

DOI: 10.20542/0131-2227-2024-68-6-52-60

EDN: IORETI

THE “PIVOT TO ASIA”: AUKUS IN THE PERCEPTION OF AMERICAN POLITICUM

Yurii G. GOLUB,
ORCID 0000-0001-9819-7494, goloub@sgu.ru
Saratov State University, 83, Astrakhanskaya Str., Saratov, 410012, Russian Federation.

Sergei Yu. SHENIN,
ORCID 0000-0002-4503-5923, shenins@yahoo.com
Saratov State University, 83, Astrakhanskaya Str., Saratov, 410012, Russian Federation.

Received 22.01.2024. Revised 24.02.2024. Accepted 22.03.2024.

Abstract. The article is devoted to forecasting the ways of further evolution of the Western partnership called AUKUS, taking into account the geopolitical plans of J. Biden administration, and based on an analysis of the approaches of the most influential groups among the American political elite to the project. In the context of the American strategy “Pivot to Asia”, differences in views of these groups on the content of AUKUS and its prospects are shown. Special attention is paid to the study of the American experts’ and politicians’ ideas about the potential of using nuclear submarines in the Indo-Pacific region by Australia with regard to “containing” China, as well as technological cooperation between the partnership member countries in order to expand a common industrial base. While the Conservative Republicans believe that it is necessary to focus only on creating a fleet of submarines for Australia (the “first pillar”), Conservative Democrats and Moderate Republicans demand to concentrate exclusively on technological cooperation not merely of the three AUKUS countries (the “second pillar”), but also attracting other players to it – Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Canada. Only the Centrist Democrats, who are the most loyal supporters of the administration, are confident that the alliance countries will be able to “pull through” the implementation of both “pillars” of the project. The authors underscore that the coalition of the “second pillar” looks preferable today. It is concluded that the radical divergence of the elite groups’ views makes the future fate of the AUKUS quite uncertain, and the partnership can acquire different configurations depending on the balance of forces within the U.S. political establishment.

Keywords: AUKUS, USA, “pivot to Asia”, J. Biden, China, Australia, Indo-Pacific region.

About authors:

Yurii G. GOLUB, Dr. Sci. (History), Professor, Department of International Relations and Russian Foreign Policy.

Sergei Yu. SHENIN, Dr. Sci. (History), Professor, Department of International Relations and Russian Foreign Policy.

“РАЗВОРОТ В АЗИЮ”: АУКУС В ВОСПРИЯТИИ ПОЛИТИКУМА США

© 2024 г. Ю.Г. Голуб, С.Ю. Шенин

ГОЛУБ Юрий Григорьевич, доктор исторических наук, профессор,
ORCID 0000-0001-9819-7494, goloub@sgu.ru
Саратовский национальный исследовательский государственный университет им. Н.Г. Чернышевского,
РФ, 410012 Саратов, ул. Астраханская, 83.

ШЕНИН Сергей Юрьевич, доктор исторических наук, профессор,
ORCID 0000-0002-4503-5923, shenins@yahoo.com
Саратовский национальный исследовательский государственный университет им. Н.Г. Чернышевского,
РФ, 410012 Саратов, ул. Астраханская, 83.

Статья поступила 22.01.2024. После доработки 24.02.2024. Принята к печати 22.03.2024.

Аннотация. В статье сделан прогноз относительно будущего АУКУС (*Australia, United Kingdom, United States, AUKUS*) с учетом геополитических планов администрации Дж. Байдена. В контексте стратегии “разворота в Азию” показаны различия во взглядах на проект американских экспертов и политиков. Особое внимание уделяется анализу их представлений о потенциале использования Австралией атомных субмарин для “сдерживания” Китая в Индо-Тихоокеанском регионе и технологического сотрудничества стран – участниц проекта. Авторы приходят к выводу о том,

что радикальное расхождение во мнениях наиболее влиятельных групп политикума США делает судьбу АУКУС неопределенной и может привести к существенному изменению конфигурации партнерства в зависимости от соотношения сил в американском истеблишменте.

