

# Australia to get nuclear-powered submarines under AUKUS partnership

March 16, 2023

**In news**– Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States on Monday (March 13) unveiled **plans to provide Australia with conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines** in the early 2030s to counter China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.

## Key updates -

- Under this deal, the United States intends to sell Australia three US Virginia class nuclear-powered submarines built by General Dynamics in the early 2030s, with an option for Australia to buy two more if needed.
- However, the multi-stage project will culminate with British and Australian production and operation of a new submarine class – SSN-AUKUS – a trilaterally developed vessel with the best technologies and capabilities of all three countries.
- The plan involves a phased approach which will culminate in the production and operation of SSN-AUKUS.
- Notably, while Australia will receive nuclear-powered submarines, these will not be equipped with nuclear warheads.
- The newly announced deal includes “clear commitments” to the countries’ respective nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

## What is the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS)?

- AUKUS is a 2021 defence deal between Australia, the UK and the US, which was struck to help Australia deploy nuclear-powered submarines in the Pacific region.
- Officially, the deal was made to emphasise upon the

countries' "shared commitment to a free-and-open Indo-Pacific region". In effect, it seeks to combat China's ambitions in the region.

- The AUKUS partnership was signed to bolster Australia's naval heft in the region.
- According to the leaders of the three countries, the **new alliance does not and will not supersede or outrank existing arrangements in the Indo-Pacific region** such as the Quad and Asean, and that it will complement these groups and others.
- **The AUKUS enhances their contribution to their growing network of partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region: ANZUS** (Australia, New Zealand and the US); their Asian friends; their bilateral strategic partners, the Quad; Five Eyes (US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) countries; and, the Pacific family.
- The leaders have clarified that the new pact is not aimed (at) or about any one country but it is about advancing their strategic interests, upholding the international rules-based order, and promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.