



Regional Stability Rivalry in the Indo Pacific Region: China's Interests in Responding the AUKUS Trilateral Pact

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i9.4149>

Abstract

Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) were formed as a technological transformation cooperation in building nuclear-powered submarines initiated by three countries namely the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom which are projected to minimize China's aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region. China opposes the agreement, arguing that the presence of the trilateral AUKUS pact can damage the security order, disrupt regional stability, trigger an arms race and weaken the principle of international non-proliferation due to the transformation of nuclear technology. This study uses qualitative research methods, using secondary data such as Scopus and Google Scholar, e-books, articles and news that have credibility written descriptively. The theory used to support this research is the theory of securitization of the Copenhagen School thought by B. Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde by prioritizing the speech act and the assumptions of the traditional security approach. Considering this is a threat to China's supremacy in the Indo-Pacific region, China has begun to fight against AUKUS as speech act in the form of criticizing the dangers of AUKUS and military modernization measures to strengthen the Chinese military in the face of pressure from the AUKUS.

Keywords: *AUKUS; China, Asia – Pacific; Securitization Theory; Speech Act; Military Modernization*

Introduction

Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) is a trilateral defense pact initiated by three major countries in the world, namely Australia, England, and the United States. On September 15, 2021, three high-ranking state officials, namely Scott Morrison (Prime Minister of Australia), Boris Johnson (Prime Minister of Britain), and Joseph Biden (President of the United States) officially formed a security cooperation known as AUKUS. The defense pact has a goal for security cooperation through a collaborative plan in developing nuclear-powered submarines, especially for Australia (Office, 2021). The AUKUS idea was also formed to focus on cutting-edge technology in the field of security and defense, especially in the development of quantum technology. This cooperation also has plans that will involve the exchange of information, development of underwater capabilities, and can be mutually beneficial in developing the security industry base. The security and defense pact is also expected to be able to complement each other in terms of mutual defense and security (Shoebri, 2021).

The AUKUS Pact itself is expected to be able to increase collective capabilities in the security sector, especially in the mission to prevent China's expansionism, especially in the Indo-Pacific region.

For the UK, the formation of AUKUS is a great opportunity to play an important role and engage further in the Indo-Pacific region. On the other hand, AUKUS can also be a lucrative potential for the UK, especially in industrial fields such as shipbuilding with high technology. In addition, AUKUS is also an opportunity to improve the image of the UK in the international arena with the Indo-Pacific region as a new center of security concern for the UK and assisting Australia as a partner to maintain regional stability in the region. Further explained that for the United States, AUKUS is a strategic opportunity to minimize China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States also views that the existence of AUKUS can be a key reference for the Biden administration in its mission to form a stronger partnership in the security sector to maintain peace and stability throughout the Indo-Pacific region. This is of course related to China's increasing threat in the region, so the United States and its allies need to view the Indo-Pacific region as an important area for the United States foreign policy and defense strategy. Meanwhile, Australia itself understands that its involvement with the United States and Britain in the formation of AUKUS has made Australia a country that will receive technological transformation assistance in the form of a nuclear-powered submarine so the formation of AUKUS is very beneficial for Australia to protect shared values and promote security and prosperity in the country. the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, the defense pact creates high hopes and confidence for Australia to be further involved in maintaining regional stability amid increasing security threats, especially from China (Brooke-Holland et al., 2021).

Australia would gain security advantages by joining the United States and Britain in the AUKUS pact. In this case, Australia will get defense facilities in the form of nuclear-powered submarines that have high capabilities with speed, range, and durability that are more sophisticated and significantly more sophisticated than other conventionally powered fleets. This makes Australia an important capital to balance China in terms of military ability to at least provide resistance due to economic coercion imposed by China. Meanwhile, defense cooperation could enhance Australia's long-range strike capability through the acquisition of Tomahawk cruise missiles, and long-range anti-ship missiles, as well as collaboration with the United States in developing hypersonic missiles. Meanwhile for America and Britain, providing security technology transformation assistance to Australia can be an economic benefit for both countries through industrial development due to the purchase or lease of submarines made by Australia to these two countries (Lee, 2021).