Ключевые слова: АУКУС, США, “разворот в Азию”, Дж. Байден, Китай, Австралия, ИТР.

INTRODUCTION

Deglobalization today is accompanied by the emergence of new regional alliances, with AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) being one of the most widely discussed. However, there is still no consensus on its purpose or future direction. It remains unclear whether AUKUS will focus on the construction of nuclear submarines, evolve into another military-political bloc, or become an alliance with economic priorities.

A joint statement by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and US President Joseph Biden on September 15, 2021, declared that AUKUS aims to ensure “peace and stability” in the Indo-Pacific region (IPR) by creating a fleet of Australian nuclear submarines. This move was described as a significant step in implementing the “pivot to Asia” strategy and a logical extension of the policy to build strategic alliances in the Indo-Pacific, alongside ANZUS¹, ASEAN², *Quad*³, and *Five Eyes*⁴ [source 1]. However, neither the statement nor the leaders’ comments specified the adversary against which AUKUS was being formed, merely mentioning that it would serve as a “defense against rapidly growing threats in the region” [source 1]. Despite this, anonymous sources within the White House indicated that the initiative would counter the influence of “Chinese forces” in the IPR.

The creation of AUKUS came as a shock to the US’s European allies for two reasons. First, the project had been developed in secret, excluding them from the process [source 2]. Second,

¹ ANZUS (*Australia, New Zealand, United States*) – Pacific Security Pact, or military alliance of three states: Australia, New Zealand, and the USA.

² АСЕАН (*Association of South East Asian Nations*) – political, economic, and cultural regional intergovernmental organization of 10 countries located in Southeast Asia.

³ *Quad* – strategic dialogue between Australia, India, the USA, and Japan on security issues in the IPR.

⁴ *Five Eyes* – intelligence alliance of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain, and the USA.

the signing of the agreement meant that Australia was canceling its previous deal to purchase nuclear submarines from France, despite prior commitments. The explanation given was that the Australian government reconsidered because French reactors require refueling every 10 years, whereas British and American submarines operate without refueling throughout their entire service life of 33 years. It was revealed that Morrison had initiated negotiations with London in March 2021 and with Washington in April [1]. The final decision to purchase nuclear submarines from the UK and the US was made by Australia in June 2021, following a behind-the-scenes conversation between the leaders of the three nations at the G7 summit.

After the announcement of AUKUS, Paris accused Australia of having “stabbed us in the back” and recalled its ambassadors from both Canberra and Washington. The European Union demanded an apology from Australia and even threatened to reconsider its involvement in the Free Trade Agreement. This situation had the potential to create a significant rift within the West, but the United States gradually managed to defuse the conflict [2].

Australia’s acquisition of submarines became the central focus, or as it was referred to in Washington, “Pillar 1” of AUKUS. Under this pillar, Australia, which planned to construct submarines at its Adelaide shipyards, would gain access to technology for manufacturing nuclear engines. “Pillar 2” of AUKUS involves the exchange of information and technology among alliance members at a deeper level, along with the integration of their defense-related production bases and supply chains. It was anticipated that “Pillar 2” would center on cooperation in areas such as “cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities” [source 3].

Notably, the participants of AUKUS acknowledged from the outset that the project had been outlined in broad terms and that an 18-month transition period was necessary to iron out the de-

tails. While there was immediate consensus among the ruling elites in the US and Australia on AUKUS as a tool for “containing” China and an “engine of progress”, heated debates erupted in Washington over several tactical issues. First, questions were raised about the advisability of selling submarines to Australia when the US itself lacks a sufficient number of submarines to ensure its national security. Second, concerns emerged about whether the submarines sold to Canberra would serve the common goal of “containing” China or would become “sovereign submarines” under Australia’s control. Third, discussions arose about the need to address the impact of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), which date back to the Cold War, on the transfer of military technologies. Finally, there were questions about AUKUS’s compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

EVOLUTION OF THE AUKUS PARTNERSHIP

As promised, 18 months later, on March 13, 2023, a detailed plan for AUKUS development was unveiled. The leaders of the three participating countries openly acknowledged that the goal of their cooperation was to counter China, with the sale of nuclear submarines to Australia remaining the primary focus. However, the plan outlined three distinct phases. In 2027, the United States and the United Kingdom will deploy their attack submarines to Australia, which will assist in training local crews and service personnel. After 2032, the United States will sell Australia three Virginia-class submarines (two used and one new), with the potential for two additional submarines. By 2042, Australia and the United Kingdom are expected to begin jointly building AUKUS-class submarines. Canberra committed approximately \$300 billion to the project, with \$3 billion earmarked for modernizing American shipyards as early as 2025.

