

UNITED STATES' INTEREST IN JOINING THE AUKUS ALLIANCE IN THE INDO- PACIFIC REGION IN 2022-2023

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ABSTRAK

Meningkatnya peran China di Indo Pasifik membuat AS memikirkan berbagai cara untuk meredam peran tersebut. Pada tahun 2021 aliansi pertahanan militer AS, Australia, dan Inggris (AUKUS) dibentuk. Kesimpulan dari tulisan ini ialah kepentingan AS di Indo Tulisan ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dimana bertujuan untuk menggambarkan, mencatat, menganalisis dan menginterpretasikan kondisi-kondisi yang sedang terjadi atau ada. Pasifik melalui AUKUS terdiri dari beberapa hal yaitu menhalau kekuatan China dan Memperkuat dominasi AS di Indo Pasifik.

Kata Kunci : Kepentingan, Aliansi, Pertahanan, Militer

ABSTRACT

The increasing role of China in the Indo-Pacific has led the US to think of various ways to counteract this influence. In 2021, the US, Australia, and the UK formed the military defense alliance known as AUKUS. This paper uses a qualitative research method through describing, recording, analyzing, and interpreting the conditions currently occurring or existing. This paper concludes that US interests in the Indo-Pacific through AUKUS include several aspects: deterring China's power and strengthening US dominance.

Keywords: Interests, Defense Alliance, Military

INTRODUCTION

The development of a complex strategic security environment in the Asia-Pacific region after the end of the Cold War can be identified by the shifting power among major countries, the gradual emergence of a multipolar security environment with a major Asian power playing a larger role. Rapid and unpredictable economic growth, which can change the balance of power in geo-economic terms, significant increases in the defense industry and local military capabilities of countries in the region, and the potential for ethnic and national tensions, economic rivalries, aspirations, dissatisfaction with living standards, religious and racial conflicts are all factors contributing to this complexity.

In the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) in Manila a few years ago, a meeting was held among several influential leaders regarding US interests, namely India, Australia, and Japan. The forum introduced the Indo-Pacific as a new term, not only replacing the Asia-Pacific in both name and geographic scope but also expanding the

actors, power, and structure in the region. The purpose of this name change was to encourage a more open climate of cooperation in the region, with the US, as the initiator, emphasizing that the Indo-Pacific represents the initial stage of a geopolitical transformation in the region.

The Indo-Pacific is a new term used to replace Asia-Pacific both in name and geographic coverage. The more open cooperation climate in the Indo-Pacific region will become the initial stage of a geopolitical transformation in the region. In the QSD forum, the US, as the initiator, emphasized that the Indo-Pacific is the initial stage towards geopolitical transformation in the region.

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The term "Asia" was felt to be too broad, heterogeneous, and more continental than maritime, while the term "Asia Pacific," which refers to parts of Asia in the Pacific Ocean, was considered inadequate. The term "Indo-Pacific" (a combination of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean) was deemed more suitable or representative of this need. The use of the term Indo-Pacific is also inseparable from the increasing superiority of India entering the 21st century, marked by India's impressive economic growth in the 1990s and its nuclear weapons development.

Based on research by Michel and Passarelli, various strategic perspectives on the importance of the Indo-Pacific have been developed by regional actors, including the US, India, China, Australia, Indonesia, and Japan. The Indo-Pacific has become important because it has been driven by China's dramatic economic growth, India's continuous trade and productivity increases, and the rising exports of crude oil from the Middle East to Asia.

National interests and territorial control are variables that allow a country to influence other countries and limit other countries in increasing power or achieving

interests. One way is through cooperation, which includes multilateral exercises, information sharing, and joint patrols carried out in partnership with South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia. The interactions between countries presented in the region are partly influenced by the involvement of major powers with global interests and policies. These conditions have consequences for the dynamics of the strategic environment, such as the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific maritime region, which is no longer dominated by a single superpower but is being shaped by several major powers.

