

*U.S., U.K., Australia form new partnership

- AUKUS → New trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific between Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.

- Need for AUKUS

• Aus felt increasing pressure from an assertive China.

• To balance this threat, Aus has been trying to strengthen its partnerships with India, the U.S. and the U.K.

• The U.S. too has been shifting its focus to the Indo-Pacific region. It has also been promoting new formations like the Quad.

- Focus areas

• Help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

• The partnership would also involve a new architecture of meetings and engagements

·Cooperation across emerging technologies like AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities.

·A security-focus group, though it would be different from – but complementary to – arrangements such as the Quad.

* Three is company

- AUKUS → new trilateral security partnership
b/w US, UK & Aus

• Complements several pre-existing similar arrangements for the region such as the Five Eyes, ASEAN and the Quad.

• Proposes to transfer technology to build a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia within 18 months.

• But US has assured that it is just conventionally armed submarines powered by nuclear reactors and not nuclear-armed submarines

• Aus → 2nd after the U.K. will get US nuclear submarine technology

- Countries not happy:

1. New Zealand follows its 1984 nuclear-free zone policy and hence won't allow these.

2. France

- As Aus' \$90 bn deal for conventional submarines has now been cancelled

3. China

- As the initiative is mainly to contain China's influence in the Indo-Pacific:

-Significance

- U.S., the U.K. and Aus along with other regional powers to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific, including the South China Sea.
- Closer coordination among the nations concerned in terms of joint military presence, war games and more in the region.
- Undersea capabilities including the ability to patrol
- Transfer of nuclear propulsion technology was intended to send a message of reassurance to countries in Asia.

No link between AUKUS and Quad: govt.

Foreign Secretary of India:

- AUKUS is neither relevant to the Quad, nor will it have any impact on its functioning.
- Quad meeting would deal with issues such as the pandemic, new and emerging technologies, climate change, infra, maritime security, education, HADR.
- AUKUS was predominantly a "security alliance".
- PM Modi showed solidarity with French President

France has protested against the (AUKUS) that effectively killed France-Australia cooperation on submarines.

The Indian PM will hold bilateral talks with U.S. President & VP. on-

- Focus on regional security with a specific focus on Afghanistan .
- Reform of the multilateral system, including the UN Security Council.
- Reviewing the India-U.S. comprehensive strategic global partnership.
- Trade and investment ties
- Green strategic clean energy partnership.
- Defence and security collaborations-
 - how to operationalize the four foundational defence agreements that India and the U.S. have signed in the recent past.

The big deal behind the ruckus over AUKUS

The announcement of the new Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) trilateral security pact has naturally generated animated debate in strategic circles, before the QUAD summit.

What is the AUKUS?

- The first major initiative of AUKUS would be to deliver a nuclear-powered submarine fleet for Australia.
- The nuclear-powered submarines will give Australia naval heft in the Pacific, where China has been particularly aggressive.
- While the US and Britain have had the capability for decades, Australia has never had an n-sub.

Motive: To counter China

- China has nuclear-powered submarines, as well as submarines that can launch nuclear missiles.
- The three signatories to the AUKUS deal have made it clear though, that their aim is not to arm the new subs with nuclear weapons.
- China has been one of Australia's biggest trading partners, but the relationship has soured over the last few years.
- It was in consideration of Chinese sensibilities that Australia had pulled out of the Malabar Naval Exercise with the US, India, and Japan after participating in the 2007 edition (of which Singapore too, was part).
- Australia came back to Malabar in 2020, which marked the first time in 13 years

that the navies of the four Quad nations war-gamed together.

Australia at the Centrestage

- This is primarily because a nuclear-powered submarine gives a navy the capability to reach far out into the ocean and launch attacks.
- A nuclear-powered submarine offers long distances dives, at a higher speed, without being detected gives a nation the ability to protect its interests far from its shores.
- In the context of the AUKUS agreement, nuclear-powered submarines will give the Royal Australian Navy the capability to go into the South China Sea.
- It conclusively puts to rest a long-standing domestic debate on whether it was time for Australia to assess China through the strategic lens, overcoming the purely

mercantile considerations that tended to dominate its China policy.

What makes nuclear submarines so important?