The presence of the AUKUS pact has become a spotlight in the international arena, especially for countries who consider that cooperation in the security and defense sector can become a new threat in the Indo – Pacific region. China is a country that strongly opposes the existence of the AUKUS pact. For China, the establishment of AUKUS can disrupt regional stability and undermine peace which will have an impact on creating an arms race between countries. AUKUS is also seen by China as a partnership that refers to anti-China and thinks that the partnership can trigger military confrontation (Marlow, 2021).

China also views AUKUS as a form of "new cold war mentality" initiated by the United States and its allies to hinder China's existence in the international arena, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Through his Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian said that China also warned the United States and Britain not to carry out the nuclear technology transformation that would be given to Australia because it was considered very sensitive which could trigger tensions in the region. In addition, another response was also given by a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in the United States who considered that a country should not be allowed to form an exclusive block that targets or harms the interests of third parties, especially those related to ideological prejudice purposes. Meanwhile, responding to the formation of AUKUS has forced China to prepare itself by accelerating its military development in the Indo-Pacific region. This was also triggered by increasing concerns about a confrontation in the South China Sea or the Taiwan Strait which at any time could escalate into a conflict (Davidson & Blair, 2021).

Meanwhile, the formation of AUKUS as a defense and security pact in the Indo-Pacific region is believed to have an impact on countries around the region. Several countries have responded pro and

contra to the formation of AUKUS. On the pro-AUKUS side, there are several ASEAN countries such as Singapore, the Philippines, and Vietnam who welcome and agree that the formation of the AUKUS pact can create peace, regional stability, and security cooperation in minimizing China's dominance in the Indo-Pacific region. AUKUS is also expected to be able to contribute collectively to creating regional peace and can become an ally for ASEAN in facing security threats and challenges in the Indo-Pacific region (CNN, 2021). On the other hand, several ASEAN countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia joined China as countries that rejected the security pact. The country views that there will be an arms race over the nuclear technology transformation work carried out by Australia, the United States, and Britain. This is a concern for countries that are against AUKUS by viewing that the trilateral security pact will trigger other powers to act aggressively so that it can have implications for regional conflicts. This is also strongly supported by concerns about the abandonment of commitments because they are considered to violate the nuclear non-proliferation agreement (NPT) (Shoebridge, 2021).

Literature Review

The journal that explains the response from various countries to the presence of the AUKUS pact by the three countries namely Australia, United Kingdom and the United States is described in a journal entitled "What is AUKUS and what is it not? How does it connect to the Quad, the Sydney Dialogue, ASEAN and Indo-Pacific security?" by Michael Shoebridge which describes the various pro and con responses to the formation of AUKUS. Pros like Japan and India welcome the presence of AUKUS as an agreement that will complement the Quad agreement (Shoebridge, 2021). It is further explained in Poornima Vijaya's writing entitled "Australia's Role in the Quad and Its Crumbling Ties with China". This is because Australia has deep access to nuclear-powered submarines. Meanwhile, the presence of AUKUS is also very important for the mission of minimizing the influence and existence of China, especially in the Indo-Pacific region (Vijaya, 2021). Meanwhile, Mariane Olivia Delanova's journal entitled "Impact of the AUKUS Trilateral Defense Pact on the Indo-Pacific Regional Condition" explained that opposing parties such as China, Indonesia, and Malaysia thought that the trilateral defense cooperation agreement would have an impact on the arms race between countries and impact to the stability of the Indo-Pacific region (Delanova, 2021).

