

Debate Pack

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Impact on Anglo-Chinese relations following the AUKUS pact

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Background

A Westminster Hall debate on the 'Impact on Anglo-Chinese relations following the AUKUS pact' has been scheduled for Wednesday 20 October 2021 from 9.30-11:00am. The debate has been initiated by Daniel Kawczynski MP.

AUKUS agreement

In September 2021 the UK, Australia and the United States announced a [new security partnership called AUKUS](#). The agreement will see the three countries collaborate on new nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy and work together on areas such as cyber and artificial intelligence. The three countries said the agreement “will help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.”¹ For the UK, it furthers the UK’s proposed tilt to the Indo-Pacific, articulated in the [Integrated Review of security, defence and foreign policy](#), published in March 2021.

The agreement came as a surprise, and there has been mixed reaction from the Indo-pacific region, with some countries, such as the Philippines, [believing it will help address the military imbalance against China](#). Others, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, [fear it could spark an arms race or heighten the risk of conflict](#).

Responding to concerns about China’s response, the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said the partnership “is not intended to be adversarial towards any other power.”²

Mr Johnson added that the US, Australia and the UK “also have a shared interest in promoting democracy, human rights, freedom of navigation and freedom of trade around the world”.

China was not mentioned in the [Joint Statement](#) released by the leaders of the US, UK and Australia. However, commentators are united in believing that it was in part created to counter growing perceptions of a rising Chinese threat in the Indo-Pacific region.

The UK’s “tilt to the Indo-Pacific”

For the UK, AUKUS reflects the UK’s intention to tilt to the Indo-Pacific, as outlined in the [Integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy](#). The tilt is necessary, the Government says, because the region is “critical to our economy, our security and our global ambition to support

¹ [‘UK, US and Australia launch new security partnership’](#), Gov.uk, 15 September 2021

² [HC Deb 16 September 2021 \[AUKUS\]](#).

open societies.”³ Mr Johnson told MPs the partnership demonstrates “Britain’s generational commitment to the security of the Indo-Pacific” and how the UK can help Australia “preserve regional stability.”⁴ A senior White House official described UK involvement in AUKUS as a “down payment” on their effort to engage more deeply with the Indo-Pacific.

Questions have been raised over how AUKUS might affect [geopolitical tensions in the South-China Sea](#), including [Taiwan](#).

The former Prime Minister, Theresa May asked Mr Johnson, what are the implications of AUKUS “for the stance and response the United Kingdom would take should China attempt to invade Taiwan?”⁵

He responded that “the United Kingdom remains determined to defend international law, and that is the strong advice we would give to our friends across the world and the strong advice we would give to the Government in Beijing”.

UK naval activity in the South-China Sea

The UK has increased its naval exercises in the South China Sea over the last few years. HMS Albion conducted a US style freedom of navigation operation by the Paracel islands in August 2018, and in early 2019 the Royal Navy [conducted two joint military exercises with the US Navy](#) in the South China Sea.

At the end of September 2021, the UK sent a warship through the Taiwan strait for the first time since 2008 (HMS Enterprise, a survey vessel, navigated the strait in 2019). HMS Richmond, a frigate deployed with the Royal Navy’s aircraft carrier strike group, sailed through the strait on a trip from Japan to Vietnam.

The Chinese military followed the vessel and were reported to have warned it away. The People's Liberation Army also condemned the move saying it was behaviour that “harboured evil intentions”.⁶

UK-China relations before the agreement

Over the last few years, the largely cordial relationship between the UK and China has deteriorated sharply.

³ [Integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy](#), CP 403, 16 March 2021. Library papers analysing the review and the related defence command paper are collated on the Library’s website: [Integrated Review 2021](#).

⁴ [HC Deb 16 September 2021 \[AUKUS\]](#).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [‘China condemns Britain for Taiwan Strait warship mission’](#), Reuters, 27 September 2021.

In the previous two decades, regardless of the political make up of successive UK governments, the trend had been towards closer engagement and cooperation.

The high-point of UK-China relations was during the 2015-17 Conservative Government, when there was talk on both sides of a “golden era”.

However, growing controversy in the UK over the involvement of the Chinese multinational company Huawei in the UK’s 5G mobile phone network, along with mounting concern about the [erosion of the “one country, two systems” status quo in Hong Kong](#), has dramatically changed the atmosphere between the two countries. Other important factors have been [UK concern about Chinese secrecy over the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic](#) and [China’s human rights clamp-down against the Muslim Uighur population in the Western province of Xinjiang](#).

March 2021 sanctions

On 22 March 2021 the UK Government [announced](#) it was placing sanctions on four Chinese officials and an official body, in concert with the EU, Canada and the US, labelling those sanctioned as “perpetrators of gross human rights violations taking place against Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang”.

Announcing the sanctions, the then Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, told the House of Commons: “This is one of the worst human rights crises of our time and I believe the evidence is clear, as it is sobering”.

Mr Raab went onto say:

I’m sure the whole House will join with me in condemning such appalling violations of the most basic human rights. In terms of scale, it is the largest mass detention of an ethnic or religious group since the Second World War.⁷

In response, on 26 March China announced it was imposing its own sanctions on nine UK citizens, including five MPs and two peers.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said the UK’s decision to impose sanctions “flagrantly breaches international law and basic norms governing international relations, grossly interferes in China’s internal affairs, and severely undermines China-UK relations”.⁸

The spokesman added that the Chinese foreign ministry had summoned the British Ambassador to China to “lodge solemn representations, expressing firm opposition and strong condemnation”.

