



Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

**AUKUS AS A COUNTER-APPROACH AGAINST CHINA'S
AGGRESSION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA**

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AUKUS AS A COUNTER-APPROACH AGAINST CHINA'S AGGRESSION
IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

This graduation exercise is submitted in partial fulfilment of requirement for the degree of

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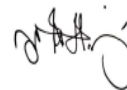
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Abstract

On September 15, 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States came together to establish a multifunctional military alliance known as AUKUS. The alliance's primary objective was to increase the level of collective security in the Indo-Pacific region. As a result of this alliance, Australia will get long-range strike capabilities from the United States and the United Kingdom. These long-range strike capabilities include air force, navy, and army capabilities, as well as nuclear submarines and nuclear fuel. An immediate response is made against China by the establishment, which believes that the creation of the alliance was an irresponsible move. As a result, the purpose of this study paper is to investigate the AUKUS as a potential counter-approach to China's aggressiveness in the vicinity of the South China Sea. This research work obtained its data from a variety of internet sources, including scholarly publications and papers, official websites, and archive research. This study paper deepens the research that has been done regarding the goal of the establishment of AUKUS, and it also investigates to what extent the trilateral agreement has an influence on China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea as a whole.

Keywords: AUKUS, United States, China, South China Sea, Nuclear Submarine.

Abstrak

Pada 15 September 2021, Australia, United Kingdom dan Amerika Syarikat telah bersatu untuk menubuhkan pakatan ketenteraan pelbagai fungsi yang dikenali sebagai AUKUS. Objektif utama perikatan itu adalah untuk meningkatkan tahap keselamatan kolektif di rantau Indo-Pasifik. Hasil daripada pakatan ini, Australia akan mendapat keupayaan serangan jarak jauh dari Amerika Syarikat dan United Kingdom. Keupayaan serangan jarak jauh ini termasuk keupayaan tentera udara, tentera laut, dan tentera, serta kapal selam nuklear dan bahan api nuklear. Tindak balas segera dibuat terhadap China oleh pertubuhan itu, yang percaya bahawa penciptaan pakatan itu adalah satu tindakan yang tidak bertanggungjawab. Hasilnya, tujuan kertas kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat AUKUS sebagai pendekatan balas yang berpotensi terhadap keagresifan China di sekitar Laut China Selatan. Kerja penyelidikan ini memperoleh datanya daripada pelbagai sumber internet, termasuk penerbitan dan kertas kerja ilmiah, laman web rasmi, dan penyelidikan arkib. Kertas kajian ini mendalami penyelidikan yang telah dilakukan berhubung matlamat penubuhan AUKUS, dan ia juga menyiasat sejauh manakah perjanjian tiga hala itu mempengaruhi keagresifan China di Laut China Selatan secara keseluruhan.

Kata kunci: *AUKUS, Amerika Syarikat, China, Laut China Selatan, Kapal Selam Nuklear.*

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List of Acronyms

ANZUS	The Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia, United Kingdom and United States trilateral security pact
BRI	Belt Road Initiative
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
DOD	Department of Defense
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FOIP	Free and Open Indo-Pacific
INDOPACOM	United States Indo-Pacific Command
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NTS	Non-Traditional Security
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

TPNW	The Treaty of Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UNCLOS	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UK	United Kingdom
U. S	The United States of America

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Figure 1 – Map of China’s latest military incursion against Taiwan

Figure 2 – Xi Jinping at the 19th Party Congress

Chapter I

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The South China Sea claimant countries in Southeast Asia have had a challenging couple of years. As countries struggled to deal with vaccination negotiations and the COVID-19 outbreak, China has been criticized of exploiting the situation by growing more forceful in the disputed territories. Even during pandemic, the China Navy as well as the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) reportedly angered Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. China sent survey surveillance craft to the Indonesian sea, accompanied by a PLAN navy vessel, and threatened local fishermen in one of the first occurrences. Non-claimant nations' army participation in the South China Sea also has expanded. In addition to the United States' Freedom of Navigation programme, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France have also dispatched warships towards the territory. These nations appear to be sending a signal to Beijing that they are positioned to react to each and every aggression within South China Sea.