- A nuclear-powered submarine is classified as an "SSN" under the US Navy hull classification system, wherein 'SS' is the symbol for submarine, and 'N' stands for nuclear.
- A nuclear-powered submarine that can launch ballistic missiles is called "SSBN".
- Conventional diesel-engine submarines have batteries that keep and propel — though not very fast — the vessel underwater. The life of these batteries can vary from a few hours to a few days.
- The newer Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) submarines have additional fuel cells that allow them to stay underwater for longer

and move faster than the conventional vessels.

- However, the fuel cells are used only at strategic times, when the endurance to remain submerged is required.
- Both conventional and AIP subs need to come to the surface to recharge their batteries using the diesel engine.
- The diesel engine also propels the vessel on the surface. However, the fuel cells of AIP can only be charged at on-land stations, not while at sea.

Why is France unhappy about Australia getting these submarines?

- The deal has complicated the relations between France and Australia, and also France and the US.
- France is upset as it has been kept out of the loop. But, with the core objective of

pushing back against China's aggression, all five countries – US, UK, Australia, France and India – are on the same track.

- The deal between France and Australia had been marked by delays and other issues.
- The first submarine was expected to be operational around 2034.

Does India have nuclear-powered submarines?

- Yes, India is among the six nations that have SSNs. The other five are the US, the UK, Russia, France and China.
- India has had the capacity since it got the Soviet-built K-43 Charlie-class SSN in 1987.
- Commissioned with the Red Fleet of the USSR in 1967, it was leased to the Indian Navy, and was rechristened INS Chakra. The submarine was decommissioned in 1991.

Indo-Pacific is the core issue

- France, which like the UK has historically been an Indo-Pacific power with territories and bases across the region.
- It has participated in a multi-nation naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal with the four Quad nations.
- There is no gainsaying the fact that rapid accretion in China's economic and military capacities, but more particularly its belligerence, has led to a tectonic shift in regional security paradigms.
- Several countries have been obliged to review their defence preparedness in response to China's rising military power and its adverse impact on regional stability.

A chance for the UK

- The AUKUS pact is also an emphatic assertion of the relevance of the U.S.-Australia Security Treaty (ANZUS).
- New Zealand, the outlier, walked away in 1984 from the treaty that ironically still bears its initials.
- Its "nuclear-free" stance ran counter to the U.S. Navy's non-disclosure policy in regard to nuclear weapons aboard visiting vessels.
- Close ties notwithstanding, Australia's future fleet of nuclear submarines will not be permitted access to New Zealand's ports or waters, as averred by PM Jacinda Ardern.
- AUKUS provides a fresh opportunity to the United Kingdom to reinsert itself more directly into the Indo-Pacific.

- It is already a member of the Five Eyes (FVEY), an intelligence-sharing alliance built on Anglo-Saxon solidarity (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S.).

AUKUS is not a substitute for the Quad

- It does not erode the Quad's significance as a platform for consultations and coordination on broader themes of maritime security, free and open trade, health care, critical technologies, supply chains and capacity-building.
- The AUKUS submarine deal, on the other hand, is an undiluted example of strategic defence collaboration, and a game-changer at that.

Chinese reception of AUKUS

- China, expectedly, has strongly criticised AUKUS and the submarine deal as promoting instability and stoking an arms race.

The exposed double standards

- China has the world's fastest-growing fleet of sub-surface combatants.
- This includes the Type 093 Shang-class nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) and the Type 094 nuclear-powered Jin-class ballistic missile submarine (SSBN).
- Its nuclear submarines are on the prowl in the Indo-Pacific.
- Yet, China denies Australia and others the sovereign right to decide on their defence requirements.

What's in the box of AUKUS?

Greater role for Australia

- Australia's proposed nuclear submarines will give quite a punch in terms of a stand-off capability.
- The growing focus on anti-submarine warfare across a more expansive region is clearly altering calculations.
- Australia's nuclear submarines would help create a new balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, especially in tandem with the U.S. and the U.K.
- It will now have a more meaningful naval deterrence of its own to protect its sovereign interests.
- It is set to play a more robust role in ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Way forward

- The setback 'down under' may spur France to focus afresh on partners such as India.

- India must strike a balance between continuing imports and implementing the all-important Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing.
- France should take AUKUS as a business deal.
- Its momentary reaction at the cancellation of the contract by Australia should soon subside.
- As a major Indo-Pacific power, France is an important part of the regional security calculus.

