



## Reviewing China-AUKUS Tensions through Constructivism Perspective

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### Abstract

*AUKUS (Australia, UK, US) is a relatively new trilateral pact. By aiming to maintain security and peace in the Indo-Pacific, AUKUS will indirectly deal with China as a country that is considered to have an important position in the region at this time. This research was conducted using a qualitative method whose sources were obtained from books, journals, scientific papers, etc. related to the problems between AUKUS and China. In this research, the tension between AUKUS and China will be discussed from the perspective of constructivism which assumes that the tension between the two comes from the perceptions that arise. This means that the tension that exists between AUKUS and China does not originate from material things as many neorealist or neoliberalist groups say. Rather, it is the different ideas/norms between the two camps that create tension. The AUKUS camp, which carries a democratic mission to maintain peace, is under a global hegemon that wants to maintain the current international structure, namely the United States. Where the United States secures the Indo-Pacific along with its two allied countries. Even though there has been much criticism, this trilateral pact continues because they both agreed to make China their enemy in terms of regional security.*

*Keywords: AUKUS, China, Indo-Pacific, United States of America*

### Introduction

Today, there are just a couple of two situations that are garnering global attention. Both of these difficulties pertain to security concerns, specifically the Russia-Ukraine War and the AUKUS Pact, which have contributed to heightened security tensions between China and the US in the Asia-Pacific area. However, during this period, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine garnered global attention due to its immediate repercussions on the world economy. Presently, the global attention is mostly directed towards the ongoing conflict in mainland Europe. However, it is important to acknowledge that the AUKUS Pact, as a security alliance, retains its significance. This alliance should not be disregarded, particularly in light of the fact that the Asia Pacific region plays a crucial role in global development. In addition to having the largest population and the highest GDP income, the international dynamics in the region are undergoing a transformation as China asserts its position by bolstering its economy and enhancing its military capabilities (Mas'udi, 2020).

Following implementing a "rebalancing strategy" in the Asian area in 2011, the US has unexpectedly returned to the scene by signing the AUKUS Pact security pact. The term 'Pivot to Asia' refers to a strategic approach that prioritizes the Asia Pacific Region, as stated in the official US declaration (Rizky, 2023). Therefore, the United States considers its efforts in the Asia Pacific region as a top priority in its foreign policy. The key elements of this policy encompass fostering economic collaboration, bolstering allied nations, and ensuring

collective security through regional organizations to peacefully address territorial conflicts. Nevertheless, this strategy of rebalancing encompasses not only economic cooperation and strong alliances, but also incorporates aspects of military defense and diplomacy. Some argue that this approach may pose risks to the relationships among countries in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in relation to the perception of threats from other nations.

China is consistently identified as a formidable obstacle to the achievement of the US plan, as stated in several documents and study findings. Indeed, multiple parties have underscored that the US's presence in the Asia Pacific region is a logical outcome of China's growing capabilities. China is now recognized as a new force in the Asia Pacific, wielding influence in diplomacy, economics, and the military.

The United States has distinct challenges due to China's expanding economy. China successfully displaced Japan from its prior position as the second-largest economy in Asia, thereby becoming the most prominent economic force in the region. China's expanding economy enables it to enhance its military capabilities by augmenting its people and fleet across land, sea, and air domains, thereby addressing the nation's requirements.

In addition to its own interests, the United States also foresees China as a potential threat to its allied nations in the Asia-Pacific area. According to the official USPACOM page, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines are the five countries that form alliances with the United States. Among the alliance countries, the United States, Japan, and South Korea are geographically proximate to China. Clashes of interests, involving territorial disputes and demonstrations of military power, frequently occur between China and Japan, as well as between China and South Korea. Thailand and the Philippines are engaged in ongoing disputes with China over boundary issues in the South China Sea region, although their relationship is not as tense as that between Japan and South Korea.

