

AUKUS SEEKS TO RESHAPE INDO-PACIFIC TIES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Fresh ties:(from left) Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton, Foreign Minister Marise Payne, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.AFP

Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. (AUKUS) have announced they're forming a new security alliance that will help equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines. The alliance will see a reshaping of relations in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Here's what it might mean for various players:

United States

Ten years ago under President Barack Obama, the U.S. began discussing the need to focus more attention on the Indo-Pacific region while pivoting away from conflicts in West Asia.

Under President Joe Biden, the U.S. has now withdrawn its troops from Afghanistan while finding that tensions with China have only grown.

In the Pacific, the U.S. and others have been concerned about China's actions in the South China Sea and its antipathy toward Japan, Taiwan and Australia.

Britain

In announcing the deal, none of the three leaders mentioned China. The U.S. had previously only shared the nuclear propulsion technology with Britain. Mr. Biden said it was about ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific over the long term. Leaving the EU under Brexit has left Britain seeking to reassert its global position. Part of that has been an increased focus — or tilt — towards the Indo-Pacific.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the new alliance would allow the three nations to sharpen their focus on an increasingly complicated part of the world.

Australia

Under the arrangement, Australia will build at least eight nuclear-powered submarines using U.S. expertise, while dumping a contract with France for diesel-electric submarines.

Experts say the nuclear submarines will allow Australia to conduct longer patrols and give the alliance a stronger military presence in the region.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he had called the leaders of Japan and India to explain the new alliance.

Japan, India, Australia and the U.S. already have a strategic dialogue known as 'the Quad'. Mr. Biden is set to host fellow Quad leaders at the White House next week.

France

Australia told France it would end its contract with state majority-owned DCNS to build 12 of the world's largest conventional submarines. The contract was worth tens of billions of dollars. France is furious, demanding explanations from all sides.

"It was really a stab in the back. We built a relationship of trust with Australia, and this trust was betrayed," said French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian on France-Info radio.

New Zealand

Left out of the new alliance is Australia's neighbour New Zealand. It has a long-standing nuclear-free policy that includes a ban on nuclear-powered ships entering its ports. That stance has sometimes been a sticking point in otherwise close relations with the U.S.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said New Zealand wasn't asked to be part of the alliance and wouldn't have expected an invitation. Still, it leaves New Zealand out of a deal to share a range of information, including artificial intelligence, cyber and underwater defence capabilities.

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