

AUKUS vs China: Inching Toward War

By [Brian Berletic](#)

Asia-Pacific Research, September 22, 2021

[Land Destroyer Report](#) 21 September 2021

Region: [China](#), [Oceania](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Defence](#), [Politics](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website” drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

Visit and follow us on Instagram at [@crg_globalresearch](#).

Australia, the UK and the US announced the formation of “AUKUS,” an amalgamation of the three nation’s initials, as a tripartite “defense alliance.”

Despite claims that the alliance is aimed at no particular country (and no particular country was mentioned during its announcement), the Western media has not reported it as such, and China – the obvious target of this “AUKUS” alliance – doesn’t perceive it as such.

The Guardian in its [article](#), “Alliance with Australia and US a ‘downpayment on global Britain’,” would explicitly state:

Britain’s post-Brexit foreign policy is taking shape, and the early moves are hardly very surprising: a tripartite defence alliance with the US and Australia – handily compressed to Aukus – clearly designed to send a message to Beijing.

Chinese state media, Global Times, would make it abundantly clear that China understood this with a headline reading, “AUKUS another hostile signal to China, worsens Asia-Pacific security.”

AUKUS begins with the three nations announcing plans to design, develop, and deliver nuclear-powered attack submarines to Australia, which currently has 6 Collins-class diesel electric submarines delivered between the late 1990’s and early 2000’s.

The abovementioned Guardian article noted that Rolls Royce and BAE Systems would likely win contracts as part of this deal. Considering the 18 month period the Guardian reported would be used to plan this process and the several years it takes for BAE Systems to build and commission nuclear-powered submarines, Australia may put these new submarines into service around 2030.

The Price of this New Alliance

As an extra caveat, and perhaps warning to Australia, the new deal is likely to result in a French-Australian submarine deal falling through. Worth 65.6 billion US dollars, this will not be the first time US machinations have cost Paris dearly. In 2015 France was forced to [reimburse Russia](#) when it failed to deliver two Mistral-class amphibious assault ships after Paris was pressured to cancel the deal by Washington.

The adage, “no honor among thieves,” comes to mind. France, an eager accomplice in Washington’s various wars of aggression since the turn of the century now finds itself on the receiving end of American exceptionalism. France’s misfortunes today will almost certainly be Australia’s tomorrow as “AUKUS” runs its course.

In many ways, Australia has already begun paying its own price.

Australia’s largest trade partner [in 2019](#) was China. Australian exports to China outmatched all Australian exports to North America and Europe combined. Prompted by the US to pressure China across a range of fabricated accusations, Chinese-Australian trade dropped significantly, with ABC Australia itself [claiming](#) by as much as 40%.

While Australia says it is working to compensate for these losses by expanding into alternative markets, such effort could have been used to double Australian trade rather than merely recover from politically-motivated and very much self-inflicted economic damage in its trade row with China.

A War Alliance Predicated on Lies

The “security challenges” AUKUS claims to be addressing include two obvious flashpoints, both the product of persistent US provocations.

The first is centered around Taiwan where the current, US-backed ruling government in Taipei continues to inch toward independence. It should be remembered that Taiwan is recognized by virtually all nations (including the United States) as part of China under the “One China” policy.

To illustrate this, the US itself does not have an official embassy in Taipei. But while the US officially recognizes Taiwan’s status under international law, it has unofficially and consistently undermined it by supporting pro-independence political groups in Taiwan.

The other flashpoint is in the South China Sea where the US accuses China of “bullying” other nations by making “excessive” maritime claims.

The US regularly conducts “Freedom of Navigation Operations” (FNOPs) throughout the region.

The official US Navy website in a [statement](#) titled, “7th Fleet conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation” (July 12, 2021), for example, would claim:

The United States challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant. The international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention provides for certain rights and freedoms and other lawful uses of the sea to all nations.

Not mentioned is the fact that the US itself is not actually a signatory of the 1982 Law of the

Sea of Conventions and is in fact one of only a few nations not to sign it.

The US Navy also makes another telling admission when it claimed:

China, Taiwan, and Vietnam each claim sovereignty over the Paracel Islands.

This reveals that it is not China “bullying” nations in the region over the South China Sea, but instead a series of overlapping claims. Nations in the region have disputes not only with China, but also with each other.

This is revealed in headlines like the Wall Street Journal’s 2016 [article](#), “Indonesia Blows Up 23 Foreign Fishing Boats to Send a Message,” in which the Indonesian government destroyed captured Malaysian and Vietnamese fishing boats.

Vietnamese news portal Binh Duong News’ [article](#), “Malaysian Navy seizes Vietnamese fishing boats,” and Bangkok Post’s [article](#), “3 Malaysian trawlers seized near Satun,” also help illustrate many nations in the region are engaged in heated maritime disputes with often theatrical results – but always avoid actual conflict and are eventually resolved bilaterally.