Akmal Tawakal writing entitled "Indo-Pacific and European Union Security Dynamics Regarding the AUKUS Alliance" explains concerns over the use of nuclear-powered submarines that will be owned by Australia obtained from the transfer of technology from the United States and Britain. In addition to this, the use of nuclear-based submarines is considered to have violated international agreements in terms of the transformation of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, namely the Treaty on the NPT (Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) (Tawakal, 2022). Manqing Cheng also presented his views in his writing entitled "AUKUS: The Changing Dynamic and Its Regional Implications" about the urgency for parties involved in the AUKUS pact such as Australia, which has strategic security potential in easing Australia's domestic criticism of the ANZUS Alliance. In addition, Australia also has the opportunity to demonstrate to the international community its influence on the Indo-Pacific region (Cheng, 2022). In the Indo-Pacific region, the United States also has a goal in its security measures through AUKUS with the main focus being on the transfer of submarine technology and implicitly aiming to minimize China's dominance in the region as explained by Kristen E. Eichensehr in his article entitled "The United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom Announce "AUKUS" Alliance Focused on Indo-Pacific Security" (Eichensehr, 2022).

A journal initiated by Kolja Raube and Raquel V. Rubio entitled "Coherence at Last? Transatlantic Cooperation in Response to the Geostrategic Challenge of China" explains the coherence and incoherence of transatlantic cooperation to China's geostrategic challenges. The

article also provides two examples of cases, namely the joint sanction and the AUKUS case. It was further explained that in the AUKUS case, transatlantic actors did not find a coherent answer to the geographical strategic competition with China. This is because the United States is focusing on its alternative cooperation with Britain and Australia for its geostrategic interests to the exclusion of the broader transatlantic approach. Transatlantic relations are not necessarily strengthened or weakened in the case of AUKUS. This is due to a shift in United States policy due to a change in leadership. Even the existence of AUKUS is considered to have the potential to weaken and damage the trust of transatlantic partners so that it becomes incoherent in reaching a mutual agreement on China's geostrategic strategy (Raube & Vega Rubio, 2022). Meanwhile, the journal by Mentor Lecaj and Donat Rexha entitled "The AUKUS International Legal Agreement and its Impact on International Institutions and Security" that the AUKUS pact is said to be a turning point for the United States and its allies to rebuild global security policies amid a world order that is unipolar is starting to look outdated. The existence of instability and uncertainty in the international world order triggers countries to start thinking about forming alliances in order to protect against the creation of common security interests. The change in the unipolar world order dominated by the United States towards a multipolar world order with China as one of the countries that challenged the old global order has raised European concerns about China's growth and development through economic and military power (Lecaj & Rexha, 2022).

The journal entitled "Taking stock of Australia's asymmetrical relations with China: interdependence, tensions, and new dimensions" which was initiated by Alicia Kizekova explains the asymmetrical relationship that occurs between Australia and China which can be said to be mutually dependent on each other. However, the formation of a trilateral defense pact initiated by the United States, Britain and Australia known as the AUKUS Pact has heightened tensions in relations between Australia and China. The formation of the AUKUS pact has become a new dimension of tension for relations between the two countries. In this regard, China opposes the presence of the AUKUS Pact as a threat to regional stability (Kizeková, 2021). The article initiated by Audry Anjani Danindra Novita in his journal entitled "AUKUS Alliance: United States Strategic Interest in Indo-Pacific" discusses the interests of the United States in the Indo-Pacific through the AUKUS trilateral pact. The United States is focusing its strategy on preventing conflict in the South China Sea. Biden-era United States foreign policy tends to prioritize building alliances and allies. The formation of AUKUS is clear evidence for the United States in strengthening its alliance with the common goal of opposing Chinese supremacy in the Indo-Pacific region. This is important considering that the region is potentially important for the future geopolitical strategy of the United States (Novita, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This study will use securitization theory which is useful in helping in analyzing research problems, especially related to security issues. The securitization theory is a theory initiated by the Copenhagen School such as B. Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. The ideas and ideas related to the theory have been listed in a book entitled "Security: A Framework for Analysis" which discusses in detail the socially constructed security issues in international politics. This theory also has a special view on the extent to which political actors assess certain issues as a security threat. Furthermore, the securitization process will enable emergency actions in the face of security threats. In this case, a threat can be seen from the speech act. On this basis, the actors in the securitization process prioritize the use of speech acts to show that the state needs to take the necessary attitudes and actions in dealing with a threat (Buzan et al., 1998).

