

Abstract

Cybersecurity Implications of AUKUS

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AUKUS is a strategic alliance focused on the Indo-Pacific region established by Anglosphere maritime forces representing the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans. The AUKUS pact among Australia, the UK, and the U.S. aims to strengthen their military alliance in response to gray zone operations regarding the cyber domain, emerging technologies, and space. By encouraging trilateral cooperation with middle powers, the U.S. seeks to maintain its competitive edge over China in the Indo-Pacific region and the gray area. With U.S. and UK support, Australia also aims to gain the upper hand in its relationship with China,

which has deteriorated since 2017. The UK, after Brexit, attempts to reset its role and global strategy to enhance its competitiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.

The AUKUS countries have implemented national-level strategies and policies to apply the principle of free and open navigation in cyberspace. AUKUS seeks to expand its cooperation from maritime security to gray zone operations, including the cyber realm, emerging technologies, and space by applying the principle of free and open navigation. With the Russia-Ukraine war exacerbating the division of techno-ideological blocs in cyberspace, AUKUS members have pledged to make attributions on cyber attacks, retaliate using cyber and non-cyber means, and even resort to kinetic weapons, if necessary. As a leader in emerging technologies, the U.S. along with the UK and Australia also strive to strengthen their competitiveness in cyberspace and the physical world. In addition, AUKUS can become a bridgehead for Atlantic forces such as the UK to enhance cybersecurity cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries.

AUKUS is a military technology alliance based on maritime security, however, as an informal agreement, it is open to expansion. AUKUS may likely request South Korea to participate in an expanded AUKUS Plus. South Korea, as a contributing participant of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE), has somewhat already joined the AUKUS camp in cyberspace. Hence, the South Korean government should actively explore its participation in the cyber domain as a global pivotal state and prepare to provide technical support to a potential AUKUS Plus.

Keywords
AUKUS, Free Navigation, Cybersecurity, Global Pivotal State, Gray Zone, Emerging Technologies