After previously being part of The Quad, the US also formed the AUKUS Alliance. AUKUS is a form of cooperation between the US, the UK, and Australia aimed at maintaining security in the Indo-Pacific region. The initial step of this alliance will give Australia nuclear-powered submarines to strengthen its position in the region. The formation of AUKUS has sparked controversy, particularly among countries involved in the Indo-Pacific region. Many countries do not agree with the formation of the AUKUS defense alliance. Besides causing discomfort among many countries, AUKUS is also considered likely to provoke war in the region.

Although the UK has stated that the British Prime Minister, along with President Biden and Prime Minister Morrison, announced a security partnership called AUKUS, emphasizing that AUKUS is not a treaty, pact, or new alliance, but rather a partnership. AUKUS, or Australia-United Kingdom-United States, is a trilateral security alliance established on September 15, 2021. The AUKUS alliance was formed under the actions of the three countries to develop cooperative relations in security and defense in the Indo-Pacific region.

The AUKUS alliance has also resulted in varying reactions from countries in the Indo-Pacific region. This alliance can increase security behavior in the Indo-Pacific region and lead to the political strengthening of Australia. The alliance has been clarified as a signal that these three countries are enhancing security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Despite these explanations, many countries remain skeptical. Especially in this case, the US has already entered The Quad but still formed a new defense alliance, AUKUS.

This has led many countries to believe that this step is an effort by the US to expand its presence to remain dominant in the Indo-Pacific and as a tool to deter China's power in the region. Thus, based on the background presented above, this research will address the topic "UNITED STATES' INTEREST IN JOINING THE AUKUS ALLIANCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION IN 2022-2023."

Research Question

What are the US's interests in joining the AUKUS Alliance in the Indo-Pacific region in 2022-2023?

Literature Review

The first journal, titled "**Strategic Interests of the United States in the Asia-Pacific**" by Poltak Partogi Nainggolan, was published in the *Politica Journal*, Vol 4, No 1, May 2013. This journal explains that since the end of 2011, changes in US policy in the Asia-Pacific region have become increasingly apparent. President Obama has explicitly stated the US's return to the region after previously focusing more on the Middle East and Europe. This shift in focus is influenced not only by the escalation of tensions in the South China Sea but also by the perception of increasingly threatened US interests in Indonesia, the largest country in Southeast Asia, which is located near the US Marine base in Darwin.

Many cannot overlook that not far from there, in Papua, lies the US transnational corporation (TNC) Freeport, which has been generating high profits for years but whose continued operations are now threatened. The interests of US TNCs in the mining business, scattered across various regions in Indonesia near Australia, have also been threatened lately due to the proliferation of mining disputes.

With the placement of its marines in Darwin and the increasingly intense maneuvers of its warships, at the very least, the US wants to show its military presence clearly in the Asia-Pacific region. The visible and tangible military presence of the US in the region will naturally make China cautious in displaying its military aggression in the region, especially against smaller countries that rely on US protection.

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This writing is part of research on changes in US security policy orientation in the region. The research is descriptive-analytical, using qualitative methods. Data collection was carried out through a combination of literature studies and in- depth interviews. The research findings show the relevance of US national interests and the changes in its security policy orientation in the Asia- Pacific region. The second journal, titled **"China Versus the United States: An Interpretation of Superpower Security Rivalry in the Asia- Pacific"** by M Najeri Al Syahrin, was published in the *Global & Strategic Journal*, Vol. 12 No. 1, January-June 2018, Universitas Muhammadiyah East Kalimantan. This writing attempts to explore the meaning of the security rivalry issue currently taking place between the superpowers, the United States and China, in the Asia-Pacific region. With China's rise, Sino-US relations have become increasingly important for Asia-Pacific security stability. The security rivalry between these two countries resembles an "old ritual" now being repeated by "new congregants." The political and security contestation that ended with the Cold War has not been able to establish the United States as the sole superpower capable of continuously controlling global political dynamics. The rise of China provides an alternative in regional security interactions in the Asia-Pacific. The initiation of China's strategy and the US's active response will determine the security landscape of the Asia. Certainly, here is the continuation of the document translation:

Pacific in the coming decades. Driven by China's rise, China's identity has now shifted to become an intimidating great power. On one hand, it poses a threat to US security interests in the region, while on the other hand, China also emerges as a competitor in US economic interests. This journal employs qualitative methods, where the flow of explanation is based on existing events. In its conclusion, the writing suggests that it is not easy to arrive at a single, clear conclusion regarding the security rivalry between superpowers in the Asia- Pacific region. The security rivalry is a complex condition with various supporting aspects, some of which are outside the security circle itself— economics being one of them. The author attempts to outline this rivalry by showing that with China's rise, Sino- US relations have become increasingly important and potentially dangerous for regional security stability. The political and security contestation that ended with the Cold War has not yet fully established the US as a superpower that can

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always dictate the world unilaterally. The rise of China provides an alternative in regional security interactions. As a result, this shift triggers contemporary debates on how to manage conflicts and hegemony between these two powers.

This journal is helpful in writing this thesis, especially in explaining that a significant competition has occurred between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific region. This journal will later strengthen the author's writing, particularly in terms of information on how the US and other countries compete to expand their influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

The third journal, titled "**Indo-Pacific from Geopolitical and Geostrategic Perspectives**" by Rodon Pedrason, was published in the Indonesian Education Research Journal, Vol. 7 No. 1, 2021, Universitas Pertahanan Bogor Indonesia, 2021. In this writing, it is explained that the Indo-Pacific is a maritime region with a strategic layout, both in terms of the marine resources beneath it and its strategic position in supporting various maritime policies of states. This strategic condition is also reflected in the region, which is part of the sovereignty of states. This ultimately explains the complexity of inter-state interactions. Moreover, state interests are not limited to the exploration of maritime resources but also control over access, which has political and economic consequences. The strategic interests factor then drives the dynamics of shifting power influenced by various security policies, especially those of countries with the capability and influence in shaping the security structure in the Indo-Pacific. Power distribution becomes an unavoidable option, whether through military force or cooperation and alliances, as relevant options in facing the complexities of competition in fulfilling strategic interests. This condition illustrates the perspective of state actors in viewing the behavior of other actors as threats to their strategic interests. The balancing action becomes a field of interaction aimed at limiting the movement of other actors as part of the competition in increasing the political and security influence of each state actor as an effort to prevent the dominance of other actors' behavior, which poses a threat to geopolitical interests and competitors in the geostrategic policies of each state actor.

Main Argument

From a neo-realist perspective, the US's interests in the Indo-Pacific are explained through the concept of anarchy, which suggests that states are unprotected in the international context and must have power to manage potential conflicts with other states. The balance of power, as another concept, will analyze how the power and military strength of a state will influence the behavior and strategy of other states. In the context of the AUKUS alliance, the national interest of the United States is to maintain and strengthen its presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific region, which is strategically important due to its economic and geopolitical significance. This research aims to understand the interests that the US has in maintaining its existence through AUKUS in the Indo-Pacific region in 2022

Analytical Framework

Neo-Realism

The concepts of anarchy and balance of power influence the behavior of the US in developing defense alliances in the Indo-Pacific region, such as the AUKUS alliance. Neo-realism is a theory that considers justice and honor among states as factors that do not have a significant effect on state behavior and may even lead to more aggressive behavior.

National Interest

National interest is the goal of a state to maintain and increase its power relative to other states. In pursuing and achieving national interests, a state actor must have dimensions of national interest. These dimensions include economic interests, security interests, international interests, and ideological interests.

National interest represents the aspirations, goals, and objectives that a state wishes to achieve. It is one of the most important factors in conducting international relations. There is no definite theory or definition of national interest because it is abstract. In pursuing national interests, a state must be supported by dimensions such as economic interests, security interests, international interests, and ideological interests.

