The AUKUS Agreement

Why in news?

The United States, United Kingdom, and Australia announced a new trilateral security partnership called the AUKUS

What is the agreement about?

- The agreement aims to ensure that there will be 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.
- With this Australia becomes the second nation after U.K. that the U.S. has ever shared its nuclear submarine technology with.
- The submarines are to be conventionally armed and are powered are powered by nuclear reactors.
- It will give Australia naval heft in the Pacific, where China has been particularly aggressive.
- The partnership complements several pre-existing similar arrangements for the region like Five Eyes intelligence cooperation initiative, ASEAN, Quad, etc.

The Five Eyes is an intelligence-sharing alliance consisting of the US, UK, Australia, Canada & New Zealand. The origins of the Five Eyes can be traced back to WW II

What makes nuclear submarines so important?

- A nuclear-powered submarine is classified as an “SSN” under the US Navy hull classification system.
- Since SSN’s are propelled by a nuclear-powered engine rather than by batteries, they don’t have to emerge on the surface except to replenish supplies for the crew.

- SSNs are also able to move faster underwater than the conventional submarines.
- They have the capability to go into the South China Sea at a higher speed without being detected.

What is the fuss over the agreement?

- New Zealand has announced that under its 1984 nuclear-free zone policy, Australia's nuclear-powered submarines would not be allowed into the former's territorial waters.
- France is also upset with Australia upon cancellation of the earlier struck deal worth $90 billion of conventional submarines.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

Quick Facts

India's nuclear-powered submarines

- India is among the six nations that have SSNs.
- The other five are the US, the UK, Russia, France and China.
- In 1987, the Soviet-built K-43 Charlie-class SSN was leased to the Indian Navy and was rechristened **INS Chakra**
- In 2012 India got another Russian SSN called **INS Chakra 2** on a 10-year lease.
- India commissioned the first Indian nuclear submarine, **INS Arihant** in 2016.
- A second Arihant-class submarine, **INS Arighat**, was secretly launched in 2017.
- INS Arihant is now classified as a Strategic Strike Nuclear Submarine or SSBN which means it is a nuclear-powered ballistic submarine.
- INS Arihant completes India's **nuclear triad** which means that the country has the capacity to launch nuclear missiles from land, aircraft, and submarine.


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