



Analysis of British Foreign Policy Forming the Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) Security Alliance in 2021

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ABSTRACT

Security has become a major issue in the study of international relations because it involves aspects of territorial protection, peacekeeping, economic stability, and other elements that influence the lives of countries throughout the world. In the context of international relations, security involves a deep understanding of threats, conflicts and strategies to maintain peace and stability both at regional and global levels. This research aims to analyze state behavior in the context of security cooperation, with a focus on the UK's participation in the AUKUS security alliance which was formed in 2021. The UK's decision to join AUKUS was driven by two main factors, namely national role conceptions and role prescriptions. This research pays special attention to the uniqueness of Britain's participation in this alliance, considering its geographical position which is located in the North Atlantic region, not in the Indo-Pacific region which is the main focus of AUKUS. It is hoped that this analysis will provide valuable insight for the Indonesian Government in addressing security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region related to the formation of the AUKUS alliance. By understanding the motivational factors driving UK participation, this research can contribute to formulating more effective policies in addressing security challenges at regional and global levels.

Keywords: British Foreign Policy, AUKUS, Security Alliance

INTRODUCTION

Security is a major issue in the study of international relations as it deals with territorial protection, peacekeeping, economic stability and many other aspects that affect the lives of countries in the world (Ahmad & Nusrat, 2023; Kandil, 2024). Security in the context of international relations involves understanding threats, conflicts, and ways of maintaining peace and stability at the regional and global levels (Ardiyono & Patunru, 2023; Fielbaum et al., 2023). Efforts to maintain security often involve diplomacy, negotiations, international cooperation,

and a series of agreements to address threats and conflicts (Keskinen et al., 2021; Sovacool et al., 2023).

The security situation of a region can affect a country's foreign policy (Clapp et al., 2022; Vakulchuk et al., 2020). The existence of threats or conflicts that affect its national interests can encourage a country to form a defense and security alliance. With the alliance, a country hopes to improve its defenses as well as participate in maintaining peace and overcoming conflicts. Many countries form alliances and security pacts to be able to help each other in situations of crisis or conflict so that the security of a country is often guaranteed by the collective strength of its alliance (Ambrosio, 2022; Usman & Onapajo, 2023; Weitsman, 1997).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the behavior of countries in security cooperation. Britain's participation in the security alliance is unique considering that Britain is geographically not in the Indo-Pacific region, but is in the North Atlantic region. While the other two AUKUS members, namely: the United States and Australia, are included in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Indo-Pacific is a region with a very large area and has enormous economic potential, especially in the field of natural wealth, including abundant oil and gas reserves. With its vast sea area, the Indo-Pacific has significance as a transportation route for trade purposes, shipping logistics vessels (sea lines of Communication / SLOCs and Sea Lines of Trade / SLOT), and naval deployments (Poon et al., 2024; Siqueira-Silva & Martinez, 2023).

The establishment of the AUKUS alliance with the aim of enhancing cooperation in the field of security and defense in the Indo-Pacific region between the three countries of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States is of interest to study. The security cooperation between the three countries is an important event in the Indo-Pacific region because it clearly carries out cooperation in increasing the power and defense of nuclear-powered militaries. This has significantly changed the geopolitical situation in security in the Indo-Pacific region which in the last decade has begun to be dominated by Chinese power (Shah, 2020). Specifically, the author wants to understand what factors influence a country's behavior so as to encourage it to participate in forming a security alliance even though the countries are not in the same region (Editors, 1997; Kwan et al., 2005; Seidler et al., 2017).

Furthermore, this research is expected to have theoretical significance by contributing to the analysis of interactions and behaviors between actors in security cooperation. Conducting this analysis will help International Relations scholars understand the foreign policy of the United Kingdom participating in forming the AUKUS alliance in 2021 even though the UK is in the North Atlantic region. Empirically, this research will contribute to studies that discuss security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region that have special characteristics, given the geographical, political, economic, and military complexity of the region. The Indo-Pacific region is also home to countries with diverse interests, histories, and security priorities involving many different countries and security organizations, including major nations such as the United States, China, Japan and India.