⁷ [HC Deb 22 March 2021 \[Human Rights Update\]](#).

⁸ [‘Uighurs: China bans UK MPs after abuse sanctions’](#), BBC News, 26 March 2021.

The BBC also reported that a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, later told a press briefing China was forced to act "in self-defence" in response to UK sanctions "based on lies".

In September 2021, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker of the Commons, and Lord John McFall, the Lord Speaker, barred the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, Zheng Zeguang, from addressing the All-Party Parliamentary Group for China at an event on the Parliamentary estate. In a statement Sir Lindsay said, "I do not feel it is appropriate for the ambassador for China to meet on the Commons estate and in our place of work when his country has imposed sanctions against some of our members".⁹

Lord McFall said in his statement: "The Speakers of both houses are in agreement that this particular APPG China meeting should take place elsewhere considering the current sanctions against members, including two members of the Lords".¹⁰

Assessment of China in the Integrated Review

In the [March 2021 Integrated Review](#), China was described as a "systemic competitor".

The review said the UK will "do more to adapt to China's growing impact on many aspects of our lives as it becomes a more powerful in the world". The Government said it will invest in "China-facing capabilities" which will allow the UK to better understand China and its people, while also improving the UK's ability to respond to the challenge it poses to "our security, prosperity and values – and those of our allies and partners".

However, the review also emphasised the Government's intention to continue pursuing a "positive trade and investment relationship" with China, while also ensuring that national security is protected. It also acknowledged that cooperation with China on transnational issues such as climate change is a necessity.

In the House of Commons debate on AUKUS, when asked what the Government is doing to increase its influence on China on issues like climate change, Mr Johnson responded that Alok Sharma, President for [COP 26](#), "was in Beijing recently and had very productive conversations with his Chinese counterparts".¹¹

⁹ '[Chinese ambassador to UK banned from event in Houses of Parliament](#)', Financial Times, 14 September 2021.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ [HC Deb 16 September 2021 \[AUKUS\]](#).

Chinese reaction to AUKUS

For China, AUKUS “has seriously undermined regional peace and stability”. China’s foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, went on to say that the announcement has “intensified the arms race and undermined international non-proliferation efforts.” China accused the three countries of double standards over nuclear non-proliferation and of holding on to a “Cold War mentality.”¹²

A spokesperson for China’s London Embassy urged the UK “to take concrete actions to uphold the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and avoid any action that would increase tension in the Asia Pacific region or compromise the peace and stability in the region.”¹³

Further reading

Further analysis of AUKUS and the UK’s defence tilt to the Indo-Pacific is available in the following Commons Library Briefing Papers:

[The AUKUS agreement](#) (11 October 2021)

[Integrated Review 2021: The Defence tilt to the Indo-Pacific](#) (11 October 2021)

¹² [‘Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference’](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 16 September 2021

¹³ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China, [‘Embassy Spokesperson’s Remarks on the Newly-announced Military Partnership between UK, US and Australia’](#), 18 September 2021. The Embassy has also written two articles on AUKUS: [‘Wang Yi: U.S.-Britain-Australia Nuclear Submarine Cooperation Poses Three Hidden Dangers’](#), 28 September 2021 and [‘Wang Yi: U.S.-Britain-Australia Nuclear Submarine Cooperation Causes Five Harms to the Region’](#) 29 September 2021.

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Press articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[China's AUKUS Response Highlights Beijing's Bunker Mentality](#)

The Diplomat
Bonnie Girard
30 September 2021

[AUKUS pact no threat to Indo-Pacific stability, U.S. envoy says](#)

Reuters
Stanley Widianto
29 September 2021

[China's new aircraft carrier underlines need for the Aukus pact](#)

The Guardian
Dan Sabbagh
29 September 2021

[AUKUS nuclear submarine deal harms innocent people in South Pacific again: FM](#)

Global Times (China)
28 September 2021

[AUKUS threatens ASEAN, not just China](#)

Global Times (China)
Herman Tiu Laurel
27 September 2021

[Aukus: How transatlantic allies turned on each other over China's Indo-Pacific threat](#)

Financial Times
George Parker, Sebastian Payne, Anthony Klan, Katrina Manson, Anna Gross and Victor Mallet
24 September 2021

[Malaysia to hold talks with China on AUKUS](#)

Janes
Ridzwan Rahmat
24 September 2021

[Why the Aukus, Quad and Five Eyes Pacts Anger China](#)

Bloomberg
Iain Marlow
23 September 2021

[China says Asia needs jobs over submarines in fresh Aukus salvo](#)

Financial Times
Edward White
22 September 2021

[Aukus deal 'ties UK into Indo-Pacific and sends message to China'](#)

The Guardian
Dan Sabbagh
21 September 2021

[Global Britain is planting its flag on the world stage](#)

Sunday Telegraph
Liz Truss (UK Foreign Secretary)
19 September 2021

[China warns US-UK-Australia pact could 'hurt their own interests'](#)

The Guardian
Helen Davidson and Gavin Blair
16 September 2021

[China and UK clash over 'Cold War' submarine pact with Australia to counter Beijing](#)

