

## ANGLO AMERICAN WEAPONRY SUPPORT TO AUSTRALIA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ASIA PACIFIC

**\*SHERIFF GHALI IBRAHIM, \*\*AZI SAMUEL MAGAJI & \*\*\*ABDULKARIM ABDULLAHI**

*\*Department Of Political Science And International Relations, University Of Abuja*

*\*\*Department Of Political Science And International Relations, University Of Abuja*

*\*\*\*Department Of Political Science And International Relations, Nile University Of Nigeria*

*\*EMAIL: sherfboy@yahoo.com*

*PHONE: +234-7063372013*

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article discusses the Anglo-American weaponry alliance with Australia and also analyses the impact of such alliance on the politics of Asia-Pacific. From the secondary-descriptive research method used, the paper finds out that, Australia has been a strong adherent of nuclear disarmament and a future option to manufacture nuclear weapons was an equally long-standing tenet of Australian defense and diplomatic thinking. Yet the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which Australia signed in 1970, allowed development of weapons know-how to the brink of manufacture. Despite reservations from key Australian policy-makers, US pressure and the option to leverage, the ANZUS alliance tipped the balance to signing. This concession satisfied US negotiators that Australia would look to ANZUS and the US extended deterrent for the immediate future, but also allowed Australian defense planners a hedging option. The paper concludes that The Anglo-American alliance with Austria is apparently aimed at containing the rise of China in the Pacific, albeit it is too late for such an alliance to deter China from growing militarily, economically and to continue to impact on global politics. This trend will result in yet another arms race between the United States, Europe and on the other hand People's Republic of China. The paper recommends that China should try as much as possible to maintain peaceful relations which it has always been and concentrate on its development efforts and building a shared future for mankind. China should also bring strategic allies closer within the region in order to maintain balance of power.*

***Keywords:** Anglo-American; Weaponry; Support; Australia; Implication; Asia-Pacific*

## INTRODUCTION

There was a dramatic decision by the Australian government to scrap an A\$90 billion project to build a French-designed future submarine and replace it with an entirely new Anglo-American nuclear-powered successor which was an extremely well-kept secret, blindsiding most of Canberra's bureaucracy and political establishment (Graham, 2017). Announced as part of the wider 'AUKUS' tripartite security partnership, unveiled jointly by US President Joe Biden and the UK and Australian prime ministers, Boris Johnson and Scott Morrison, this had the air of grand theatre. That the Franco-Australian submarine partnership was in deep trouble, plagued by delays and rancor, was well known. But the manner of its abrupt replacement came as a genuine surprise. The Cabinet decision also comes from the same government that gave the nod to France's Naval Group to build 12 non-nuclear *Attack*-class boats back in April 2016 (Graham, 2017). That was under a different prime minister and defense minister. But such an epic reversal underlines the seismic change to Australia's security environment since, a point that Canberra's defense policy settings have already assimilated.

Nuclear propulsion and nuclear armament are fundamentally different, if commonly conflated. Morrison stated clearly that Australia has no intention of arming the new submarines with nuclear weapons and will continue to be bound by its obligations to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Still, this is a big deal worthy of the overused 'strategic' descriptor. Details remain sketchy, especially on timelines and budgets. Ensuring earlier delivery than 2035, when the first of the now-cancelled *Attack*-class was meant to be launched, will be essential, given that Canberra has dropped its longstanding ten-year strategic warning time. The Australian government has ambitiously committed itself to acquiring 'at least' eight nuclear-powered attack submarines and to building them in South Australia. This is one more SSN than the UK has currently, and two more than France. Specifications are to be worked out 'intensively' in the next 18 months, including the question of 'nuclear stewardship' among Australia, the UK and US. A nuclear-powered submarine task force will be established within the defense department to lead the project, (Graham, 2017).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Functionalists (Mitrany, 1943) argue that mutual trust and habits of cooperation between governments are more likely to develop through the sharing of discrete public-sector responsibilities, or functions (e.g., collecting meteorological data, coordinating international air-traffic control, the prevention of pandemic diseases, and promoting sustainable development), rather than through attempts to cooperate on more sensitive issues such as citizenship, monetary union, or national defense. The central feature of the functional approach is the creation of international agencies with limited and specific powers defined by the function that they perform. Functional agencies operate only within the territories of the states that choose to join them and do not therefore threaten state sovereignty (Mitrany, 1943).