It was emphasized that other countries would not be included in “Pillar 1” of AUKUS, which focuses on the construction of nuclear submarines. However, nations such as Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea could participate in the technological cooperation under “Pillar 2”.

From a scientific and technical standpoint, the emphasis was placed on developing hypersonic missiles and electronic warfare systems. Additionally, the United States pledged to grant Australia a license and funding (\$2.7 billion) for producing non-nuclear missiles for the submarines, with production expected to begin as early as 2025. These missiles will be exported to the United States, Ukraine, and other nations, effectively extending the reach of the American military-industrial complex [3].

Commenting on the strategic objectives of the alliance, US National Security Advisor Jacob Sullivan argued that AUKUS is “not a wall to contain China” and not another NATO in the Pacific, but rather a flexible network of coalitions addressing various needs. AUKUS is viewed as a defensive partnership, while the *Quad* serves as a soft integration of technology and policy. *Five Eyes* coordinates intelligence capabilities, *Chip 4*⁵ addresses global semiconductor supply chains, and the *PBP*⁶ group strengthens cooperation with Pacific island states. Thus, the United States is no longer focusing on bilateral security treaties, as it did in the 20th century, but instead creating a more adaptable network that serves the interests of all its allies [4].

The administration continued its push for AUKUS in December 2023 when the National Defense Authorization Act of 2024 was passed by the US Congress. The Act included provisions such as approval for the sale of Virginia-class nuclear submarines to Australia, exemptions from licensing requirements for exporting American military products to Australia and the UK, and subsidies for producing critical goods in countries participating in the project [source 4].

However, the implementation of AUKUS has proven to be “difficult and expensive”, leading to divisions among the most influential groups in American politics. Within the Democratic Party, centrists, conservatives, and left-wing progressives hold differing views, while in the Republican

⁵ *Chip 4* – alliance of the USA, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, aimed to expand cooperation between its members in the development and production of complex semiconductors.

⁶ *The Partners in the Blue Pacific, PBP* – an informal group that includes the USA, the UK, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia, aimed to strengthen economic and diplomatic ties with the island states of the Pacific Ocean.

Party, moderates, conservatives, and neoconservatives are similarly divided on the project.

“A MASTERSTROKE”

Centrist Democrats⁷, who form the core support group for the Biden administration, strongly endorse AUKUS, viewing it as a “strategic masterstroke”. They argue that it is not a reactive measure to a sudden threat but a well-considered plan for the future [5]. In their view, AUKUS’s significance lies in its role as a key part of a strategic coalition of “like-minded democracies”, which will demonstrate to the world, including China, that “defeating the West, despite its challenges, is very difficult” [6].

Centrist Democrats support AUKUS’s focus on submarine construction, seeing it as crucial for long-term security in the Indo-Pacific region (IPR), where they anticipate conflict will take the form of an “underwater war”. In the short term, they believe it will remove barriers to technology exchange, unify the defense industries of the participating nations, and increase efficiency. The creation of AUKUS-class submarines is also seen as a means for the US to maintain its leadership in the nuclear submarine sector while completing the Columbia-class submarine program [5]. Moreover, they argue that by providing Australia access to nuclear technology and materials – rewarding its “good track record” – the US is not violating the red lines of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Instead, they see AUKUS as a form of “nuclear oversight” and a rethinking of the “outdated” NPT [5].

