and purpose of minilaterals are such that it enables a small number of states to engage and produce satisfactory results for their achievement. Some minilaterals concentrate on maritime security while others might focus on regional security, technological assistance, freedom of navigation, or cultural exchanges.

⁵ Lee-Brown, Troy. "Asia's Security Triangles: Maritime Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific." *East Asia* 35, no. 2 (2018): 163–76.

Therefore, conclusively minilateralism is a short-term strategy for achieving a specified policy goal. It is the inherently unstable procedure for security cooperation, susceptible to changes in the domestic politics of its participating nations or in the wider regional context that makes it obsolete as time passes due to a smaller number of stakeholders.

The United States is presently improving its balancing act by utilizing its AUKUS alliance with Australia. Since the trilateral pact involves close strategic partners of New Delhi to counter China in the Indo-Pacific, the AUKUS helps India without directly involving India. It serves New Delhi's interests towards a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, a check on Beijing's hostility, while allowing India to maintain its strategic autonomy. The Quad also is fostering three roles through order-building: regional public goods supply, mutual resilience strengthening, and standard-setting for important and emerging technologies. The Biden administration is striving to engage China in "responsible competition." Quad's cooperation on non-military issues will help these four countries to accumulate their trust and knowhow to counter China's eventual military challenge to their regional rules-based order in the coming years.

THE FRENCH-WEST DIPLOMATIC CRISIS

Analysis and Remedies

Masha Tokas

Introduction

This report will help the readers get an insight into the diplomatic relations between France, a strong European state and the United States of America (USA), the current hegemonic power. The relations between these two highly developed economies with powerful armies and strong leaderships is currently at a low point, however, there is no single factor that has caused this crisis to occur. Along with getting to know the significant factors, this report will also cover the stand taken by India and Australia on this diplomatic crisis. Towards the end, this report will discuss the remedies to get the diplomatic relationship between France and USA back to normal.

How did the USA influence the crisis?

A new security partnership had been announced on the 15th of September 2021 by the United States of America (USA), called AUKUS. This is a nuclear submarine deal among three countries namely- the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. What makes this deal different from the Quad is that it is a security partnership, whereas, the Quad is a diplomatic dialogue between four states. The establishment of the AUKUS is seen as a move to counter the growing Chinese dominance in the Indo-Pacific. This nuclear deal will empower all the three states, especially Australia because of its geographical proximity, with the required quality and quantity of nuclear capabilities to counter China in the region with the help of the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Why was France aggravated?

The AUKUS agreement has created a rift between France and the United States. This is because the new security agreement among the three countries has completely scrapped off the submarine deal that was signed between France and Australia back in 2016. This deal was the foundation stone of the French strategy in the Indo-Pacific region to counter China.

In just a few days of signing the security agreement, the entire French administration including the Armed Forces and Foreign Affairs Ministries were raging in anger. “There was lying, there was duplicity, there was a major breach of trust.” said the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian after the [announcement](#) of AUKUS. As a response to the signing of the agreement and the betrayal that it caused, Paris called all its ambassadors to Canberra and Washington back to Paris . This was the first time in the history of French-American bilateral relations.

However, a tinge of satisfaction for France in this case is that it succeeded in compelling the United States to have a trans-Atlantic dialogue which helped clarify the expectations that the States had from Europe, even with its “best ally”, France.

The nature of past USA-France relations

“The state of relations between France and the United States has not been a stable quantity, but has instead oscillated over time, with a series of rifts and reconciliations,” [wrote](#) French historian Georges-Henri Soutou in 2004. But these fluctuations never prevented the two countries from keeping their alliance strong. Ever since the occurrence of the Suez crisis, the French and American interests have not been on the same page, but this didn’t affect the permanent relationship between the two.

The AUKUS agreement took their relationship status back to as it was in the French and American clash over the Iraq war nearly two decades ago where the French opposition prevented the Americans from reshaping the Middle East. Now, the French response to AUKUS has made it even more difficult for the United States to hold together allies against the rising Chinese dominance for this time, the clash is primarily bilateral and unexpected at the same time. And, the most sovereigntist of French politicians threatened to leave NATO during the election campaigns.

However, the situation was pretty much different in the United States for the strategists and think tanks praised AUKUS but criticized the blunder of placating France as an essential ally.

AUKUS has come after more than a decade of enhanced French-West cooperation, where France has started to gain significance for the Americans. The French move to return to NATO in 2009 made it more influential within the organisation. Obama and François Hollande were successful at working towards Iran and climate change. France even took responsibility over Libya and the Sahel. Though they failed to be on the same page in the case of Syria, there were counter terrorism priorities that were

consolidated by the French defence minister and the U.S. secretary of defence a year after the Bataclan attack in Paris, in naval, air, cyber, and space areas.

