



EMERGENCE OF AUKUS PACT AS A REGIONAL BLOC AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN ASIA CONTINENT

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Abstract

The study examined the emergence of the AUKUS Pact as a regional bloc and its implications in Asia Continent and also how the entire world received the news of the establishment of the Pact. The research design use for the paper was the diary research method involving creditable media report and internet analysis reports. The result showed that there are persistent threats of dominance within the Indo-Pacific region that led to the emergence of the AUKUS Pact. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the period of the establishment of the AUKUS Pact was not right due to the tense tension in the region. However, the establishment of the AUKUS Pact intensified the existing tension rather than reducing it. The Pact was not adequately welcome by other nations mostly China, France, Indonesia and Malaysia that voiced out their concerns against the Pact. Hence, this will undermine the existing alliance such as ASEAN in which the rivalries nations are members. Therefore, the power game politics and the growing rivalries among the big world powers and the middle powers is over dominance in the Indo-Pacific region is all about balance of power.

Keywords: *Pact, Nuclear-power submarine, International community, Dominance, Technology and Intelligence.*



1. Introduction

Basically speaking, the 21st Century witnessed two different great World Wars with its consequences on human life, properties and environmental hazards it causes on all the actors and on the world in general. These wars change the way nations view each other and cause nations to realigned itself and forming coalitions as well as bloc for their survival due to lack of trust among nations. After the World War II, the world was restructure into the West and East Bloc between the United States and the defunct Soviet Union (now Russian Federation) as part of the consequence of the war. This restructuring of the world resulted into cold war between the US and its allied and the defunct Soviet Union and its own allied which lasted between 1945 to 1989 without both nations officially declaring war on each other. However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union between 1988 to 1991 brought the cold war to an end thereby creating room for emergence of new states and growing regional powers within various regions.

The Asia Continent was not left out in the form of restructuring and regional realignment after the end of the Second World War and Cold War which witnessed the emergence of independent nations that spring up in the world. Presently, the continent has 19 different organizations with some high degree of overlapping membership among the countries while others are well pronounced and most maintained low profile. Hence, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand was more pronounce and given an institutional feature, it's effects and relevance as well as its relation to the broader regional organization and global context. In the early 1990s, there are formulation of new regional initiatives by ASEAN that led to a broadened empirical scope and encouraged the adoption of new perspectives from broader debates in international relations theory.



Therefore, the creation of a new strategic alliance by three continental powers involving the Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) called AUKUS is not a new phenomenon in the international community. This continental strategic alliance intend to build a nuclear-power submarines for Australia and also work together to secure the Asia-Pacific region against China dominance (CMG, 2021). However, the period it was form and announced was not idea due to the tensed situations between China, Australia, the US and some nations within the region over the South China Sea right of ownership and freedom of navigation for all nations. The purpose of this paper therefore is to examine the emergence of the AUKUS Pact as a regional bloc and its implications in Asia continent. The paper will cover the conceptual discourse, background to the emergence of AUKUS Pact, emergence of AUKUS as a regional bloc, issues surrounding the AUKUS Pact, world reaction on reception of AUKUS and implications of AUKUS Pact in Asia continent.

2. Conceptual Discourse

The two key variables in this study are emergence as the dependent variable and implications as the independent variable. These variables were conceptualized and the relationship between them established. This is to provide a better understanding of the context in which they were used in this study.

2.1. Emergence. According to Collins English Dictionary, define “emergence as the process or event of its coming into existence”. Furthermore, some scholars refer to emergence as a process of coming into public view or something appearing into public recognition as well as becoming visible. This view provides a basic element of emergence but see it from the point of mutual acceptance by the parties involved. Therefore,



emergence connotes the appearances, visibility and existence of something important that was not in place before it occur. It is therefore comprehensive enough and it would be adopted for this study.

2.2. Implication. In line with Collins English Dictionary, “the implications of something are the things that are likely to happen as a result”. In the same vein, implications could be referred to a possible future effect of something that took place earlier or the fact or state of being involved in or connected to something that are likely to happen. Hence, the wider implication of an actions could lead to the surrounding of a side effect. Therefore, implication connotes the effect, result and happening of something that is not envisage in the earlier future. It further highlights the need for caution in establish something that is not pleasant to all and therefore it is comprehensive enough and thereby adopted for this study.

