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The AUKUS Partnership and its Implications for Australia

Thesis on International Relations

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INTRODUCTION

AUKUS partnership was announced in September 2021 as a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States to develop a class of nuclear-powered submarines and collaborate in Indo-Pacific cooperation. Thus, the AUKUS partnership represents a shift towards greater strategic cooperation among like-minded democracies in response to China's rising influence. The AUKUS partnership reshapes the Indo-Pacific strategic landscape, posing concerns over regional stability.

The AUKUS partnership aims to enhance Australia's power, security, and national interests in the face of regional challenges and the shifting balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region. The partnership involves the transfer of advanced military technology and expertise from the US and UK to Australia, as well as collaboration in areas such as cyber, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies. The AUKUS partnership has been viewed as a response to China's increasing military and economic influence in the region and a signal of the US and UK's commitment to supporting Australia's strategic interests.

This thesis examines the AUKUS partnership and its impact on Australia's defense capabilities, security, and national interests, including the implications of this partnership for regional and global security in the Indo-Pacific region.

The topic of this work is a novelty in this field because the AUKUS partnership is a relatively new development in international relations that is still in its infancy. This work's relevance lies in a few facts. Firstly, it represents a shift in Australia's foreign and defense policy, as the country seeks to strengthen its military ties with the US and the UK in the face of growing strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly from China. Second, the partnership has implications for the regional balance of power and the regional security dynamics. The partnership has drawn criticism from China and other countries in the region, and there are concerns about the potential for the partnership to escalate tensions and lead to conflict. Thirdly, the AUKUS partnership also has implications for broader issues in international relations, such as the role of alliances and

partnerships in maintaining stability and security, the transfer of advanced military technology and expertise, and the balance between cooperation and competition in international relations.

The purpose of this work is to discover how the AUKUS partnership affects Australia's defense capabilities and security, along with the potential risks and benefits of this partnership for regional and global security in the Indo-Pacific region.

The main tasks of this thesis are the following:

1. To analyze the AUKUS partnership as a way for Australia to enhance its power, security, and national interest in the face of regional challenges and the shifting balance of power in the region through the realism theory of international relations;
2. To examine the objectives of the AUKUS partnership and the interests of its members, along with describing the power contestation of the key players in the Indo-Pacific region;
3. To identify and assess the influence of the AUKUS partnership on Australia, including its defense capabilities and security, and determine its political and social implications, along with potential benefits and challenges for Australia.

The subject of the study is Australia's defense capabilities and military strategies.

The object of the study is Australia's defense capabilities and military strategies affected by the AUKUS Partnership.

The research question of the study is “How will the AUKUS partnership affect the defense capabilities and military strategies of Australia, and what are the potential risks and benefits of this partnership for regional and global security in the Indo-Pacific region?”

Research theory and methodology. In this work, I analyze the influence of the AUKUS Partnership on Australia's defense capabilities and military strategies and the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region. I use the realism theory of international relations, which emphasizes the role of the state's power and national interest in the international system and the role of alliances in achieving those interests. The terms used in this study will be defined and discussed in detail in Chapter One. Nevertheless, for the reader's convenience here, from page 13 of Chapter One: “State's national interest is the central motivation for its behavior, including the pursuit of power, security, and

prosperity.” This thesis's document analysis methodology involves a systematic and comprehensive review of primary sources and official documents, secondary sources such as analytical notes, reports, academic articles, and two semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, including a government official and an expert in the field to allow for a deeper understanding of the motivations, perspectives, and decision-making processes related to the AUKUS partnership, and provide additional context. The analysis of official documents includes examining policy statements, treaties, and official reports issued by governments, international organizations, and other authoritative sources.

The literature used in this study includes foundational works of realism theory, more specifically focusing on the works of the founder of defensive realist theory, Kenneth Waltz's “Theory of international politics” (1979), Hans Morgenthau's “Politics Among Nations” (1948), which is considered as one of the most significant works in modern realism theory, Barry Buzan “From international system to international society: structural realism and regime theory meet the English school” (1993). In addition, Mearsheimer's (2001) work “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics” provides a theoretical analysis of international conflict, while Schelling's “The Strategy of Conflict” (1960) examines the strategies and tactics that states use to achieve their objectives in conflict situations.