The Independent
Rob Merrick
16 September 2021

[Nuke sub deal could make Australia 'potential nuclear war target'](#)

Global Times (China)
Yang Sheng
16 September 2021

[Aukus: UK, US and Australia launch pact to counter China](#)

BBC News Online
16 September 2021

[AUKUS: is an arms race with China the price of 'Global Britain'?](#)

The Conversation
16 September 2021

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Press releases

[Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng: AUKUS Advocates a New Cold War, and Brings Only Harm, Nothing Good at all](#)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China

13 October 2021

In an interview with The Point of CGTN on 11 October 2021, Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng said that the trilateral security partnership among Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States called "AUKUS" is a small bloc composed of Anglo-Saxon nations. It advocates a new Cold War, and stirs up zero-sum geopolitical games. AUKUS brings only harm, nothing good at all. First of all, it triggers the risks of nuclear proliferation, seriously violates the spirit of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and brings harm to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. It undermines the progress toward a Southeast Asia nuclear weapon-free zone. The recent collision accident of a U.S. nuclear attack submarine in the South China Sea is an alarming example. Although we have not heard of report of nuclear leak yet, it is still a very serious matter. Frequent entry of nuclear submarines into the South China Sea brings high risks of nuclear proliferation and on nuclear safety. If not handled properly, it may cause a nuclear disaster. On one hand, the U.S. and the U.K. use sanctions to deter other countries from developing uranium enrichment technology. But on the other hand, they blatantly equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines. They dished out "China assertiveness" as an excuse, but it cannot cover their double standard. At the same time, AUKUS aims to seek maritime hegemony. It stokes arms race in the region, fuels military risk-taking, and undermines regional peace and stability. China firmly opposes AUKUS. Countries in the region and the international community all have plenty of reasons to oppose and resist it.

[Minister for Asia visits HMS Queen Elizabeth in Singapore](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

11 October 2021

Minister for Asia, Amanda Milling, has visited the flagship of the UK's Carrier Strike Group 2021 in Singapore.

HMS Queen Elizabeth, one of the two largest warships ever built for the Royal Navy, has led the British and allied deployment to the Indo-Pacific. The ship demonstrates our commitment to regional stability, working alongside allies and partners.

The deployment has also helped to deepen the UK's diplomatic and prosperity links with partners new and old in the region.

Minister for Asia, Amanda Milling, said:

The Carrier Strike Group deployment to the Indo-Pacific is a demonstration of Global Britain in action and the UK's commitment to strengthening security ties in the region.

It was an honour to go aboard and meet the crew. I have also met my Singaporean counterpart with whom we work so closely on regional and maritime security.

While in Singapore, Minister Milling met with Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sim Ann, where they discussed the Carrier Strike Group visit to the region, the UK's CPTPP application and the ongoing work between the UK and Singapore to boost trade and the digital economy.

The British High Commission hosted a roundtable event with academics and think tanks. The session covered regional and security issues such as the UK's new trilateral partnership with the United States and Australia, AUKUS.

The Minister also participated in a dialogue session with key members of the British Chamber of Commerce and discussed ways to foster closer collaboration on trade, education and sustainability.

[AUKUS, trilateral security partnership: joint op-ed by UK, US and Australia](#)
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
29 September 2021

This op-ed is jointly authored by H.E. Dr Justin Lee, High Commissioner of Australia to Malaysia, H.E. Brian D. McFeeters, Ambassador of the United States of America to Malaysia and H.E. Charles Hay MVO, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Malaysia:

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.

Wang Yi: U.S.-Britain-Australia Nuclear Submarine Cooperation Causes Five Harms to the Region

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
29 September 2021

On September 29, 2021, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone conversation with the Malaysian and Bruneian foreign ministers, respectively. The three foreign ministers exchanged views on and expressed grave concerns over the tripartite security partnership among the United States, Britain and Australia (AUKUS) and their planned nuclear submarine cooperation. Wang Yi said, in so doing, AUKUS will possibly cause five harms to the region:

First, this move may trigger the risk of nuclear proliferation. According to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, non-nuclear-weapon states can only use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under supervision and safeguards. Nuclear submarines, however, are used for military purposes and are fueled by highly enriched uranium, which can be used directly to build nuclear weapons, while the International Atomic Energy Agency is unable to conduct effective and timely supervision of nuclear submarines. While the United States has imposed unilateral sanctions on countries developing enriched uranium technology, it gave Australia a green light, which will inevitably give rise to the risk of proliferation of nuclear technology and materials and deal a blow to the international nuclear non-proliferation system.

Second, the move may induce a new round of arms race. Nuclear submarines are strategic security forces and capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Australia's move will break the strategic balance in the region, make the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty it has signed a mere scrap of paper, and constitute a real threat to countries in the region, not ruling out the possibility that other countries may follow suit to wage a new round of arms race or even cross the nuclear threshold.

Third, the move may undermine regional prosperity and stability. Thanks to the concerted efforts of China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) over the years, the region has become the most dynamic and fastest-growing one in the world. We should cherish such hard-won results. However, AUKUS sets on creating regional tensions, casting a shadow over the region's peace, stability, and development.

