

AUKUS SUBMARINE: DEFENCE

NEWS: US launches review of AUKUS submarine deal; Australia confident pact will proceed

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The United States has launched a formal review of the AUKUS submarine pact with the UK and Australia due to concerns over submarine production delays and alignment with its “America First” policy. The AUKUS alliance aims to counter China’s Indo-Pacific influence through nuclear submarine sharing and advanced defense technology cooperation.

Context:

- The United States has initiated a **formal review of the AUKUS submarine agreement**, a landmark defense pact with Australia and the United Kingdom.
- This development reflects growing concerns within the US about production capability, alliance cost-sharing, and strategic priorities.

Reasons for the US Review:

Alignment with Domestic Priorities:

- The US administration wants to ensure that the agreement is in line with the “**America First**” policy, prioritizing US strategic and economic interests.
- There are concerns over **resource allocation** — especially if US commitments to AUKUS compromise its own military readiness.

Production and Supply Bottlenecks:

- The **Virginia-class nuclear submarines** (which the US intends to supply to Australia) are **behind production schedules**.
- This delays the US Navy’s own submarine fleet expansion, creating tension between **domestic defense needs** and international commitments.

Pressure on Australia:

- The US is urging **Australia to increase its defense spending** to at least **3.5% of its GDP**, up from the current 2%.
- The aim is to ensure that all partners **share the financial burden** of defense and that Australia is fully committed to the AUKUS obligations.

About AUKUS:

Trilateral Security Pact:

- **AUKUS** is a strategic alliance involving **Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States**, announced in **September 2021**.

- Its central aim is to **counter China's expanding influence** in the Indo-Pacific region through enhanced defense collaboration.

Two Pillars of AUKUS:

1. Pillar 1 – Nuclear Submarines for Australia:

- Australia will acquire **three used Virginia-class nuclear submarines** from the US starting from **2032**.
- Eventually, a **new class of nuclear-powered submarines (SSN-AUKUS)** will be co-developed by the UK and Australia, with technological inputs from all three nations.
- These submarines will be **built in the UK and Australia**, boosting their local defense industries.

2. Pillar 2 – Advanced Military Technology Collaboration:

- The three countries will cooperate on **emerging defense technologies** such as:
 - **Hypersonic weapons**
 - **Artificial Intelligence for military purposes**
 - **Cybersecurity infrastructure**
 - **Quantum computing**
 - **Undersea robotics**
- This will help develop a **technological edge** in modern warfare systems and improve **interoperability** among the partner militaries.

Strategic Impact of AUKUS on India:

Geopolitical Balancing in Indo-Pacific:

- AUKUS provides a **counterweight to Chinese assertiveness** in the Indo-Pacific.
- It indirectly benefits India by curbing **unilateral Chinese influence**, especially in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean Region.

Defense Technology Opportunities:

- Though not a member, **India can engage with AUKUS Pillar 2**, exploring collaboration in **cyber defense, AI, and naval robotics**.
- These technologies can **enhance India's maritime surveillance and warfare capabilities**.

Regional Strategic Realignment:

- The bolstering of **Australia's military posture** under AUKUS changes the **balance of power** in the region.
- India may need to **reassess its defense preparedness and partnerships** (such as QUAD) to adapt to the evolving regional security framework.

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