Security related studies were basically influenced by the bipolar system during the cold war through the influence of realism. In today's contemporary era, security issues are dominated by strategic military issues so that these issues are now starting to become an important part of the interests of a

country. Security studies also prioritize the extent to which the state is able to maintain a "feel of security" for its country from a threat. It also makes the state to focus on developing and strengthening security technical matters such as weapons, security forces, and other military elements (Muhaimin, 2018).

In securitization theory, the Copenhagen School tends to view that an issue can be said to be a security threat if there is a speech act carried out by security actors. Securitization is considered to be a process that can resolve a problem that is considered a security threat. Further explained, this school views that there has been a shift in the main focus of security studies from traditional security to non-traditional security. Furthermore, Buzan as one of the initiators of this school also classifies 5 sectors of security studies which consist of:

- Military sector which includes forceful coercion
- Political sector which includes government status, authority, and recognition
- Economic sectors that include trade, production, and finance
- Social sector which includes collective identity
- The environmental sector which includes human activities and the planetary biosphere (Buzan et al., 1998).

Meanwhile, security theory also has 3 important indicators in security studies, such as the speech act, the Schmittian approach, and assumptions based on the traditional security approach. A speech act or "talk act" can be understood as an action in the form of statements and speeches of political actors related to security that have the potential to become a threat. The Schmittian approach can be understood as thinking that sees security as a potential danger and part of the special character of security politics (Huysmans, 1998). Meanwhile, Buzan also explained that the state is an actor that plays a role in the securitization process. This is done by the state by looking at several actions that are considered to have the potential to be a threat. However, there are several important things in the securitization process, such as the first identification of an issue (political or non-political) to see whether the issue can turn into a security issue. Second, it is related to looking at the conditions supporting the securitization process. It aims to gain public support for the threat of being securitized (Witarti & Hartono, 2014).

Research Methods

This study uses qualitative research methods that examine how phenomena or social entities are interpreted, understood, and structured. In other words, qualitative research methods aim to find the meaning behind an action or event that occurs in the international arena. Collecting data using literature study using secondary data sources related to the research topic. The author uses secondary data sources obtained through online data from Scopus journals and Google Scholar. Other online data is obtained through e-books, articles, news that have credibility, and government responses obtained through the channel platform Youtube. Meanwhile, other offline data were obtained through printed books. The data that has been obtained by the author will be read, studied, compared, and analyzed so that it can help answer the problems in the research which will be written descriptively.

Results and Analysis

Tension Rivalry in the Indo – Pacific Region: China vs AUKUS Speech Act Efforts

The presence of AUKUS as a forum for a new collaboration on security for the three countries namely the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia in 2021 has caused various reactions in the international community. Various reactions from the pros and cons have also made the AUKUS issue an

important topic that must be considered by the international community. One of the most opposed to the presence of AUKUS as an acronym for security and defense cooperation, namely China. China, in response to the AUKUS trilateral agreement between Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States, carried out Speech Act such as an open criticism to emphasize that the AUKUS agreement was dangerous for many parties. This is also supported by China's strong statement assessing that the agreement of the three countries is a new model of western provocation. China itself thinks that AUKUS can be a threat to regional security, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. AUKUS itself is a form of trilateral agreement to build nuclear-powered submarines. However, for China, this will disrupt regional stability and undermine regional peace. Lijian Zhao, a spokesman for the Beijing Foreign Ministry, stressed that the agreement could trigger an arms race because AUKUS' actions could undermine the international principle of non-proliferation. Furthermore, Zhao considered the efforts of the United States and its allies to be an irresponsible double standard act for using the export of nuclear use as part of a geopolitical game plan (Shinkman, 2021).