2.3. Relationship Between Emergence and Implication. Emergence is a process that involve the existence of something that may bring positive or negative effect into a society or community with reactions from others communities. On the other hand, implications referred to that something that are likely to happen as a result of what must have commence existence connected to that something. Furthermore, the application of all means to counter a threat may lead to other situations that is worse than the initial threat because others would feel threaten and seek for mutual survival in a geographically delineated area. This goes to show that a threat cannot be successfully handle by the use of another threat because it may lead to other repercussions that may be more severe than the initial threat. Conversely, poor emergence of an alliance will impinge negative reaction on its implications in a region that is already tense. Hence, there is a direct, strong and sufficient relationship between emergence and implications.



3. Methodology. The study adopted the research diary method where written records of the event are been analysis from some creditable sources. The sources are news media briefing reports, media internet publication and analyst reports. This research was diary studies because the matter is fairly new and researchers are still conducting investigation into the Pact agreements. Furthermore, it provides a channel for finding out the meanings and actions taken by nations in understanding the purpose of the agreements. This approach offers a better means for finding out emotions, feelings, understandings and actions taken as the unfold.

4. The Emergence Of Aukus

Geographically, the Asia Continent can be divided into five major physical regions which are mountain systems, plateaus, plains, steppes and deserts, freshwater environments and saltwater environments. The Himalaya mountains extended for about 2,500 kilometres (1,550 miles) separating the Indian subcontinent from the rest of Asia. The Asia Continent is bounded by the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Indian Ocean to the south, the Red Sea as well as the inland seas of the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean and the Black to the southwest, and Europe to the west. Asia can be divided into five geographical regions which include the South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, and North Asia, this diverse continent is vast as you would expect and contained 75% of the world resources and wealth.

According to the United Nations (UN), Asia continent host 48 countries including the two countries with the largest population in the world which are China and India (Chang, n.d.). China is one of the five super power nations with both economic and military might in Asia continent in particular and the world at large. China has been a dominant force in Asia and as the world second largest economic it has a trade agreement



with most countries in Asia-Pacific region and the world at large. Australia on the other hand is the smallest of the seven continents in the world although it is regarded as an integral part of the Asia-Pacific region and it was once a good trade partner with China. The current China and Australia trade dispute is actually a war of words and trade restrictions among both nations which is beyond caution base on threats from China.

However, the global dominance of China has been clear for more than 20 years ago but was not view as a menace to the rest of the world most especially within the Asia-Pacific region. Hence, the way the Chinese economic and military strength grown beyond expectation lead to some influential voices in Australia to called for Canberra to recognize the shifting balance of regional power as well as distance itself from the US by drawing closer to China. Although, Australia seemed to face a looming choice between its economic interests which solely depend on China and its defence and security interests that depend on the US. Though, the recent trade war saw Chinese threat efforts to “teach Australia a lesson” by slapping new tariffs on exports of Australian wine, coal, timber, cotton and other products exported to China.

On the other hand, Australia feels highly threaten by China and quickly aligned itself firmly with the US in an effort to block China’s ambitions to dominate Asia especially its recent activities in the South China Sea. The UK involve herself as former Australia colonial master and partners in trade as well as allied to the US since during and after the World War II and Cold War. Meanwhile, China has built a network of new military bases outpost in the South China Sea although if the Chinese navy has a weakness, it would be on anti-submarine warfare. Therefore, Australia is effectively putting itself at the centre of this emerging militarized contest for the future of maritime Asia by investing in the construction of an advanced nuclear-power attack submarines. These activities gave birth to the newly formed alliances called AUKUS in Asia-Pacific region to checkmate the growing dominance of the Chinese within Asia continent.



5. Emergence of Aukus as A Regional Bloc

On 15 September 2021, a new regional historic security pact was established and announced by three actors which are Australian, the UK and the US called the “AUKUS Alliance”. The alliance will allow the main actor Australia to build 8 nuclear-powered submarines for the first-time using technology provided by the US and the UK. According to analysts, the AUKUS Pact which will cover Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other advance technologies is one of the countries’ biggest defence partnership in decades (BBC, 2021). Among the reason given for the procurement plan of 8 nuclear-powered submarines from the US by Australian government was to counter the growing dominance and influences of the Chinese in the South China Sea. However, the deal was view with negative feelings all over the world especially by other actors like China and France as well as countries in the Asia-Pacific region like Indonesia and Malaysia among others.