In the context of the AUKUS alliance, the national interest of the United States is to maintain and strengthen its presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific region, which is strategically important due to its economic and geopolitical significance. The alliance with Australia and the United Kingdom aims to enhance military cooperation and share

technology, particularly in the fields of nuclear- powered submarines, cyber capabilities, underwater capabilities, and artificial intelligence. In conducting international relations, a state must have a national interest. National interest is one of the most important parts of conducting interactions in international relations.

Defense Alliances

An alliance is a merger between two or more groups into one to better achieve their respective goals due to mutually beneficial cooperation. An alliance can also be defined as a coalition formed by individuals, groups, or organizations that have resources (facilities, infrastructure, funds, expertise, access, influence, information) and are willing to be actively involved or play a role in carrying out certain functions and tasks. The definition of an alliance in international relations is cooperation between organizations or specific groups within the scope of international (interstate) relations, either in the political or business fields, for a specific period.

Those within the main circle of an alliance may have different views, even differing political ideologies. However, this does not hinder the achievement of the alliance's goals.

The following are some principles of alliances:

1. Find common vision, not differing interests. Alliances should begin with good intentions.
2. Prioritize initiating some small achievements and trust your hopes, not fears.
3. Perform tasks and activities according to plan. If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.
4. Focus on agreed issues and rely on them when taking action.
5. Always be open to other views, be willing to negotiate and prioritize mutually beneficial agreements.
6. Alliances must be dynamic and innovative, meaning not easily satisfied and continuously striving to create something new for the advancement of the alliance.

Military Defense

Military defense is the primary strength of national defense, established and prepared to face military threats, structured into main components, reserve components, and supporting components. The utilization of military defense layers is realized in the conduct of military operations, both in the form of War Military Operations (OMP)

and Non-War Military Operations (OMSP). Military defense, as an armed force, is displayed through human resources and defense equipment, established and developed professionally to achieve a deterrent capability.

However, the construction of national defense forces must be prepared to face any military threats that may arise at any time. Deterrence efforts are not passive but are developed in a dynamic deterrence strategy through the readiness of defense forces to face the worst conditions, namely confronting actual threats in the form of war or other military threats.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods, which are methods for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and activities. The research strategies employed are specific designs within qualitative research that establish special procedures for the study.

The type of research used is descriptive analysis, which is "a method aimed at describing, recording, analyzing, and interpreting conditions that are currently occurring or existing." In other words, descriptive analysis research aims to obtain information about current conditions and to observe the relationships between the variables involved. Descriptive research is a type of qualitative research, so the data collected in this study is mostly descriptive data in the form of reports and explanations. Therefore, this research does not emphasize numbers or statistical data processing, although it does not reject quantitative data.

Data Collection Techniques Used in This Research Are:

1. **Documentation:** This technique involves collecting secondary data from scientific literature, such as books, papers, journals, magazines, newspapers, and official documents that are published or unpublished, which are considered relevant to the research topic.
2. **Observation:** The researcher conducts direct observation and recording of the phenomena being studied, in line with the assignment experienced by the author.

3. **Interviews:** The researcher interviews informants with pre-prepared questions to create a dialogue that can uncover all information related to the research focus.

Data Analysis Used in This Research Is Qualitative Data Analysis, Including:

1. **Data Reduction:** Selecting and filtering key data relevant to the research focus.
2. **Data Display:** Presenting data in the form of words, sentences, images, symbols, diagrams, charts, tables, and matrices.
3. **Data Verification:** The data that has been collected is tested empirically to ensure its validity, reliability, and objectivity.