1.1 Background of Study

The United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia established an unprecedented security alliance in the Asia-Pacific on September 15, 2021, in what has been considered as an attempt to challenge China. This will allow Australia to develop nuclear-powered submarines for the very first time, utilising US technologies. The AUKUS treaty, which would also embrace artificial intelligence as well as other technology, is among the nations' largest defence collaborations in years (BBC News, 2021). China has slammed the deal as 'very reckless. According to Zhao Lijian, a foreign ministry spokesperson, it 'directly impacts regional peace and security and accelerates the armed conflict'. China's embassy in Washington accused the

countries of a 'Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice'. The reaction has indeed been varied throughout Southeast Asia. ASEAN nations have traditionally maintained contrary viewpoints on Western military involvement within territory, and attitudes on AUKUS have followed suit. Countries that accept a Western military interest in the region, including Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines, have reacted favourably, or at the very most fairly and impartially, to AUKUS. Countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, who were already wary of this force, have become even more so.

AUKUS has enormous military ramifications, particularly in the South China Sea. Whereas the Philippines claims that even a larger Western involvement in the South China Sea would dissuade further assertive Chinese advances, Indonesia claims that AUKUS may spark an armed conflict within region, which will be damaging to nuclear non-proliferation. According to Darmawan (2021), AUKUS would not actually threaten Indonesia or any other Southeast Asian countries, but it will elicit a retaliation from Beijing and exacerbate the region's naval competition between the US and China. The aggressive military confrontation will put countries in Southeast Asia in risk. Even though some experts believe that such an explicit battle in the South China Sea is improbable, the area should then be prepared for any eventuality. As Chinese President Xi Jinping visited a military facility in Guangdong in 2020, one of his important instructions towards the troops would have been to 'focus all their attention and efforts on fighting a war' and to 'remain vigilant.' China appears to be bracing for the worst-case scenario. In reaction to AUKUS, the country's military modernisation will most certainly be accelerated.

1.2 Significance of Study

The founding of this study will benefit as well as awaken the global powers in dealing with such long-term complicated issue that could cause a huge problem in the coming future. This

study focusing on to investigate the main purpose of the formation of AUKUS. This study is important to see the extent of the trilateral partnership roles and implications in the disputed region and to distinguish what triggers them to interfere such conflict.

Furthermore, this study is especially important with a focus on to identifying and explaining the effects of the establishment of the trilateral agreement between the UK, the US and Australia as a whole. Finally, this study is extremely important to look at the leaders of the countries and organizations involved in managing and maintaining good relations despite the ‘reckless’ collaboration of the three nations as well as the aggressive shift by China in rapidly powering up its military force.

1.3 Problem Statement

A territorial conflict is a common occurrence in the global system, and it is best avoided. The China's claim to the South China Sea is at the heart of the continuing disagreement, or rather, war, involving territorial issues in the region. As the tensions over territorial disputes in the South China Sea are rising rapidly, following the establishment of AUKUS, the possibilities for formulating an efficient and broad "remedy" to the situation have become incredibly hard. The latest catalysing event has been the announcement on 15th September 2021 of a new security alliance between the U.S., Australia and the U.K. and clearly intended to counter China's influence in the region. This caused an instant reaction from China, seeing this as yet another move in the geopolitical chess game it is playing with the United States.

China's embassy spokesperson stated that countries “should not build exclusionary blocs targeting or harming the interests of third parties. In particular, they should shake off their cold war mentality and ideological prejudice.” The researcher would like to understand what are the purpose of the establishment of the AUKUS are as well as the implications of the three nations alliance in regard to counter the China's aggression in the South China Sea region.

1.4 Research Question

How has the trilateral pact counter the China's aggression in the South China Sea?

1.5 Research Objective

1. To identify what are the purpose of AUKUS.
2. To explore to what extend the trilateral agreement impact the China's aggression in the South China Sea as a whole.