However, centrist Democrats also acknowledge the risks associated with AUKUS. They see a potential rise in opposition within Australia, questioning whether the country is sacrificing too much military sovereignty. Additionally, they worry that Biden’s aggressive stance toward China could provoke a conflict in the IPR before the allied submarine fleet is ready. Other concerns include maintaining close cooperation over

the long term (into the 2040s), the risk of American technology theft critical to US security, and complaints from allies like South Korea, which are excluded from AUKUS. Still, centrist Democrats believe these risks can and should be mitigated [5].

“INCUBATOR OF INNOVATION”

Conservative Democrats⁸ have a different perspective on AUKUS. They argue that the bipartisan consensus on the anti-China “pivot to Asia” is weakening, as it’s clear that “the IPR is the main but not the only regional theater of military operations”. They emphasize that the US should not neglect Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Consequently, they advocate for slowing down the “pivot to Asia” to safeguard American interests in an increasingly volatile global landscape [7]. Instead of focusing solely on military buildup, conservative Democrats recommend the US strengthen diplomatic and economic ties in the region, starting with re-entry into or renegotiation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement [7].

For conservative Democrats, AUKUS presents an opportunity to give regional allies, especially Australia, more autonomy to bolster their defense capabilities and better deter China. They argue that Australia’s defense policy should be independent rather than bloc-based, as the current bipartisan consensus in Canberra is “deceptive” and unreliable in the long run [8].

Conservative Democrats also disagree with the Biden administration’s emphasis on submarine construction, fearing that a conflict with China may occur before “Pillar 1” of AUKUS can be fully implemented. They instead propose focusing on “Pillar 2”, which they believe could have a significant impact on US national security by combining the resources and expertise of the three nations to create an “incubator of innovations”. They also call for expanding “Pillar 2” by including New Zealand and Canada [9] and addressing other experimental challenges, such as drone development. For instance,

⁷ In Congress, their interests are actively defended by senators Schumer, Menendez, and Kelly. The most prominent centrist Democrats among politicians and analysts are Talbott, Thornton, and Pifer. The leading analytical center is the *Brookings Institution*.

⁸ They include Senators Manchin, Gonzales, and Sinema. The leading analytical center is the *Council of Foreign Relations*.

within the framework of AUKUS, the American company Anduril delivered a prototype of the unmanned underwater drone Ghost Shark three months ahead of schedule [source 5]. Developing drones, they argue, has a clear advantage over nuclear submarines, as it bypasses the restrictions of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) by falling under the US Commerce Department's less restrictive dual-use program [10].

“PURE DECEPTION”

Left-wing progressives⁹ argue that the ongoing tensions between Washington and Beijing are not simply a new Cold War marked by ideological confrontation and economic competition, but rather a manifestation of inter-imperialist contradictions, driven by the exploitation of weaker nations and deepening global crises. They contend that both the US and China, as “imperialist predators”, are inevitably headed toward a hot conflict [11].

Without victory in such a conflict, America will not emerge from its current crisis – making preparation for war an existential necessity that requires the full mobilization of both its own resources and those of its allies. Washington and Canberra signed an agreement on the extraction of minerals in Australia under the guise of solving global climate problems, which is quite cynical, from the point of view of left progressives. In their opinion, the real goal of this agreement is to ensure independence from China, the leader in deliveries of such essential minerals as lithium, cobalt, graphite, magnesium, and manganese to the West, in the event of war. Uninterrupted supplies of rare earth metals are critically important for the development of the American military-industrial complex, and cooperation in this area is effectively becoming “Pillar 3” of AUKUS. “Imperialist Australia” is tightly integrated into the US military-industrial complex and represents Washington's interests in the region [12].

In addition, left-wing progressives believe that the scheme for transferring submarines and related technologies to Australia within

⁹ They include such members of Congress as Sanders, Warren, and Ocasio-Cortez. The leading analytical center is the *Progressive Policy Institute*.

the framework of AUKUS is a clear disregard for the IAEA. Two nuclear states, the US and Great Britain, which officially adhere to the highest standards of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, are transferring tons of highly enriched uranium to a non-nuclear state, clearly violating the NPT. In their view, the submarine deal conceals Washington's real aims – to deploy up to six nuclear-armed B-52 bombers in Northern Australia; there, they would be close enough to strike China. Therefore, AUKUS is a “pure deception” to prepare Australia as a US ally in an inter-imperialist war with China [13].