This is not unlike maritime disputes taking place anywhere else in the world, including in Europe, where just this year the New York Times [reported](#) on the mobilization of British and French naval vessels over contesting fishing waters near Jersey island. This row too was resolved peacefully.

The South China Sea’s various overlapping disputes have been exploited by the US. Washington has injected itself into the middle of what would be commonplace and long-standing maritime disputes to depict them as one-sided bullying by China to justify America’s large and growing naval presence in the region and to recruit nations into belligerent alliances precisely like AUKUS.

The US even went as far as initiating a tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at the Hague, the Netherlands in 2016 – allegedly on behalf of the Philippines. It was American lawyer Paul Reichler and the Western law firm Foley Hoag – not Filipino lawyers – who led the effort.

The non-binding politically-motivated ruling was not even used by the Philippines who instead opted for bilateral talks with Beijing to establish a mechanism to ease tensions in the South China Sea and even cooperate in contested waters, according to the Philippines’ own Department of Foreign Affairs [website](#).

For added irony and to further illustrate how these disputes are not one-sided Chinese “bullying,” upon the conclusion of the PCA’s ruling, not only did Beijing reject it, Taiwan did too. According to a 2016 New York Times [article](#), Taiwan also then sent a patrol ship to the contested waters.

Together, with the Taiwan issue, these two flashpoints are clearly artificial, kept in motion by a constant investment by Washington in terms of political pressure and propaganda as well as a steady stream of military provocations.

Toward War with China

These flashpoints are cultivated specifically to rally nations against China, to isolate and contain the rising nation, and to grant the US an extension to what it itself calls its “primacy” over Asia.

However, they may also serve as impetus for a limited US-initiated war with China, a war the US would prefer to fight sooner rather than later.

In a 2016 RAND Corporation [paper \(PDF\)](#) commissioned by the US Army and titled, “War with China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable,” a compelling argument is made for the preservation of American hegemony through a limited war predicted to remain conventional and confined to East Asia.

The paper notes:

We postulate that a war would be regional and conventional. It would be waged mainly by ships on and beneath the sea, by aircraft and missiles of many sorts, and in space (against satellites) and cyberspace (against computer systems). We assume that fighting would start and remain in East Asia, where potential Sino-US flash points and nearly all Chinese forces are located.

It’s worth emphasizing that US planners admit that China’s forces are confined to Chinese territory and that the only way a conflict would breakout would be if US forces were in close proximity to them and provoked into conflict where “potential Sino-US flash points” are located, e.g. the South China Sea, or Taiwan. The paper notes that the time frame studied stretched from 2015 to 2025.

The paper also describes the obvious benefits of, and thus motive for the US provoking such a conflict. It states:

The prospect of a military standoff means that war could eventually be decided by nonmilitary factors. These should favor the United States now and in the future. Although war would harm both economies, damage to China’s could be catastrophic and lasting: on the order of a 25–35 percent reduction in Chinese gross domestic product (GDP) in a yearlong war, compared with a reduction in US GDP on the order of 5–10 percent. Even a mild conflict, unless ended promptly, could weaken China’s economy. A long and severe war could ravage China’s economy, stall its hard-earned development, and cause widespread hardship and dislocation.

Such economic damage could in turn aggravate political turmoil and embolden separatists in China.

The US is clearly preparing the grounds for such a conflict, cultivating the very “separatists” the paper notes the conflict would “embolden,” while attacking and attempting to block China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which is currently diversifying away from China’s dependency on vulnerable Asia-Pacific maritime trade routes.

Through the creation of what are clearly military alliances like AUKUS, the US is ensuring it has the military muscle before, during, and after any such conflict to wage and win it, before then doubling down on a containment strategy to ensure Western hegemony over the Indo-Pacific region for decades to come.

The current status quo all but guarantees China’s economy (as well as military and political

influence) will irreversibly surpass the US' within a decade. The closing window of opportunity the US has to prevent China's as well as Asia's surpassing of the West in a transfer of primacy from West to East that has not occurred in centuries, almost certainly was the impetus behind "AUKUS."

Only time will tell whether or not "AUKUS" will simply buy the US time before being surpassed by China, or if it is one of several final pieces being put in place before the hypothetical conflict RAND Corporation described in the pages of its 2016 paper is turned into a bloody reality.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, @crg_globalresearch. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Brian Berletic is a Bangkok-based geopolitical researcher and writer, especially for the online magazine ["New Eastern Outlook"](#).

Featured image is from OneWorld

The original source of this article is [Land Destroyer Report](#)
Copyright © [Brian Berletic](#), [Land Destroyer Report](#), 2021

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Brian Berletic](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). Asia-Pacific Research will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. Asia-Pacific Research grants permission to cross-post Asia-Pacific Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Asia-Pacific Research article. For publication of Asia-Pacific Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: editors@asia-pacificresearch.com

www.asia-pacificresearch.com contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: editors@asia-pacificresearch.com