

The Impact of AUKUS in Indonesian Perspective: Regional Military Balance and Security Dilemma

Alifsar Nurfauzi¹, Frisca Lampita², Muhammad Rizky Mahendra³

¹Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia, alifsar22001@mail.unpad.ac.id

²Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Pertamina, Indonesia, friscalampita@gmail.com

³Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Pasundan, Indonesia, mrizky094@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Indonesia in issuing Australia's plans to pursue nuclear-powered submarines and the launch of AUKUS as a new security grouping between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States aimed at promoting greater defense industry cooperation will be significant considerations for Indonesia. As one of Australia's major neighboring country, one of Indonesia major concerns will be the significant impact on the region's military balance. Not only will Australian nuclear-powered submarines will be able to undertake long-endurance, high-speed, stealth operations, but they could be equipped with upgraded missile systems. The Indonesian government viewed the submarine decision 'cautiously' and was 'deeply concerned' over the continuous arms race and power projection in the region.

The aim of this paper is to analyze how Australia's decision to power up its maritime capability create a security dilemma for Indonesia that left Indonesia 'jammed' between two major powers. This could increase the tension in the region. As Indonesia believe the AUKUS will provoke China into developing more sophisticated anti-submarine which would generate anxiety for Jakarta. This could lead into arms race between major powers. The author uses qualitative research to find fact and answer research questions on Indonesia's concern regarding AUKUS will trigger China and provoke arm race in the region and create security dilemma for Indonesia.

Keywords: AUKUS, Indonesia, China, arms race, regional stability.

ABSTRAK

Indonesia di dalam menyikapi rencana Australia di dalam menciptakan kapal selam bertenaga nuklir dan meluncurkan AUKUS sebagai pakta pertahanan baru di kawasan yang beranggotakan Australia, Inggris, dan Amerika Serikat, di mana Amerika Serikat yang bertujuan untuk mempromosikan kerja sama pertahanan yang lebih besar menjadi pertimbangan yang signifikan bagi Indonesia. Sebagai salah satu dari negara tetangga Australia, salah satu perhatian besar Indonesia terhadap hal tersebut adalah dampak signifikan daripada keseimbangan militer di kawasan. Tak hanya kapal selam bertenaga nuklir Australia dapat menjadi tahan lama, berkecepatan tinggi, juga melakukan operasi penyamaran, tetapi kapal selam Australia juga bisa jadi dilengkapi dengan sistem misil terbaru. Pemerintah Indonesia melihat keputusan ini dengan 'hati-hati' juga 'sangat memperhatikan terhadap persaingan persenjataan dan proyeksi kekuasaan yang berkesinambungan di kawasan.

Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana keputusan Australia untuk meningkatkan kapabilitas militernya dapat menciptakan suatu dilema keamanan bagi Indonesia sebagaimana dilema tersebut meningkatkan kemungkinan yang menyebabkan Indonesia 'terjebak' di antara dua kekuatan besar. Indonesia percaya bahwa AUKUS akan memprovokasi Tiongkok untuk turut serta meningkatkan sistem persenjataan anti-kapal selam mutakhir yang mana akan memberikan kecemasan tersendiri bagi Jakarta. Penulis menggunakan

metode kualitatif guna mencari fakta serta menjawab pertanyaan penelitian bagaimana Indonesia dalam menyikapi AUKUS yang dapat memicu Tiongkok serta memprovokasi persaingan persenjataan di kawasan dan menciptakan dilema keamanan bagi Indonesia.

Kata kunci: AUKUS, Indonesia, Tiongkok, *arms race*, stabilitas keamanan.

Introduction

The US, the UK, and Australia have agreed to form a security alliance called AUKUS on the 15th September 2021. This agreement covers the cooperation between countries in security, especially in assisting Australia to develop nuclear submarines in Adelaide. The Guardian, a British media reported this very step is one of the initiations in response of China's presence and movement in the South China Sea.¹ Australia Prime Minister (PM) Scott Morrison said that "This will include an intense examination of what we need to do to exercise our nuclear stewardship responsibilities here in Australia".²

Pashya in his web article from EurasiaReview stated that this very attitude has certainly become 'a big spotlight' in response to China's raising power who was heavily involved in the confrontation.³ China who does not recognize the UNCLOS are railing their might on the nine-dash lines yet they are calling the formation of AUKUS as 'an irresponsible act' that could threaten the peace and regional stability in the Asia Pacific. The spokesperson of the Chinese MoFA, Zhao Lijian asserted to the reporters that "The nuclear submarine cooperation between the US, the UK, and Australia, has seriously undermined regional peace and stability, intensified the arms race and undermined international nonproliferation efforts."⁴ AUKUS agreement certainly have further implications to the relationships of Indonesia and related countries, especially in defense and economic cooperations. Teuku Faizasyah as Indonesia's MoFA spokesperson has showed concern about this ongoing power projection and arms race in the region regarding AUKUS formation.⁵