Differences in assumptions regarding the purpose of establishing AUKUS as a trilateral cooperation agreement in the development of technology transfer for nuclear-powered ships have sparked a tension rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region with China as the party most opposed to the AUKUS pact. For the AUKUS party, as stated by Peter Dutton as the Australian Minister of Defense, considered that China's criticism of the AUKUS agreement an irrational act. Furthermore, Dutton explained that there is an irrational argument when China considers that AUKUS will cause an arms race in the Indo-Pacific region while China already has 335 fleet ships and seeks to continue to increase its fleet to 400 shortly (Hurst, 2021). This was later responded by Wang Xining as the Chinese ambassador to Australia by warning that the Australian government should not be obsessed with the cold war mentality of ideological prejudice. Furthermore, Wang stated that Australian officials should not provide arguments that could trigger a confrontation with China by seeking to take selfish political advantages because in the end it will only harm Australia and become a laughing stock in the international community (Sky News Australia, 2021). In the face of counter-reactions from the international community, other AUKUS parties such as the UK also through Prime Minister Boris Johnson assessed that AUKUS is not widely seen as an attempt to be hostile to China. However, it is seen more as a technology transfer partnership in building nuclear-powered submarines for peaceful purposes and maintaining regional stability (BBC, 2021). The UK also views its involvement with the AUKUS pact will be a new geostrategic step after the Brexit momentum. It will be important for the UK to play an important role in the "Global UK" strategy again by leveraging the advantages of closer comparative partnerships with the United States and Australia in the Indo-Pacific region (Harding et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, the United States in the era of Biden's leadership has emphasized that the focus of United States foreign policy is not only focused on national interests but also focuses on commitments and joint efforts in facing global challenges, especially in terms of international security. This is evidenced by the efforts of the United States in establishing AUKUS with its two allied countries by making the Indo-Pacific region the first step in building a joint commitment. In this case, the United States Vision regarding the Indo-Pacific region tends to prioritize the management of its alliances and partnerships. The presence of AUKUS can also be seen as a form of emphasis by the United States and its alliances on China's dominance in the Indo-Pacific region. This is important considering that the region is considered important for the future of the United States (Novita, 2022).

The Indo-Pacific region is considered part of the tense rivalry between China and the United States and its allies. The area can also be said to be a battle ring in the struggle for influence for the two superpowers today, namely China and the United States. However, China is seen as having a slight advantage over its influence in the region over the United States. China is known as a country that can offer economic assistance that can be accepted by Indo-Pacific countries. Meanwhile, the United States is considered a bit late to make the Indo-Pacific region part of its foreign policy. The United States itself views that its main focus is its concern about China's increasingly massive coercive and aggressive

actions in the region. However, some Indo-Pacific countries are more focused on concerns about the immediate threat posed by climate change. These countries are only interested in cooperative relations with the United States but are not interested in the United States' geopolitical strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. This is because several countries in the region do not want to see China as a common enemy (Al Jazeera Staff, 2022).

Rivalry tensions in the Indo-Pacific region between the two major powers, namely the United States and China, are inseparable from differences in views towards the region. For China, Beijing views the Indo-Pacific region as part of its plan to build the region's infrastructure by implementing the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) model to make a positive contribution to countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Meanwhile, the United States views the region as more likely to focus on the military component through its geopolitical concepts and strategies. Even that view is based on the concept of "coordination of great powers" to the exclusion of China's presence. Beijing itself considers that the concept offered by Washington can undermine the principle of openness and non-exclusivity in the Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, China views the United States point of view as an attempt to prevent the foreign policy program initiated by China, namely the BRI. Even China accused that the model offered by the United States would only interfere with the concept of the Indo-Pacific region which is free and open. For China, the United States tendency towards a new geopolitical construction with a military component is Washington's attempt to create a new cold war mentality in the Indo-Pacific region (Denisov et al., 2021).