This thesis extensively analyzed several key **primary sources**, including: Background Press Call on AUKUS (The White House, 2021), the Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS (The White House, 2021), Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS (The White House, 2021), Joint Leaders Statement to Mark One Year of AUKUS (The White House, 2022), Fact Sheet: Implementation of the Australia – United Kingdom – United States Partnership (AUKUS) (The White House, 2022), Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia Before Bilateral Meeting (The White House, 2023), the Joint Statement by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, together with U.S. President Joe Biden and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (Australian Government, 2023), AUKUS Submarine Workforce And Industry Strategy by the Australian Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister

for Defence, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for International Development and the Pacific (Australian Government, 2023), the official AUKUS Nuclear-Powered Submarine Pathway by the Australian Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Defence (Australian Government, 2023), Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Albanese of Australia, and Prime Minister Sunak of the United Kingdom on the AUKUS Partnership (The White House, 2023), transcript of Joint press conference with Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese and UK Secretary of State for Defence Ben Wallace (Australian Government, 2023), Release of the Defence Strategic Review (Australian Government, 2023), AUKUS Submarine Workforce And Industry Strategy (Australian Government, 2023), National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023 (Australian Government Department of Defence, 2023) and others.

This thesis also thoroughly examined a range of **secondary sources**, including the book "Contest for the Indo-Pacific: Why China Won't Map the Future" (2020) by Rory Medcalf, the Head of the National Security College (NSC) at the Australian National University, who discusses the AUKUS partnership as a significant development in the Indo-Pacific region. Medcalf provides a comprehensive analysis of historical and current trends in the Indo-Pacific region, contending that it is undergoing a significant transformation in power and influence, with China becoming a key regional power that challenges the US's dominance. He also analyzes how these changes impact regional security and stability and asserts that policymakers must focus on managing the escalating strategic competition between the US and China in a manner that avoids any potential conflict. While analyzing the implications of the AUKUS Partnership on Australia and the Indo-Pacific, many research articles published by the world's leading defense and security think tanks, such as Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), contributed to the thesis. One of them is the "ASPI AUKUS Update 2: September 2022 One-Year Anniversary" report by Marcus Hellyer and Ben Stevens published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) provides an update on the progress made by the AUKUS partnership in the first anniversary of its formation, highlighting the progress made in areas such as nuclear submarine technology, cybersecurity, and defense cooperation. It also examines the challenges and controversies

surrounding the partnership, particularly in relation to China's reactions and concerns from other countries such as France. The report concludes that while AUKUS has achieved significant progress in its first year, it will face ongoing challenges in implementation and diplomacy. Another significant contribution to the thesis is a nationwide survey conducted by the Social Research Centre (SRC) among 2,006 Australian adults between March 15 and 28, 2022, presented by The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll. The findings of this poll provide insights into public sentiment regarding AUKUS, defense spending, nuclear-powered submarines, and the Australia-France relationship. It reflects a mixed response from the Australian population, with varying views on the impact of the AUKUS partnership and differing perspectives on defense policy and international relations (The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll, 2022). In conjunction with that, various articles linked to the AUKUS partnership's impact on regional security and outcomes for Australia will be employed to provide the contextual data necessary to create a deeper understanding of the topics given; the media coverage of the partnership has been extensive, with articles from The New York Times (2021, 2023), The Guardian (2021), BBC News (2022), and The Australian Financial Review (2022, 2023) providing different perspectives on the AUKUS partnership. Finally, The Economist article "The AUKUS pact is a model for Western allies" (2023) provides insights into the AUKUS partnership's significance as a model for Western allies and its potential for transforming the strategic landscape of the Indo-Pacific region.

The structure of this paper consists of an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion.

The first chapter – “AUKUS partnership as a way for Australia to enhance its power, security, and national interest through the realism theory,” will define the key term “state’s national interest” and its role in the international system through the realism theory of international relations. The chapter will also explain Australia's national interest in the AUKUS partnership and how it aims to increase its power and security through stronger military ties with the US and UK.

The second chapter – “The AUKUS partnership and regional power contestation,” will focus on the creation of the AUKUS partnership and its strategic

objectives and motivations, including the roles of the US, UK, and Australia. This chapter will also analyze the consequences of the partnership, including China's position and the reactions of other countries in the region, and assess the security situation and power contestation of the key players in the Indo-Pacific region.

The third chapter – “The influence of the partnership on Australia, including its defense capabilities and security,” will evaluate the overall impact of the partnership on Australia's domestic political and social landscape and its defense and security capabilities. It will also analyze the potential benefits, including economic implications such as trade and investment opportunities, and challenges, such as conflict escalation and diplomatic tensions with China.

