COMMENT

As China menaces Taiwan, the Royal and US navies rightly stand by Australia

America is moving to cut its own red tape and get this thing done

JOHN HEMMINGS

18 July 2023 • 1:45pm

The news this week that the US Senate was putting in amendments to the State Department Authorization Act of 2023 that would help authorize the transfer of two Virginia Class submarines to Australia in line with the Australia-UK-US trilateral arrangement (Aukus) is to be welcomed.

Should it go through, it will grant Australia and the UK priority status within the US foreign military sales (FMS) process, including advanced clearance for the transfer of Aukus-related technologies. Visiting the security think tank Pacific Forum this week, Australian Ambassador to the USA Kevin Rudd quoted Bismarck, saying "making legislation is like making sausage – messy and not to be observed too closely – but with any luck, you have sausage at the end of the process". Behind Rudd's words – and laced throughout his speech – was the central theme that seems to be dominating Washington DC these days – that of deterring China from invading Taiwan.

Aukus is intended to do just that by creating a shared industrial and technological base between the three countries around the most sensitive technologies, by creating a rotational force of submarines forward-deployed in Australia – close to China's key shipping lanes and the South China Sea – and by bolstering the submarine capabilities of all three countries. Euan Graham, a former British diplomat and expert on the region, has noted in the *ASPI Strategist* how the announcement this past March will put at least one Royal Navy Astute-class submarine permanently based in the region.

"Compared to the Royal Navy's other experiment in forward deployment in the region, involving a pair of roving patrol vessels", Graham notes that submarines are primarily "platforms for high-intensity conflict".

In his comments to the Pacific Forum, Ambassador Rudd – one-time Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Australia – noted that China's language on Taiwan has changed over the length of his long career. While once reserving the right to use military force to reunify Taiwan if the "wayward province" declared independence, Beijing now states that it has this right if there is not enough progress in unification, an alarmingly vague metric. As a consequence of this and of Russian's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden Administration has created the concept of "integrated deterrence".

The subject of late nights at the Pentagon, the concept was first introduced by the administration in the December 2022 Defense Forum Washington as the "cornerstone" of the US approach, supposedly allowing the US and its allies to dissuade or defeat aggression in any form or domain. The concept was subsequently more fully fleshed out in the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Defense Science and Technology Strategy. The latter report shows the link to Aukus: "Defense science and technology cooperation with our allies and partners will help create more capabilities, increase shared production capacity, and reinforce our shared commitment to, and therefore the credibility of, integrated deterrence."

While all of this sounds impressive – and to some extent it should – there are real questions about how the US will manage all of this "integration". After all, it has previously turned export controls on sensitive technologies into a bureaucratic science. And not in a good way.

The victory that Ambassador Rudd and Senator Kaine, Chair of the Senate Armed Services Seapower Subcommittee, were celebrating this week might be premature. The United States government has set itself a gargantuan task: it must expand defense industrial base capacity and integrate foreign companies into extremely sensitive parts of the military industrial economy and it must do this quickly – if we are to assume, as seems wise, that the timeline of a Taiwan invasion is in Xi Jinping's lifetime. Furthermore, it must reform and reduce the bureaucracy involved in its foreign military sales, a single sale of which can often involve no fewer than 10 or 11 agencies and departments across the executive and legislative.

While such change across a well-entrenched bureaucracy sounds like the administration might be asking too much of itself, the good news is that bureaucracy is one of the few things holding back change. For the most part, both parties – the Democrats and Republicans – agree that reforms and changes are needed if they are to build a sufficiently robust defense industrial base that will dissuade any aggression across all domains. In an era where China is most commonly perceived to be the largest manufacturing power, the imperative is all the stronger.

The good news for UK business – particularly across defense industry – is that this opening is occurring, presenting opportunities to tap into and integrate with the largest single defense market by spending. The question of course is how the UK will manage its own national interests in the establishment of a common defense technological base. The news that Aukus planners are already pushing for quantum submarines speaks to future opportunities, but there will of course be risks.

The real question is how the three powers will balance their own interests, while the largest of them attempts to strip out the mess of red tape that it has built to keep foreigners out and its technology in.

Related Topics

Royal Navy Submarine Service, US Navy, Australia, South China Sea, Taiwan, China

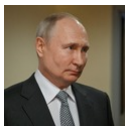
15

More stories

Ukraine and the West are facing a devastating defeat

Nigel Farage's Coutts account closed as bank felt he did not 'align with their values'

Britain is no country for Christians



Kosovo and Serbia are about to deal a final blow to Vladimir Putin

Russia massing 100,000 troops for attack on Kharkiv

Ben Wallace: We will pay for tanks but not more troops

More from News

Australian sailor thanks his ‘brave’ dog Bella as they make landfall in Mexico

By Our Foreign Staff

18 Jul 2023, 10:04pm

Questions over Britain’s 70pc boost in aid to India just days after its rocket launch

By Daniel Martin

18 Jul 2023, 10:00pm

Donald Trump ‘almost certainly’ faces arrest and federal charges

By Rozina Sabur

18 Jul 2023, 9:33pm

EHRC restarts investigation into Baroness Falkner

By Ewan Somerville

18 Jul 2023, 9:20pm

Docks reject cruise ships intended to house 1,000 asylum seekers

By Charles Hymas

18 Jul 2023, 9:00pm

Ministers braced for imminent Rishi Sunak reshuffle

By Ben Riley-Smith

18 Jul 2023, 9:00pm

More from The Telegraph

New York City has decided to destroy itself

The Left-wing celebrity philosopher who could deny Joe Biden a second term

The dossier that blows apart the Coutts claims about closing Nigel Farage's account

Ministers braced for imminent Rishi Sunak reshuffle

Britain braces for potentially 'deeply alarming' inflation figures

NS&I blocks early withdrawals on savings account with £22.5bn invested