The US's implementation of a rebalancing policy as part of a balancing strategy serves as a validation of the concerns over China's growing capabilities in recent decades. The US's implementation of a balancing policy, achieved by bolstering military alliances, is an apt approach to limit China's ability to dominate the Asia-Pacific area. The US reaction to China's growing influence, known as the "China's Rise," involves implementing a policy of balance by establishing a military alliance with other countries. This approach aims to address the changing dynamics in the region, taking into account factors such as the power disparity between nations, the availability of alliances, and conditions related to peace and conflict.

On September 15, 2021, the leaders of the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States released a joint statement declaring the establishment of a "enhanced trilateral security partnership" known as AUKUS (Australia, UK, US). The crucial stipulation in the agreement is that in order for the three nations to initiate discussions regarding Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines, it must be emphasized that there are no nuclear weapons involved, only nuclear-powered submarines. This agreement stipulates that the initial phase of this trilateral cooperation will be conducted for a duration of 18 months. The initial stage will involve the development of nuclear-powered submarines, with an emphasis on interoperability, commonality, and mutual benefit (The White House, 2022).

In addition to acknowledging aid to Australia, the three nations also declared intentions to collaborate more extensively in order to improve our collective abilities and compatibility. This plan aims to prioritize the development of robust cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technology, and other advanced underwater capabilities. The

trilateral collaboration was formally proclaimed by verbal statements made by the British Government and Prime Minister Boris Johnson to the House of Representatives, official declarations from the Australian Government, and via the United States and White House press briefing (Ebbighausen, 2022). The inception of AUKUS was prompted by the ascent of China, which was perceived as a growing menace, hence influencing the advancement of technology on a wider scale.

Meanwhile, Australia will terminate its 2016 agreement with France to construct 12 diesel-powered submarines as a replacement for its current Collins submarine fleet. Moreover, the AUKUS agreement signifies the inaugural instance in which the United States has imparted nuclear propulsion technology to a partner nation other than the United Kingdom. In response to AUKUS, France expressed its indignation in a very transparent manner. French foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, characterized AUKUS as an act of betrayal or a "treacherous act" committed by Australia. France perceived the existence of AUKUS as a betrayal, as just two weeks prior to the revelation, the Australian foreign and defense ministers had met with the French to reiterate their pledge to purchase submarines from France. What is the rationale behind Australia's decision to substitute its deal with France with a new one involving the United States and the United Kingdom?

In 2016, Australia selected a French diesel-electric design as the foundation for its primary deterrent weapon, a next-generation submarine. Nuclear submarines were not included as potential choices at that time. The Australian government and military leaders do not perceive Australia's strategic environment as a significant reason to justify the challenges and intricacies involved in obtaining and operating nuclear submarines. Additionally, it is unlikely that the US and UK governments would be willing to share nuclear submarine technology with Australia upon request. Since their entry into the US-UK nuclear partnership in 1958, no nation has subsequently shared this technology with another partner.

One determinant account for the change in the stances of the three administrations from 2016 to 2021. The current formidable and assertive Chinese state, led by President Xi Jinping, poses a significant and widespread challenge to security in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. In 2021, President Xi has prioritized something that was considered unimaginable in 2016. Hence, AUKUS primarily aims to alter the military equilibrium in the Indo-Pacific region by diminishing China's influence and imposing higher expenses on Beijing, which relies on military coercion and intimidation to accomplish its objectives (Shoebridge, 2021).

The Chinese government did not provide any prior notification, which is expected given the official American stance that the submarine agreement is not targeted towards any specific nation. China's initial reaction to the newly formed alliance, known as AUKUS (comprising Australia, Britain, and the United States), was characterized as "highly irresponsible" and predicted to instigate an arms race. The most recent Pentagon study on China reveals that the Chinese Navy has constructed twelve nuclear submarines, a portion of which has the capability to transport nuclear armaments. Australia has made a commitment to refrain from deploying nuclear weapons (Sanger, 2021).