China has also massively carried out speech acts through campaigns to the international community regarding the dangers of the AUKUS alliance. This can be seen from China's efforts by alleging that the AUKUS agreement would violate the NPT (Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) because it would carry out illegal transfers of nuclear weapons during its meeting with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) board. China also views that the AUKUS alliance is trying to persuade the IAEA to eliminate nuclear proliferation. Even China has begun to doubt and question the legitimacy, integration, and mandate of the IAEA in resolving the issue of nuclear materials for the AUKUS agreement (Murphy, 2022).

China's Military Modernization in Response to the Presence of AUKUS

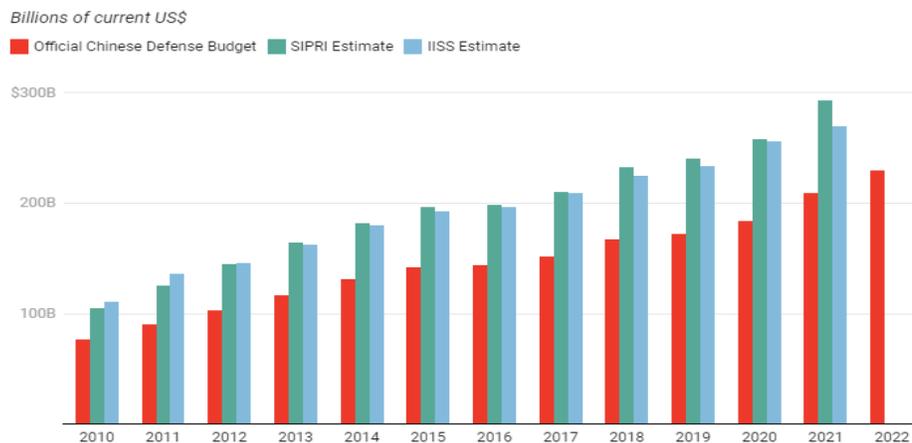
The presence of the AUKUS pact has now become a serious threat to countries around the Indo-Pacific region, especially to China. China realizes that the security pact initiated by Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States will become a serious problem in the future for the influence of China's dominance, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. It is also now forcing China to prepare an important strategy in dealing with the AUKUS threat. Some things that China has considered as a strategy are related to increasing military capacity and speech acts in the form of criticism of the trilateral pact. Broadly speaking, there are several supporting factors why China began to carry out the first military modernization, namely in terms of a comprehensive strategy and perspective, China views that the modernization of military power aims to maintain domestic security stability and regional security stability from threats from other countries. Meanwhile, from a historical and theoretical perspective, the presence of modern war technology and information also influences changes in military characteristics in the international world. The act of modernizing military forces is very important given the dynamic international security uncertainty caused by increasing complex threats. This made China aware that the issue of national defense is an important thing for the state to continue to pay attention to (Amin, 2019).

In terms of increasing military capacity, China has modernized the armed forces that have been in operation since the 1980s. This can be seen from the increase in the ability of the warship fleet and submarine fleet. The fleet has nuclear power capabilities complemented by ballistic missiles. In the program to increase the modernization of the armed forces, China has also boosted the capabilities of its naval forces to reach deep-sea and coastal areas (Gertz, 2017). This is also supported by China's efforts to apply a new style of war doctrine in the process of military modernization. In this case, the doctrine of the

new style of war puts forward a war strategy by maximizing the use of technology and information. This is intended so that China's military capabilities can take advantage of more effective attacks to streamline time in war conditions. This doctrine also explains in the implementation of the format of war in the modern era that those who have mastery of modern weapons technology and a more efficient range will have a more dangerous destructive effect so that the war will end quickly (Cordesman & Yarosh, 2013).