During the Iraq war crisis, France realized how costly the war had been and also the lack of influence it had on the United States as compared to other European allies. In order to gain significance, France began to offer educational study trips to American students and even supported research on France in Washington based think tanks.

Chinese influence on French-West relations

A sustainable relationship is built on shared interests. As France began to establish strategic autonomy, increase in defence spending was encouraged and China was viewed critically. America's priority too is China and its strategic choices have also been framed accordingly. With AUKUS, the United States relies on its allies to counter Chinese dominance in the Indo-Pacific. However, there are times when France contradicts U.S. agenda while questioning its strategy or NATO's role. Though their priorities remain the same, the difference in ideologies will always cause disagreements to occur.

As the focus has shifted from Jihadism in the Middle East, which happened to be the core of French-West relations, to countering China in the Indo-Pacific, we get to see a derailment in the diplomatic relations. The Pentagon in November 2021 assured that the Indo-Pacific is the priority and issues in the Middle East will be submitted in future reviews. Though the United States has no interests in the Middle East region for now, it is committed to counter-terrorism in the Sahel primarily to [support](#) French and European initiatives.

On several key issues, the European Union happens to play an even more crucial role than individual member states for the United States. European Union's normative and internal market power attracts the United States, that has begun to rely more on E.U.-U.S. relations which is inclusive of its dislike of [China](#) and concurrence on issues of trade, technology, climate change issues at large. France, which has long wanted to move away from trans-atlantic collaboration from the NATO is pleased with the Biden administration's interest in European institutions. However, Paris nervous is to see the strengthening Brussels-Washington relations, since it fears getting excluded from trans-Atlantic talks.

Possible solutions

Unfortunately, the resumption of normal diplomatic relations between the US and France is not limited to one solution. . French discontentment has peaked and the United States has realized its mistake and has agreed to have “[in-depth consultations](#)” at high levels in September and October. The Group of Twenty conference on 29th October 2021, gave an opportunity for both the Presidents to have a bilateral dialogue that would ensure the French-West diplomatic relationship continues. The repentance from the side of the American officials ended when the Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris visited Paris in mid-November.

Though the French-West diplomatic relationship bounced back after AUKUS, it is necessary to nurture this essential diplomatic relationship before it gets impacted again. For France, this means three things. First, France will have to gather the support of other European nations , this may be possible in multiple ways- bilaterally, through coalitions, or with all E.U members for autonomy, just the way the [defence agreements were made](#) with Greece or the [Quirinal Treaty](#) with Italy. Secondly, France should continue to play a significant role in diplomatic proposals related to issues or crises that are being faced world-wide. This should be done by way of initiating diplomacy with both Europeans and Americans, as was done on the Iranian nuclear agreement.

Finally, France needs to re-establish viable diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom, in order to gain its significance back in the eyes of the United States. The French-West diplomatic relations can come back to complete normalcy once these three conditions are met. This could further happen through joint initiatives on European security, with regard to Russia.

Apart from the United States, France can also act as a “[balance of power](#)” and count on other partnerships, such as the one with India, which will offer [strategic options](#) to counter China. Lastly, the AUKUS security agreement has not been negotiated entirely. This leaves chances for amendments or accommodation of more members as said by Kurt Campbell, the White House coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs, that the AUKUS security agreement [promises](#) to have an “open” architecture, which will eventually leave the door open for future partnerships with other countries that have same interests to counter China.

Conclusion

One thing that cannot be denied is that the AUKUS crisis has been a wake-up call for French-West diplomatic relations. It indicates structural vulnerabilities that exist in this bilateral relationship. As it is understood that this diplomatic partnership is being torn by centrifugal forces, it is necessary to counter these forces in order to prevent further derailments. Though things have not been in favour of Paris ever since the AUKUS shock came along, it has tested the French influence on the White House after decades of strengthened diplomatic relations. Apart from this, it even highlighted the fragility of a bilateral relationship in a drastically changing global world order.

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Chinese and Global Responses to AUKUS

A Geopolitical Overview

Smruthi Chandrasekar

Introduction

The AUKUS alliance is a trilateral security partnership in the Indo-pacific, between Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States¹. It was announced in September 2021, in a meeting between Australian president Scott Morrison, US president Joe Biden, and UK prime minister Boris Johnson. The AUKUS, however is not the only alliance focusing on the Indo-pacific. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (also referred to as QUAD), formed in 2007, is an ideal example of a pre-existing alliance in the Indo-pacific. However, unlike AUKUS, the QUAD is only a diplomatic and a dialogue-oriented approach aimed at a free, open, prosperous, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. It's unclear whether the QUAD and AUKUS will complement each other or compete with one another. The convergence of these two alliances would have to highlight the common interest in protecting the Indo-Pacific region from China's dominance over other nations.