Fourth, the move may sabotage the building of a nuclear-free zone in Southeast Asia. The Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ Treaty) reflects the common will of the people in Southeast Asian countries, which ought to be understood and respected by other countries. China was the first one among the five countries with nuclear weapons to support the SEANWFZ Treaty and announce its willingness to sign a protocol

to this end. The United States and Britain chose not to participate in the SEANWFZ Treaty. Instead, they have transferred military nuclear technology to the region under various pretexts and also provided the region with highly enriched uranium materials, running counter to the efforts made by ASEAN countries to build a nuclear-free zone.

Fifth, the move may lead to the resurgence of the Cold War mentality. Just like the Quad that groups the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, AUKUS is also subservient to and serves the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific strategy, seeking to go its own way and start all over again, with an eye to provoking rivalry among different sides in the region and ushering in geopolitical zero-sum games. It goes against the trend of the times and is a resurgence of the Cold War mentality, which should arouse vigilance and opposition from countries in the region and the international community.

[Wang Yi: U.S.-Britain-Australia Nuclear Submarine Cooperation Poses Three Hidden Dangers](#)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China

29 September 2021

On September 28, 2021, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles co-chaired the 11th round of China-EU high-level strategic dialogue via video link.

Wang Yi said that the tripartite security partnership among the United States, Britain and Australia and their planned nuclear submarine cooperation have drawn close attention and vigilance of the international community, especially Asia-Pacific countries. Many countries have expressed their concerns and doubts. China believes this move will bring three hidden dangers to regional peace and stability and the international order:

First, it will bring the hidden danger of a resurgence of the Cold War. The three countries have drawn ideological lines and built a new military bloc, which will aggravate geographical tensions. Against the backdrop of worldwide opposition against Cold War and division, the United States blatantly violated its policy statement of not seeking a new Cold War, and ganged up to form an Anglo-Saxon clique. Putting its own geological gains above global solidarity is a typical Cold War mentality.

Second, it will cause the hidden danger of an arms race, prompting some regional countries to step up their military build-up or even break the nuclear threshold, thus increasing the risks of military conflict. The United States imposed sanctions against some countries on the ground of developing nuclear technology while openly transferring nuclear technologies to nuclear-free countries. This is typical double standards.

Third, it will pose the hidden danger of nuclear proliferation. Provisioning nuclear-free countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials on the ground of building nuclear-powered submarines will let weapons-grade highly enriched uranium escape necessary regulation, thus bringing significant risks to nuclear proliferation. It will affect the nuclear non-proliferation system, damage the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and undermine the efforts of ASEAN countries to establish a nuclear-free zone in the region. This is typical flouting of rules.

Wang Yi stressed that while United States, Britain and Australia were enhancing military connections and exacerbating bloc confrontation, China put forward the Global Development Initiative and formally applied to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Who is fueling conflict and confrontation, endangering peace and stability, and who is promoting regional integration and advancing peace and stability? These contrasting behaviors are easy to distinguish. We urge the three countries to follow the trend of the times, get back on the right track and play a constructive role in regional peace and stability.

Embassy Spokesperson's Remarks on the Newly-announced Military Partnership between UK, US and Australia

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the UK
18 September 2021

Question: The UK, the US and Australia have announced a new military partnership by which Australia will be provided with nuclear-powered submarines. Some people say this move is aimed at countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific. What is your comment?

Embassy Spokesperson: The AUKUS military partnership and cooperation on nuclear submarines risk intensifying global arms race, crippling international non-proliferation efforts and severely undermining regional peace and stability.

The export of highly sensitive nuclear submarine technologies by the UK and the US, two nuclear powers, to Australia, a non-nuclear-weapon state, proves once again that they are using nuclear exports as a geopolitical tool and applying double standards to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. This action is irresponsible.

Any regional mechanism should reflect the current trend of peace and development and should contribute to enhancing mutual trust and cooperation among regional countries, rather than targeting any third party or jeopardizing third-party interests. Seeking exclusive military blocs betrays a Cold-War mentality. This goes against the trend of the times and the

aspirations for peace and cooperation of the Asia-Pacific nations. It will receive no support and lead nowhere.

China is committed to the path of peaceful development, it is resolute in safeguarding its sovereignty, security and development interests, and it is firmly against any action that undermines regional and global peace and stability.

We urge the UK to take concrete actions to uphold the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and avoid any action that would increase tension in the Asia Pacific region or compromise the peace and stability in the region.

UK, US AND Australia launch new security partnership

Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing St

15 September 2021

A landmark defence and security partnership has been agreed by the leaders of the UK, the United States and Australia today which will protect and defend our shared interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Under the 'AUKUS' alliance, we will enhance the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing, ensuring our people are kept safe from harm and reinforcing our shared goals. AUKUS will foster deeper integration of security and defence-related science, technology, industrial bases and supply chains.

AUKUS is a concrete articulation of the UK's ambition, made in the Integrated Review, to deepen defence, security and foreign policy ties with like-minded allies across the globe. The agreement reflects the unique level of trust and cooperation between our three countries, who already share extensive intelligence through the Five Eyes alliance.

The first initiative under AUKUS will be a collaboration on future nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. This capability will promote stability in the Indo-Pacific and will be deployed in support of our shared values and interests.

The UK has built and operated world-class nuclear-powered submarines for over 60 years. We will therefore bring deep expertise and experience to the project through, for example, the work carried out by Rolls Royce near Derby and BAE Systems in Barrow.