The military modernization carried out by China is clear evidence of China's great desire to achieve superpower status. One of the initial stages that became a supporting factor to achieve this was maritime power. In this case, China understands that the strength of a maritime nation is not only seen from the strength of a strong naval fleet but also requires strong military infrastructure and logistics such as coast guard ships that have superior capabilities, a strong navy, a large fleet of merchant ships and industry. world class military. For China, this aims to prevent external threats that will be faced by Beijing, especially when there are disputes with other countries. In addition, China's massive military modernization is a message that the international community wants to convey that China is starting to prepare itself as a maritime superpower. This is also supported by China's military activities by conducting joint exercises with Russia in the Baltic sea as well as the activities of Chinese warships and intelligence vessels that began operating on the coasts of Queensland and Djibouti (Cipto, 2018). China in the Xi Jinping era has ambitions to become the country with the best maritime power in the world. This is considered important for China because projections at sea have important potential in increasing economic development in the outside world. This is also supported by the government's role in the Maritime Silk Road program as part of China's maritime power instrument. The country's dependence on trade, such as exports of raw materials and economic fuel, has become a geostrategic opportunity for China to become the "commander of the seas" in ensuring a stable flow of shipping through maritime routes (Khan et al., 2019).

Estimates of Chinese Defense Spending



Source: CSIS China Power Project; Chinese Central Government; SIPRI; IISS

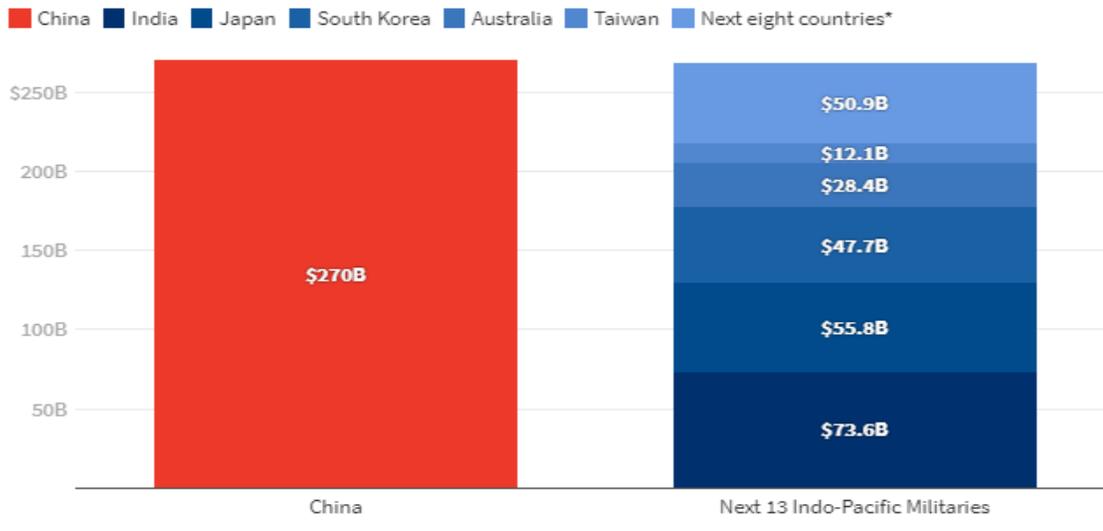
Figure 1 Estimation of China's Defense Budget Expenditure from 2010-2022
(course: chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/)

In 2022, the opening of the annual session of the People's Congress of China (NPC) has shown that the Chinese government has officially announced an increase in the country's defense spending by 7.1% for 1.45 trillion yuan or equivalent to \$230 billion in the draft report. state budget. This figure is considered realistic for Beijing to continue to support its military modernization program. Even amid the uncertainty of the security situation surrounding China, the increase in defense spending in 2022 has exceeded the defense spending budget in 2020 with a figure of around 6.6% and in 2021 with a figure of around 6.8%. The Chinese government is expected to make big strides in 2022 by increasing combat

training and military logistics readiness to safeguard China's sovereignty, security, and development interests (Xuanzun, 2022).