This study hypothesizes that the factors forming the UK's motivation to participate in shaping AUKUS in 2021 are based on two main factors, namely national role conceptions and role prescriptions. Using these factors in operationalization' five hypotheses were obtained, namely: 1) Traditional British Roles; 2) British military capabilities; 3) British economic interests; 4) International Structure System (China's Increasing Military Power in the Indo-Pacific Region); and 5) General Legal Principles (Indo-Pacific Conception for the UK).

In the end, this research is expected to be one of the references for the Government of Indonesia in addressing the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region associated with the formation of the AUKUS alliance.

RESEARCH METHODS

To answer the formulation of the problem in this study, the method used is a qualitative research method using the causal process tracing (CPT) method (Schmidt et al., 2020). Lamont (2015) defines qualitative research methods as research that uses techniques or strategies for data collection as well as data analysis that relies on non-numerical data collection and analysis (Allen, 2023; Holmes, 2022). The qualitative method is used because it can show the causes of the UK's foreign policy decisions helped shape AUKUS in 2021. This type of data will use primary data (UK government documents: white papers, white papers; white papers; state regulations and statements of state actors) as well as secondary data (international and national accredited books and journals, electronic media).

While the CPT method does not explain cause and effect, it explains and parses the many and complex causes of a specific outcome (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). The purpose of CPT is to uncover and evaluate what preconditions produce a particular event. The author uses this CPT analysis technique because it can explain which causal configuration could cause the UK to decide its foreign policy to co-shape AUKUS in 2021.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On September 15, 2021, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and United States President Joe Biden in a joint press conference held virtually announced a defense and security alliance agreement named AUKUS. The abbreviation AUKUS is an English acronym for the initial letters of the three member states involved in the agreement, namely Australia, United Kingdom, United States. The purpose of the establishment of AUKUS is to enhance cooperation in the field of security and defense between the three countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

One of the main aspects of the deal is cooperation in the development of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia. As a first step, the partnership focuses on building nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. In this regard, Australia will gain access to knowledge and technology relevant to the development of nuclear-powered submarine units

from the United States and the United Kingdom. Australia will buy nuclear-fueled submarines from the United States and Britain. The technology will make it possible for Australia to have submarines that travel faster and are harder to detect than conventional submarine fleets. In addition, the nuclear-powered submarine allows it to dive for months on the seafloor and can fire missiles at longer distances. This means Australia will become the seventh country in the world to operate nuclear-powered submarines after the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and India.

The establishment of the AUKUS security alliance has dominated the discourse on security issues in the Indo-Pacific region. Reactions and responses emerged from a number of countries, especially countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The alliance is widely interpreted as a response to China's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific region and is attributed to the substantial development of Chinese naval activity in the South China Sea (LTS). In addition, AUKUS is seen as a bold statement of the importance of the Indo-Pacific region and China's systemic challenges to the three alliance partners.



Figure 1. Map of the Indo-Pacific

Sumber: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, Free and Open Indo-Pacific

AUKUS is seen as a partnership that raises concerns about the potential destabilization that nuclear submarine technology is capable of presenting. Some countries in the Indo-Pacific region, especially China, see AUKUS as an act that could upset the balance of power in the region and could create geopolitical tensions in the region. The establishment of AUKUS also led to discussions related to widespread proliferation, especially from countries in East and Southeast Asia. Some countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, identified the effects that such decisions could have on boosting the spirit of the arms race in the region due to perceptions of new challenges.

Furthermore, Britain's participation in forming the AUKUS security alliance is also one of the issues of concern to international relations studies. In the past decade, the UK has experienced two important events in its foreign policy related to international integration, namely Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit) on January 31, 2020 and Britain's joining the AUKUS alliance on September 15, 2021. Currently considered that the Aukus alliance is one

of Britain's steps to expand its influence in the economic and security fields globally after Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit).