“POTENTIAL FOR VICTORY”

Moderate Republicans¹⁰ generally support AUKUS, viewing the containment of China as a necessary response to its “growing aggressiveness”. They believe the project will foster further integration among the defense industries of the three participating countries (the US, UK, and Australia) and deepen their interoperability, sending a clear signal to Beijing that it “no longer operates under conditions of permissiveness” [14]. However, they are critical of the heavy emphasis placed on “Pillar 1” of AUKUS, which focuses on submarine construction, viewing it as unpromising for addressing strategic problems in the IPR.

Moderate Republicans note that the most volatile period in the US-China strategic rivalry is expected to last until the late 2020s, during which time Australia will not have acquired any significant number of submarines – perhaps only one training submarine at best. By the 2040s, advancements in detection technology could render submarines less effective. Drawing lessons from the conflict in Ukraine, they emphasize that modern air defense systems and integrated capabilities across air, land, and sea remain fundamental for national security, warning that an over-reliance on submarines could lead to a less capable and autonomous Australian military in the future [15]. Another concern for moderate Republicans is the issue of “sovereignty” over the submarines.

¹⁰ In Congress, their positions are represented by Paul, Amash, and Murkowski. Among the analytical centers of this direction, the *Center for Strategic and International Studies* can be singled out.

The operational reliance on American specialists and sailors worries many within Australia’s opposition, casting doubt on the true independence of Australia’s future submarine fleet [16].

They also highlight the relative weakness of the shipbuilding industries across the AUKUS countries and the shortage of qualified workers – Australia alone is short of 20,000 specialists. Moreover, the budgets of the AUKUS allies are not stable enough to consistently finance the project.

Moderate Republicans conclude that AUKUS is unstable and unreliable for investment, which means that betting on it is very risky. At the same time, they are concerned by the fact that China leads the United States and its allies in 19 of 23 critical technologies related to “Pillar 2” of AUKUS [14]. Accordingly, they demand that the project focus on technological cooperation, as they believe that uniting the defense and technology sectors of the AUKUS member states will bolster America’s competitiveness. This view is supported by the successes already achieved under AUKUS, such as the development of underwater robotic vehicles (the *AURAS*¹¹ project), advancements in quantum technologies for underwater navigation (the *AQUA*¹² project), and the reprogramming of electronic warfare systems for Australian and British F-35s at the American laboratory in Eglin, Florida etc.

Experts among moderate Republicans emphasize that even if each area of “Pillar 2” is developed individually, it could lead to strategic advantages over China, and if these areas are combined, it could reshape the competitive landscape and ensure military and economic superiority for the US, UK, and Australia. Therefore, the implementation of “Pillar 2” could drive a technological leap among the allies, strengthening their unity not only around nuclear submarines but also around broader American national interests. This, in turn, could enhance the “global influence” of the United States [14].

Moderate Republicans also question Australia’s reliability as a long-term partner within

¹¹ *Undersea Robotics Autonomous Systems*.

¹² *The AUKUS Quantum Arrangement*.

AUKUS and propose that Canada, with its technological capabilities, resource base, and strategic geography, might be a better fit. Canada’s participation would be free of the restrictions imposed by the ITAR, which complicates collaboration with Australia. Although Ottawa has so far avoided joining AUKUS, primarily due to a reluctance to increase defense spending, moderate Republicans argue that shifting the project’s focus from submarine production to technological cooperation could entice Canada to reconsider its position [17].

“FUTURE FUND”

Representatives of the conservative wing of the Republican Party¹³ actively support the “pivot to Asia” strategy and the administration’s tough stance on China’s expansion in the IPR, which they view as the “front line of the new Cold War”. However, they criticize the Biden administration for being too slow and indecisive in this regard. They argue that insufficient funds are being allocated to confront China in the IPR because too many resources are being diverted to aid Ukraine. Meanwhile, Taiwan faces serious risks as it lacks the necessary weapons, while China is gaining valuable experience from the conflict in Eastern Europe [18]. For conservative Republicans, the creation of AUKUS is a step in the right direction. They believe that despite its economic ties with China, Australia is determined to resist Beijing’s pressure and efforts to control Pacific island states [19].