The initial scoping phase for the new endeavour is expected to take 18 months. The design and build process will create hundreds of highly skilled scientific and engineering roles across the UK, and drive investment in some of our most high-tech sectors.

The Prime Minister said:

The UK, Australia and US are natural allies – while we may be separated geographically, our interests and values are shared. The AUKUS alliance will bring us closer than ever, creating a new defence partnership and driving jobs and prosperity.

This partnership will become increasingly vital for defending our interests in the Indo-Pacific region and, by extension, protecting our people back at home.

The UK and US are already leading members of NATO – the world’s most important defence alliance. The work done by AUKUS will support our shared goals in new regions, promoting stability and protecting our people against new and emerging threats.

In recent years, the UK and Australia have increased collaboration on defence. The Royal Australian Navy is procuring up to 9 of the UK’s Type 26 frigates, allowing our defence forces to operate together more than ever before. Our militaries, including the Royal Gurkha Rifles, have also undertaken joint training exercises.

In recent weeks the UK’s HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier has been deployed to the Indo-Pacific region alongside personnel and equipment from the US. Last month the Carrier Strike Group undertook a series of exercises with countries including Australia to build interoperability with like-minded partners.

As set out in the Integrated Review, the Indo-Pacific is at the centre of intensifying geopolitical competition with potential flashpoints including unresolved territorial disputes; to nuclear proliferation and miscalculation; to climate change and non-state threats from terrorism and Serious Organised Crime. It is on the frontline of new security challenges, including in cyberspace.

Joint Leaders statement on AUKUS:

As leaders of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, guided by our enduring ideals and shared commitment to the international rules-based order, we resolve to deepen diplomatic, security, and defense cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, including by working with partners, to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. As part of this effort, we are announcing the creation of an enhanced trilateral security partnership called “AUKUS” – Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Through AUKUS, our governments will strengthen the ability of each to support our security and defense interests, building on our longstanding and ongoing bilateral ties. We will promote deeper information and technology

sharing. We will foster deeper integration of security and defense-related science, technology, industrial bases, and supply chains. And in particular, we will significantly deepen cooperation on a range of security and defense capabilities.

As the first initiative under AUKUS, recognizing our common tradition as maritime democracies, we commit to a shared ambition to support Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. Today, we embark on a trilateral effort of 18 months to seek an optimal pathway to deliver this capability. We will leverage expertise from the United States and the United Kingdom, building on the two countries' submarine programs to bring an Australian capability into service at the earliest achievable date.

The development of Australia's nuclear-powered submarines would be a joint endeavour between the three nations, with a focus on interoperability, commonality, and mutual benefit. Australia is committed to adhering to the highest standards for safeguards, transparency, verification, and accountancy measures to ensure the non-proliferation, safety, and security of nuclear material and technology. Australia remains committed to fulfilling all of its obligations as a non-nuclear weapons state, including with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Our three nations are deeply committed to upholding our leadership on global non-proliferation.

Recognizing our deep defense ties, built over decades, today we also embark on further trilateral collaboration under AUKUS to enhance our joint capabilities and interoperability. These initial efforts will focus on cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities.

The endeavour we launch today will help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. For more than 70 years, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have worked together, along with other important allies and partners, to protect our shared values and promote security and prosperity. Today, with the formation of AUKUS, we recommit ourselves to this vision.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, President Joseph R Biden and Prime Minister Scott Morrison

[PM Statement on AUKUS Partnership](#)
Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing St
15 September 2021

I'm delighted to join President Biden and Prime Minister Morrison to announce that the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States are creating a new

trilateral defence partnership, known as AUKUS, with the aim of working hand-in-glove to preserve security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

We are opening a new chapter in our friendship, and the first task of this partnership will be to help Australia acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, emphasising of course that the submarines in question will be powered by nuclear reactors, not armed with nuclear weapons, and our work will be fully in line with our non-proliferation obligations.

This will be one of the most complex and technically demanding projects in the world, lasting for decades and requiring the most advanced technology.

It will draw on the expertise that the UK has acquired over generations, dating back to the launch of the Royal Navy's first nuclear submarine over 60 years ago.

And together with the other opportunities from AUKUS, creating hundreds of highly skilled jobs across the United Kingdom – including in Scotland, the North of England and the Midlands – taking forward this Government's driving purpose of levelling up across the whole country.

We will have a new opportunity to reinforce Britain's place at the leading edge of science and technology, strengthening our national expertise.

And perhaps most significantly, the UK, Australia and the US will be joined even more closely together.

Reflecting the measure of trust between us.

The depth of our friendship.

And the enduring strength of our shared values of freedom and democracy.

Only a handful of countries possess nuclear-powered submarines.

And it is a momentous decision for any nation to acquire this formidable capability.

And perhaps equally momentous for any other state to come to its aid.

But Australia is one of our oldest friends, a kindred nation and a fellow democracy, and a natural partner in this great enterprise.

Now the UK will embark on this project alongside our allies, making the world safer and generating jobs across the United Kingdom.

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PQs

Military Alliances: Australia and USA

24 Sep 2021 | 51007

Asked by: Owen Thompson

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take to brief (a) NATO, (b) G7 nations and (c) European allies on developments relating to AUKUS.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK will continue to engage NATO, G7, European, and other partners on defence and security matters, including the recent Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) agreement, through our regular bilateral and multilateral channels.