Defense Spending in the Indo-Pacific

China's military is better funded than the next 13 Indo-Pacific militaries combined



Note: Figures are in billions of US\$ (constant 2020).

*Includes Singapore, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Malaysia, and New Zealand.

Source: CSIS China Power Project; SIPRI

Figure 2 Comparison of China's Defense Budget vs Countries in the Indo-Pacific Region
(course: chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/)

Data quoted from the CSIS China Power Project has shown an increase in China's defense budget. The actions taken by the Chinese government in increasing the defense budget are a response to support military modernization. This is considered important in preventing foreign intervention in regional and international security issues, especially regarding state sovereignty. In addition, the increase in the defense budget was also supported by several other military modernization programs such as procurement programs, military reform, to a new doctrinal change program related to war strategy for the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In its development, the increase in China's defense budget in the last two decades has not been able to match the United States which has spent \$767.8 billion or almost three times the budget of Beijing in 2021. This has also shown that there are different interests in the military for China and the United States. The difference in interests can be seen from the pattern of the United States which is more likely to maintain its superpower status over military capabilities globally. Meanwhile, China focuses on regional security, especially in the Indo-Pacific region (ChinaPower, 2022). China's actions in carrying out military modernization are inseparable from three main objectives, namely, first, to develop a military that has superior capabilities in maintaining its national security and development interests. Second, to minimize the gap between the PLA (People's Liberation Army) and the world's leading military. Third, namely to increase its military capabilities in modern warfare. This is also supported by China's agenda and programs that support the modernization of high-quality military development as well as developing innovations related to military science and technology, providing training to its military personnel, developing modern military logistics and equipment management systems such as the discourse of launching its third aircraft carrier, development of nuclear weapons, to an increase in Beijing's production of J-20 fighter jets (Jash, 2022).

China's military modernization is also strengthened by aggressive military activities carried out with its closest ally, Russia. This can be seen from the joint training activities of 10 warship fleets

consisting of 5 warships belonging to China and the rest belonging to Russia in the western Pacific region. For China, this activity is a form of comprehensive strategic coordination carried out by Beijing and its ally Moscow. It aims to increase the joint operational capability of the two country's military fleets. Russia also supports this by considering that the joint military exercise is a testament to the commitment of Russia and China to maintaining security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region (London, 2021). Amid the threat from the United States and its allies in opposing China's dominance in the Indo-Pacific region, China is also starting to think about balancing the alliance by building military cooperation with its ally, Russia.

Conclusion

AUKUS is present as an acronym for a trilateral defense agreement between Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States which aims indirectly to threaten China's dominance, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. The aggressiveness of China's movement in the Indo-Pacific region makes the United States and its allies need to take strategic action in urging and minimizing China's domination. However, China views the actions of the United States and its allies are actions that can trigger a cold war mentality. The presence of AUKUS is also considered to only disrupt regional stability and even trigger an arms race. The trilateral pact is considered a new model of western provocation that can damage regional peace. The form of a trilateral agreement to build nuclear-powered submarines is considered only a cover for the United States and its allies to develop a security strategy for its geostrategic interests.

China realizes that the presence of AUKUS will indirectly hinder and disrupt its interests in the Indo-Pacific region. In this case, China was forced to take several urgent actions in response to the presence of the AUKUS pact. Currently, there are two Chinese actions in response to the AUKUS trilateral pact, namely carrying out speech acts through the anti-AUKUS campaign and criticizing the AUKUS party in several international agendas. The campaign strongly rejects the presence of AUKUS because it is considered to undermine the principle of international non-proliferation and threaten regional stability. In addition, China is also modernizing its military by developing its military system to prepare itself for the pressure of AUKUS. This is evidenced by the actions of the Chinese government in issuing a fantastic amount of its military budget as a form of support for its military modernization. China's actions seem to want to convey to the international community, especially those involved in AUKUS, that China is prepared to face the worst possibility of the presence of the AUKUS pact.

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