**The AUKUS pact**

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Alliances play a central role in international relations because they are seen to be an integral part of statecraft. Alliances are formed between two or more countries to counter a common adversary. Weak states enter into an alliance for protection against stronger states. Strong states enter into alliances to counter other strong states i.e., they enter into an alliance to maintain the balance of power.

AUKUS is a new trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, announced on September 15, 2021; a new security partnership that will see Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarine technology—but not nuclear weapons—from the US and UK. While it could take more than a decade for Australia to build its first sub, the agreement shows the US seeking to form a more cohesive defence arrangement in Asia to offset China’s rapidly modernising military.

Nuclear-powered vessels are significant as they are vastly superior to their diesel-electric counterparts: They’re faster, can stay submerged almost indefinitely, and are bigger—allowing them to carry more weapons, equipment and supplies. Given Australia’s remote location and the fact its subs may operate in waters stretching from the Indian Ocean up to Japan, these are big pluses.

[Hamas, Egypt agree to consolidate Gaza cease-fire: Source](https://nation.com.pk/06-Oct-2021/hamas-egypt-agree-to-consolidate-gaza-cease-fire-source)

France, which is a NATO partner of the US and UK, has accused its allies of “duplicity” in scuttling its multibillion-dollar deal with Australia, with the French foreign minister saying that the relationship was going through a “serious crisis”. Moreover, it is quite clear that the nuclear submarines are directed at China; there is no other reason for Australia to make the purchase as it faces no great defence perils from the Pacific microstates that surround it. The French defence industry would have gained a profitable deal if the Australians had gone ahead with it. Obviously, the UK and US had other ideas, as their own military industrial complex will surely benefit from manufacturing subs for Australia.

Along with the AUKUS, two more alliances are not far behind in playing their role in the Indo-Pacific region, namely QUAD and the Five Eyes alliance. The QUAD brings the US, Japan, India and Australia together in an informal alliance of democracies with shared economic and security interests that span the Pacific and Indian oceans.

[Whistleblower says Facebook apps 'harm children, stoke division'](https://nation.com.pk/06-Oct-2021/whistleblower-says-facebook-apps-harm-children-stoke-division)

As far as the Five Eyes alliance is concerned, it’s a decades-old intelligence-sharing arrangement among the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It’s so good at keeping secrets that its existence wasn’t publicly revealed until the mid-2000s. It isn’t clear how much intelligence is shared, but most of whistleblower Edward Snowden’s vast 2013 dump of classified US National Security Agency data, for instance, was marked FVEY, meaning it was available to other Five Eyes’ members. Advocates say the collaboration was used in the so-called Afghanistan war as well as in counter-terrorism operations in the Philippines and East Africa. Snowden attacked it as unanswerable to democratic oversight by national governments.

China, in reaction, lashed out at what it calls a “Cold War mentality,” denouncing such partnerships as anti-China cliques. Chinese officials argued that AUKUS will stoke an arms race in the Asia-Pacific region. In their view, its members are trying not just to compete, but to contain China’s rise—to throw a military net around it in vital waterways like the South China Sea and undermine the country’s economic development. Relations have been getting tense on all sides. Biden, like Trump, has trained his energies on preventing the world’s second-largest economy from pulling ahead. Beijing also has sparred with the UK over Hong Kong and Canada over detained citizens, while Europe has called China a “systemic rival.”

[Pandora Papers investigation should start with me, says Faisal Vawda](https://nation.com.pk/05-Oct-2021/pandora-papers-investigation-should-start-with-me-says-faisal-vawda)

Some Russian diplomatic officials joined their Chinese counterparts in expressing their concerns that Australia’s development of nuclear-powered submarines (with American and British help) would undermine the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and “speed up an arms race” in the region. For instance, former Australian ambassador to the US, Joe Hockey, boldly declared AUKUS was intended to counter not only China’s power in the Indo-Pacific region, but Russia’s, too. In the most dramatic scenario, Russia and China could form a loose maritime coalition to counter the combined military power of the AUKUS pact.

Unfortunately, after unsuccessful military adventures in the Middle East and Central Asia, it seems that the Western bloc is endeavouring to pave the way for Barack Obama’s ‘Pivot to Asia’ policy by a new adventure in the waters of East Asia and the Pacific rim. The western bloc, led by the US, needs to negotiate with China on the table rather than flex its military muscles. Once the arms race is sparked, it will be difficult to contain.

[UK's Johnson says petrol, food crises result of 'giant waking up' of economy](https://nation.com.pk/05-Oct-2021/uk-s-johnson-says-petrol-food-crises-result-of-giant-waking-up-of-economy)

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