Currently, there are a minimum of two perspectives regarding this matter. The initial perspective stems from the realism school of thought, which examines the Australian elite's perception of threats. The prevailing belief is that China's assertive foreign policy is the

primary catalyst propelling Australia towards the AUKUS pact (BAYEZİT, 2022). Consequently, this alliance is anticipated to possess the capability to serve as a deterrence and exert coercive influence, ultimately leading to the subjugation of China and the establishment of a more favorable state of tranquility (Mearsheimer, 1995).

The alternative perspective is presented by liberalism, which contends that Australia's dissatisfaction stems from the comparison between the ships given by the US and Britain, which are significantly superior, and those offered by France. Furthermore, there has been a substantial budget overrun in relation to the initial allocation of \$66 billion for the procurement of 12 submarines of French origin, amounting to approximately \$5 billion each submarine (originally priced at \$40 billion). This would impose a considerable financial burden on Australia (Mizokami, 2021).

Contrary to the perspectives expressed in the two preceding responses, constructivism does not regard empirical facts or tangible entities as the underlying basis for Australia's agreement on AUKUS. Australia's decision to align with the US and UK was mostly driven by factors other than economic and military concerns. However, the perception of China as a threat to the three countries was mostly based on the interactions among them, as outlined by Wendt (1992). Australia's decision to join the US and UK is based on the knowledge generated through intersubjective understanding. Wendt's (1992) assertion was elucidated by a declaration made by the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, affirming that Australia will abstain from employing nuclear weapons and will continue to adhere to its obligations regarding the prevention of nuclear weapon proliferation. It can be asserted that AUKUS is a deliberate measure resulting from the interplay and development of preexisting threats.

Anarchy, as elucidated by Alexander Wendt, arises from the actions of the actors involved. This implies that the state's perception of the world as 'anarchy' is shaped by its self-identification and understanding, which are influenced by the relationships it engages in and the structures it constructs. This research will examine the collective perception of Australia, as well as the countries that are part of AUKUS, considering China as a common adversary that needs to be jointly overcome. From a constructivist perspective, the author posits that the formation of the national identity (AUKUS) is a result of the intersubjective interactions among the three parties over an extended period. These interactions have led them to comprehend that 'China is our shared adversary,' prompting the establishment of a security alliance with the objective of countering China.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### ***Systemic Constructivism***

The ontological and epistemological discussions around concepts in the social sciences have given rise to many methodologies. The mainstream approach typically posits that reality and ideas are separate beings that not to be conflated or intertwined. This particular viewpoint posits that the sole reality exists in the data acquired through sensing (Adler, 1997). Meanwhile, abstract concepts exist within the realm of thoughts, incapable of manifesting as tangible entities, but just capable of mirroring the physical world. Robert Keohane argues that this influence is characterized by minimalism, indicating that it will only function as an intervening variable. The crux of the matter resides in the notion that was

governed by the prevailing social framework. This approach is seen in institutional neorealism or neoliberalism (El Bilad, 2011).

Neoliberalism posits that in an anarchic global economy, collaboration becomes necessary to address possible obstacles and foster interdependence (El Bilad, 2011). Krasner (1991) questioned the notion that neoliberalism places greater emphasis on intentions, information, and interests while neglecting skills.

Neoliberalists argue that enhancing talents is not crucial for development, since they believe that by adequate cooperation, a society may thrive in an anarchic environment. The distinction between liberalism and neoliberalism lies in the more pragmatic perspective of neoliberalism, which acknowledges the inevitability of conflict and war in international relations. Consequently, neoliberals argue that collaboration remains essential to prevent conflicts.

However, in this particular scenario, the belief that cooperation is aimed at preventing conflict instead generates fresh conflict from a nation with strategic calculations that prioritize security and military capacity - a consideration that was previously deemed unimportant within the framework of neoliberalism. Despite Australia's prior reconsideration of its battleship collaboration with France, the decision to proceed with this partnership aligns naturally with the prevailing assessment of naval capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in light of China's ongoing development of its naval power.