The motivation and purpose of the British participating in forming the alliance is interesting to study. This relates to the geographical position of Britain which is in the North Atlantic region. While the purpose of establishing AUKUS is to enhance cooperation alliances in the field of defense and security in the Indo-Pacific region.



Figure 2. Map of the United Kingdom / United Kingdom

The UK has several nuclear submarines that use advanced technology that operates with the Royal Navy. One of Britain's best-known classes of nuclear submarines is the Vanguard class which carries nuclear weapons as part of nuclear deterrence. The class was introduced in 1994 as part of the Trident missile nuclear program, and consists of four ships: Vanguard, Victorious, Vigilant and Vengeance. built between 1986 and 1999 at Barrow-in-Furness by Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering, (now owned by BAE Systems). The four ships are based at HM Naval Base Clyde in the Faslane area of Scotland.

The submarines of this class are armed with Trident II D5 missiles which have a very long range capability and are an important component of the UK's nuclear capability. In this regard, the UK has the capability to launch nuclear missiles in response to serious threats to its national security.

British foreign policy took part in shaping AUKUS interesting for further study. Britain has long maintained close ties with the United States and Australia in a variety of fields, including diplomacy and security and defence. Britain is a member of the Five Eyes, an intelligence alliance that includes the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. In addition, the United States is also a long-time ally of Britain in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) which focuses on regional security in the North Atlantic. The evolving security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in the context of China's growing military power, could be a driver for the UK to shape AUKUS.

The UK also has a long history in diplomacy and global security. As a country with a strong maritime history, Britain understands the importance of maritime influence and security. In

addition, after its decision to leave the European Union (Brexit), Britain is also eager to play a greater role in global affairs, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. In this regard, the UK's joining AUKUS could enhance its role in security and diplomatic issues outside the North Atlantic region.

After the Brexit event that led to the UK leaving the European Union and managing its government independently since 2021, the UK Government is seeking to re-promote the UK's status as a global power through its "Global Britain" policy. The policy was first announced in 2018 and has seen significant improvements in the security sector since 2021, with the aim of making the UK a stronger economically, trade and maritime country with far-reaching influence around the world.

In this regard, the UK identifies itself as a European country with a global role, and with an increasing focus on the Indo-Pacific region and seeks to enhance cooperation in security, economy and diplomacy. This policy was certainly driven by several reasons that ultimately led Britain to focus its foreign policy attention on the Indo-Pacific region.

The existence of a potential-rich Indo-Pacific region and connectivity is driving the UK to pursue its strategic interests in the region. The UK is showing a major interest in the Indo-Pacific and increasing its involvement in political, military, economic and other areas, considering the region an arena of competition. In this regard, the UK is strengthening partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries through bilateral, multilateral and regional relations.

Britain's efforts to increase its influence in the Indo-Pacific region include using the trilateral security treaty instrument AUKUS with the United States and Australia. AUKUS became a driving force for the UK in achieving its national interests, restoring Britain's status as one of the global great powers, and establishing its position as the most influential European nation in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, AUKUS is the UK's foreign policy response to be present in facing regional and world security challenges that will become increasingly complex in the future.

Through AUKUS, the UK is seeking to re-establish its influence among Commonwealth nations in the Indo-Pacific, including several countries adjacent to China such as India, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and several island nations in the South Pacific. AUKUS also reflects the UK's efforts to strengthen its privileged relationship with Australia and the United States.

CONCLUSION

After leaving the European Union in 2021, the UK through its "Global Britain" policy seeks to restore its position as a global power with a primary focus on the security sector. The policy reflects Britain's shifting role as a European country that wants to play a global role, especially in the Indo-Pacific region which is considered a source of great potential. In this context, AUKUS, a trilateral security treaty with the United States and Australia, became a key means in Britain's efforts to expand its influence in the region. By leveraging AUKUS, the UK is not only

responding to increasingly complex security challenges, but also rebuilding relationships with Commonwealth nations in the Indo-Pacific. This policy reflects Britain's ambition to strengthen its position as an influential global power, demonstrating its strategic resilience in the face of geopolitical dynamics in the 21st century.

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