

What's on the menu?

Ben Johnson

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Artist rendering of possible design for SSN-AUKUS submarines

Ben Johnson -Last week, [President Biden hosted Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese](#), celebrating his stay in Washington with a state dinner on the South Lawn. Despite changes to the entertainment and meals due to the conflict in Israel, the trip was a strong show of solidarity between allies. In a time of increasing global crisis, the dinner and discussions between the two leaders join a list of meetings between the United States and its [allies seeking to strengthen security pacts and defense treaties](#).

The efforts by countries such as Australia to reaffirm and strengthen their relationships can be understood using the concept of [geopolitical codes](#). These codes refer to how a geographical entity, such as a country, chooses to interact and present itself to the rest of the world. A key part of this calculation, exemplified by the Prime Minister's visit, is determining who one's allies are, who could become an ally, and how to make both like you more. Australia views the United States as one of its allies and is thus seeking to strengthen the relationship. The discussions between Biden and Albanese included Australia receiving nuclear-capable submarines in exchange for sending increased shipments of missiles to Ukraine along with military personnel and aircraft to the Middle East. However, strengthening ties between the two allies wasn't the only factor in each country's calculation of geopolitical codes. Conversely, geopolitical codes also consider current and future enemies and how to defend against them. The United States has identified China as a threat, particularly to its interests in Taiwan. Australia's proximity to China within the Indo-Pacific region has made the country nervous about Chinese ambitions. Thus, both countries have identified an actor that poses a threat and have sought to preemptively defend against it.

This increased cooperation between the United States and Australia has changed their power relations. [Power relations](#), or relational power, describes how an entity's [material power](#) affects its relationship with other entities. For example, the United States, Australia, and Britain have agreed to a joint contract to develop nuclear-powered attack submarines. This deal will increase all three countries' material power, thus affecting their relational power. Specifically, the U.S. and Australia are arranging exchanges of their material power capacities in order to grow their bi-lateral relations in light of increasingly tense relations with China. The United States hopes to gain a technological edge over China and, therefore, increase its relational power

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