Conversely, the neorealist perspective, which was previously the dominant viewpoint in Southeast Asia, arose as a result of ASEAN countries reacting to Australia's decision to align itself with the UK and the US. Indonesia and Malaysia expressed concerns due to the chaotic circumstances that prevented any actors or parties from ensuring that Australia's use of nuclear submarines would not disrupt their national interests in the region. This situation could potentially trigger an arms race in the area. Nevertheless, this assertion is unlikely to be accurate, as Australian analysts hold a predominantly pessimistic outlook on the future of Australia. Professor Allan Gyngell, President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, has said that Australia is unable to independently operate the submarines. Essentially, we are relinquishing a portion of our sovereignty to the United States, and potentially to the United Kingdom as well.

Hence, it can be inferred that Australia might encounter difficulties in preserving its sovereignty over actions that align with its optimal welfare. Australia's reliance on foreign nuclear technology is the root cause of this situation. According to Professor Allan Gyngell, Australia's primary naval attack capability would be unable to function without the ability for the United States to reject or prevent certain actions. However, all of this is contingent upon their sense of security while socializing with individuals who provide them with a greater sense of safety. Consequently, Australia disregarded its relations with other countries in the region. "We tend to socialize once more with individuals we feel at ease with, disregarding attempts to foster deeper connections with others in our vicinity," stated Professor Gyngell. Analysts assert that it is in the best interests of Australia, as well as other democratic nations, for the United States to uphold its supremacy in the region. (Shoebridge, 2021).

While this situation may resemble bandwagoning, as observed in Australia's actions, there is no perception that Australia is facing any form of threat from the United States or the United Kingdom, despite the fact that these two nations are considered friendly towards

Australia. Therefore, the formation of AUKUS by the three countries, particularly Australia, was not solely driven by the factual observation that both Britain and the US possess significantly larger influence than China, thereby enabling Australia to maintain its position in the region. Systemic constructivism, as proposed by Alexander Wendt, offers a more precise explanation compared to the two preceding rationalist perspectives. Systemic constructivism is a form of constructivism that maintains connections with both realism and liberalism due to its emphasis on the interactions across nations.

Constructivists in the field of International Relations acknowledge the presence of both ideational and material agents, attributing them with both a structural role and a constitutive one. Constructivism posits that the roles of these two elements are interconnected and vitalize the international framework. The core principle of this constructivist perspective revolves around the notion of practice in the context of international relations, specifically referring to the interactions between different nations. The international structure is a complex phenomenon that emerges from interactions among nations, which go beyond just physical exchanges between actors.

Moreover, this current connection will facilitate the convergence and harmonization of perspectives or subjective experiences across individuals. In other words, by convening and aligning existing encounters, this will generate intersubjectivity or communicative practices (Adler, 1997).

Therefore, the role of practice or engagement is quite significant in this context. This demonstrates that constructivism elevates the status of the subject by challenging structural dominance. According to him, the absence of these interdependent subjects would prevent the formation of any structure. Put simply, the subject holds dominion over the structure. The subject will thereafter define or recognize themselves based on their own desires through the intersubjective process.

Subsequently, following the establishment of the structure through intersubjectivity in advance, a reversal occurs whereby the creator of the structure becomes influenced by the structure itself. The structure will establish the standards for subjects engaged in interaction. This implies that the process of interaction imparts knowledge to individuals regarding their own self, others, personal interests, or social standing. This information will then serve as a normative guide for the subjects in their activities. The causal relationship between agents and structures aligns with Nicholas Onuf's (2012) assertion: "Individuals establish rules, which in turn shape society, and society's rules then dictate how individuals behave." (Onuf, 2012).

This contact involves the interchange of ideas, leading to the development of a collective comprehension regarding oneself, others, and the underlying framework. Consequently, this interaction prompts a new inquiry: what distinguishes one norm's ability to transform into a structure while others cannot? Alternatively, what is the origin of the existing hierarchical framework?

In this context, constructivism acknowledges the significance of the aforementioned material factors, specifically military strength, economics, and national interests, in the field of international relations. Constructivism posits that a nation possessing significant economic and military strength has the ability to exert control over the beliefs and actions of other nations. (Wendt, 1999).