Chapter 1. The AUKUS partnership as a way for Australia to enhance its national interest against the background of the shifting balance of power in the region through the realism theory

Through applying the realism theory of international relations, this chapter explores the concept of the state's national interest in the context of realism theory in international relations. This chapter also examines the role of power as a key component of the state's national interest and the role of alliances in international relations, which can be a beneficial strategy for states to gain power and guarantee their security in the system. With these theoretical perspectives in mind, this chapter analyzes how Australia uses the AUKUS partnership in its national interest, particularly to reinforce its power and security in the face of regional challenges and the shifting balance of power in the region and how Australia has pursued its national interest by joining the AUKUS partnership, strengthening its military ties with the US and the UK to enhance its power and security in the face of China's growing assertiveness. By leveraging the benefits of increased military technology, economic growth, and nuclear monitoring, Australia has positioned itself as a more influential player in the region and the global community.

1.1. Theoretical and methodological principles and definitions of the research

State national interest is a key concept in international relations that refers to a state's motivation to act in ways that promote its own interests, often at the expense of others. Scholars explore various theoretical perspectives to explain this definition in IR literature. While defining the concept of "state's national interest," I apply the realist theory of IR, which refers to a state's pursuit of policies and actions that advance its survival and well-being.

According to Waltz (1979), states work in a self-help system, with each state motivated by its national interest to strengthen its power and security. As noted by Waltz, the anarchic nature of the international system implies that nations are primarily

concerned with survival and are prepared to use force to safeguard their interests if necessary (Waltz, 1979). “The self-help system of international politics, by which states seek to protect and promote their own interests, is the most important feature of the international system.” (Waltz, 1979, p. 170). Thus, the state’s functioning in an anarchic international system leads to competition among states, as each seeks to enhance its relative power and security in comparison to others. In this context, the pursuit of national interest is not a choice but a necessity, and as a result, states sometimes act aggressively, defensively, or both (Waltz, 2018, p.173).

Similarly, Mearsheimer (2001) argues that strong powers are motivated by a desire for power and security and that state behavior is primarily motivated by competition for power. He claims that states are rational actors seeking to increase their power in order to survive in an anarchic international system (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Barry Buzan takes a different approach to state national interest. Though he contributed to various theories of International Relations, including constructivism and security theory, he is primarily known for his work on international relations theory, precisely realism. According to Buzan, realism is a theory of international relations that emphasizes power's centrality and the state's importance as the primary actor in international relations (Buzan, 1993). Thus, Buzan explains that, from a realist perspective, the state's national interest is central to its behavior in international politics. Buzan (1993) argues that states operate in an international society where shared norms, values, and institutions shape their behavior. He argues that states operate in their national interest, determined by their membership in the broader international community. From his perspective, international relations are shaped by competition among states for power and security, and the state's pursuit of its national interest is a crucial driver of this competition (Buzan, 1993).

Hans Morgenthau (1978) defined the "state's national interest" as the pursuit of power and security. According to Morgenthau, power constitutes the dominant goal in international politics, and national interests are defined in terms of power. Morgenthau holds that states are the main actors throughout international relations, with their behavior driven by a constant struggle for power and security (Morgenthau, 1978). State actors act

out of national interest, seeking to maintain or enhance their power relative to other states. According to Morgenthau, states' ultimate goal was power, and they would use whatever means were necessary, including military force, to obtain and maintain it. As a result of the constant competition between states, he believed that the international system was inherently anarchic and that there was no higher authority to regulate the behavior of states (Morgenthau, 1978, pp. 4-15).

Considering the definitions provided by realist theorists Waltz, Mearsheimer, Buzan, and Morgenthau, I can compose my own definition of “state’s national interest.” The state’s national interest is the central motivation for its behavior, including the pursuit of power, security, and prosperity.

1.2. The role of the state’s power as a component of the national interest in the international system and the role of the alliance

In the realm of the realism theory of international relations, states often prioritize their own national interest in order to maintain and increase their power and security. In order to comprehend the basis and importance of the personal interest of the state through the prism of the theory of realism, let me first consider the foundations of classical realism and the perception of the state through this theory of international relations. The theorists of classical realism believe that conflict is an integral part of international relations and that all conflicts are resolved by war (Morgenthau, 1978). Furthermore, this explains why security and power are so important for a state in international relations. The theorists of classical realism focus on national security and the state's survival.

As Hans Morgenthau stated: the pursuit of power was the ultimate goal of states, and states would use whatever means necessary to achieve and maintain their power position (Morgenthau, 1978). Morgenthau viewed international relations as an arena of conflicting interests (Morgenthau, 1978). Therefore, the balance of power between states is essential in anarchy because it is a guarantee that there will be no hegemon. The balance of power is seen as the basis of peace and security. However, the assumption of realists that changes in the international system occur only as a result of war is one of the reasons

for criticizing classical realism because classical realists do not consider internal factors that can affect the external environment.

