

AUKUS Military Deal Turning Australia Into American State, Fueling Tensions

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Region: [Oceania](#)

Theme: [Defence](#)

AUKUS is once again in the spotlight. The anti-Chinese security pact between Australia, UK and the US (sometimes described as an “Asian NATO”) has been [controversial](#) from the beginning. Together with the QUAD, it has certainly [increased tensions](#) in the Asia-Pacific region. One of its aims is helping Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

Paul Keating, Australian former Prime Minister, had already used strong language last year to [describe](#) AUKUS as the “worst deal in all history”, adding that it would turn Australia into the United States’ 51st state. Last week, he again [used](#) the same expression, adding that it would make his country a target by aligning it with American aggression towards China. The same week, **Ross Garnaut** (the former Australian ambassador to China, who was also the main economic adviser to former prime minister Bob Hawke), [questioned](#) whether AUKUS is even “consistent with the preservation of Australian sovereign independence in future decisions on war and peace.”

He cautioned Australia against failing to diversify its options in terms of partnerships and foreign policy. As I wrote before, Australia has historically been called the “[coup capital](#)” of the so-called democratic world and the American influence over that nation over decades has a lot to do with this. Washington’s blatant intervention in Canberra’s foreign policy is best exemplified by the infamous [Anglo-American coup](#) that “dismissed” **Prime Minister Gough Whitlam**. These Australian voices are today denouncing what they perceive as the latest example of such American interference.

The **former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark** recently joined the chorus by [saying](#) that

“all of these statements made about AUKUS being good for us are highly questionable. What is good about joining a ratcheting up of tensions in a region? Where is the military threat to New Zealand?”

She is no lone voice in New Zealand either: **Don Brash** (former Reserve Bank governor and chair of the New Zealand subsidiary of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China) is [also urging](#) his country to not [abandon its independent foreign policy](#).

As **Arnaud Bertrand**, a French businessman and commentator on economics has [noted](#), many authorities in the Pacific region have come out to criticize Aukus. **Enele Sopoaga**, Tuvalu’s former PM [described](#) it even more bluntly, by saying that the deal showed a “contemptuous disregard for Pacific regionalism”, and that nuclear-powered submarines in the area would only further inflame local tensions and threaten the region’s stability and

security.

Tuvalu described the Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union, a recent [agreement](#) between Australia and Tuvalu thusly:

“For a small migration entitlement, Tuvalu was being asked to hand over its sovereignty to Australia. It basically said that before Tuvalu entered into any security agreement it has to get Australia’s approval first. This is neo-colonialism at its worst.” Sopoaga added that “in all my years of politics I have never seen anything so brazen and disrespectful.” Those are all experienced and authoritative voices coming from different positions within the political spectrum.

Unwittingly echoing Keating’s characterisation of the deal, US **Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell** (known as the US “Asia Tsar”) did [say](#) in 2022 that AUKUS “gets Australia off the fence and locks it in for the next 40 years”, meaning that it was path to “lock” Australia under the US for the next decades.

Last week, a New York Times [story](#) by David E. Sanger, who has been covering American nuclear strategy for over thirty years, revealed that the incumbent US **President Joe Biden** (and he still is the incumbent president, although many seem to have forgotten it) “approved in March a highly classified nuclear strategic plan for the United States that, for the first time, reorients America’s deterrent strategy to focus on China’s rapid expansion in its nuclear arsenal.”

Under the revised strategy, called the “Nuclear Employment Guidance”, Biden in fact went so far as to give orders for the American forces to prepare “for possible coordinated nuclear confrontations with Russia, China and North Korea.” Much has been said about how badly the authorities in Washington need to [exercise restraint](#) and about the overburdened and overstretched state of the Atlantic superpower. Describing Biden’s policy as the US “overextending its power” (as historian Stephen Wertheim has often [described](#) current American foreign policy) would actually be an euphemism, however. It sounds much more like a blueprint for nuclear armageddon.

Last week I [wrote](#) about Europe being on its way to a new Cuban Missile Crisis-like incident, with the deployment of long-range capabilities to Germany, which obviously makes the OTANized and nuclearized continent a target for Russia. While Washington pivots to the Pacific, its transatlantic allies (in an energy-starved post-Nord Stream reality) are left with the hard task of becoming a kind of suicidal proxies for the United States’ war of encirclement against Russia.

As for Washington’s AUKUS’ allies in turn the prognostic involves damaging their economic relationship with China and becoming entangled in a new Cold War. Simultaneously, Washington is also busy supplying the fuel for Netanyahu [to set the Middle East ablaze](#). Keep in mind that all such developments are taking place while it is not even clear [who has been de facto governing the US for the last couple of years](#). All things considered, it is hard to deny that Washington is the one and largest threat to humanity’s peace and stability today.

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*Featured image: AUKUS nuclear submarine deal is already making ripples across the Indo-Pacific.
Image: US Embassy in China*

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