This heightened subjectivity has the potential to subsequently become an international standard or a conceptual framework. Thus, it is highly logical to observe how the United States, having just emerged victorious in the Cold War due to its democratic principles, exerted a significant impact on the global framework for combating terrorism in the early 21st century. Democracy, in certain instances, has emerged as a potent tool to exert pressure on other nations, thereby establishing itself as a global standard. Constructivism emphasizes the equal or even superior role of the subject in relation to the structure, as the subject is seen as the creator of the structure. This allows for the potential renovation of the existing structure with a new subject, in cases where injustices or deficiencies in the previous global standards are identified. Improved by the influence of other disciplines as well. Constructivists unequivocally reject the notion of a 'value-free' theory, also known as the fact-value distinction. The 'value-free' notion is invalidated in this context due to its assumption that a structure is contingent upon the subject's identity. According to Thomas Kuhn (1970), constructivism suggests that a fact, also known as a brute fact, has never been devoid of value, even from its initial utterance (Kuhn, 1970).

### **Research Method**

This research is qualitative research with a literature study whose sources come from books, journals, scientific articles, news, and the internet which have been tested for validity, and all of that is used to find the desired information to support this research (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

### **Finding and Discussion**

#### ***Development of Relations between Australia, England, United States***

Australia is located in the Indo-Pacific region according to the current political map of the world. Australia has maintained strong and enduring diplomatic ties with Western countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom. Australia's classification as a Western nation by neighboring countries in the Indo-Pacific, and possibly even the Asia-Pacific region, is attributed to this particular characteristic. Prior to the early 1970s, the Australian government consistently relied on the military might of more powerful nations to protect national security. This policy decision was made based on the great geographical expanse of Australia, which is inversely correlated with its population.

Australia's adoption of the 'Frontline Strategy' policy is founded on conditions like this, with the ideology of avoiding war on the Australian mainland (Chacko, 2019). Besides from that, Australia uses this strategy to mask its concern of being a threat in the Asia Pacific due to its history as a British colony, which dates back to 1901. Consequently, Australia is unavoidably dependent on Britain for its internal security. Nevertheless, in 1960, Australia transitioned its reliance on the United States for security, recognizing its pivotal role in safeguarding Australia during the Pacific War against Japan in 1941. The conditions are largely similar to those seen by Australia and the United States. England and the United States share a longstanding history of interactions. During World War II, the United States made significant contributions to ensuring Britain's security against the German menace in Western Europe. In 1958, the governments of Britain and the United States entered into a bilateral agreement titled "Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes." (Department of State USA, 2014). This agreement has had 8 revisions. The agreement, which automatically continues the tight relationship between the UK and the United States, was last agreed upon on 22 July 2014. It is set to run for the next 10 years and is highly likely to be renewed once more.

Another instance that bolstered the connections between the United Kingdom and the United States were the concurrent measures implemented during the Cold War. The launch of the inaugural satellite, named Sputnik I, during the height of the Cold War, bestowed superiority onto the Soviet Union over the democratic faction, particularly Britain and America, during that era. During that period, Britain proactively initiated discussions with the United States for submarine reactors. (Botti, 1987). Where in the discussion it was discovered that England was not the only country that had nuclear cooperation with the United States, because NATO and France had also established nuclear cooperation with the United States. However, that is not an obstacle to the relationship between the two. After the agreement was renewed, the relationship between the two continued to be cordial (Rizky, 2023).

In the last renewal of cooperation in 2014, the two agreed to reduce nuclear threats, naval nuclear propulsion, and personnel security. Although *Mutual Defence Agreement* was done, but this became a source of criticism for the United States and Britain. The reason is that both countries are considered to have violated one of the articles contained in *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon* (Mills, 2014). By carrying out this mutually beneficial relationship with each other, the relationship between the two becomes even closer. But on the other hand, this cooperation that has been going on for half a century shows Britain's dependence on weapons and even nuclear weapons systems on the United States.

