

AUKUS, trilateral security partnership: joint op-ed by UK, US and Australia

Malaysia lies at the heart of Southeast Asia, the heart of ASEAN and the heart of the Indo Pacific. Malaysia is a key partner for Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States as we work to achieve a shared vision for the region – one that is open, stable and inclusive, in line with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

Recently our three countries announced an enhanced trilateral security partnership – AUKUS – that will enhance our capacity to develop and share a range of emerging security and defence capabilities. This agreement does not change our ambitions for a peaceful and prosperous region, nor our support for inclusive ASEAN-centred regional architecture. It will strengthen our ability to work with regional partners like Malaysia to forge a secure and stable region and support the rules-based system on which our collective prosperity is built.

It is the sovereign responsibility of every government to pursue the defensive capabilities it needs for its country. As a three-ocean nation dependent on seaborne international trade, Australia requires cutting-edge naval capabilities. For the partnership's first initiative, we embark on a trilateral effort to seek an optimal pathway to support Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines, leveraging expertise from the United States and the United Kingdom, both of whom have operated such submarines safely for more than 60 years. Nuclear-powered submarines will provide Australia with the capability it needs for its own defence and contribute to a durable strategic balance in our region.

While these submarines will be nuclear-powered, they will not carry nuclear weapons. Australia has been clear that it does not and will not seek such weapons. Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States remain steadfast in our support of the nuclear non proliferation regime and Non-Proliferation Treaty. Our commitment to non-proliferation is unchanged and we remain committed to upholding our global leadership in this domain.

This partnership will also enable Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States to deepen cooperation on a range of emerging security and defence capabilities, with an initial focus on cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities. Collaboration across these fields will strengthen the ability of each of our three countries to contribute to regional security.

In working together to strengthen our capabilities, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States are committed to supporting a region that places ASEAN at its centre and which aligns with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. All members of AUKUS are ASEAN Dialogue Partners, and all are

committed to complementing and strengthening the existing inclusive ASEAN-led regional architecture. AUKUS will also complement our networks of regional bilateral and minilateral partnerships in promoting regional peace, security, and prosperity.

We want to live in a region where all countries are empowered to engage and prosper in a stable, rules-based environment, including the rules enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We want to ensure that all nations in the region have the strategic space to make decisions in their sovereign interests. Our collaboration under AUKUS is guided by our commitment to these ideals, and ultimately to ensuring that we are all able to grow and thrive in an open, inclusive and prosperous region.