

What is MAPW's role in disrupting and opposing AUKUS?

Richard Tanter

17 August 2022

rtanter@nautilus.org

<https://nautilus.org/network/associates/richard-tanter/publications/>
<https://nautilus.org/network/associates/richard-tanter/talks/>

0

Outline

Introduction

- The bad joke: Marles on Britain
 - The good joke: the Chinese *Note Verbale* to the IAEA on AUKUS'
1. MAPW at this point in our history
 2. What is AUKUS?
 - The submarines
 - Beyond the submarines?
 - AUKUS Plus
 - Frame for opposing China and preparing for war
 3. Where to start? No war, real security, and MAPW's skill set and model
 4. Build resources – and what is already present
 5. Domestic links
 6. International links – with Australia's 'allies', and above all with China
 7. Public education and peace research: a proposal

1

1

Australia's renewed Anglosphere longings

- Richard Marles, Minister for Defence in the ALP government (The Age, 1 September 2022):

"We see the relationship with Britain as being very central to our national interest and our world view.

"We will have an intense and ongoing agenda with Britain.

"Britain is now oldest relationship."

2

2

China's Working Paper on the Nuclear Submarine Cooperation under AUKUS, Vienna, 12 September 2022



The image shows the cover page of an IAEA Information Circular. At the top left is the IAEA logo with the text "IAEA Atoms for Peace and Development". Below the logo is the title "Information Circular". On the right side, it says "INFCIRC/1034", "Date: 12 September 2022", and "General Distribution Original: English". A horizontal line separates the header from the main text. The main text reads: "Communication dated 12 September 2022 received from the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the Agency". At the bottom, there are two numbered footnotes: "1. The Secretariat has received a Note Verbale dated 12 September 2022 from the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the Agency." and "2. As requested, the Note Verbale, together with its attachment, is herewith circulated for the information of all Member States."

<https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/2022/infcirc1034.pdf>

- Critique of two documents circulated to the IAEA in August and September by the AUKUS states.
- China maintains those documents are "an obvious cover-up effort by the three countries to conceal the true nature of their trilateral nuclear submarine cooperation, which is nothing but an act of nuclear proliferation."
- Notes that "a wide range of member states have expressed their support for the concerns voiced in the 10th NPT Review Conference working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/WP.67) regarding cooperation among the three countries.
- "In this context, China, for its part, wishes to solemnly articulate its formal position on the sinister and illegal moves of the three countries and the flawed and self-serving arguments being advanced to justify them as well as the inappropriateness of the Director-General's report."

3

3

The Chinese accusations against the AUKUS states

- ‘Firstly, the three countries have done **its utmost to disguise, under the pretext of the “naval nuclear propulsion”**, **the “original sin”** that their trilateral cooperation **involves the transfer of nuclear weapon material** from Nuclear-Weapons States to a NPT Non-Nuclear-Weapon-State...
- ‘Secondly, the three countries have **deliberately confused legitimate military activities** within a country’s sovereignty with acts of **nuclear proliferation**...
- ‘Thirdly, the three countries **have misled the international community** claiming that “nuclear material would be sealed in the reactors” and “cannot be directly used in nuclear weapons”...
- ‘Fourthly, the three countries, especially Australia, **have failed their reporting obligations** required under their CSA and relevant protocols...
- ‘Fifthly, the three countries’ **claim that they “are engaging the IAEA** regularly with respect to the development of a suitable verification arrangement” **is totally untenable**...
- ‘Sixthly, the three countries **have undermined the non-proliferation functions and integrity of the Agency by taking hostage** of the Secretariat to engage in activities prohibited by the statute...
- ‘In addition, the three countries have consistently **refused to report to the Agency** on the substantive progress of nuclear submarine cooperation on the grounds that “no cooperation programme has been established”...’

4

4

The Conclusion to the Chinese *Note Verbale*

- ‘China maintains that the nuclear submarine cooperation under AUKUS **violates the NPT, the CSA and the AP. It is a sheer act of nuclear proliferation with enormous negative impacts and the three countries should thus stop this cooperation, without delay.**
- ‘If the three countries are bent in their own way by pushing ahead their cooperation, **all Member States of the Agency have the responsibility and obligation to tell them what to do** by working out, through the intergovernmental consultation process, an agreed formula to address this issue, and submit a report on recommendations to the Agency’s Board of Governors and the General Conference accordingly.
- ‘Pending the consensus among the member states, the three countries should refrain from pushing ahead their nuclear submarine cooperation programmes, while the **Agency’s Secretariat, for its part, should not proceed further in its engagement**, with the three countries on any safeguard arrangement relating to the three countries’ nuclear submarine cooperation under AUKUS in the absence of due mandate from member States.
- ‘China urges the three countries to immediately stop relevant acts of nuclear proliferation, and **calls on the Director General to continue to make impartial and objective reports** on the issue of nuclear submarine cooperation under AUKUS.
- ‘At the same time, China also **calls on all member states of the Agency to continue to participate in the discussions on the subject** under the agenda item proposed by China, as well as the Director General’s report, at this Board meeting and the upcoming General Conference.’