The USA's and the UK's priorities with respect to the alliance are to provide Australia with the technology required to make nuclear powered submarines. This technology was previously shared only by the US to UK almost 70 years ago. This technology share agreement demonstrates the growing ties and cooperation between the two nations. The alliance's Indo-Pacific orientation places it directly alliance against China's assertive actions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan strait. It will entail a new framework of interactions and exchanges between the three countries, as well as cross-technology collaboration in fields such as applied AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities. Under the partnership, Australia would receive eight state-of-the-art, nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines capable of stealthy, long-range operations as part of the AUKUS contract. Canberra wanted traditional diesel-powered submarines when the contract with France was inked in 2016. However, five years later, a trade war with China and increased worry about Beijing's assertiveness in the Pacific had prompted calls for nuclear-powered submarines that could stay submerged for longer periods of time.

The reactions to AUKUS are plenty. Some countries have condemned the alliance itself while some have shown disregard for the method of forming this alliance. Certain countries were apprehensive, and others have issued open threats.

¹ The Guardian. 2021. Accessed 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/sep/16/what-is-the-aucus-alliance-and-what-are-its-implications>.

The Responses

China

Beijing, has focused on the deal's geopolitical impact and attacked AUKUS, arguing that it is the product of a "Cold War mentality" among Australia, UK and US and that it will undermine regional security and stability. The treaty, according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry official, "seriously undermines regional peace and increases the arms race."² Diplomatically, the response was forceful.

The Global Times, a worldwide English-language media source owned by the Chinese Communist Party, accused the US of "hysterically dividing its alliance structure," writing on its editorial page that "Washington is losing its mind by trying to unite its allies against China."

The publication went on to declare that Australia "remains a US hound" and is a participant in the "US-led strategic siege of China."

"If Australia dares to irritate China more openly as a result of this, or even find fault militarily, China will respond severely." "Australian forces are also most likely to be the first batch of Western soldiers to squander their lives in the South China Sea," the article says if Australia becomes "militarily assertive." (The Guardian 2021)

Of course, these dangers were not exclusive to Australia. A separate Global Times editorial stated, "The US seeks to make the Quad and AUKUS into 'sinister gangs' restricting China." It continued to warn sternly Japan, India, and Australia not to follow the United States too far in confronting China. China will not care about their connections with the US once they cross the red line of China's vital interests, and China will not hesitate to punish them."

France

After labelling the decision a "stab in the back," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian announced on September 17 that President Emmanuel Macron had requested the recall of France's ambassadors to Australia and the United States to conduct consultations on how to respond to the situation's "exceptional seriousness."³ This was done for the first time in the history of relationship between France, Australia and the US.

Officials in France were enraged that they were effectively kept in the dark about the

² 2021 *The Guardian*. Accessed 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/16/cold-war-mentality-china-criticises-aukus-us-uk-australia-submarine-pact>

³ Perez, Jose Mikhail, and Christian Vicedo. 2021. April. <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/aukus-and-france-as-an-indo-pacific-power>

AUKUS transaction, which jeopardised their own submarine sale to Australia. They argued that such a lack of transparency among close partners is improper and reflects a breach of trust. The cancellation of the French submarine deal with Canberra, which was worth more than \$60 billion, significantly angered Paris.

Apart from this, France views the Asia-Pacific area to be of critical strategic and economic importance, with 1.65 million French nationals living on islands such as La Réunion, New Caledonia, Mayotte, and French Polynesia. Therefore, it was enraged by the submarine sale as well as being left out of the alliance due to its interests in the region

As a result, France proposes to deal with Australia on a case-to-case basis until the lost trust is at least partially restored.

European Union

The declaration by AUKUS came only a day before the EU was set to release its long-awaited Indo-Pacific policy. According to the EU, it was not contacted in advance. Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, claimed that Brussels had not been consulted on the "AUKUS" accord. He added, "We regret not having been informed, not having been a part of these negotiations." "We, like others, must fend for ourselves,"⁴ He further said that the new arrangement for the US to assist Australia develop a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines is a particular thorn in the pact's side. "I understand the extent to which the French administration must be disappointed," he remarked, empathising with France.

Charles Michel, President of the European Council, accused the US of "lack of allegiance" and demanded a "clarification" to "attempt to better grasp the motives underlying" the AUKUS declaration⁵.