Little did we know that this agreement could lead to an unknowingly 'underwater warfare' between China and the US because this agreement could legally give Canberra its first nuclear-powered submarines and boost its naval power to another US ally in this region. Both countries such as China and the US have been aware of their own intentions toward another as the US President Joe Biden stated "Our nations will update and enhance our shared ability to take on the threats of the 21st

¹ The Guardian. (2022). *China has fully militarized three islands in South China Sea, US admiral says*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/21/china-has-fully-militarized-three-islands-in-south-china-sea-us-admiral-says>

² The White House (2021). *PM Scott Morrison, PM Boris Johnson, President Joe Biden: Joint Announcement of AUKUS Trilateral Security Pact*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/bidenjohnsonmorrisonaukus.htm>

³ Pashya, Habib. (2021). *AUKUS and Indonesia's Dilemma*. Retrieved from <https://www.eurasiareview.com/23092021-aukus-and-indonesias-dilemma-oped/>

⁴ Nagasawa, Tsuyoshi & Hadano, Tsukasa. (2021). *US-China rivalry flares undersea with Australia submarine deal*. Retrieved from <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/U.S.-China-rivalry-flares-undersea-with-Australia-submarine-deal>

⁵ CNN Indonesia. (2021). *Jokowi dan PM Australia Bahas Kapal Selam Nuklir via Telepon*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20210921193956-113-697500/jokowi-dan-pm-australia-bahas-kapal-selam-nuklir-via-telepon>

century just as we did in the 20th century.”⁶ According to both countries, both are their own threats and somewhat ally. The dynamics of enmity and amity between both countries has fluctuated countless times. By his statement, we could obviously sense that Biden veiled China as the threats of the 21st century.

Indonesia could be ‘trapped’ between the rising tensions of US and China in response to each other. In one hand, the US got itself an increasing ally-power in the region and China is ‘threatened’ because of this action. On the other hand, Indonesia has ‘good relationships’ with those countries, such as Australia, the UK, the US, and even China.

Indonesia has recently signed the memorandum of understanding with Australia in the defense sector in which deals with terrorism (MoU on Countering Terrorism and Violence Extremism)⁷, cyber security (MoU in Cyber Cooperation and Emerging Cyber Technology), and defense cooperation (Arrangement on Defence Cooperation). The Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi along with the Indonesian Minister of Defense Prabowo Subianto met with Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Marise Payne and Australian Minister of Defense Peter Dutton. Both countries agreed to increase and strengthening their commitments in those sectors.⁸ Indonesia through Prabowo Subianto also proposed the participation the Indonesian Armed Force personnel to do joint training cooperation in Australia and send its cadet students (taruna) to study directly at the Australian academic facilities.⁹

To strengthen its defense, the Indonesian government who has close ties with the US has already collaborated and cooperated with the US such as the BAKAMLA-US Navy maritime training as a collaborative effort between the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency, the US Coast Guard, the US Embassy’s Narcotics Affairs and International Law Enforcement office, the Joint Interagency Task Force West, Indo-US Pacific Command, and US Naval Engineering Facilities Command. According to VOI, Indonesia and the US have built a maritime training facility for the BAKAMLA (Maritime Security Agency) at the Batam Fleet Base. Its ceremony for laying the ‘foundation stone’ was carried by the US Ambassador Sung Kim and BAKAMLA’s Head Admiral Aan Kurnia. This training facility spent USD 3.5 million.¹⁰

On the other hand, Indonesia has also a good economic relationship with China even amidst the pandemic, Chinese investment in Indonesia has increased. Despite the rising high-cases of COVID-19 and the spread of negative news about Chinese investments in Indonesia. The relationships between two countries have disclosed several positive developments.¹¹ For example,

⁶ White House East Room. (2021). *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aucus/>

⁷ In line with the ASEAN-Australia Declaration on the ASEAN PoA in preventing the emergence of radicalism and violent extremism 2018-2025.

⁸ VOA Indonesia. (2021). *Indonesia-Australia Setuju Tingkatkan Hubungan Pertahanan dan Keamanan*. Retrieved from <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/indonesia-australia-setuju-tingkatkan-hubungan-pertahanan-dan-keamanan/6219568.html>

⁹ Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia. (2021). *Indonesia dan Australia Sepakat Meningkatkan DCA Menjadi Kerjasama Pertahanan Komprehensif*. Retrieved from <https://www.kemhan.go.id/2021/09/09/menhan-ri-indonesia-dan-australia-sepakat-meningkatkan-dca-menjadi-kerjasama-pertahanan-komprehensif.html>

¹⁰ VOI ID. (2021). *Indonesia and US Build Maritime Training Center in Batam*. Retrieved from <https://voi.id/en/news/62124/indonesia-and-us-build-maritime-training-center-in-batam>

¹¹ Rakhmat, Zulfikar, M. *The Diplomat*. (2021). *Despite COVID-19, Indonesia-China Relations Continue to Develop*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/despite-covid-19-indonesia-china-relations-continue-to-develop/>

according to Bisnis.com, Indonesia's total bilateral trade with China has reached USD 53.5 billion during the first half of 2021 (50.3% increased compared to last year's same period). Indonesia's exports to China recorded at USD 26.2 billion (51.4% increased), along with the growing imports from China at USD 27.3 billion (49.3% increased).¹²