Initially, Australia chose a middle path in the tensions between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific. As its power grows rapidly, China has begun to challenge US dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. China has built the world's largest navy and has become increasingly assertive over contested areas such as the South China Sea. In that dominance, Australia has long said it does not have to choose between the two powers, but in recent years its attitude towards Beijing has hardened. In 2016, United States Army Assistant Chief of Staff Colonel Tom Hanson urged Australia to choose between strengthening its alliance with the US or deepening ties with China. "I think Australia needs to make a choice, because it's very difficult to walk this fine line, which is between balancing an alliance with the United States and economic engagement with China," Hanson told Australian Broadcasting Corp Radio. "[Australia] has to make a decision which is more important to Australia's national interests." Even though that year Australia did not give a definite answer to what the US wanted, in 2020, Morrison said the increasingly intense competition between China and the US had contributed to pressure and challenges for other countries, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. "Like other sovereign countries in the Indo-Pacific, our preference in Australia is not to be forced to choose between binary options," said Morrison in his speech at a UK-based think tank forum (Chacko, 2019).

Australia ultimately opted to align with the United States instead of China, even at the cost of straining its ties with France. Countries in the Asia-Pacific area have taken a decisive and conclusive move. The security agreement between the United States and the United



Kingdom will significantly enhance Australia's defense capabilities, benefiting from the world's most formidable military power. A contract might be likened to a gift that comes with certain conditions or obligations.

Henceforth, it can be inferred that Australia may encounter difficulties in preserving its independence in making judgments that align with its own welfare. Australia's reliance on foreign nuclear technology is the root cause of this situation. According to Professor Allan Gyngell, Australia's primary naval strike capability would be unable to function without the ability for the United States to veto. However, all of this is contingent upon their sense of security while socializing with individuals who provide them with a greater sense of safety. Consequently, Australia disregarded its relations with other countries in the region. "According to Professor Gyngell, we tend to socialize once more with individuals we feel at ease with, disregarding any attempts to establish deeper connections with others in our vicinity." Analysts assert that it is in the best interests of Australia, as well as other democratic nations, for the United States to uphold its supremacy in the region (Rizky, 2023).

Constructivism posits that non-material structures play a significant role in shaping the identity of an agent. Hence, a nation's identity encompasses and shapes its behavior and even its objectives. The primary commonality among the three countries in their perception of China as a 'adversary' is the concept of democracy. While the concept of democracy may have had a role, Australia's decision to align with the US and UK cannot be solely attributed to it. The consideration of an anarchic system and military calculations also factored into Australia's choice. Put simply, the three countries involved in the 'democratic security project' in the Indo-Pacific firmly believe that offering support in the form of nuclear-powered submarines is a proven and tangible means of achieving the necessary level of security.

### ***Purpose of the Formation of AUKUS***

The Indo-Pacific is presently regarded as a pivotal region for the world economy. This region serves as a crucial international shipping route due to its advantageous location at the intersection of the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and the Pacific Ocean. Despite the considerable geographical distance between the United States and this region, the United States is capable of forging strong diplomatic ties with countries in this region, particularly Australia (The White House, 2022).

Undoubtedly, the United States is a dominant force in the world system. However, America has perceived China's development as a threat since China's swift economic ascent. The United States perceived a significant threat arising from China's rapid economic expansion, which China subsequently utilized to enhance various areas, including bolstering their military capabilities. China's ascent positions it as a potential dominant power in the Asia Pacific, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, which holds significant strategic importance. This is evidenced by the countries in the region increasingly expressing a desire to engage in collaboration with China, particularly in terms of economic cooperation. China is currently ranked 3rd out of 142 countries worldwide in terms of military capability, according to Global Firepower (GFP). According to the annual update made by GFP, China's Power Index is nearly flawless, specifically 0.0511 (a score of 0.0000 is deemed flawless). The consistent view of China's security threat by the United States is evident in the annual

escalation of China's military expenditure. In 2012, China experienced a significant 11.2% increase in its military expenditure compared to the previous year. This figure is remarkable, given that China's military budget in 2011 amounted to a mere 601.1 billion Yuan. Despite being lower than the US military budget, China now possesses the second-largest military budget globally, following the US. In 2021, China allocated a budget of 1,350 billion Yuan for military expenditure (Global Firepower, 2022).