AUKUS, according to Michael Roth, Germany's Minister for European Affairs, is a "wake-up call for Europeans"⁶, as the EU is often divided on foreign and security policy matters.

However, The AUKUS agreement does not mean the disengagement of France and the European Union from the Indo-Pacific. Nor does it mean a complete break with

⁴ Liboreiro, Jorge. 2021. September. Accessed 2022. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/09/17/we-were-not-informed-new-us-australia-defence-pact-eclipses-eu-s-indo-pacific-pivot>

⁵ Marafona, Marta. 2021. November. Accessed 2022. <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/european-reactions-aukus-and-implications-eu-strategic-autonomy>

⁶ DW. n.d. *DW.com*. Accessed 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/german-minister-submarine-dispute-is-a-wake-up-call/a-59245294>.

Australia or US, even if the distrust it has created might have a corrosive effect on the cohesion of Western democracies. It has only led to a push for the EU's case of “strategic autonomy.”

Canada and New Zealand

The statement also caused concern in Canada and New Zealand, which, along with the three AUKUS allies, make up the "Five Eyes" intelligence-sharing network. New Zealand responded with a testy statement, saying that the nuclear-powered Australian submarines that would be built under the arrangement will not be allowed to dock in its seas. While in Canada, the Conservative Party was keen to take a position in favour of joining AUKUS and criticise Trudeau for refusing to do so, the Prime Minister declared that Canada had no interest in nuclear submarines and that the country had nothing to offer in this regard. Canadian military analysts say the country was not included principally because it had nothing to contribute to a nuclear submarine program.

Besides this, Canada's and New Zealand's nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policies are based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Both Canada as well as New Zealand aim to prevent countries from acquiring nuclear weapons, reduce the number of nuclear weapons on the planet, and eventually eliminate them permanently.

India

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said the deal was “neither relevant to the Quad, nor will it have any impact on its functioning.”⁷ The remark was released just days before Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US for the first in-person Quad summit.

The new defence pact is inextricably linked to India's participation in and strategic calculations in relation to the Quad. AUKUS outlines some of India's dilemmas in relation to the Quad, including whether to share or pass the weight of containing China in the Indo-Pacific, and whether to commit to even greater reliance on the US as a defence partner, especially with the recent developments with respect to Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Taiwan and Japan

Both Taiwan and Japan have witnessed the extent of China's influence in the Indo-

⁷ Kamath, Pritesh. 2021. *Republic world*. Accessed 2022. <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/uk-news/aukus-wont-impact-quad-clarifies-indias-foreign-secretary-before-pm-modis-us-visit.html>.

acific and even their own sovereignties being violated. Hence, both these countries would respect and understand this alliance and the check that it brings on China.

The Taiwanese government had "taken note" of the AUKUS alliance, according to Foreign Ministry spokesperson Joanne Ou, adding Taiwan shared common interests with the three allies. "We are an important member of the Indo-Pacific region ... and we have long shared an interest in Indo-Pacific peace and stability with countries with similar philosophies, like the U.S., Australia, and the U.K.,"⁸ Ou told reporters. Not only is Taiwan happy to acknowledge the arrangement but also ready to cooperate with the countries so as to balance the CCP's military expansionism.

ASEAN Countries

There was not a single member of Parliament in Indonesia who supported the alliance. Indonesian government responded with a five-point statement that avoided mentioning AUKUS but declared that Indonesia was "very worried" about the region's "continued arms race and power projection." Jakarta was clearly wary of the development.

Malaysia has similar concerns to Indonesia regarding the agreement's potential to spark a regional arms race. There is no consensus on AUKUS across ASEAN (which is recognised for its consensus-building strategy).

Singapore's view is somewhat neutral, hoping that this alliance would help achieve regional peace and security.

Vietnam and the Philippines, on the other hand, consider it as a positive step toward achieving strategic balance in the regional geopolitical struggle.

Conclusion

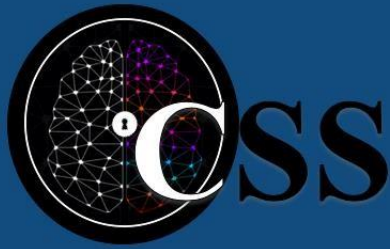
The question now is on the effectiveness of the AUKUS alliance to act when there is conflict. It will be disappointing to witness another NATO-Ukraine like situation in the Indo-pacific, especially with China's assertive one China policy and the BRI initiative that have often been accompanied by Chinese diplomatic and military aggression.

⁸ Policy, Institute for Security and Development. 2021. *Institute for Security and Development Policy*. November.

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