

Morrison's Dangerous Fantasies Represent a Danger to Australia's Future

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Australia has just caused surprise among its friends, concern among its neighbours, and an overtly hostile reaction from the Chinese with its announcement that it was scrapping the submarine deal it had signed with France and replacing it with a scheme, cooked together with British and American allies, to buy 8 nuclear powered submarines.

The scheme as announced was extraordinarily short on details. There is apparently at least 18 months of negotiating ahead before the contract is even signed. After that there will be a lengthy delay, estimated being at least 10 years in length, before the first submarine is ever delivered. By that time, who knows what the state of the world's geopolitical system will be. One can be assured that the Chinese, against whom the plan is obviously directed, will have taken multiple steps to ensure its own safety.

The Australian prime minister **Scott Morrison** was not short of hyperbole in announcing the deal. He described the relationship with the United States as the “forever partnership”. As the old joke goes, there are only two forever's, death and taxes. Morrison's words are reflective of an unfortunate tendency among Australian politicians. They are inclined not to look at the map when making grand geopolitical statements.

Australia is a thinly populated European nation that sits at the southern end of the Asian landmass. In keeping with its geography, the bulk of Australian foreign trade is conducted with those same Asian neighbours. Ironically, China is by far Australia's largest trading partner, followed by Japan.

The British are yesterday's men when it comes to Asia having finally been forced to give up its holding in Hong Kong that they took by force from China in the 19th century. The United States likes to project itself as an important figure in the Asian scheme of things. As the recent debacle in Afghanistan showed, however, American influence in the region is marked by one rebuttal after another.

With the possible exception of Japan, United States influence in the region is rapidly fading, notwithstanding its provocative sailings in the South China Sea and its overt support for the island of Taiwan. It is conveniently forgotten by Western commentators that from 1949 to 1972 the island of Taiwan held China's seat on the United Nations Security Council. There was no suggestion then that Taiwan was a separate country. It could hardly have claimed to be, yet retaining China's seat on the Security Council.

Now, Taiwan is making noises about becoming an independent country, something that the Beijing government has declared to be totally unacceptable, and which they will prevent by the use of force if necessary. It would be very unwise for the West to ignore the determination of the People's Republic of China to recapture its rebellious neighbour. It would be equally unwise for the Americans to underestimate the Chinese level of determination and attempt to defend Taiwan from returning to the control of the mainland.

It is into this fraught situation that the Australian government is being inexorably drawn by its latest agreement with the Americans. Although the Australian media are almost completely silent on the point, one of the consequences of this new agreement with the Americans will be an increase in the number of United States military holdings in Australia. They already control the operation of the spy base at Pine Gap in the Northern Territory. It was former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's intention to close the base that led to the coup against his government in November 1975.

The United States has operated a baleful influence upon Australian foreign policy ever since. There is absolutely nothing in the latest announcement of Australia buying United States designed nuclear powered ships that will do a single thing to reduce that influence. Quite the contrary.

The current posturing by the Australian Prime Minister will do nothing to alter that reality. Together with his defence minister, Peter Dutton, who has been a failure at each of his previous ministerial postings, they are both talking loudly about the wonderful future of Australia. They are either too vain or too stupid to see that this latest deal does more than any other single decision in recent years to entrap Australia in a subservient role to the United States.

As Scott Ritter writes in *RT*: "This is a story of geopolitically driven military procurement gone mad",¹ pointing out that this deal "further exacerbates the existing geopolitical crisis with China by injecting a military dimension that will never see the light of day."

Ritter goes on to seek answers to problems he sees as being associated with the announced purchase; for instance, first of all, how much will it cost? Secondly, how will Australia operate advanced nuclear power systems when it has no indigenous nuclear experience to draw upon? And how does Australia plan to man a large nuclear submarine when it can barely field four crews for its existing Collins class fleet.

These are legitimate questions to ask, yet the timid Opposition Labor Party seems paralysed by them.

As Alan Gynge points out², the United States' expectations of Australia's support in almost anything going, whether it involves China or not (although that is the greatest danger) will grow. It represents an application of responsibility to ensure the ongoing welfare of the

Australian people. By the time the submarines are delivered, if at all, the present generation of political leaders will be long gone. The damage they are doing will last a lot longer.

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Notes

1. [US-UK-Australia Submarine Deal is a Dangerous Joke](#), 18 September 2021.
2. ["Australia Signs up for the Anglosphere"](#), September 19, 2021.

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