Indonesia and the UK has also a very good relationship. Indonesian Trade Minister Muhammad Lutfi and the UK Secretary of State for International Trade Elizabeth Truss virtually signed the memorandum of understanding for the Establishment of the Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) which aims increasing potential sectors in both countries such food and beverage, education, technology, agriculture, health and medicine, infrastructure and transportation, and renewable energy. The new JETCO will help promote and develop trade, investment, and economic cooperation ties and address market access barriers affecting UK businesses trading with Indonesia.¹³

This paper will analyze Indonesia's concern regarding Australia's decision to acquire the AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine that will provoke China to trigger an arms race in the region. Should this create a dilemma for Indonesia? The regional security complex theory and the concept of security dilemma will be used in this paper.

Theoretical Framework

Realism is one of the classical theories in international relations. Both realists and liberalists argue that states' behavior is driven by human nature and is predetermined. As classical realists assume that anarchy of the international system, the distribution of relative power, and self-interest are things that navigate most of the states' behavior. Holsti stated that realism is the most venerable and persisting model of international relations.¹⁴ The idea of realism derived from Thomas Hobbes in his writing called 'Leviathan', he stated that the international system is 'bellum omnium contra omnes' or war of all against all. Morgenthau stated that international politics is a struggle for power.¹⁵

First of all, the regional security complex theory which was introduced by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever in 'Region and Powers: The Structure of International Security, will be able to analyze states' interaction which played as 'interconnected units' in a region as their system. The 'region' concept in international relations can be defined not only as a geographical affinity, but also others, as Breslin mentioned such as cultural, economic, linguistic, and political relations.¹⁶ This theory combines realists' assumptions about polarity and system, and constructivists' approaches of identity. According to this theory, polarity not only can be analyzed at the global level but also in regional and sub-regional levels.¹⁷ Polarity generates power distribution to make countries be superpower, great power, middle power, or lesser power. The states' behaviors are driven by identity. Buzan classified international interactions as enmity (conflictual and competition) and amity (peace and cooperation)

¹² Mola, Thomas. Bisnis.com. (2021). *Investasi Tumbuh, Ekspor ke Tiongkok Ikut Naik*. Retrieved from <https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20210805/12/1426317/investasi-tumbuh-ekspor-ke-tiongkok-ikut-naik>

¹³ UK Government. (2021). UK and Indonesia announce new Joint Economic and Trade Committee. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-indonesia-announce-new-joint-economic-and-trade-committee>

¹⁴ Holsti, KJ. (1995). *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall International, Inc.

¹⁵ Morgenthau, H.J. (1978). *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace*. New York: Knopf.

¹⁶ Breslin, S. (2011). *Regions and Regionalism in World Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁷ Buzan, B. & Waever, Ole. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

which are determined by four essentials as 1) boundary; 2) interaction in the anarchic international system; 3) polarity; and 4) social construction or identity.¹⁸

Australia's decision to acquire a nuclear-powered submarine even without being equipped with nuclear weaponry will surely trigger the security dilemma in the region. Especially for Australia's neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, which both are worried and concerned.¹⁹ This condition will lead to a security dilemma, especially for Indonesia, and later will provoke China and an arms race in the region.

The very concept of security dilemma, the term has originally been coined by John Herz. Herz stated that the groups and individuals shall be concerned about their own security, and to attain that 'security' from such attacks, they need to overpower the attacker in order to escape the attack, and they are uncertain about how secure they are.²⁰

Butterfield stated that states can be driven to 'harm' each other by security dilemma, though they may not have the intention to do so.²¹ A security dilemma can be defined as an effort by a state to increase its security, which surely can decrease other states' security. The concept of security is relative, which has raised a question of safety for whom?' according to Buzan. Butterfield then added the six proportions of security dilemma as Tang written on his article. Firstly, 'fear' is the main concern. Second, states don't know other states' intentions, should they generate uncertainty among states. Third, security dilemma is originally unintentional. Fourth, it certainly produces tragic results, such as casualties and calamities. Fifth, psychological factors can worsen it. And sixth, security dilemma according to Butterfield is the main fundamental cause of all human conflicts.²²

Shipping Tang argues that security dilemma is the 'linchpin' of defensive realism, it can eventually boost the states' cooperation in terms of 'defensive alliance' in order to face a common foe. Tang also added that security dilemma could make war inevitable.²³ Seth in Tang (2009) stated that neoliberals view international institutions as a tool to 'ease' the security dilemma.²⁴ Practically, a security dilemma will lead to an arms race. For example, a state is building a military to maximize its relative power, and the other state also responded by upgrading its own military, and it will happen continuously until one state has lost its economic and military capabilities against other states.