DISCUSSION

Profile of the United States

The United States, abbreviated as the US or commonly known as America, is a federal constitutional republic consisting of fifty states and a federal district. The country is located in central North America, where forty-eight contiguous states and the capital district, Washington, D.C., are situated. The United States is bordered by the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans to the west and east, respectively, with Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. The other two states, Alaska and Hawaii, are separated from the mainland United States. Alaska is located at the northwest tip of North America, bordered by Canada to the east and Russia to the west, separated by the Bering Strait. Hawaii is an archipelago located in the Pacific Ocean. The United States also has several territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean. With an area of 3.79 million square miles (9.83 million km²) and a population of approximately 315 million people, the United States is the third or fourth largest country in the world by total area and the third largest by population. The United States is one of the most ethnically diverse and multicultural nations in the world, a result of large-scale immigration from many countries. The climate and geography of the United States are also very diverse, and the country is home to a wide variety of species.

The Native Americans began migrating from Asia to the land that is now the United States about 15,000 years ago. After 1500 AD, the arrival of Europeans and disease outbreaks gradually reduced their population. European migration and colonization began around 1600, primarily from England. The United States was formed from thirteen British

colonies that stretched along the Atlantic coast and developed their own democratic economic and political systems, separate from England. Disputes between England and the American colonists led to the outbreak of the American Revolution. On July 4, 1776, with a unanimous vote, delegates from the thirteen British colonies proclaimed independence, marking the beginning of the United States. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union made the United States the world's sole superpower.

The United States is classified as an advanced post-industrial country and is the world's leading economy, with an estimated GDP of \$15.6 trillion in 2012, representing 19% of the global GDP according to purchasing power parity in 2011. The US GDP per capita was the sixth-largest in the world in 2010. The advancement of the United States economy is driven by abundant natural resources, well-developed infrastructure, and high productivity. Although the country is post-industrial, the United States remains the world's largest manufacturer.

The United States also has the highest military spending in the world and leads in economic, cultural, and political influence, as well as being a leader in scientific research and technological innovation.

The United States ratified the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. On May 25, 1787, through the Constitutional Convention, the Constitution of the United States was ratified. This constitution contains the main objectives of the United States in guaranteeing the rights of the states. In 1788, Congress and the House of Representatives were established, and George Washington was appointed as the first president of the United States. The formation of the US democratic government system is based on the 1787 Constitution, which is still in effect today.

Federalism is a form of government that consists of several states, each working together with other states to form a united federation. In the national government, powers are divided into three branches: executive, judicial, and legislative. However, in practice, no one branch can subordinate another.

To amend the Constitution, a proposal containing two-thirds of the votes of the congressional assembly or a national convention based on the request of two-thirds of the state legislatures is required, followed by ratification by three-fourths of the state legislatures.

Executive Branch of the United States

The president is the leader of the executive branch of the United States. The general requirements to be a presidential candidate in the United States are being a US citizen, having been a US resident for approximately 14 years, and being at least 45 years old. The president serves a four-year term with a maximum of two terms.

The president is elected through the Electoral College and is not directly chosen by the people. In addition to the president, the executive branch also includes independent regulatory bodies, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Reserve System. The function of these bodies is to protect various public interests, resolve disputes about federal regulations, and enforce the rules. The election of members of these bodies is regulated by commissions appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

US foreign policy dynamics can be divided into several characteristics based on historical periods:

1. **Expansionism** aimed at strengthening US influence in ideology, politics, and economics in the American-Pacific region. In practice, the US successfully expanded its territory, including Alaska, which was purchased from Russia in 1867, and occupied 40% of Mexico's territory, as well as purchasing territories in the Americas, such as Louisiana, Texas, and Florida. Using religion and culture, the US expanded throughout the American continent based on the concept of "manifest destiny" (the principle guiding US foreign policy over the ages).

2. **Isolationism** refers to the US principle and policy of avoiding and shutting itself off from any political and military commitments with other countries, especially those in the region. **Neutrality** is the stance of US foreign policy that seeks to avoid involvement in wars, particularly in global conflicts like World War I and World War II. US isolationist politics dominated decision-making throughout the 18th and early 20th centuries. US isolationism was evident from 1796 until the 19th century when President George Washington, in his Farewell Address, stated that America should avoid permanent alliances with foreign nations and emphasized that Europe did not share the same interests as America, thus making it unnecessary for America to get involved in other nations' affairs, particularly when they did not serve US national interests.