India is not a bystander in the AUKUS saga

The announcement of AUKUS – a new security pact between the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

How does it impact India?

For observers in India, the AUKUS has evoked mixed feelings.

- Many are happy for Australia which is a partner in the Quad to receive top quality nuclear submarine technology from the U.S. and the U.K., strengthening China deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.
- There is also a sense of pity with France, India's foremost partner in the Indian Ocean.
- Some Quad-sceptics see this as a sign of what the future might hold for India.
- If Australia and the U.S. could deceive France which is a NATO partner, the

question is what would prevent them from doing the same with lesser allies.

- There is apprehension that the deal could eventually lead to crowding of nuclear attack submarines (SSNs/submersible ship nuclear) 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.
- An Indian plan to develop a fleet of nuclear attack submarines has not got an offer of help from the U.S.
- Recent development raises the possibility that Australia could deploy nuclear submarines in the Eastern Indian Ocean well before India positions its own.

AUKUS versus the Quad:

- AUKUS seems to have taken the focus away from the Quad.
- There is more than a subtle hint of U.S. favouritism for Australia in the new deal as it asserted that the transfer of nuclear submarine technology was a one-off event.
- The agreement suggests preferential treatment on the part of Washington for a close Anglo-alliance partner.
- Critics wonder why the U.S. made an allowance for one Quad partner and not another.

Conclusion:

- While India has rarely received any submarine technology from the U.S, it has instead relied on Russia for nuclear submarine technology.

- It took Russia's assistance in the construction of the reactor of India's first SSBN/submersible ship ballistic missile nuclear (Arihant) and in the acquisition (on lease) of a nuclear attack submarine.
- The Indian Navy's indigenous SSN programme requires a nuclear reactor more powerful than the one installed in the Arihant (a non-war-fighting platform).
- Following the deepening of Quad ties, it was hoped that the U.S. would consider providing the Indian Navy with nuclear submarine propulsion technology.
- There is now speculation that Delhi might consider seeking French help with nuclear submarines.
- However, India must be careful in its official response to AUKUS.

- France, the U.S., the U.K. and Australia are some of India's closest partners.
- The bottom line for New Delhi is that it cannot be seen to be taking sides in a feud among friends.

* AUKUS could rock China's boat in Indo-Pacific

- AUKUS

↳ Trilateral security agreement b/w Aus, UK & US.

- Decades old partnership

- of US, UK & Australia
- Fought as allies in WWII
- US shared nuclear weapons tech with UK
- UK's first nuclear test conducted in Montebello Islands in Australia
- Aus still regards British monarch as its head of state.



- Concerns raised by -

• France

↳ as its submarine deal with Aus was cancelled.

↳ Now UK & US will help Aus acquire nuclear powered submarines

• ASEAN & New Zealand

↳ Australia's nuclear powered submarines will be a threat to South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty & Treaty of SE Asia Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone.

• China

↳ Criticized it as an "exclusive bloc"

↳ undermines regional peace & security

↳ reflects Cold War mentality.

- What led to the AUKUS?

• China's deliberate targeting of Australia's exports to China

• China's naval expansion forced Aus to revisit its defence & security policies.

• China's monitoring of Australia's

military exercises -

- ↳ **Talisman Sabre** → biennial exercise led by either Aus or US (2017, 2019)
- ↳ Multilateral **RIMPAC** exercise in 2018.

- AUKUS' range & influence

- Joint capabilities & interoperability in defence cooperation
- Other areas covered are **cyber capabilities**, **AI**, **quantum Tech** & **undersea capabilities**.
- Engagement with other countries
 - ↳ like New Zealand
- Role to play in other US led prog, like **Build Back Better World**, **Blue Dot Network** & **Clean Network**.
 - ↳ These are to challenge China's BRI.
- Complementary to Quad
 - ↳ Quad covers Indian & Pacific Oceans
 - ↳ AUKUS has the remaining Pacific covered.
 - ↳ But Quad neither has the mandate nor the capability to counter China militarily.

- ↳ AUKUS provides opportunity to US to place proxy submarine forces in the Pacific.
- Enhanced security to Japan, Taiwan, ASEAN.