Data and Methodology

This research will be conducted by deductive methodology and qualitative method. As Bakry in Wendt, et. al 2014: 20-21 stated a deductive methodology is a theory-testing approach. The deductive methodology can help to develop a hypothesis based on existing abstract concepts and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ ABC. (2021). *Malaysia, Indonesia 'worried and concerned' AUKUS could lead to Asia regional arms race*. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-18/indonesia-malaysia-express-aukus-concern/100549172>

²⁰ Herz in Tang, S. (2009). *Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis*. p. 590

²¹ Butterfield in Tang, S. (2009). *Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis*. p. 589.. *Security Studies*. 18:3. 587-623. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC. DOI: 10.1080/09636410903133050

²² *Ibid.* p. 590

²³ *Ibid.* Tang, S. (2009). *Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis*. *Security Studies*. 18:3. 587-623. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC. DOI: 10.1080/09636410903133050

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 588

theories which later design a research strategy to test the hypothesis.²⁵ The data collected are mainly from internet reports, journal articles, and we also collect data from news websites. Using the deductive methodology and qualitative method, we generate the data which are chart-based data to create logical sentence structures to support our arguments.

Qualitative research is phenomenological or naturalist research. Constructed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in collecting data analysis funds, as well as emphasizing on inductive for the pattern of the relationship between theory and research, with an emphasis on creation theory (generation of theory). Thus, qualitative research is considered as a process investigation by exploring and understanding the perceived social and humanitarian problems. Then, based on the creation of a holistic picture complete with words, reporting the views of the informant in detail and arranged in a scientific setting.

On qualitative research sources of data were collected from various forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual information rather than relying on a single data source. This is a form of data open, where respondents or parties involved in researchers can share their ideas freely, not limited by the scales or a predetermined instrument. then the researchers in the end review all data, make sense, and organize them into codes and themes which intercepts all data sources in qualitative research usually using inductive logic, building patterns, categories, and themes from the ground up above by organizing data into increasingly abstract units of information. This deductive reasoning describes going back and forth between themes and databases until the researcher developed a comprehensive set of themes.²⁶

Analysis and Discussion

a. AUKUS: Regional Implication and Indonesia's Reaction

Indonesia has canceled a meeting with Australia's PM Scott Morrison after knowing the signing of AUKUS. Indonesia saw it as a threat and also shared its concern. Indonesia is the first country in ASEAN that reminds Australia's obligation to maintain peace. Indonesia also reminds all countries to adopt international law and promote dialogue. As a background, Indonesia-Australia has strong relations. They shared common values and interests. They also have high-level meetings regularly and committed to promoting peace and stability. However, this arrangement will tend to threaten the bilateral, regional and global scale. The agreement allows Australia to have eight nuclear-powered submarine fleets with technology provided and assisted by the US and the UK. It is a tactical strategy in which nuclear-powered attack submarines can deter or against China in a high-intensity naval conflict in the Indo-Pacific.²⁷ Indonesia fears the possibility of a nuclear war in the Southeast Asia region. Specifically, this cooperation can spur China's aggression in the South China Sea.

Arms race will be happening in the region if American technology (torpedo and missiles) will be equipped to Australia's nuclear-powered submarine fleets. Canberra has announced to purchase

²⁵ Wendt, et al. (2014). *Metodologi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional Perdebatan Paradigmatik dan Pendekatan Alternatif*. Malang: Intrans Publishing. ISBN 978-979-3580-65-4. pp. 20-21

²⁶ Cresswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. California: Sage.

²⁷ Joannin, Pascale. Robert Schuman. (2021). *The AUKUS agreement, what repercussions for the European Union*. Retrieved from <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0608-the-aukus-agreement-what-repercussions-for-the-european-union>

missiles from the United States. Specifically, Australia wants to add Hobart-class destroyers with Tomahawk cruise missiles.²⁸ History also writes that it only takes a few years for the United States and The United Kingdom to shift Submersible Ship Nuclear (SSN) to Submersible Ship Ballistic Missile Nuclear (SSBN). These agreements can also shift nuclear-powered submarine fleets from diesel-electric energy to nuclear weapons. Moreover, AUKUS cooperation also covers cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities. China's response is opposing this arrangement, and it is justifiable.

Even though the objective of the AUKUS is to try to ensure peace and stability in the long term, and did not mention China. Obviously, this agreement tends to threaten peace and counter China in the Indo-Pacific. This agreement should see as a consequence of power rivalry between the US vs. China. Australia is US' ally Therefore, equipping Australia is the US' step to offshore the balancing China. China is perceived as a systematic challenge by European countries and America. The last North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Brussel declares China as a rival systemic to the rule-based order and the area relevant toward alliance security.²⁹ In this summit, the US also condemns China's arsenal of nuclear. This summit shows the tendency to see China as enmity rather than amity.