Therefore, they argue that the US should fully support Australia, making it a crucial strategic partner in “containing” China, uniting industrial potential, consolidating allies, and serving as a nuclear submarine base invulnerable to China. Conservative Republicans are staunch supporters of “Pillar 1” of AUKUS, as they believe control of sea routes is essential for protecting the IPR.

However, they stress the importance of ensuring continuity of this issue across presidential administrations, which they see as challenging. They predict that AUKUS will thrive under Trump, given his strong anti-China stance, but

¹³ Their interests are represented in Congress by Johnson, Jordan, Curtis, and Graham. The leading analytical center is the *Heritage Foundation*.

are less confident about other potential 2024 election winners [20].

Conservative Republicans argue that the AUKUS plan should not be dragged out over decades. Specific results must be achieved within the next two to three years to prevent the project from losing relevance and support. They propose a permanent American submarine presence at the Stirling naval base in Western Australia, alongside providing Australia with a submarine for training purposes. They also call for accelerated construction of Australian shipyards and facilities for working with nuclear engines, as well as the training of specialists and crews [21].

On the financial side, conservative Republicans highlight the immense cost of the AUKUS project. To address this, they suggest that the Australian government establish a “future fund”. With Australia’s average annual interest rate at 9.1%, an initial deposit of \$50 billion and annual contributions of \$10 billion could generate \$400 billion over 20 years, helping to fund the submarine fleet [22]. However, conservative Republicans are critical of “Pillar 2” of AUKUS, which focuses on high-tech cooperation. They argue that focusing on both pillars simultaneously would dilute the political and budgetary commitments necessary for the success of Australia’s submarine program. In their view, prioritizing “Pillar 1” is essential for the long-term survival of the project [21].

“SHAKY FOUNDATION”

Experts from the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party¹⁴ are more skeptical about the prospects of AUKUS than their counterparts in other factions. Neocons view the project as a potentially useful addition to the anti-Chinese strategic network in the IPR, complementing existing alliances such as the Quad, the new partnership with the Philippines, the evolving US-Japan-South Korea alliance, and the G7. While they recognize the logical basis for AUKUS, they believe it rests on a “shaky foundation”.

According to neocons, anti-Chinese alliances are generally formed by countries under signifi-

¹⁴ These include Kogan, Ryan, Aron, Doar, and Barfield. The leading analytical center is the *American Enterprise Institute*.

cant political and economic pressure from Beijing. Those not under such pressure tend to avoid strategic alignment with Washington, as China is often a more vital economic partner than the US, which does not open its market to Southeast Asian nations. Neocons argue that if Beijing reduces its aggressive tactics, many pro-American alliances in the IPR, including AUKUS, could disintegrate [23].

Beyond their strategic doubts, neocons have several specific objections. They contend that selling submarines to Australia undermines US security, as giving up five submarines would reduce the US submarine fleet by 10%. With only six submarines currently stationed in the IPR, this would amount to losing nearly half of the region’s US submarine fleet. They argue that if the White House wants to proceed with “Pillar 1”, it must significantly ramp up submarine production, noting that building just one submarine takes six to seven years [24].

Neocons also emphasize that, despite Australia’s consistent alliance with the US in major wars and conflicts over the past century, the ultimate decision to use its armed forces lies with Canberra. They argue that Australia’s primary need for submarines is to protect its own sea approaches, suggesting that it may not automatically join the US in a conflict against China.

Finally, they assert that Australian Prime Ministers Morrison and Albanese supported the submarine project due to the prevailing political climate, but a future leader could easily withdraw from AUKUS if circumstances change [25].

CONCLUSION

In 2023, while the American administration continued to promote AUKUS, the divisions among the most influential factions of the US political elite regarding the project’s future deepened.

