AUKUS could rock China's Boat in the Indo-Pacific

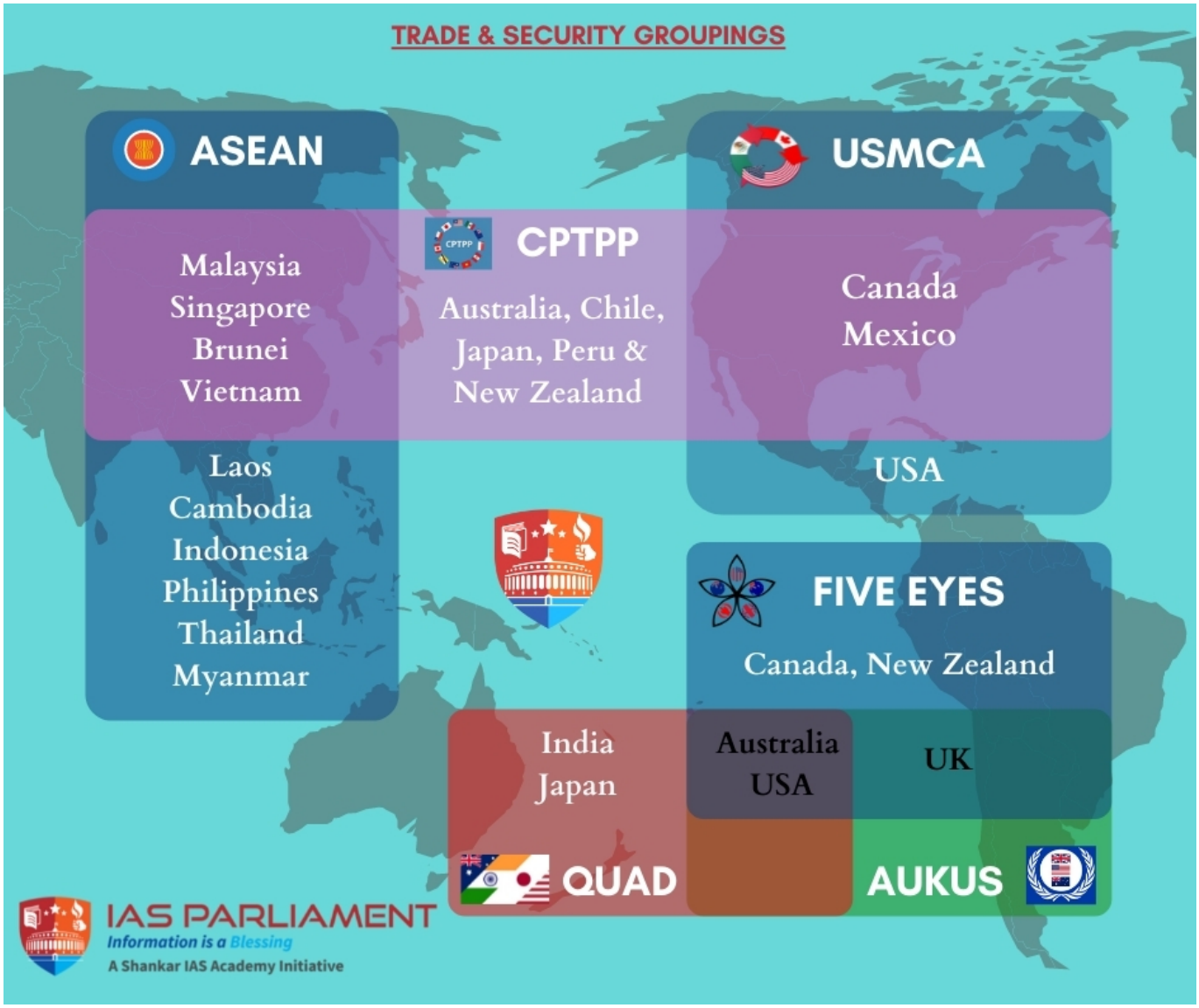
What is the issue?

The ruffle over the AUKUS agreement continues to prevail as France has expressed its resentment at the Australian action at the G20 press conference.

What is AUKUS?

- AUKUS is a new trilateral security partnership among The United States, United Kingdom, and Australia for enduring freedom and openness in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Under the agreement, America and Britain proposed to transfer technology to build a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia within 18 months.

To know more about AUKUS agreement, click here



What are the concerns over the emergence of AUKUS?

- **The ASEAN factor -** There is a matter of ASEAN disunity over the emergence of AUKUS.
- Even though AUKUS is not a defence alliance, issues such as the strategic threats posed by China are a matter of concern for AUKUS.
- Australia has clearly assured its commitment to ASEAN centrality and its continued support for the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty and the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.
- **The China factor** – The rise of China, particularly its rapid militarisation and aggressive behaviour, is undoubtedly the trigger for the emergence f the agreement.
- The China has criticised AUKUS as an “exclusive bloc” that gravely undermines regional peace and security and reflects a Cold War mentality.

What is the significance of this decades old partnership?

- The U.S. and the U.K. have enjoyed a special defence partnership for decades and have fought together as allies, together with Australia, in the Second World War.
- The U.S. shared nuclear weapons technology with the U.K. following the merging of the latter's nuclear weapons programme with the American Manhattan Project as early as in 1943.
- The first U.K. test was conducted in 1952 in the Montebello Islands in Australia.
- The transfer of sensitive submarine technology by the U.S. to the U.K. is a arrangement based on their long-standing Mutual Defence Agreement of 1958.
- The other areas covered are cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, apart from undersea capabilities.
- All three nations will also play a major role in U.S.-led programmes such as Build Back Better World, Blue Dot Network and Clean Network to meet the challenge of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

What is the status of their engagement with China?

- Australia had subordinated its strategic assessment of China to transactional commercial interests.
- China's naval expansion and incursions into the Indo-Pacific has compelled Australia to revisit its defence and security policies.
- In 2017 and 2019, China's *Dongdiao*-class Type 815 auxiliary general intelligence (AGI) vessel tagged the Talisman Sabre exercises (a biennial exercise that is led by either Australia or the U.S.).
- China also used the same type of vessel to monitor the multilateral Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise in 2018.
- AUKUS provides an opportunity to the U.S. to place proxy submarine forces to limit China's forays, especially in the Pacific Ocean.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/aukus-could-rock-chinas-boat-in-the-indo-pacific/article37372664.ece



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