Typical examples of the functional approach in operation are specialized agencies of the United Nations (UN) such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the World Health Organization (WHO), each of which has nearly global membership. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) are also based on functional principles. The UN Charter makes explicit reference,

in Article 55, to promoting conditions of stability and the promotion of higher living standards, economic and social progress, and development. Functionalism therefore underpins the UN system's entire range of activities outside of the collective security role.

The period of 1945 to 1975 represented the most successful period for the application of the functional approach, when a broad consensus about the theories of John Maynard Keynes on the provision of international public goods in sectors prone to market failure prevailed (*see also* Keynesian economics). The last quarter of the 20th century, however, proved to be problematic. Political disputes occasionally disturbed the technocratic rationale of the agencies. The rise of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also challenged the democratic credentials of the agencies. In addition, globalization in the form of privatization, deregulation, and marketization has challenged the public-sector monopoly basis on which the original functional scheme relied. At the turn of the 21st century, the combined growth of global civil society and the transnational business sector appeared to progressively narrow the range of services historically and uniquely associated with the functional agencies (World Nuclear Association, 2012).

## **RATIONALE FOR FUNCTIONALISM**

David Mitrany, a Romanian-born British scholar, was most closely associated with promoting a functional approach. Mitrany was employed in the British Foreign Office during World War II, planning postwar reconstruction, and was inspired in part by the New Deal public works programs of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration. Mitrany was also influenced by observing the elaborate processes of inter-allied collaboration made in preparation for the Normandy Invasion and the plans for the postwar administration of Europe. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was an example of a new institution providing a particular public service that was separated from the territorial basis of state authority. In the TVA case, seven state governments renounced their authority over the river-watershed and agreed to create one specific agency to develop and execute an ambitious plan of dam construction, hydraulic engineering, electricity generation, and job creation in an area subject to regular flood damage. Mitrany advocated the creation of a range of similarly constituted technical and scientific agencies with potentially global reach to implement infrastructure and reconstruction programs, organized on a technical or functional basis rather than on a territorial basis (Mitrany, 1943).

The functional scheme was created for a planned recovery and reconstruction in the post-1945 international order. The Anglo-American parentage of specialized agencies derived partly from the U.S. New Deal model clearly identified them as agencies of Keynesian intervention. Although functionalism is widely acknowledged as an influence in founding the post-1945 system of economic, technical and welfare cooperation, the approach has also attracted criticism. Critics questioned the basic assumption that it is possible to separate functional and political issues and so insulate functional cooperation from political disputes between member states. They argued that peace creates the conditions for functional cooperation between states, rather than functional cooperation creating the peace.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The submarine decision represents an emphatic doubling down on the Australia US alliance by both countries. It locks Australia into a higher level of technology dependence with its principal ally. Its future submarine capability is now a ward of the alliance. Australia was always going to acquire the American combat system, but the move to nuclear propulsion means accepting complete reliance on the US and/or UK for fuel and other support, as the Morrison government has no plans to develop a civil nuclear-energy program. Australia currently lacks any nuclear infrastructure apart from a small research reactor. The British input is likely to be assisting Australia with reactor technology, submariner training and possibly design elements from the Royal Navy's *Astute*-class SSNs. Such dependence inevitably comes at the price of Australia's reduced strategic autonomy at some level (Reuters, 2012).

For the US, sharing its leading *Virginia*-class design with Australia, including the reactor if that is what is on the cards would be an unprecedented vote of trust and confidence in Canberra as an ally. Nuclear propulsion is prized among the crown jewels of national capability for the few who possess it. France has never transferred its own nuclear propulsion technology to anyone, despite furnishing Australia with a submarine design based on the *Barracuda*-class SSN. The fact that the Biden administration has branded this as a one-off, in briefing, suggests technology share on a par with US assistance to the UK during the Cold War (Reuters, 2012).