China seeks to modify the current regional order, which is mostly influenced by Asian countries, due to the United States' involvement in the Asia Pacific area. However, China does not pursue an assertive approach to achieve this aspiration, as it merely maintains an alliance with North Korea, with whom it shares a lengthy history (Ebbighausen, 2022).

In response to China's growing influence in the regional order, America, along with Britain and Australia, established a strategic alliance named AUKUS with the aim of enhancing security in the Indo-Pacific area. This collaboration also impacted the political instability within the European Union in late 2021. France, feeling betrayed by Australia, due to the cancellation of the submarine cooperation, opted to join the United States and Britain in forming a security alliance. According to prominent schools of thought such as neoliberalism and neorealism, it is expected to observe the benefits that Australia derives by collaborating with the United Kingdom and the United States. If accumulated, it can yield greater economic profitability than collaborating with France. Australia is enhancing its security by acquiring nuclear submarines and improving its military posture.

### ***AUKUS and China Tensions in Constructivism Viewpoint***

Thus far, analysts of international relations perceive the establishment of AUKUS as a response to concerns regarding security risks posed by the United States-Australia alliance and China's presence in the Indo-Pacific area. Embraces popular opinions This analysis solely examines the potential of the nuclear-powered submarines provided to Australia to pose a danger to the stability and security of the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, diverse reactions arose due to the fact that the trilateral agreement granting Australia nuclear-powered submarines was deemed to contravene the non-proliferation treaty regarding the utilization of nuclear armaments.

This perspective solely posits that matter or reality encompasses all aspects. The conflict between AUKUS and China arises from tangible factors, specifically economic and military, which pose risks to both parties. The neorealist faction claims that the escalating arms competition between China, the United States, and its regional allies, such as AUKUS, is the primary source of the Asia-Pacific region's peril. This state emerges from divergent beliefs held by both parties regarding risks that are, in fact, self-generated.

The neorealist group is unable to address the escalating challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with perception. Both China and the United States are apprehensive about each other's actions, which is why this situation arises. Subsequently, the perception of this danger assumed a more detrimental trajectory following America's decision to establish the AUKUS Trilateral Pact in collaboration with Britain and Australia. Despite AUKUS's assertion that the vessels provided to Australia were just powered by nuclear energy and not equipped with nuclear weapons, this action was seen to be in breach of the non-proliferation treaty regarding the utilization of nuclear armaments. Neorealists claim that the ongoing weapons race will persist indefinitely because to the current deteriorating

and unpredictable environment. Even among neorealist proponents, there remains considerable debate on which party is more provocative in this rivalry.

One intriguing aspect that prompts inquiry is how the impression of danger might emerge from both parties involved. Contrary to emphasizing the economic or military prowess held by both parties, constructivism directs attention towards the emergence of these perceptions between the two. Perception in which both parties identify themselves as 'me', 'we', 'he', or even 'them'.

The current global order can be characterized as being under American hegemony following its triumph over the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The triumph of America has disseminated democracy as an idea and system that is presently prevalent in nearly all nations worldwide. However, the question arises as to why the United States is considered to exert dominance over the international system. Is it due to its robust economic prowess? Is it due to its formidable military prowess? Alternatively, the dominance could be established by a consensus derived from its dealings with the majority of states worldwide.