This action and reaction are the part of the security dilemma that creates an arms race. China's assertiveness in the South China Sea (SCS), Taiwan, and aggressive maneuvers in other regions are described as action, While the AUKUS agreement is a reaction towards China's movements. Additionally, the relation between AUKUS and China has worsen nowadays. Particularly, the relations between Australia and China. For example, Australia calls for investigation about the origin of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Later, China imposes Australia in the economic sector. One of the sectors that affected is coal. China stopped importing coal from Australia. To conclude, China's threats in Indo-Pacific is much greater than before. Therefore, this is the reason why Australia cooperates in AUKUS rather than continue its partnership with France.³⁰

Furthermore, this agreement will destabilize the ASEAN centrality architecture, Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). AUKUS did not even think to discuss this arrangement with ASEAN. The commitment of west countries regarding promoting peace, stability, and respect of ASEAN centrality is *'lip-service'*. Moreover, ASEAN does not have its major power to impose order.

This agreement also is an increasing power projection in Indo-Pacific and impact on the entire architecture. The details of this cooperation is still on negotiations. China's reaction will depend on the result of the AUKUS internal talk after 18 months. To promote stability, Australia, the United Kingdom, and America should ask ASEAN countries' opinions regarding the points of AUKUS cooperation. Because in the end, when the submarine passes other territories, Australia should ask permission from related countries.

²⁸ Joannin, Pascale. Robert Schuman. (2021). *The AUKUS agreement, what repercussions for the European Union*. Retrieved from <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0608-the-aukus-agreement-what-repercussions-for-the-european-union>

²⁹ Aljazeera. (2021). *NATO to call out China's behavior as a systemic challenge*. Aljazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/14/nato-chief-calls-for-alliance-to-toughen-stance-on-china>

³⁰ Joannin, Pascale. Robert Schuman. (2021). *The AUKUS agreement, what repercussions for the European Union*. Retrieved from <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0608-the-aukus-agreement-what-repercussions-for-the-european-union>

In a global scale, the international communities do not have yet the law that regulates a submarine fleet with nuclear reactors. The international community has Non-Proliferation nuclear Treaty (NPT), and Australia signed NPT. NPT is a treaty that prohibits countries from using nuclear weapons. NPT also talks about the disarmament of nuclear weapons and using nuclear for peace and energy. Nevertheless, AUKUS did not violate this treaty and committed to obeying NPT. Furthermore, NPT did not also give clarity about how countries should utilize nuclear energy for military purposes.

Moreover, this agreement caused a security dilemma for Indonesia. The security dilemma is a state where the country should increase its security capability because of the growing military capability of other countries.³¹ In the end, balancing others' military never ends because all of the countries have the same objective. For Indonesia, as a middle-power country, the best strategy is hedging. Indonesia could not pick between China and AUKUS. China is a comprehensive strategic partner of Indonesia. The relationship between the two countries is intensifying in this COVID-19 period. China has contributed to sharing its vaccine with Indonesia and encouraged Indonesia as a hub in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, China and Hong Kong are the largest trading partner of Indonesia.

On the other hand, AUKUS countries are also significant partners of Indonesia. The presence of AUKUS may positively affect Indonesia as a response to China maneuvers. However, this is not Indonesia's foreign policy. Indonesia holds in free and active foreign policy. Indonesia could not remain silent if it related to territory and the security of the Southeast Asia region. Indonesia should strengthen its security by itself and do not rely upon other countries. Based on realism thoughts, there is no world government in the anarchic structure. Therefore, each country should take care of its security and survival (self-help) because we do not know who will attack us in the future. There are only two options, the country can increase its capability to rebalance or start preemptive attacks on other countries. The first alternative is called spiral security that the countries are in the same position to increase power and increase their expenditure in defense. The second one leads to creating war imminently.³²

Indonesia needs to increase their military capabilities. The latest research shows Indonesia tends to maintain weapons rather than increase its combat capabilities.³³ Furthermore, this research analyzes the three main determinants. The determinants are defense economy, defense technology, and defense potential.³⁴ In defense economic indicators, Indonesia is in low rank compared to the other 29 countries. In this indicator, they count defense budget, research budget, and defense spending. The result reveals Indonesia's defense spending is still below 1% of the entire gross domestic product. Saudi Arabia is the biggest country where defense spending reaches 8.8% of gross domestic product. While in terms of defense technology, Indonesia is below average because lack of new technology inventory. In terms of defense potential, Indonesia is the best compared to countries in Southeast Asia. One of the factors that support this achievement is the ambition and performance of Indonesia's strategic industries.

³¹ Wivel, Anders. (2011). *Security dilemma*. In Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Leonardo Morlino (Eds), *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, pp. 89-91.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ Tim Analis Lab 45. (2021). *Indonesia dan Dinamika Persenjataan Global*. Retrieved from <https://www.lab45.id/publikasi/download/145/tilik-data-quot-indonesia-dan-dinamika-persenjataan-global-quot>

³⁴ *Ibid*.

b. Anxiety over an incoming arms race

The AUKUS has raised concerns of heightened tensions, also reactionary countermeasures from China and its allies who perceives themselves as the targets of the pact. In line with Biden's statement about 'the threats of 21st century', he stated "China is the main challenge to US global leadership in 21st century."³⁵ Indonesia in its midst of plans to modernize its military equipments and capabilities, particularly its naval capacity. Reminding that Indonesia placed as the top-five country with its longest shorelines in the world, and two-three of Indonesian territory consisting of waters, comparing to it, Indonesia's naval capacity and capability is still weak and long-way from its bare-minimum. Indonesia's naval upgrades aim to impose greater control over the massive seawaters under its rule. Now, Indonesia must also deal with an 'increased presence' of higher-capacity submarines, namely the AUKUS submarine, on the other hand Indonesia must also 'side' with countries threatened, particularly China, to develop a joint cooperation in the form of more advanced anti-submarine technology to ensure its safety and survival. Indonesia has no power to control or even properly observe its huge span of waters.

Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi through an official statement expressed her concern that AUKUS will therefore provoke the continuation of an arms race and military power projections in the region. Her statement was echoed by other spokespeople in various events and outlets. For years, the Government of Indonesia has tried to avoid open conflict by attempting to divert competition between major powers in the Indo-Pacific into more cooperative projects. The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific exemplifies this effort but the arrival of AUKUS complicates this approach.³⁶ Writing in *The Jakarta Post*, Abdul Kadir Jailani, the Foreign Ministry's director-general for Asian, Pacific, and African Affairs, mentioned that Indonesia was the first country to remind Australia of its commitment to non-proliferation and to the overall stability of the region, referring to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.³⁷ But Indonesia's diplomatic reminder to Australia has now been blown out of proportion and the AUKUS agreement painted as a "betrayal" of Indonesia by Australia. The hashtag *#AustraliaBerbohong* ("#AustraliaLied") was briefly trending on Twitter, though how much it organically represented the real views of Indonesians (and was not just spread by paid "buzzers") is questionable.

However, public sentiment does reflect fears of a potential NATO-like pact in the region. This has not been helped by alarmist news articles which claims that "Indonesia is Surrounded by Nukes"³⁸ Some have either oversimplified the development or outright misled readers. For example, by obscuring the difference between a nuclear-powered submarine and a submarine carrying nuclear warheads, asserting that Australia is building a nuclear weapon. Even politicians have struggled with this distinction (or sought to capitalize on the confusion), calling on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to

³⁵ NPR. (2021). *Biden's National Security Team Lists Leading Threats, with China at the Top*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/13/986453250/bidens-national-security-team-lists-leading-threats-with-china-at-the-top>

³⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. (2021). *Statement on Australia's Nuclear Powered Submarines Program*. (2021). Retrieved from https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/2937/siaran_pers/statement-on-australias-nuclear-powered-submarines-program

³⁷ Jailani, Abdul Kadir. (2021). *Indonesia has legitimate reasons to worry about Aussie nuke subs*. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/09/28/indonesia-has-legitimate-reasons-to-worry-about-aussie-nuke-subs.html>

³⁸ Example of an alarmist news articles: <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20210920065505-4-277494/ngeri-ri-dikepung-senjata-nuklir-malaysia-teriak>

consider a “harder diplomatic approach”, or for Indonesia to express its protest via reactionary military diplomacy – or even a joint exercise with China. Regardless, the fear that Indonesia will be forced into choosing one bloc at the cost of another is very real and is shared by many.

Perhaps this is why the common response to AUKUS in the Indonesian media has been to refer to the potential damage it could do to ASEAN’s relevance and neutrality. Critics have noted the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality Declaration, as well as possible indirect harm to the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, or even the influence the pact could have on Indonesia’s free and active foreign policy principles. Far-fetched as it may be, some have even claimed there is potential for Indonesia to be swept into “the AUKUS bloc”. Consequently, some observers have argued for a stronger response to AUKUS, including siding with China or France to oppose AUKUS should it end up transgressing existing agreements.

c. Beyond fear

Looking beyond reactionary comments, more informed Indonesian analysts take the view that the development should not come as a surprise, reminding Indonesia of the realities it faces. Rizal Sukma of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has argued that Indonesia should face the need for a return to *realpolitik*, as multilateral diplomacy focused on norm-building continues to fade.³⁹ In the absence of “a serious alternative to the regional flux”, Evan Laksmana has commented that countries will be increasingly called to consider options outside the existing multilateral bodies in the region.⁴⁰

Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto, from the Australian National University’s Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, suggested in *Foreign Policy* that AUKUS should serve as a lesson for Southeast Asia to pay more attention to eroding sovereignty in the region and offer a credible response to China’s aggressive behavior.⁴¹ Indonesian diplomat Arif Havas Oegroseno, meanwhile, has suggested that Indonesia should continue to play a mediating role by establishing its own trilateral arrangement with the United States and China.⁴²

All these comments point to a similar reality: Indonesia should stick to responding to the core area of concern – the increasing competition between the United States and China – rather than be too worried about AUKUS while continuing to build its own strategic leverage and capacity. But there are still some in Indonesia who think that, while the country has previously had no choice but to engage in small or middle-power diplomacy to buffer geopolitical developments, it now has the leverage and appeal to punch above its weight – and should start doing so.