In the midst of its isolationist policies, the US, between 1890 and 1917, intervened in Latin American countries and former Spanish colonies such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines. Cuba became a focus of attention due to Spanish colonialism at that time. **Interventionism and Internationalism** are, in essence, similar, where the US began to play an active role in international affairs and intervened directly in other countries. As a foreign policy, interventionism is seen as the antithesis of isolationism, meaning the US involves itself in political commitments through international treaties or membership in international organizations. **Unilateralism** represents another characteristic of US foreign policy, defined as a doctrine supporting unilateral actions. Post- Cold War, US unilateralism became a hallmark of its ambitious foreign policy. Francis Fukuyama, in "The End of History and the Last Man" (1992), argued that history had ended, and humanity had no choice but to follow the US political system and policies. The US's unilateral stance demonstrated its determination to dominate the world based on unilateralism. The **Double Standard Politics** is clearly illustrated in US foreign policy under unilateralism. A double standard refers to an inconsistency in foreign policy where the US treats two or more countries differently. This means one party receives positive treatment from the US while others experience unfair treatment. **Moralism and Realism** represent the dual nature of US foreign policy. US foreign policy is often characterized as lacking clear direction, oscillating between moralistic and realistic approaches. In practicing moralism, the US positions itself as a model of democracy and moral superiority. The US strives to show its moral responsibility for its policies and towards other countries. This is reflected in policies aimed at maintaining world peace through democracy, economic revival through the Marshall Plan, humanitarian concerns, and other initiatives. However, on the other hand, the US is highly aggressive and tends to use any means necessary to protect and achieve its foreign policy interests.

US Foreign Policy Related to AUKUS in 2022-2023

AUKUS is a trilateral initiative between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States launched in September 2021. This initiative aims to enhance Australia's military and technological capabilities through the sharing of nuclear and space technology.

Formation of the AUKUS Military Defense Alliance

In mid-September 2021, through a virtual press conference, a new partnership was announced by US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. This new partnership, known as AUKUS, is a historic defense pact that encompasses the Asia- Pacific region. AUKUS stands for Australia, United Kingdom, and United States of America. On the surface, this move is clearly an effort to counter China's influence, particularly the rapid growth of its military power. As part of the AUKUS pact, Australia will have the opportunity to build a fleet of nuclear- powered submarines using advanced technology from the United States. AUKUS has become a significant moment, marking the first time that the UK and the US have shared such sensitive submarine technology with Australia. The US and the UK will help Australia build at least eight nuclear-powered submarines.

Besides the agreement on the construction of nuclear- powered submarines for Australia by the United States and the United Kingdom, which has been officially and publicly announced, it is difficult to determine what else lies behind the AUKUS defense pact. What is certain is that from China's reaction to the formation of AUKUS and the anger of France over the same issue, there are many strategic problems hidden within it. This alliance is likely to raise tensions that have long simmered in the South China Sea and Indo-Pacific regions.

US Interests in the Indo- Pacific Region through AUKUS

The increase in US military presence represents a balance of power, a legacy of World War II and the Cold War, where the US established several defense outposts in the Indo- Pacific region. With this renewed concept, the US is deploying additional forces to Singapore, Australia, and the Philippines. In particular, in addressing the South China Sea dispute, the US plays a role in training forces and providing military bases in Northeast Asia. Since 2011, the US has implemented this strategy by taking several actions. First, the announcement of the deployment of new US military forces to Australia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Second, strengthening its presence in East Asia related to the South China Sea dispute. Third, participating in meetings with East Asian and ASEAN countries. Fourth, negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade bloc, and finally, the formation of AUKUS.