1.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study conducted is more qualitative in nature by using secondary sources and library methods, moreover this study generally, focusing on the purpose of the UK, the US and Australia (AUKUS), the implications of the establishment of AUKUS towards China's aggression, and the effects of the establishment of the trilateral agreement between the UK, the US and Australia as a whole. Researchers will look into scholars who have written and have similarities about that conflict discussed to further strengthen the written study. The significant of this study in general, researchers emphasize the importance of the trilateral collaboration as well as the involvement of the leaders throughout the conflict in order to maintain good relations and peace between the rising China superpower and the countries involved.

Chapter II

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to review various relevant literature that have been found that are related to the topic which are the AUKUS Pact, the claim over the South China Sea by China as well as issues that occur between China and the three nations agreement regarding the aggression of China in the South China Sea region. This chapter will be examining the literature within the area of this research. This chapter will also cover the key concept that are related to this research. This research will implement integrative literature review. The researcher will critique and synthesizes secondary data regarding the topic in an integrated way such that the new frameworks and perspective on AUKUS and China.

2.1 Key Concept

2.1.1 Regional Hegemony

In the context of international affairs, the concept of regional hegemony refers to the political, economical, or military superiority, control, or influence of one relatively powerful state, often termed as the regional hegemon, over other nations in the area. The connection that exists between a hegemonic power and the other nations that are a part of the international system is comparable to the one that exists connecting regional hegemons as well as the other states that are a part of their domains of influence.

According to Mearsheimer (2014), which is referred to as offensive realism, the anarchic character of the international order, the drive to survive, and the ambiguity about the intentions of other nations all eventually lead to states pursuing regional

hegemony. Mearsheimer (2014) also stated that achieving global hegemony is an impossible objective, as a result, a state that has attained the degree of regional superpower would instead try to prevent the establishment of peer rivals in other areas.

2.1.2 Geopolitics

Geopolitics is the science of geographic impacts on hierarchies in international relations, and it is a branch of political science. The term *geopolitics* was invented by a Swedish political analyst, Rudolf Kjellén, around the start of the 20th century, and its usage extended across Europe during the early years of World War I and World War II until being well known around the globe through the latter conflict. Presently, as according Deudney (n.d.), *geopolitics* is often used as a vague substitute for global politics in contemporary culture.

It is centred on Halford Mackinder's understanding of the term of geopolitics, which states that geopolitics is the practise of evaluating the effects of world's geographical location on global politics, including human and physical landscape, with a particular emphasis on political clout as it relates to geographical area. For this reason, in order to comprehend the political underlying geopolitics, it is necessary to perform a study of state foreign policy or non-state actor behaviour in attempt to comprehend, describe, and anticipate global behaviour using geographical factors. There are many of them, including the geographic situation, climatic change, topography, population, environmental assets, and related sciences of the area under consideration (Tinline, 2019).

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 South China Sea

Historically, China's claim to the South China Sea, which dates back to the immediate post-war period of World War II, has served as a flashpoint for disagreement among claimant countries in the region, which include the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Philippine, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan (Republic of China/ROC), Brunei and Vietnam. Due to the fact that it serves as an important retail route for a substantial amount of the world's cargo ships, the South China Sea is a substantial strategic and economic sub-region of Indo-Pacific area. Also located there are various complicated territorial disputes that are the source of strife and conflict across the Indo-Pacific region, even inside its own borders.

According to Lowy Institute (n.d.), conflicting interests to sovereignty of islands and minor elements in the South China Sea have become a cause of friction and suspicion in the region for decades. With the 1982 signing and subsequent entry into effect of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a legislative basis was formed to tread a fine line between the economic and security concerns of coastline governments as well as that of oceanic states. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a 200-nautical-mile area that grants maritime states unrestricted exploration claims of ocean biodiversity. It is important to note, nevertheless, that the EEZ has never been meant to be used as a protected zone, and UNCLOS grants navy vessels and military aircraft broad rights of passage. Whereas the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has already been adopted and approved by virtually all of the coastline nations in the South China Sea, its validity is still up for debate. Constitutional

and geopolitical conflicts continue to rage, mainly over the Spratly and Paracel Islands, as well as the Scarborough Shoal, which has been a flashpoint in recent years for tension involving China and the Philippines.