d. Managing Indonesia’s security dilemma: restoring trust in Indonesia-Australia relations

Indonesians have bemoaned a leadership vacuum in the Indo-Pacific since the United States departed the region under former President Donald Trump. But now that the United States’ attention has returned, Indonesia’s main concern is losing relevance in future strategic calculations in the

³⁹ Sukma, Rizal. The Jakarta Post. (2021). Is AUKUS a problem or blessing for ASEAN. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/09/30/is-aucus-a-problem-or-blessing-for-asean.html>

⁴⁰ The Diplomat. (2021). *What Does the New AUKUS Alliance Mean for Southeast Asia*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/what-does-the-new-aucus-alliance-mean-for-southeast-asia/>

⁴¹ Supriyanto, Ristian A. *Foreign Policy*. (2021). *Why Southeast Asia Should Welcome AUKUS*. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/28/southeast-asia-asean-australia-aucus-china-united-states/>

⁴² Oegroseno, Arif H. Kompas. (2021). *Kita dan AUKUS*. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2021/09/30/kita-dan-aucus/>

region. Indonesia has long contributed to the regional security architecture through its leadership role in ASEAN, with the aim of tempering domination by major powers and supporting stability through collective leadership. This has been undercut by the arrival of AUKUS, which occurred without consultation with Indonesia or ASEAN. To Indonesia, this signaled that the major powers do not see Indonesia or ASEAN countries as important in security calculations for their own region.

This, coupled with Indonesia's fears of being vulnerable to foreign interference, is what has caused the sense of distrust that greeted the submarine announcement. Australia's proximity, as well as its history of diplomatic incidents with Indonesia, has not helped either. Many Indonesians are likely to perceive the possible 'threat' of an Australian nuclear-powered submarine appearing in the seas around Indonesia quite differently to, say, a US nuclear-powered submarine. Some in Jakarta know that China's behavior needs checking and that AUKUS could help restrain China. But the higher-ups' responses suggesting that AUKUS could also harm Indonesia's future interests by bringing an arms race to its backyard and increasing its maritime vulnerability are also understandable.

Australia's military build-up means it now needs to work to maintain the confidence of its partners in the region. Australia has said that AUKUS will not detract from its support for the ASEAN-led regional architecture.⁴³ However, neither Indonesia nor ASEAN is in a position to accept such a statement at face value. Even the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (US, Japan, India, and Australia), which is more of a consultative forum, has not made any major effort to complement ASEAN-led architecture. Australia could build confidence by showing Indonesia how this development will benefit it in the long run, rather than becoming a future threat. Australia should also seek to improve its defense relations with Indonesia, a country with a similar interest in defending the rules-based regional order. It could do this in many ways, including technology transfers. Australia should also continue to support ASEAN's key mechanisms for major power relations, particularly the East Asia Summit. Australia, after all, has an interest in showing up as an "Asian power", not a western state that just happens to be located at the bottom of Asia.⁴⁴

Conclusion

While nuclear-powered submarines are at least a decade away for the Australian military, the AUKUS pact will probably pose both opportunities and challenges as participating countries calibrate their next steps. The agreement builds on existing U.S. commitments to Australia and has been perceived as a signal of Washington's willingness to take more assertive actions in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, AUKUS risks encouraging other non-nuclear weapons states to pursue nuclear propulsion capabilities, which can undermine the global nuclear non-proliferation regime by encouraging the enrichment of HEU. Critics like China have already begun to warn of the risks that the agreement poses for the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Iran may see this sort of activity by a non-nuclear weapons state as justification for its own nuclear submarine ambitions and may exploit this loophole to keep HEU from IAEA monitors or to drive a hard bargain during potential renewed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action talks. Therefore, as AUKUS begins to take shape over the next

⁴³ The Diplomat. (2021). *Australian PM, Diplomats Seek to Allay Southeast Asian AUKUS Fears*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/australian-pm-diplomats-seek-to-allay-southeast-asian-aucus-fears/>

⁴⁴ Center for Strategic and International Studies. (2020). *Defining the Diamond: The Past, Present, and Future of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-diamond-past-present-and-future-quadrilateral-security-dialogue>

18 months since its establishment, the mechanics of U.S. technology sharing and the accompanying IAEA safeguards regime will likely play an important role in assuaging international proliferation concerns associated with the agreement.