Military Alliances: Australia and USA

24 Sep 2021 | 51006

Asked by: Owen Thompson

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what provisions will form part of the AUKUS agreement to ensure that that agreement does not lead to potential future breaches of obligations in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We take our obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) extremely seriously and remain strongly committed to full implementation of the NPT in all its aspects.

It is too soon to talk about specifics, but Australia has impeccable non-proliferation credentials and does not - and will not - seek nuclear weapons. All three AUKUS parties (Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) are committed to ensuring progress on this agreement will be consistent with our international obligations, including our respective safeguards obligations, which we will investigate in the 18 month programme of work.

Engagements

22 Sep 2021 | 701 cc277-9

Asked by: Rob Butler

Last week, members of the armed forces parliamentary scheme from across the House attended our excellent Defence Academy. What is striking is the number of service personnel from overseas who come to the UK to benefit from its world-class professional defence and security education. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is a further illustration that, far from being a fifth wheel on the carriage, the UK is at the heart of ensuring global security, and that the AUKUS pact is one of the best ways to meet emerging threats, particularly in the South China sea?

Answered by: The Deputy Prime Minister

My hon. Friend is bang on. The AUKUS partnership is incredibly important for our security. It builds on what we said in the integrated review about promoting stability in the Indo-Pacific. It builds on our free trade agreement negotiations, including the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific partnership. It builds on our membership, as a dialogue partner, of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations—the first new member in more than 20 years. It will provide huge opportunities for jobs and businesses here at home, as part of the levelling-up agenda.

Military Alliances: Australia and USA

22 Sep 2021 | 51005

Asked by: Owen Thompson

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his AUKUS counterparts on weaponised and industrialised disinformation from cybertroops.

Answering member: Mr Ben Wallace | Ministry of Defence

As part of the AUKUS agreement I will work with my counterparts, and the Five Eyes, to increase Australia-UK-US security collaboration. This will involve a range of areas, such as submarines and other undersea capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and cyber capabilities, including defence against such disinformation campaigns.

Taiwan Strait: HMS Queen Elizabeth

06 Sep 2021 | 40727

Asked by: Tobias Ellwood

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there are plans to sail the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait during its visit to the Indo-pacific in July 2021.

Answering member: James Heappey | Ministry of Defence

I can confirm that no element of the Carrier Strike Group sailed through the Taiwan Strait in July 2021. The Royal Navy will next navigate the Taiwan Strait when navigationally expeditious to do so and in accordance with international law and operational requirements. To preserve operational security, the Royal Navy does not discuss the specifics of the operational routings of ships in advance.

Diplomatic Service

23 Jun 2021 | HL971

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (CP403), published on 16 March, what plans they have to increase the UK's (1) diplomatic presence, and (2) other infrastructure, around the globe.

Answering member: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

As outlined in the Integrated Review, effective diplomacy is a critical tool in the UK's ability to deliver for British citizens in the world. Our diplomatic network of 283 officially designated Posts in 180 countries and territories includes an increased presence in the Indo-Pacific region where four new Posts have opened since 2018.

Navy: Deployment

01 Jun 2021 | HL474

Asked by: Lord Coaker

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the objectives of the Carrier Strike Group deployment; and how achievement of these objectives will be measured.

Answering member: Baroness Goldie | Ministry of Defence

The Carrier Strike Group deployment is an embodiment of the Government's Integrated Review, and has significant diplomatic, trade and security objectives:

- Send a clear message to our allies and adversaries that the UK can, and will, play a global leadership role, exerting influence on bilateral and regional issues to achieve HMG objectives and acting as a force for good in the world;

- Prove our leading role in NATO through the strength of our capability, our readiness to operate closely with Allies, and our interoperability with the US and others;
- Put the Integrated Review into action, underlining the UK's commitment to an enduring presence in the Indo-Pacific and win support for our goals and objectives there;
- Reinforce existing UK international relationships and networks, and strengthen links with NATO's partners around the world. Establish new links with a broader audience, furthering defence engagement, political and prosperity objectives;
- Promote UK industry, technology and export sales across the breadth of the UK's commercial strengths. Improve trading relationships and trade cooperation, as well as pursuing investment prospects, especially in competitive markets; and
- Build relationships between key officials and organisations.

The achievement of these ambitious and pan-Government objectives will be measured over time and in numerous ways, including public media and communications, complex interoperability tasks, exercises and missions, and increased investment, sales and trade arrangements. Importantly, the Carrier Strike Group deployment should not be viewed as a stand-alone event but as a contribution to a broader network of military, diplomatic and trade activity over the coming years.

China: Taiwan

13 Apr 2021 | 175780

Asked by: Daniel Kawczynski

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to ensure British ships instigate freedom of navigation exercises in the straits between China and Taiwan.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Many international ships, both military and commercial, travel through the Taiwan Strait and such actions are routine and non-contentious. All activities conducted by the Royal Navy are and will be in accordance with international law.

Indo-Pacific Region: Navy

01 Apr 2021 | HL14443

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to establish a permanent naval force in the (1) Indian, and (2) Pacific, oceans; if so, where they intend to establish dockyards to conduct repairs for those forces; and whether such forces would be protected by permanent air defences.