Furthermore, according to Kivimäki (2002), the region is often depicted as a stage of military confrontation with an elevated risk of war escalation. Ecological concerns, economic stability, and political developments are all involved in the South China Sea issues, which cannot be simplified to conventional maritime safety concerns solely. It is the interests of the disputing countries in the territorial claims in the South China Sea that are related to their political, economic, ecological, and security concern in the region. According to Wiranto et al. (2015), the South China Sea disputes are determined by three geopolitical reasons, including political, economic, as well as strategic considerations, among others. For the claimant nations, three of such elements serve as the major motivation for collective efforts to assert their claims in the South China Sea. Forthomme (2021), stated that China's power in terms of politics, economics and infrastructures is the reason why it is one of the factors at play in the region and making the South China Sea pivotal.

2.2.2 Non-Traditional Security Cooperation between China and South-East Asia: Implications for Indo-Pacific Geopolitics

This study examined non-traditional security cooperation between China and Southeast Asian nations, as well as the ramifications of this cooperation on Indo-Pacific geopolitics. As Chinese wealth and influence have grown, and so has the country's ability to protect its citizens over the past few years, it is vital to investigate whether the country is cooperating on conventional and non-traditional security activities. It is

because China has experienced huge geopolitical repercussions in Asia as well as other parts of the world as a consequence of increased.

Gong (2020), stated that the "free and open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) strategy, popularised mostly by United States with assist out of its partner nations, may be the most important diplomatic retaliatory action organised by terrific powers in the region, also with goal of developing Chinese actions and attempting to control China's expanding ambitions. According to Suzuki and Wallace (2018), China has implemented a series of innovative methods in order to counteract the United States' objectives, including improving its ties with Japan. Furthermore, China has adopted similar policies with respect to India, as well (Sharma, 2017). The implementation of such approaches has resulted in the acceleration of joint development projects such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one of the strategic instruments it has developed in response to FOIP (Nordin & Weissmann, 2018).

As a result, China and ASEAN have joined forces together on a wide range of non-traditional security (NTS) issues, including health, the environment, providing humanitarian, food and energy, cross-border crime, water supplies, and seafaring implementation, such as the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, among others. The article focuses on China's non-traditional military roles in regard to the Mekong River and coastal security concerns such as those in the South China Sea. It also touches on the subject of groundwater resources and cooperation from the standpoint of China.

2.2.3 AUKUS: Trilateral Relation between the US, UK and Australia

The United States and the United Kingdom have long been recognised for their global supremacy. Historically, the relationship between the two countries has spanned

from two early world wars to rivalry for international markets. According to Morrison and Burns (2021), the nations have indeed been strong military allies since 1940, benefiting from the Special Relationship that was established as a result of their roles as allied powers. The trilateral treaty has enabled Australia to become 'allies' to the United Kingdom and the United States, despite the fact that it is just a partnership and not necessarily a genuine ally. Kolodziej (2021) stated that the establishment of AUKUS is clearly a response towards the security threats posed by China in the disputed region.

Geiger (2021) in his article 'AUKUS: Recalling Legacies of Anglo-Saxonism and Muffling the Voices of Island Nations' discussing about the AUKUS may be viewed as attempting to undermine the objectives of nations such as France or as a tactical counterbalance to Chinese force, but also as an omission of the island nations of the Indian Ocean and Oceania, not only in defence and security judgement, but also in identifying regional allegiances and histories. The main discussion is the intention of AUKUS in spreading the nuclear weapon as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapon (TPNW) alliances has been trying to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons for the sake of the member states' and the world's existence.

In the article 'Political, Economic, and Strategic Implications of the Sale of Nuclear Submarines to Australia' by Kolodziej (2021) focused on the various implications of the trilateral agreement towards Australia. This study also focused on Australia's entry into a strengthened security alliance with the United States and Britain in response to the threats posed by China. The results of this study found that whoever controls the navigation and over-flight of the South China Sea directly impacts China's core security interests. Darmawan (2021) stated that if the trilateral pact could not find