References

- ABC. (2021). *Malaysia, Indonesia 'worried and concerned' AUKUS could lead to Asia regional arms race*. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-18/indonesia-malaysia-express-aukus-concern/100549172>
- Aljazeera. (2021). *NATO to call out China's behavior as a systemic challenge*. Aljazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/14/nato-chief-calls-for-alliance-to-toughen-stance-on-china>
- Breslin, S. (2011). *Regions and Regionalism in World Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Buzan, B. & Waeber, Ole. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Center for Strategic and International Studies. (2020). *Defining the Diamond: The Past, Present, and Future of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-diamond-past-present-and-future-quadrilateral-security-dialogue>
- CNN Indonesia. (2021). *Jokowi dan PM Australia Bahas Kapal Selam Nuklir via Telepon*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20210921193956-113-697500/jokowi-dan-pm-australia-bahas-kapal-selam-nuklir-via-telepon>
- Cresswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. California: Sage.
- Holsti, KJ. (1995). *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall International, Inc.
- Jailani, Abdul Kadir. (2021). *Indonesia has legitimate reasons to worry about Aussie nuke subs*. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/09/28/indonesia-has-legitimate-reasons-to-worry-about-aussie-nuke-subs.html>
- Joannin, Pascale. Robert Schuman. (2021). *The AUKUS agreement, what repercussions for the European Union*. Retrieved from <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0608-the-aukus-agreement-what-repercussions-for-the-european-union>

- Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia. (2021). *Indonesia dan Australia Sepakat Meningkatkan DCA Menjadi Kerjasama Pertahanan Komprehensif*. Retrieved from <https://www.kemhan.go.id/2021/09/09/menhan-ri-indonesia-dan-australia-sepakat-meningkatkan-dca-menjadi-kerjasama-pertahanan-komprehensif.html>
- Mola, Thomas. *Bisnis.com*. (2021). *Investasi Tumbuh, Ekspor ke Tiongkok Ikut Naik*. Retrieved from <https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20210805/12/1426317/investasi-tumbuh-ekspor-ke-tiongkok-ikut-naik>
- Morgenthau, H.J. (1978). *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace*. New York: Knopf.
- Nagasawa, Tsuyoshi & Hadano, Tsukasa. (2021). *US-China rivalry flares undersea with Australia submarine deal*. Retrieved from <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/U.S.-China-rivalry-flares-undersea-with-Australia-submarine-deal>
- Oegrosono, Arif H. *Kompas*. (2021). *Kita dan AUKUS*. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2021/09/30/kita-dan-aucus/>
- Pashya, Habib. (2021). *AUKUS and Indonesia's Dilemma*. Retrieved from <https://www.eurasiareview.com/23092021-aucus-and-indonesias-dilemma-oped/>
- Rakhmat, Zulfikar, M. *The Diplomat*. (2021). *Despite COVID-19, Indonesia-China Relations Continue to Develop*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/despite-covid-19-indonesia-china-relations-continue-to-develop/>
- Sukma, Rizal. *The Jakarta Post*. (2021). *Is AUKUS a problem or blessing for ASEAN*. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/09/30/is-aucus-a-problem-or-blessing-for-asean.html>
- Supriyanto, Ristian A. *Foreign Policy*. (2021). *Why Southeast Asia Should Welcome AUKUS*. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/28/southeast-asia-asean-australia-aucus-china-united-states/>
- Tang, S. (2009). *Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis*. *Security Studies*. 18:3. 587-623. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC. DOI: 10.1080/09636410903133050
- The Diplomat*. (2021). *Australian PM, Diplomats Seek to Allay Southeast Asian AUKUS Fears*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/australian-pm-diplomats-seek-to-allay-southeast-asian-aucus-fears/>

- The Diplomat. (2021). *What Does the New AUKUS Alliance Mean for Southeast Asia*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/what-does-the-new-aukus-alliance-mean-for-southeast-asia/>
- The Guardian. (2022). *China has fully militarized three islands in South China Sea, US admiral says*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/21/china-has-fully-militarized-three-islands-in-south-china-sea-us-admiral-says>
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. (2021). *Statement on Australia's Nuclear Powered Submarines Program*. (2021). Retrieved from https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/2937/siaran_pers/statement-on-australias-nuclear-powered-submarines-program
- The White House (2021). *PM Scott Morrison, PM Boris Johnson, President Joe Biden: Joint Announcement of AUKUS Trilateral Security Pact*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/bidenjohnsonmorrisonaukus.htm>
- Tim Analis Lab 45. (2021). *Indonesia dan dinamika persenjataan global*. Retrieved from <https://www.lab45.id/publikasi/download/145/tilik-data-quot-indonesia-dan-dinamika-persenjataan-global-quot>
- UK Government. (2021). *UK and Indonesia announce new Joint Economic and Trade Committee*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-indonesia-announce-new-joint-economic-and-trade-committee>
- VOA Indonesia. (2021). *Indonesia-Australia Setuju Tingkatkan Hubungan Pertahanan dan Keamanan*. Retrieved from <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/indonesia-australia-setuju-tingkatkan-hubungan-pertahanan-dan-keamanan/6219568.html>
- VOI ID. (2021). *Indonesia and US Build Maritime Training Center in Batam*. Retrieved from <https://voi.id/en/news/62124/indonesia-and-us-build-maritime-training-center-in-batam>
- Wendt, et al. (2014). *Metodologi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional Perdebatan Paradigmatik dan Pendekatan Alternatif*. Malang: Intrans Publishing. ISBN 978-979-3580-65-4. pp. 20-21
- White House East Room. (2021). *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aukus/>
- Wivel, Anders. (2011). *Security dilemma*. In Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Leonardo Morlino (Eds), *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, pp. 89-91.