5

5

What China has done with the legal attack on the AUKUS states?

- Directly challenged the AUKUS states in the principal nuclear legal arena
- Plausibly claimed the AUKUS submarine deals amounts a potent violation and subversion of the IAEA's non-proliferation objectives and obligations.
- Successfully invoked US-defined standards of the "rules-based international order" against the US regarding the NPT.
- Widened the critique of the AUKUS submarines deal to a formally global audience
- Broadened the grounds of critique of the AUKUS AUKUS submarines deal to failures of the NPT and IAEA treaty obligations by the AUKUS states
- Pointed to US pressuring of the IAEA Secretariat "held hostage", and criticized the "inappropriateness" of the IAEA Director-General's reporting.
- Called for formation of an anti-AUKUS coalition of NPT member states

6

6

MAPW at this point in our history - starting points

1. MAPW at this point in our history
2. Where to start? No war, real security, and MAPW's skill set and model

7

7

3. What is AUKUS?

3. What is AUKUS?

- The submarines
- Beyond the submarines?
- AUKUS Plus
- Frame for opposing China and preparing for war

8

8

Two starting points – resources and domestic links

- Examples of what (and who) is already present and underway (somewhat randomly and with apologies for omissions)

Some organisations	Some people
ICAN and nuclear specialists	Michelle Fahy
IPAN	Kellie Tranter / FOIA
AWPR	Monique Cormier / Anna Hood on law
State Capture project / accountability	Felicity Ruby and Scott Ludlam
NFIP	Emma Shortis (alliance)
AWM campaign	Brian Martin (peace movement thinking)
Frontier Wars	Nic Maclellan / NFIP
Pearls & Irritations writers on defence	

- the point is not what or who is missing – a long list in both cases – but how people can be joined up and in public education and peace research (see below)

9

9

International links – with Australia’s ‘allies’, and above all with China

- Decline of international links in the peace movement – and potential benefits.
- There will always be potential points of cooperation, common ground even amidst conflict and suspicion – importance of discovering shared concerns and interests
- Follow the pattern of Australian government alliances in the broadest sense
 - Strategic partnerships, enhanced defence cooperation, mutual logistics and basing arrangements
 - There will always be potential points of cooperation, common ground even amidst conflict and suspicion
 - US
 - UK (aka Disuniting Kingdom)
 - Japan
 - France (and their colonial possessions in the neighbourhood)
 - India
 - Japan
 - Singapore (Kishore Mahbubani on AUKUS)
 - Vietnam

10

10

And above all, links with China

- Very difficult at the best of times, and now harder than any time since 1973.
- Effects of Chinese government climate, US (and “The Free Press”) public opinion restructuring, and Australian government ‘foreign influence’ legislation
- First step is to find people to talk to; to find common ground, however limited, and to clarify actual as opposed to purported or imagined difference
- From a basis of respectful listening, always acknowledge difference and disagreement, on the basis of commitment to impartial application of shared standards to all parties
- to allow the possibility of Australian civil society contribution to and pressure for reform of Australian policy
- A few starting points for interlocutors re security – there are known Chinese specialists on all
 - arms control and nuclear disarmament specialists
 - critique of foreign military bases and armed intervention
 - support for UN and international law
 - climate, energy and environmental science and policy
 - infectious diseases
 - Global inequality and injustice
 - Shared settler colonial history, policy and ideologies

11

11

How to proceed on China

- Accept that this will be slow and bumpy – but vastly better than the alternative
- How those Chinese contacts are to be established, fruitful discussions achieved, inevitable and sometimes serious bumps handled, and most importantly relationships maintained is obviously not straightforward.
- But some of it should involve bringing people to Australia for carefully organised discussions, Chinese government connections or not

- Public education and peace research: a proposal

- We need to commit, through our various organizational connections and personal roles, to public education on the basis of authoritative, evidence-based, and accessible educational material
- Key issues of controversy and public importance should be prioritized
- Careful thought should be given to building a space for open and respectful discussion of the difficult elements and policy of peace and security

12