Although the majority still support the “pivot to Asia”, progressives stand apart, condemning the entire “imperialist foreign policy of the United States”. Even among proponents of Washington’s anti-China policy, differing opinions are emerging. For instance, conservative Democrats argue for a slowdown of the strategy, while both Republican conservatives and neocons question whether

AUKUS can lead the anti-China strategic network in the Indo-Pacific without granting regional countries access to the American market.

Disagreements also arose over the content of AUKUS itself. Republican conservatives argue that the focus should remain solely on creating a nuclear submarine for Australia, or “Pillar 1”. In contrast, conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans advocate focusing exclusively on “Pillar 2”, which emphasizes technological cooperation between the US, UK, and Australia, with the involvement of other regional players like Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and Canada. Meanwhile, centrist Democrats – the administration’s most loyal supporters – believe in implementing both pillars simultaneously.

The coalition opposing “Pillar 1” includes progressives, conservative Democrats, moderate Re-

publicans, and neoconservatives. Their criticisms center on several key points: the lack of continuity in leadership between Washington and Canberra, the high costs (particularly for Australia), uncertainty over the submarines’ sovereignty, the long timeline for completion, and the complications posed by ITAR. In contrast, advocates for “Pillar 2” argue that technological cooperation through AUKUS could offer a common military and economic advantage for “like-minded democracies”.

In summary, the differences within the American establishment over AUKUS are conceptual. While they have not yet impacted the project’s course, they do create an unstable foundation. A change in US leadership could potentially shift the direction of AUKUS, as its success depends largely on the Washington bureaucracy, which is already divided over its future.

REFERENCES

1. Shepherd T. Australia considered buying nuclear submarines from France before ditching deal. *The Guardian*, 17.09.2021. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/17/australia-considered-buying-nuclear-submarines-from-france-before-ditching-deal-peter-dutton-says> (accessed 20.01.2024).
2. Remeikis A. Aukus row: EU officials demand apology from Australia over France’s treatment before trade talks. *The Guardian*, 21.09.2021. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/21/aukus-row-european-union-demands-apology-from-australia-over-frances-treatment-before-trade-talks> (accessed 20.01.2024).
3. Cave D. Australia to Fast-Track Missile Production for U.S. Exports. *The New York Times*, 28.07.2023. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/28/world/australia/australia-us-missile-export.html> (accessed 20.01.2024).
4. Ignatius D. How the submarine deal fits into the complex U.S. strategy for the Pacific. *Washington Post*, 13.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/03/13/us-submarine-deal-strategy-pacific-china/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
5. Jones B., O’Hanlon, Hass R. et al. *Around the halls: AUKUS defines an emerging alliance at sea*. Washington, Brookings Institution, 15.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/around-the-halls-aukus-defines-an-emerging-alliance-at-sea/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
6. Hass R., Dollar D. *August What’s the best case scenario for US-China relations?* Washington, Brookings Institution. 14.08.2023. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/whats-the-best-case-scenario-for-us-china-relations/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
7. Blackwill R., Fontaine R. Ukraine War Should Slow but not Stop the U.S. Pivot to Asia. *Bloomberg*, 03.09.2022. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-03-09/russia-s-ukraine-invasion-should-slow-not-stop-u-s-pivot-to-china> (accessed 20.01.2024).
8. Lyon R. Is Australia Really All-in on AUKUS? *National Interest*, 11.05.2023. Available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/australia-really-all-aukus-207161> (accessed 20.01.2024).
9. Kahn L. AUKUS Explained: How Will the Trilateral Pact Shape Indo-Pacific Security? *CFR*, 06.12.2023. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/aukus-explained-how-will-trilateral-pact-shape-indo-pacific-security> (accessed 20.01.2024).
10. Kahn L. The AUKUS Alliance Has a Lot More to Offer Than Submarines. *CFR*, 27.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/aukus-alliance-has-lot-more-offer-submarines> (accessed 20.01.2024).
11. Mackler J. AUKUS: Myth of a New “Cold War” between the U.S. and China/Russia. *LA Progressive*, 30.09.2021. Available at: <https://www.laprogressive.com/asia/new-cold-war-4> (accessed 20.01.2024).
12. Symonds P. Australia-US critical minerals deal: The “third pillar” of the military alliance. *World Socialist Web Site*, 08.06.2023. Available at: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/06/08/tfx-j08.html> (accessed 20.01.2024).