Consequently, China strongly condemned the strategy agreement as extremely irresponsible and its foreign ministry spokesman said “it seriously undermines regional peace and stability as well as intensifies the arms race”. Also, China’s embassy in Washington accused the US of a “Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice” (BBC, 2021). These are strong comments coming from the China angle that could result to unforeseen circumstances in the nearest future. On the other hand, France was deeply disappointed with the Australia government decision over the new defence pact which made France to lost a deal with Australia to build 12 submarines. Similarly, the France’s foreign minister stated that the AUKUS pact “it’s really a stab in the back” (BBC, 2021). The government of France condemned the pact and reacted by recalling its ambassador to the US in response to the AUKUS referring to it as blindsided and also Australia in which signals a widening rift among Western allies against China.



Furthermore, Indonesia view the Australia move as a hostile development that could harm Indonesia. However, some Indonesians view the AUKUS as a destabilizing force for Indonesia and the southeast Asia region either now or in the near future. Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that Pact provoke "the continuation of arms race and military power projections in the region". Additionally, Indonesia's diplomatic reminder to Australia was blown out of proportion in which AUKUS agreement painted as a betrayal of Indonesia by Australia. Similarly, Malaysia joins voices with Indonesia to also condemned the Pact and warns that the Pact may spark nuclear arms race in the already contested Indo-Pacific. It added that, the Pact will provoke other powers to act more aggressively in the region which will further destabilize the relative peace enjoyed in the region and creates distrust among the ASEAN member states. The reactions by Indonesia and Malaysia are just a tip of the iceberg because other nations around the region would also raise their concerns when the Pact finally materialize in the region.

This new Pact will made Australia the seventh nation in the world to operates nuclear-powered submarines after the US, UK, France, China, India and Russia. The submarines will be using the latest technology provided by the US and previously it only shared the technology with the UK as the submarines can operates much faster and detect conventionally powered fleets (BBC, 2021). As Guy Boekenstein said that these three nations are starting to draw a line as well as counter [China's] aggressive moves in the Indo-Pacific (BBC, 2021). This is an open confrontation to China and definitely the Chinese will step up to the challenge by increasing it arms and military deployment in the region to further showcased and enhance its presence in the Indo-Pacific region. These trends have kick start a silent cold war and arms race that may manifest into serious regional conflict if not properly address with each party interest put into consideration.



6. Issues Surrounding The Aukus Pact

In recent years, Beijing has been accused of raising tensions in disputed territories such as the South China Sea and the UK Defence Secretary *Ben Wallace* further accused China of “embarking on one of the biggest militaries spends in history” (BBC, 2021). He added that “it is growing its Navy and Air Force at a huge rate. Obviously, it is engaged in some disputed areas”. Therefore, “our partners in these regions want to be able to stand their own ground”. In addition, the UK Prime Minister *Boris Johnson* stated that the pact would “preserve security and stability around the world and generate hundreds of high skilled jobs” (Asia, 2021). According to analysts, the AUKUS alliance is probably the most significant security arrangement between the three nations since after the World War II. The Pact will focus on military capability, separating it from the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance which also includes New Zealand and Canada (BBC, 2021).

The Australia’s submarines are the big-ticket item while the AUKUS will also involve the sharing of cyber capabilities and other undersea technologies. The historic Pact is a great opportunity for the three nations as like-minded allies and partners to protect shared values and promote security as well as prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region (Strangio, 2021). According to *Guy Boekenstein* stated that “all the three nations are drawing a line in the sand to start and counter China’s aggressive moves in the Indo-Pacific” (Asia, 2021). The Western nations have been wary of China's infrastructure investment on the Pacific islands, and also criticized China's trade sanctions against countries like Australia. Australia in the past, maintained good relations with China, its biggest trading partner but the relationship has broken down in recent years amid political tensions. Presently, there is tension with France, after Australia tore up the A\$50bn (€31bn; £27bn) deal to build 12 submarines (BBC, 2021).



The AUKUS Pact has strategically intensified the tension in the Indo-Pacific region and more opposition against the Pact are been raise by countries in the Asia continent. The tension between the AUKUS Pact members and France may lead to further tension among these actors in other alliances that involve the same actors. Presently, the world has witnessed some signs of conflict friction between France and the UK in issues that could have been resolved by the two super-powers without the awareness of the world. Generally, this dilemma involves three super-powers allied having a high strategic distrust among themselves over the AUKUS Pact in the Indo-Pacific region. In other hand, another super-power nation (China) is in total disagreement with the formulation of the AUKUS Pact. In addition, two regional powers (Indonesia and Malaysia) also voiced out their condemnation on the AUKUS Pact in the region which may threaten their national interests.