The formation of AUKUS, designed to curb China’s hegemony in the Indo-Pacific, makes the US even more dominant in the region. Therefore, AUKUS is very important for the US, especially in terms of strengthening its dominance in the Indo-Pacific, which continues to be overshadowed by China. AUKUS focuses on the military cooperation of the US, Australia, and the UK. It is a serious cooperation pact that could have significant implications for global geopolitics, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. This pact includes elements of cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, underwater capabilities, and nuclear technology, which are currently under debate.

In the end, the formation of AUKUS is indeed used by the US for its national interests, where with AUKUS, the US dominance in the Indo-Pacific is further maintained. This can also be seen from the growing US power in Asia under President Joe Biden, according to the annual index by the foreign policy think tank Lowy Institute. The Asia Power Index considers various measures, including economic and military capabilities, economic relationships, defense networks, and diplomatic and cultural influence.

In 2021, the US remained the most powerful country in the Asia-Pacific region, with China in second place after its influence continued to grow in recent years on the Index. Australia ranked sixth in the Asia Power Index 2021, behind Japan, India, and Russia. Despite prolonged diplomatic disputes with China, its largest trading partner, Australia increased its resilience in 2021. AUKUS focuses on the military cooperation of the US, Australia, and the UK. This pact includes elements of cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, underwater capabilities, and nuclear technology.

It is a serious cooperation pact that could have significant implications for global geopolitics, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific is the fastest-growing region in the world. The region accounts for 60 percent of the global economy and two-thirds of total economic growth over the past five years.

Geographically, the Indo-Pacific region refers to the area stretching from the eastern part of the Indian Ocean to the western part of the Pacific Ocean, connected by the Strait of Malacca.

The Indo-Pacific has become a center for geopolitical, maritime security, trade, and environmental activities. The region also stands at the crossroads of

international trade. The strategic value as a geopolitical center is emphasized by the presence of strong countries such as the United States, China, India, Australia, Japan, and ASEAN countries. However, beyond the geographic description, the concept of the Indo-Pacific is essentially a new geopolitical architecture for the region. Proponents of the Indo-Pacific concept assume that the growth of economic ties, the need for greater political and security cooperation and coordination, requires an expansion of the regional concept.

Currently, half of the United States' main trading partners are in the Indo-Pacific region.

This region is a destination for nearly a third of US exports and a source of direct foreign investment worth 900 billion dollars in the United States, which creates millions of jobs spread across all 50 US states. However, while the US military technology remains advanced, it does not have strong economic power. Therefore, the US inevitably must collaborate with other countries considered capable of balancing and assisting the US in the Indo-Pacific region. This aligns with the US rebalancing strategy in the Indo-Pacific, where the US will strengthen its strategic partnership relations with allied countries. Given this, the US interests in the strengthening US dominance in the Indo-Pacific region. Since 2007, the emergence of the Indo-Pacific has become a primary focus within the geographical, political, and strategic concepts for several countries. The strategic value of the Asia-Pacific has driven the development of free trade in recent years. According to WTO data, free trade in the Asia-Pacific region has increased significantly, starting from just three Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in 2000 to 40 FTAs by 2022. Meanwhile, according to ADB data, in 2022, there were 71 FTAs in the Asia-Pacific region, both operational and under negotiation, beyond WTO data.

China's presence is seen as a threat to US trade and the values of Western liberal democracy.

China is viewed as a political, military, and economic rival, and is officially regarded as a peer competitor by the US. The US depicts the Indo-Pacific as a "priority theater" in its policy because the Indo-Pacific region is likely to become an engine of economic growth and the epicenter of global geopolitical competition.

In the 2018 National Defense Strategy, the US identified China as a strategic competitor that employs predatory economics and leverages its modern military for its advantage. China's military modernization and expansion have escalated in recent years. China became the second-largest country in military expenditure after the US since 2008, and in 2018, China's Ministry of Finance announced an 8.1% increase in military spending from the previous year, totaling 1.107 trillion yuan, or approximately 174.6 billion USD. China's rise in the region has transformed its economic growth into military power and diplomatic influence, challenging the stability and order in the region. Since the start of the Trump administration in 2017, significant changes have occurred in US policy, along with the emergence of a new vision for America under "America First," a concept introduced by Trump that prioritizes American interests above all others.