13. Stancil K. "Path of Error and Danger": China Rebukes US Plan to Sell Nuclear Submarines to Australia. *Common Dreams*, 14.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.commondreams.org/news/china-aucus-nuclear-submarine-sale> (accessed 20.01.2024).
14. Christianson J., Monaghan S., Cooke D. AUKUS Pillar Two: Advancing the Capabilities of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. *CSIS*, 07.10.2023. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/aucus-pillar-two-advancing-capabilities-united-states-united-kingdom-and-australia> (accessed 20.01.2024).
15. Ryan M. AUKUS Submarine Agreement: Historic but Not Yet Smooth Sailing. *CSIS*, 17.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/aucus-submarine-agreement-historic-not-yet-smooth-sailing> (accessed 20.01.2024).
16. Carouso J. AUKUS Is a Big Deal, and Big Deals Should Lead to Big Debates. *CSIS*, 28.04.2023. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/aucus-big-deal-and-big-deals-should-lead-big-debates> (accessed 20.01.2024).
17. Hernandez-Roy C., Rigby V., Ziemer H. Canadian Membership in AUKUS: A Time for Action. *CSIS*, 05.09.2023. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/canadian-membership-aucus-time-action> (accessed 20.01.2024).
18. Velez-Green A. *Prioritizing Ukraine Aid Threatens Deterrence by Denial in the Pacific*. Washington, Heritage Foundation, 26.07.2023. Available at: <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/prioritizing-ukraine-aid-threatens-deterrence-denial-the-pacific> (accessed 20.01.2024).
19. Harding A. China on the Mind: It Will Be a Busy Year for Australia. *Defense News*, 13.02.2023. Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2023/02/13/china-on-the-mind-it-will-be-a-busy-year-for-australia/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
20. Bourke L. AUKUS safe under Trump, says top US diplomat. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27.04.2023. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/aucus-safe-under-trump-says-top-us-diplomat-20230426-p5d3k3.html> (accessed 20.01.2024).
21. Sadler B. *AUKUS: Success of Australian Nuclear Submarine Deal Depends on Quick Wins*. Washington, Heritage Foundation, 21.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/aucus-success-australian-nuclear-submarine-deal-depends-quick-wins> (accessed 20.01.2024).
22. Newman M. How Will Australia Pay for AUKUS Submarines? *19Fortyfive*, 22.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.19fortyfive.com/2023/03/how-will-australia-pay-for-aucus-submarines/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
23. Barfield C. US Indo-Pacific policy prioritises security over economics. *East Asia Forum*, 10.02.2023. Available at: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/02/10/us-indo-pacific-policy-prioritises-security-over-economics/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
24. Walker D. Is America Postured for a Fight in the Indo-Pacific? *Defense News*, 01.05.2023. Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2023/05/01/is-america-postured-for-a-fight-in-the-indo-pacific/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
25. Cooper Z. AUKUS: Flawed by Design? *AEIdeas*, 14.03.2023. Available at: <https://www.aei.org/foreign-and-defense-policy/aucus-flawed-by-design/> (accessed 20.01.2024).

SOURCES

1. *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS*. The White House, 15.09.2021. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aucus/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
2. *Questions and Answers: The EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*. European Commission, 16.09.2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_4709 (accessed 20.01.2024).
3. *Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS*. The White House, 15.09.2021. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aucus/> (accessed 20.01.2024).
4. *S.2226 – National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year*. U.S. Congress, Senate, 07.27.2023. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2226?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22national+defense+authorization+act%22%7D&s=1&r=2> (accessed 20.01.2024).
5. *Ghost Shark a Stealthy "Game-Changer"*. Australian Department of Defence, 14.12.2022. Available at: <https://www.defence.gov.au/news-events/news/2022-12-14/ghost-shark-stealthy-game-changer> (accessed 20.01.2024).