Answering member: Baroness Goldie | Ministry of Defence

In support of the strategic tilt toward the Indo-Pacific announced by Her Majesty's Government in the Integrated Review (CP 403) on 16 March 2021, the Ministry of Defence plans to establish a persistent maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific region. On 22 March 2021, the Secretary of State for Defence outlined a plan to Parliament (CP 411) to deliver this through Offshore Patrol Vessels from 2021, a Littoral Response Group from 2023 and a permanently assigned Frigate by the end of the decade. These forces will intentionally operate asymmetrically, without a nominated base. They will use existing UK, allied and partner facilities around the region enabled by our existing global support agreements. Consequently, no permanent air defences are required.

South China Sea

17 Dec 2020 | 127690

Asked by: Imran Ahmad Khan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the geopolitical situation in the South China Sea.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

I expressed our concern at reports of militarisation, coercion and intimidation in the South China Sea in Parliament on 3 September. We call on all parties to refrain from activity likely to raise tensions, including land reclamation, construction and militarisation. We urge all parties to exercise restraint and behave responsibly in accordance with their international obligations. Our position is longstanding: we do not take sides on the competing sovereignty claims. Our commitment is to international law, particularly to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and to freedom of navigation and overflight.

Given the importance we attach to UNCLOS, on 3 September I set out in full our legal analysis on the South China Sea for the first time. On 16 September, we issued a joint Note Verbale with France and Germany to the UN's Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in response to assertions in Chinese Notes Verbale that we consider inconsistent with UNCLOS. Most

recently, on 8 December, the UK made a national statement at the annual UN General Assembly debate on the Law of the Sea reiterating our legal position on the South China Sea. We are working closely with allies and ASEAN partners to strengthen regional capacity on maritime law and security. This includes dialogues on maritime law and Royal Navy training courses on maritime security.

Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy
24 Nov 2020 | 909169

Asked by: Tobias Ellwood

What plans the Government has for the publication of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Prime Minister commissioned the Integrated Review as the most ambitious review of our foreign policy since the Cold War. The Prime Minister set out in his speech to the House on 19 November how the UK will support a world order in which open societies and economies flourish. The Indo-Pacific is of central importance.

The Prime Minister is clear: Global Britain will be more active and engaged around the world. The FCDO is central to delivery and we will integrate development and diplomatic expertise to maximise UK impact as a force for good. We will apply a more strategic lens to our use of ODA to ensure it delivers both for the 'bottom billion' and in the UK's national interest.

5

Debates

[Beijing Winter Olympics and Chinese Government Sanctions](#)

15 Jul 2021 | Backbench debates | House of Commons | 699 cc609-639

Motion that this House believes that the 2022 Winter Olympic games should not be hosted in a country whose Government is credibly accused of mass atrocity crimes; and calls on the UK Government to decline invitations for its representatives to attend the 2022 Beijing Olympic Games unless the Government of the People's Republic of China ends the atrocities taking place in the Xinjiang region and lifts the sanctions imposed on UK Parliamentarians, citizens and entities. Agreed to on question.

[South China Sea: Freedom of Navigation](#)

03 Sep 2020 | Adjournment debates | House of Commons | 679 cc339-344

Agreed to on question.

6

Urgent questions

Chinese Government Sanctions on UK Citizens

13 Apr 2021 | House of Commons | 692 cc155-167

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if he will make a statement on recent sanctions imposed by the Chinese Government on UK citizens.

The Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams): The Government stand in complete solidarity with those sanctioned by China. As the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have made clear, this action by Beijing is utterly unacceptable and unwarranted.

The House will recall that on 22 March, the UK, alongside the EU, Canada and the United States, imposed asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese Government officials and one entity responsible for the violations that have taken place and persist against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. In response, China sanctioned nine individuals and four organisations, including Members of this House and the other place, who have criticised its record on human rights. It speaks volumes that while 30 countries are united in sanctioning those responsible for serious and systematic violations of human rights in Xinjiang, China's response is to retaliate against those who seek to shine a light on those violations. It is fundamental to our parliamentary democracy that Members of both Houses can speak without fear or favour on matters of concern to the British people.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made absolutely clear the Government's position through their public statements and on 22 March. I also summoned China's representative in the UK to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to lodge a strong, formal protest at China's actions. This Government have been quick to offer support to those who have been sanctioned. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary held private meetings with the parliamentarians named in China's announcement. My noble Friend, the Minister for human rights, Lord Ahmad, met other individuals and the entities that have been targeted. Through this engagement, we have provided guidance and an offer of ongoing support, including a designated FCDO point of contact and specialist briefing from relevant Departments.

Just as this Government will be unbowed by China's action, I have no doubt that Members across this House will be undeterred in raising their fully justified concerns about the situation in Xinjiang and the human rights situation in China more broadly. I applaud the parliamentarians named by China: my hon. Friends the Members for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton), for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat), for Harborough (Neil

O'Brien) and for Wealden (Ms Ghani), my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith), the noble Lord Alton and the noble Baroness Kennedy for the vital role they have played in drawing attention to the plight of the Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

This Government have worked with partners to build the international caucus of those willing to speak out against China's human rights violations and increase the pressure on China to change its behaviour. We have led joint statements at the UN's human rights bodies, most recently joined by 38 countries at the UN General Assembly Third Committee in October, and we have backed up our international action with robust domestic measures. In addition to the global human rights sanctions announced on 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced a series of targeted measures in January to help ensure that British businesses are not complicit in human rights violations in Xinjiang. The United Kingdom will continue to work alongside its partners to send the clearest possible signal of the international community's serious concern and our collective willingness to act to hold China to account for its gross human rights violations in the region.