Following America's triumph in the Cold War, the majority of nations worldwide officially or discreetly recognized America as the preeminent power subsequent to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This indicates that countries around the world tacitly acknowledge the hegemony of the United States. Even in the midst of the Cold War, various regions vied to establish regional institutions in order to proactively address potential risks stemming from the war. Put simply, the international structure is not shaped by weaponry or the economics, but rather by the perceptions of how various actors define themselves. The regionalism that evolved during the Cold War came from the notion of the threat that would emanate from the Cold War between the United States and the Soviets. Ultimately, they reached a consensus to establish this organization in order to safeguard regional stability (Rizky, 2023).

As an illustration, America, having attained worldwide influence in the early 2000s, implemented a policy of warfare against terrorism, which is widely regarded as a declaration of war on Islamic nations. This merely presents other nations with the option of aligning themselves with or against the United States. It is clear that countries striving to align with America are vying to establish themselves as democratic nations. Indonesia, like with other Islamic nations, endeavors to establish itself as a moderate Islamic country to avoid being perceived as adversaries by the United States. The international structure is formed solely based on an actor's perception or self-identification, which is influenced by their relationships, interactions with other players, and historical reasons.

AUKUS and China are currently facing this condition. The member countries of AUKUS perceive themselves as democratic nations committed to maintaining stability, security, and peace. In addition, the three countries have experienced historical factors that are highly interconnected. Australia, a democratic nation with a historical connection to Britain as a former colony, has made a deliberate decision to align itself with this alliance, often depending on the United States for its security. Meanwhile, America, holding the assumption that it still maintains global dominance, perceives China's economic and military endeavors as a source of threat. Conversely, China, driven by its aspiration to modify the regional system, is endeavoring to bolster its position through its ongoing economic and military advancements. The sole objective is to establish the Asian country as a frontrunner within its region.

The constructivists' emphasis on the connection between ideas and materials is clearly demonstrated in the ongoing tension between AUKUS and China. AUKUS, comprising nations rooted in democratic principles, perceives China's economic and military endeavors, driven by a communist ideology, as a threat to the Indo-Pacific region. England sees this as an opportunity to rebuild its reputation, as its historical baggage motivates it to reclaim its position as a former influential nation in this chaotic globe, driven by its democratic values. Meanwhile, the United States, today the dominant global power, is also facing the potential rise of China as a new regional power, in accordance with the nightmarelong-cycle hypothesis. Given its privileged position in shaping the global order, the United States naturally emerges as a contender to China in the region, partly through its participation in the AUKUS Trilateral Pact. Simultaneously, Australia, a crucial component in America's efforts to solidify its position in the Asia Pacific region, and a former British colony, has successfully facilitated an agreement among the three nations that China is their shared adversary (Wallis & Powles, 2021).

Conversely, China, recognized as an emerging force in the area, asserts that its actions are solely aimed at preserving the existing state of affairs. While this perspective aligns more closely with neorealism, it also holds true for China. Specifically, China has adopted the identity of placing the US as an 'enemy' in the region due to historical circumstances, given China's significant influence in the Asia Pacific region. Therefore, the disorder that is commonly attributed to empirical evidence, such as economic and military considerations, is not the primary cause of this tension. Nevertheless, the distinct historical backgrounds and contacts of the two parties contribute to the formation of their relationship as either allies or adversaries. Once the structure is completed, both parties proceed to act according to their perceptions, focusing on tangible aspects such as enhancing their economy or military prowess to defend their respective ideologies.

### Conclusion

Both AUKUS and China perceive each other as dangers. Within the framework of constructivism, it is the very process of seeing that generates a state of tension between the two parties, while yet maintaining their current economic or military endeavors. In addition, constructivists use this vision as the foundation for their analysis of the global and regional order in the Asia Pacific area. Systemic constructivism posits that the occurrence of anarchy is not derived from tangible factors such as economic and military prowess. Conversely, the state's self-perception motivates its actions to safeguard its established ideals and standards. China, being a prominent force in the Asia Pacific region, is engaged in ongoing competition with the United States to uphold the existing state of affairs. Conversely, AUKUS aims to assist Australia by supplying nuclear-powered submarines, thereby diminishing China's influence, while upholding democratic principles and preserving current security stability.

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