In line with neo-realism believes that there is no higher authority than the state and all states possess some offensive military capability for self-defence of their citizen and state at large. It further believes that alliance is important for state to create a security group that will assist them to deal with dangerous and threatening situation within their territory. The other point of neo-realism stated that it is very important for states to possess power and if it's possible to have a bigger power than the other neighbouring states. Neo-realism said that power will lead to a balancing and this have played out in this context. The security Pact happens because there is no single power hence no single higher authority higher than the states that will control their action. This is reciprocal with neo-realism points where international stage remains as an anarchy system where every state strives for powers and they build an alliance to assist them in the unforeseen situation for their survival.



Although, Morgenthau one of the most famous realist scholars argue that balancing of power will create more tensions between actors instead creating peace for them. Morgenthau assertion has proven to be correct because the AUKUS Pact has intensified the tension in the region rather than solving the main issue and this development is not a good trend for the countries in the Indo-Pacific region and the world in general. Therefore, there is the need for ASEAN to organize the ASEAN plus 6 countries involving Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea for a strategic diplomatic dialogue to downplay the existing tension. This is important because the ASEAN plus 6 countries involve all the countries in dispute around the Indo-Pacific region that is Australia, China, India and Japan to resolve their differences for peace, security and unity to exist among them.

7. THE WORLD REACTION ON RECEPTION OF AUKUS

The regional policymakers publicly and privately welcome a stronger presence, commitment and set of capabilities that could checkmate and balance China influence in the region. Meanwhile, others are concerned about the regional tensions the Pact will cause and arms race it will bring to the region, while many more appear unsure on one way or the other of its implications. Australian policymakers, in an effort to reassure countries in the region, portray AUKUS as mere technological cooperation among longstanding allies to develop new defence capabilities. These new capabilities in turn supposedly assist Australia better to work with regional partners and contribute to the rules-based order. However, the implicit message here is that AUKUS is not about encircling China, but instead about helping Australia to assist the region to curtail the influence and dominance of China. It's also important to note that the AUKUS partners explicitly confirmed that the agreement doesn't change Australia's prohibition on nuclear weapons (Biden et al., n.d.).



On the other hand, Australia hopes not only to obtain sensitive military technology but also to strengthen US and UK regional presence and commitment in the region which some of the countries within the region would not welcome due to US dominance in the world (Biden et al., n.d.). The strategic narrative by Japan, India and the US have become increasingly coherent about China, although in a different manner, pace and scope. Therefore, Australian policymakers thought invoking ASEAN-related slogans would 'soften the blow' of AUKUS in a bit condescending. The Indo-Pacific region doesn't need to be reminded of that fact by attaching ASEAN jargons to the non-ASEAN options Australia is pursuing (Asia, 2021). These contradictions may never be fully resolved and that is simply the cost of doing business in the age of great power politics. Australia is fully within its rights to formulate whatever strategic policy it deems necessary after all but been a member of ASEAN is never going to be the strategic bridge between Canberra and Beijing.

8. Implications of Aukus in Asia Continent

The Asia Continent will be looming with a rising and increasing assertive China with the geopolitical uncertainties it poses to the region. The ASEAN centric regional architecture will have limited utility in the affairs happening in the region. The US that is viewed as offshore stabilizing power in the region and the world at large would be gradually been squeezed out of the region with China's massive increase military power presence and activities (Kuo, 2021). The new security partnership outfit for regional peace and security will make Australia to further request for the US to assert more active role in the Indo-Pacific due to the fear of China reaction to the Pact. This would result to a huge dominance by the western world super-power by effectively using their military supremacy against any country in Asia and playing the role of world police in the



Continent. Hence, the power game politics and rivalries among big world power and middle power over dominance is all about balance of power which will have consequences.

Australia is home to one of the region's most advanced defence Research and Development (R&D) and innovation hubs as well as the country has also pre-existing programs on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (Kuo, 2021). Its alliance with the US in particular, provides readier access to some of the niche capabilities that the Australian Defence Force requires for indigenous capacity to become self-sufficient in providing it. AUKUS Pact therefore provides a channel for critical technological insights/inputs to Australia's pre-existing indigenous strategy defence programs, which include R&D on future underwater systems. Invariably, China will definitely react to counter the Australia adventure in the region and may led to arms race that would involve other countries within the region. This would definitely have a long-lasting repercussion within the region and the rest of the world as other countries will like to build their defence system to prevent reoccurrence in their region.