7

Statements

AUKUS

16 Sep 2021 | House of Commons | 700 cc1119-1131

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement about our friendship with Australia and the United States, and the security of the Indo-Pacific.

Yesterday I joined President Biden and Prime Minister Morrison to create a new trilateral defence partnership between our countries known as AUKUS. Australia has, for the first time, taken the momentous decision to acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, and it has asked for our help in achieving this ambition. I am delighted to tell the House that we have agreed to this request and we shall place the UK's expertise in this field, amassed over decades, at the assistance of our Australian friends. The first task of AUKUS will be an 18-month trilateral collaboration to determine the best way of delivering advanced nuclear submarines for Australia—emphasising, of course, that they will be powered by nuclear reactors, not armed with nuclear weapons, so the nuclear non-proliferation treaty places no prohibition on that work. The House will understand how Australia's future possession of that capability will help safeguard the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific.

Nuclear submarines are the capital ships of our age, propelled by an effectively inexhaustible source of energy, allowing them to circumnavigate the world without surfacing, deriving oxygen and fresh water from the sea around them. While on patrol, they keep silent watch over vast expanses of ocean, protecting shipping, gathering intelligence, deterring adversaries, and guarding the trade routes on which our livelihoods depend.

To design, build, operate and then safely decommission a nuclear submarine ranks among the most complex and technically demanding enterprises yet devised. Only six nations possess nuclear-powered submarines, and to help another country join this tiny circle is a decision of the utmost gravity, requiring perhaps the closest relationship of trust that can exist between sovereign states. I hope that I speak for the House when I say that I have no hesitation about trusting Australia, a fellow maritime democracy, joined to us by blood and history, which stood by Britain through two world wars at immense sacrifice.

Today, the UK and Australia defend the same interests, promote the same values and face the same threats: we are as closely aligned in international policy as any two countries in the world. One of the great prizes of this enterprise is that Australia, the UK and the US will become inseparable

partners in a project that will last for decades, creating opportunities for still greater defence and industrial co-operation.

The integrated review of foreign and defence policy described Britain's renewed focus on the Indo-Pacific, a region that is fast becoming the geopolitical centre of the world, and ever more important for British trade and therefore British jobs and British livelihoods. If there were ever any question about what global Britain's tilt towards the Indo-Pacific would mean in reality, or what capabilities we might offer, this partnership with Australia and the US provides the answer. It amounts to a new pillar of our strategy, demonstrating Britain's generational commitment to the security of the Indo-Pacific and showing exactly how we can help one of our oldest friends to preserve regional stability. It comes after the UK's success in becoming a dialogue partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and our application to join the trans-Pacific free trade area.

At the same time, this project will create hundreds of highly skilled jobs across the UK, including in Scotland, the north of England and the midlands, reinforcing our industrial base and our national scientific expertise, exemplified by the British companies participating in this week's Defence and Security Equipment International event.

A nuclear submarine programme exists within a different realm of engineering from any other marine project, requiring a mastery of disciplines ranging from propulsion to acoustics. In these fields and many others, we will have a new opportunity to strengthen Britain's position as a science and technology superpower, and by generating economies of scale, this project could reduce the cost of the next generation of nuclear submarines for the Royal Navy, helping us to renew our own capabilities.

While our partnership will begin with nuclear-powered submarines, now that we have created AUKUS, we expect to accelerate the development of other advanced defence systems, including in cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum computing and undersea capabilities. This partnership will open a new chapter in Britain's friendship with our closest allies, help to safeguard the security of the Indo-Pacific, create jobs at home and reinforce our country's place at the leading edge of technology. I commend this statement to the House.

8

Early Day Motions

UK representation at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics

EDM 149 (session 2021-22)

7 June 2021

Sir Iain Duncan Smith

That this House notes with concern that the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics will take place alongside a rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where Uyghurs and other minority groups are subject to widespread forced labour, sterilization, political indoctrination and arbitrary detention; reaffirms its opinion that Uyghurs and other minority groups in the Uyghur Region are victims of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity; reminds the International Olympics Committee that the Olympic Charter's principles of solidarity and non-discrimination are hard to reconcile with holding the 2022 Winter Games in a country whose Government stands credibly accused of perpetrating Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide; affirms that the International Olympic Committee's desire to stay above politics does not permit turning a blind eye to mass atrocity crimes; urges the International Olympics Committee to initiate an emergency search process for suitable replacement facilities for the 2022 Winter Games; calls on the Government to decline invitations for state officials to attend the 2022 Winter Games so long as Beijing remains the host venue; advises the Government to discourage companies operating in the UK from acting as commercial sponsors for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics; recognises that individual athletes have the right to choose whether to participate in the Olympic Games or not and urges them to think carefully about whether they should take part; and encourages the Chinese Government to work with international partners to take verifiable steps to improve the human rights situation of Uyghurs and other persecuted groups.

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