Australia has been quietly lobbying for improved technology access in the face of legal and political barriers. But Washington also stands to benefit from a more collaborative approach with close allies than it has traditionally been comfortable with. China's advances in strategic technologies have eroded the US edge, threatening to overtake it in some areas. The US still enjoys a clear lead in the undersea arena, but there are likely to be reciprocal pay-offs from access to allies' strengths in hypersonic and missile design, as well as the broader categories of quantum, AI and cyber identified in the AUKUS announcement (Reuters, 2012).

## THE ENHANCED CAPABILITY

Nuclear propulsion offers unambiguous advantages over diesel-powered submarines, but it should not be overhyped as a game-changer for Australia's deterrence capabilities. Nuclear boats are significantly faster, which is important given very long transits from Australia's only submarine base, at HMAS Sterling, near Fremantle in Western Australia, to their likely zone of operations, stretching from the eastern Indian Ocean, to Southeast Asia's archipelagos and China's littoral. Their submerged endurance is essentially unlimited (National Archives of Australia, 2000).

Nuclear-powered submarines are bigger, allowing for more weapons, sensors and stores onboard. It is not the case that nuclear submarines are always quieter than their conventional counterparts. Reactors run constantly as they require cooling, whereas diesel boats can shut their engines down. Bigger submarines also enable more comfort for crews – not a trivial consideration given the challenge Australia's navy has experienced in recruiting and retaining submariners for its much smaller *Collins*-class (Jacques, 2000). The *Virginia*-class requires a crew of over 100 enlisted submariners and 15 officers. It is possible Australia may opt for something nimbler, given space constraints at HMAS Sterling, as well as the recruitment issue. Retention will be even more vital now that the

Royal Australian Navy submarine force is switching to nuclear, because of the significant additional training requirements, not only for the submarine crew but also for a sizeable onshore support force, analogous to the US Naval Reactors program (**Jacques, 2000**).

Australia's submarine project with France failed partly because it was structured to deliver jobs and economic benefits upfront rather than prioritizing capability (**Jacques, 2000**). There is a longer theme of perfection being the enemy of the good in Australia's approach to indigenous defense projects. But there can be no question about the seriousness of Australia's intent now. Submarine capability is finally being approached as a national endeavor to acquire a strengthened deterrent against an emerging threat from China. The question remains, however, as to whether Australia can build the necessary industrial and scientific base to build its own nuclear-powered submarines, without sinking the defense budget, *and* in time for them to be useful when the next regional crisis comes (**Jacques, 2000**).

## IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH AN ALLIANCE

### A New Level of Deterrence against China

The AUKUS alliance initiative, which I heartily applaud as one of many that will be required in the coming years to keep pace with Chinese advances, will have manifold implications as it continues to play out. The Biden administration is taking an important step to build a key alliance element of the edifice required for the new era (Bisson, 1940).

First, it will have geostrategic implications, as it tangibly strengthens the closest alliance relationships that the United States shares with allies in both the Indo-Pacific and Europe—the United Kingdom and Australia in particular. A major signal from this alliance initiative, the “AUKUS alliance,” of which China will take note, is that a European ally of the United States is joining an Indo-Pacific ally of the United States in working together to develop undersea capabilities and to patrol the seas of the Pacific, and doing so through cooperation around one of the most sensitive combat systems in modern inventories. This signals to China that European allies take China's ongoing coercive military operations in the western Pacific (for example, against Taiwan and in the South China Sea) as seriously as do America's Indo-Pacific allies.

Second, it will have particularly constructive operational military implications, strengthening the ability of the United States-led alliances to deter Chinese military coercion even as Chinese capabilities continue to develop rapidly. Undersea capabilities are critical for preventing the Chinese military from achieving its operational objectives in the most important likely contingencies in the region. A key parameter of this new trilateral alliance will include US submarine access to Australian support infrastructure, thereby strengthening the overall US and allied increasingly “latticed” global defense posture (more of which will emerge after the National Defense Strategy review is completed). In addition, this initiative will also further strengthen the already close defense industrial cooperation among the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom on some of the key technologies that will be of highest importance for future military effectiveness, including artificial intelligence, cyber, and long-range precision strike capabilities (Reuters, 2012).