Despite the statement delivered by Joe Biden and Lovegrove, a lot of countries still have a negative perspective and sentiment towards the cooperation. Indonesia and Malaysia show their concern regarding the nuclear-power submarine even though they are not a part of the plan (Reuters, 2021). Jakarta concerned that the submarines will create a disruption in the region's military balance, not only it is capable for its high-speed technology, they also equipped with an upgraded missile system and also it is known for the long-endurance (Sambhi, 2021). This would increase the quest for nuclear-power submarines by other regional power countries in the region to enable them balance the Australia new strategic defence threats pose to other nations in the Indo-Pacific region. This trend will increase the arms race competition in the region which the super-



powers nations may not be able to control because of the AUKUS Pact agreement most especially when it involve other super-powers providing for a regional power nation.

China being the economic power house of the Asia Continent and the world at large could result to economic war which most countries would not be able to cope without China economic flows and it may lead to world inflation. It could also lead to rise in inequality which can deepen poverty reduction impact in the region as well as weaken the basis of economic growth the region enjoyed. Also, it will affect the growing economic of Asia by both GDP nominal and the purchasing power parity (PPP) in the world thereby causing global economic recession. This could affect the oversupply of labour and goods, increase unemployment and pressurize the food supply chain which will worsen the nutrition level in the region. Invariably, the political setting in the region will face series of challenges ranging from food security, security itself and dynamic changes in the social cultural nature of the citizens as well as their demands for basic amenities.

On the other hand, if AUKUS Pact is not properly handle by parties involve it may generate additional fears of insecurity within the Asia continent which may lead to increase in arms race among the countries in the region. This will create room for arms smuggling on both light and heavy weapons which will further increase the insecurity level in the region on different front. The Asia Continent being a waterlogged areas will attract pirates that would be interested in the arms smuggling and illicit arms deals. Also, issues of migration for better opportunities will arise in the region and illegal human trafficking and drugs trafficking will further increase because of the tense insecurity situations. Finally, it will increase the issues of cross-borders insurgency and international terrorism as well as illegal movement of people around borders among others.



On the whole, Australia should learn by drawing lessons from the past on Western Powers supports to Iraq President Saddam Hussein to cripple Iran by supplying Saddam with all various types of weapons, military intelligence and special operations training. These supports assisted to prolong the war for eight years with heavy casualty on both human and military hardware as well as economic downturns on both countries. Additionally, in 1950 the US assisted Iran to launched its nuclear program under the Atoms for Peace program in the Middle East when relationship of both countries was good. However, the same US is calling on Iran to stop all nuclear program enrichment and has placed severe sanctions that could cripple the Iranian economic generally. Concisely, the Western nations are investing in Australia for their near future benefits and Australia should be prepare to make huge sacrifices when the West demands started unfolding especially on its iron ore and coal.

9. CONCLUSION

The AUKUS Pact established by Australia, the UK and the US is not a new phenomenon in the international arena to counter any security threats in the world. The Australia and the US view China's dominance in the Asia continent as a world threat most especially when China is having problems with both nations. The establishment of AUKUS Pact did not in any way reduce the tension in the region rather it increases the tension and concerns of the countries within the Indo-Pacific. The nuclear-power submarines deal creates bad feedings with China and France as well as some countries in the Indo-Pacific region. This deal will make Australia to be the seventh nation in the world with a nuclear-power submarines with the purpose to checkmate China dominance in the region.



The neo-realism main goals are survival in the international arena which Australia seek to gain with the establishment of the AUKUS Pact but its plan is facing challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. Realism view power as an important aspect of survival of a state in the international affairs of the world where decisions on which nation control the activities in the globe are decided. Nations are always afraid of their neighbour and the power they possess thereby attempt to build their own power to counter their neighbour threats. In neo-realism, state is the only rational actor with strategies that maximize their power through survival. Therefore, all the rivalries among actors in a specific region is to attain a substantial balance of power in that region.

Therefore, China will do all it takes to maintain it economic and military might as well as been the only dominate power within the Indo-Pacific region. The presence of the UK and the US in the region would only increase the power struggle in the Indo-Pacific region and China will intensify its efforts to still remain the dominate force as well as determine the affairs of the Indo-Pacific region. This situation may lead the world into another cold war and arms race in the Asia continent as it was witnessed after the second world war between the US and the defunct Soviet Union. Australia may end up been at the receiving end by having too many adversaries in the region due to the opposition from the middle powers in the Indo-Pacific. Also, Australia could have drawn lessons from other countries that received support from the Western nations in the past before committing their nation into the AUKUS Pact.

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