China's military power has prompted the US Navy in Yokosuka, Japan, to respond to China's naval strength.

China's economic power has also become a primary focus of the AUKUS alliance. China has experienced rapid economic growth, making it a global economic hub in the early 21st century. The AUKUS alliance aims to reduce polarization in the Indo-Pacific region and create economic unity. Indonesia, as one of the countries in the Indo-Pacific, encourages ASEAN to develop the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP), which will support Indonesia's national security interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Observing China's growth, the US, needing to preserve its influence, has reformed its defense strategy and concentrated its resources across the Indo-Pacific. The intense security competition, with significant potential for conflict, is driven by the rivalry between major powers such as China and the United States. The emergence of a new great power challenging the US's dominance in the region presents a clear threat. China's actions, mobilized to change the regional order, have created uncertainty in international relations in the area. Additionally, China has established cooperation with "rogue states" such as Iran and Russia, which threaten US interests in the region. Through AUKUS, the US can increase its military personnel presence more freely. The US military's placement in Darwin is a way for the US to strengthen its position in the Indo-Pacific. Australia has announced that more US troops will arrive, and its allies will

collaborate in missile development. This announcement marks the latest move amid shared concerns about China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, without providing specific numbers, also confirmed that the US would expand its military presence and access in Australia.

After the agreement on the deployment of US Marines in Darwin, the increased US military presence in the Asia-Pacific can also be seen in efforts to make Australia a base for long-range unmanned reconnaissance aircraft (drones). Permission has been granted by the Australian Government, although Australia's Minister of Defense said that the Cocos Islands' base option is still being considered due to necessary infrastructure and facility improvements, especially for the airfield. However, it is acknowledged that this location is the most ideal for monitoring the busiest shipping lanes in the world and the South China Sea. The Cocos Islands' coral reefs can be utilized as an air base in the Northwest Indian Ocean region of Australia, not only for manned reconnaissance aircraft but also for unmanned aircraft and weapons.

Figure 4.2 US Military Base



Source: tribunews

Hugh White, a defense analyst from the Australian National University (ANU), stated that Australia is a strategic asset for the US because from the continent of Australia, the US can monitor China's developments and its presence and interests in the Indo-Pacific. The US-Australia military alliance is intended to anticipate threats from China. The basis for selecting Darwin as a US military base is its proximity to the Malacca Strait, the busiest shipping lane in the world, where 80% of China's crude

oil imports pass. Given the data above, it can be assured that the US military's placement in Darwin is highly advantageous in curbing China's power. With the solid defense alliance of the three countries, it is certain that these countries will cooperate to pressure China in the Indo-Pacific. Australia, which is directly in the Indo-Pacific region, and the UK, which is always ready to support US actions, serve as strong tools for the US in countering China's power in the Indo-Pacific.

The formation of AUKUS, intended to curb China's hegemony in the Indo-Pacific, has significant implications for global geopolitics, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. AUKUS is a serious defense cooperation pact between Australia, the UK, and the US. This alliance aims to strengthen the power and security of the Indo-Pacific region, affecting the interests of the countries involved.

CONCLUSION

The US formed the AUKUS alliance in 2021. AUKUS is a collaboration between the US, the UK, and Australia, aimed at maintaining security in the Indo-Pacific region. The initial step of this alliance will provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines to strengthen its position in the region. The formation of AUKUS has sparked controversy, particularly among countries involved in the Indo-Pacific region. Many countries disagree with the AUKUS defense alliance. Besides causing discomfort among many countries, the formation of AUKUS is also considered likely to provoke war in the region. Unintentionally, AUKUS has become a tool for the US to advance its national interests. Essentially, when the US decided to include Australia in this military defense alliance, Australia was already bearing the significant risk of drifting further away from China.

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