Those critics who say that China will react and that this will lead to a new arms race are missing the big picture: There is a decades-long trend that has only accelerated under Xi Jinping in which China has been developing high-tech, leading-edge advanced military capabilities across the board. The parameters of likely military contingencies in the Indo-Pacific suggest that the United States and US allies have a lot of work to do in order to buttress a weakening deterrent posture in the context of rapid Chinese People's Liberation Army advances. This is one small but important step in doing just that (Reuters, 2012).

The interesting echo of history that this initiative represents harkens back to the Eisenhower administration's policy of sharing nuclear technology with the UK, a policy that caused French President Charles de Gaulle to decry the "Anglo-Saxon" nuclear cooperation and propelled France to develop its own nuclear capabilities. In light of the broad set of strategic challenges that China's continuing rise presents to the breadth of US alliances, it would be wise for the Biden administration to follow up this set of steps by developing analogous cooperative efforts with France, Japan, South Korea, and other leading allies.

To deter Chinese military aggression, Washington and its allies need the ability to sink the Chinese navy in seventy-two hours. The attack submarines we are helping Australia to build are tailor-made for destroying enemy warships. These are exactly the capabilities we need in the Indo-Pacific to shore up deterrence and defense against China. It makes sense that Australia is the partner of choice for these capabilities. Australia is one of the United States' closest allies. We fought side-by-side for over a century in World War I, World War II, Korea, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Now, with this deal, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder once again against the growing Chinese military threat.

### **THE VIEW FROM AUSTRALIA: A HUGE STEP FORWARD**

In a press conference that lasted less than twelve minutes today, the Australian defense landscape, as well as relations between Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom was transformed. The lead line was AUKUS (pronounced ORCUS), a "new enhanced trilateral security partnership," but the headline-maker is this group's first initiative nuclear-powered submarines for Australia (Jim, 1997).

This is a massive leap forward from all parties. While Australia is the recipient of this capability, the decision says far more. In the United States, it shows the willingness of the Biden administration to empower key allies with advanced military technology that it had, until now, been unwilling to share. It's a major step forward in the US-Australia relationship and a precursor of what's to come in enhancing the bilateral partnership. We should learn more at the AUSMIN meeting later this week. For the UK, it gives credence to their new "Global Britain" strategic outlook and is a major step forward for the UK defense industry and relations with Australia and the US (Jim, 1997). From a pure capability perspective, nuclear-powered attack-class submarines are a no-brainer for Australia. Australia already possesses some of the most capable conventional submarines in the world, but the difficulties of long transit times to key operational areas and the limitations of conventional submarines have long plagued Australia's defense strategy. The now-scrapped future attack-class submarines, which had been under development with France, would have been the largest conventional submarines in the world (Jim, 1997).

Nuclear-powered submarines were seen as the solution to these operational problems but for years they had only been spoken about by the Australian strategic community in dark corners. Political concerns over nuclear power, the lack of a domestic nuclear power industry, build and maintenance difficulties, and nuclear-waste disposal were all raised as inhibitors to this move. However the biggest hurdle was always seen to be the United States' unwillingness to share the crown jewels of its nuclear technology. With that barrier now smashed, the other concerns fall away to issues of planning and execution to solve (Report of the Canberra Commission, 1997).

The short press conference does leave us with more questions than answers. Is there any quid-pro-quo in the offering from Australia for US or UK global force posture? Where to next for AUKUS and how will this new trilateral relationship develop? How much will these submarines cost and how long will it take for them to come into service? Will they be based on a US or UK design? How many will be built? What happened to the attack-class deal with France and will this set back the bilateral Australian-French strategic relationship? While these questions (and many more) will need to be answered in due course, this represents a major step forward for these three countries, for Australian capability and its ability to contribute to allied submarine capability in the region. Overall, as President Biden noted at the press conference, "today is a historic step."

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Anglo-American alliance with Austria is apparently aimed at containing the rise of China in the Pacific, albeit it is too late for such an alliance to deter China from growing militarily, economically and to continue to impact on global politics. This trend will result in yet another arms race between the United States, Europe and on the other hand People's Republic of China.

China should try as much as possible to maintain peaceful relations which it has always been and concentrate on its development efforts and building a shared future for mankind. China should also bring strategic allies closer within the region in order to maintain balance of power.

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