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**EPREUVES D'ADMISSION EN
STRATEGIES INTERNATIONALES ET
DIPLOMATIE**

LANGUE DE TRAVAIL: ANGLAIS

Read the following article then complete the exercise below.

What the U.S.-British-Australian Security Pact Means for Europe

- ROSA BALFOUR - September 21, 2021

The military alliance forged between the United States, Australia, and the UK at the expense of France will lead to new alignments and could profoundly impact the transatlantic relationship. The United States and its European allies should know what's at stake.

During the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, the complaint from some European NATO members of insufficient consultation by the U.S. administration may have come across as petulant. Four weeks later, the AUKUS—a security pact between Australia, the UK, and the United States, whereby Canberra acquires U.S. nuclear-powered submarines and scraps its submarine agreement with France—dispels any doubt.

Whether the failure to warn France of the imminent agreement was an unprofessional diplomatic blunder or a sign of disdain toward the United States' European ally is less important than the likely reality: when it comes to China, the United States does not value nor trust its European partners.

The aim of the security arrangement is widely understood to be containing China's growing encroachment on the region. It comes on the heels of deteriorating trade and diplomatic relations between China and Australia in which Beijing has shown little restraint in using retaliatory measures.

Despite—or perhaps because of—its economic interdependence with China, Australia is seeking security guarantees from the United States. Unsurprisingly, Beijing interprets the deal as confrontational, accusing the United States of using an “obsolete cold war zero sum mentality*.”

The Biden administration is marching ahead in reshaping alliances in view of its rivalry with China. All else, in this case France, comes after this overarching goal. Beyond the diplomatic fallout with Paris, it is worth thinking through the broader implications for Europe.

They are about Europe's relationship with the Indo-Pacific region. They are about Europe's complicated and divisive relationship with China. They are about whether the EU can play a role in de-escalating geopolitical tensions. And fundamentally, they are about mutual European and American trust and perceptions about the future of the transatlantic alliance.

Ironically, the AUKUS was announced on the same day as the EU's unveiling of an Indo-Pacific strategy for its expanding interests and relations in the region—something France, a long-time actor in the Indo-Pacific, had pushed for.

In typical Brussels fashion, the Indo-Pacific strategy is comprehensive—ranging from climate to maritime security, from trade to sustainability— and inclusive of all interested regional actors. It reaches out to other states that have an Indo-Pacific strategy, including the AUKUS three, and is open to China, with which Brussels thinks it should engage at least on climate and biodiversity.

“Cooperation, not confrontation” were the words repeatedly chosen by EU High Representative Josep Borrell at the press conference launching the strategy. Soon after being presented on September 16, the EU's strategy looked like a lone dove singing in a choir of hawks.

Whether one interprets this approach as reflecting the EU's deeper instinct in favor of de-escalation and dialogue or as the cover story of the bloc's commercial interests in doing business with China, it does not chime with Washington's view of China as *the* strategic threat of the 21st century. That is probably the only issue upon which there is bipartisan domestic consensus.

Rather than a pivot to Asia, which during the years of Barack Obama's presidency caused Europeans to fear their irrelevance, the AUKUS signals that all means serve the end of containing China, whether Europe likes it or not. The means include some of the partnerships that the Biden administration has spent time repairing.

This could become a missed opportunity for the United States to cooperate with the EU on the Indo-Pacific. In the past, the United States and the EU have, at times, used “good cop, bad cop” tactics to deal with difficult situations, for instance when European talks with Iran eventually led to the non-proliferation negotiations and the JCPOA. Similar arrangements require trust among partners and a shared game plan. And trust is such an important issue.

The diminished trust undercuts the possibility of the United States and the EU working together on China, at least when it comes to biodiversity and climate change, which Europe increasingly recognizes as the greatest threat of the 21st century. It also limits the space for different approaches, such as bottom-up or subregional attempts to look at security outside the state-centric and rivalry-driven lens.

Europe must now ask itself two questions.

Firstly, does the EU have the bandwidth to withstand confrontational geopolitics without getting embroiled** in them? And secondly, could its dithering*** on foreign policy, its failure to invest in its security, its hopeless divisions among member states, and especially its positioning toward China—between ambivalence and mercantilism—have undermined its credibility and reliability in Washington’s eyes?

There is a deeper risk for Europe behind the AUKUS conundrum.

Further pressure toward confrontation with China risks breaking the precarious balance between transatlanticists and those in favor of strengthening Europe’s autonomy in international affairs.

Back in 2003, the George W. Bush administration’s slogan “you’re either with us or against us,” used to rally support for the military intervention in Iraq, caused deep rifts within Europe, with France, Germany, and the Benelux countries refusing to join the coalition. Those rifts took time to heal, a luxury the EU does not have in the context of such rapidly shifting alliances.

France and the EU institutions have been pushing for a greater investment in the EU’s security capacity, with new defense initiatives being announced in the State of the Union address by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen just one day before the AUKUS debacle.

Events such as the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban and the launch of the AUKUS fuel these arguments. Yet, European defense cannot protect the continent. Like Australia, the economy of some European states is critically intertwined with that of China, but their security is inextricably bound to the United States.

The debate on strategic autonomy is helplessly knotted in a false zero-sum* dichotomy, whereby more Europe would mean less United States. In a continent

where security risk perceptions diverge depending on whether you sit in Warsaw or Lisbon, this false dichotomy has become a prison and an excuse for inaction. Yet more uncertainty about the transatlantic relationship, combined with pressure to shore up against China, risk breaking Europe's and NATO's precarious balance. This ought not be in the interest of the United States—or the Europeans.

Glossary

***a zero-sum mentality** perceives situations as zero-sum games, where one person's gain would be another's loss.

****embroiled** = involved

*****dithering** = hesitancy, failure to act quickly and decisively

******to shore up** = to strengthen one's defences

EXERCISE

To what extent do you agree with the writer's assertion that "the United States does not value nor trust its European partners"? How do you see the past, present and future of US-Europe relations?

Use information from the text as well as your own knowledge and examples to justify your answer.

You should write around 500 words.