According to Thomas Schelling, a representative of the theory of strategic realism, diplomacy and military affairs require thinking strategically (Schelling, 1960). In his work “The Strategy of Conflict” (1960), Schelling wrote extensively about the role of threat in international relations. Schelling argued that the ability to make credible threats is an essential tool for states to achieve their objectives. He believed that the ability to make credible threats could deter other states from taking specific actions or compel them to take certain actions. In addition, Schelling believed that threats could be used to communicate between states (Schelling, 1960). He argued that threats could signal one's intentions and shape the perceptions of other states. For example, a state might threaten to demonstrate its resolve or convey its willingness to use force if necessary. Therefore, the existence of a threat in relations between countries makes the pursuit of power one of the most essential objectives in every state's national interest. An example would be China's threat to other states' regional and global security in the Indo-Pacific region. States have no choice but to ascertain whether they can defend themselves.

For realists like Buzan, states are motivated primarily by a concern for their own security and survival, which they achieve through the accumulation and exercise of power (Buzan, 1993). In this view, the state is a rational actor that seeks to maximize its national interest and is willing to use force or coercion to achieve its objectives (Buzan, 1993). Buzan argues that the state's national interest is shaped by its relative power position in the international system, which is determined by factors such as military capabilities, economic strength, and diplomatic influence (Buzan, 1993). States seek to maintain or increase their relative power position in order to protect their security and promote their interests.

Kenneth Waltz, the founder of defensive realist theory, thinks that a state must reach such a place in the system in order to survive and preserve itself. However, it must not extend its power to other countries – that is why his theory is called “defensive”; that is to say, states have to be able to defend themselves (Waltz, 1979). Thus, security is a mandatory component of the personal interest of each state.

Mearsheimer's theory, "offensive realism," which he describes in his work "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics," is based on the premise that states are the main actors in international politics and their ultimate goal is survival (Mearsheimer, 2001). Within the framework of realism, Mearsheimer posits that the international system lacks a central authority and is characterized by anarchy, leading to a situation where states cannot definitively ascertain the intentions of one another. This inherent uncertainty compels states to pursue strategies that maximize their power and security, aiming to establish dominance and proactively counter potential challenges from other states. Mearsheimer assumes that states chase power indefinitely. At the same time, Waltz emphasizes how the balance of power constrains power-maximizing behavior and satisfies states once they have reached a level of power to feel secure (Liu, 2014). From Mearsheimer's point of view, firstly, states are the key actors in world politics, and they operate in an anarchic system. Secondly, great powers invariably have some offensive military capability. Thirdly, states can never be sure whether other states have hostile intentions toward them. Fourthly, great powers place a high premium on survival, and finally, states are rational actors who are reasonably practical at designing strategies that maximize their chances of survival (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Mearsheimer's assessment in 2001 was that China's strategic objective was to attain hegemony in the Asian region, while the United States would endeavor to thwart that ambition (Mearsheimer, 2001). His book, "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics," predicted many things we see today in US-China relations (Mearsheimer, 2001). For example, both countries consider the other a primary threat as he argues that as China grows economically and militarily, it will inevitably seek to challenge the United States for regional hegemony in Asia and, ultimately, for global dominance. He also concludes that China's rise poses a significant challenge to the United States and that the two countries are likely to be engaged in a long-term strategic competition that could potentially lead to conflict (Mearsheimer, 2001). He argues that the United States should seek to maintain its dominance in Asia and prevent China from achieving regional hegemony while also engaging in diplomatic efforts to manage the inevitable tensions that will arise between the two countries (Mearsheimer, 2001). China has emerged as a

dominant power in Asia, assuming the role of a regional hegemon. Concurrently, China is actively bolstering its military capabilities to reinforce its position. This development has prompted countries in Southeast and East Asia to allocate increasing resources to defense expenditures and find themselves compelled to choose between aligning with either China or the United States.

Power is central to the entire theory of realism. Speaking of power as an implication of the state's national interest from a classical realism view, Morgenthau stated that international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power (Morgenthau, 1978). Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim or a means to an end. Morgenthau propounded two functions of the balance of power: the first is to fulfill stability in the power relations among nations, and the second is to ensure the freedom of one nation from domination by the other (Morgenthau, 1978). While John Mearsheimer, in his "The tragedy of great power," stated that the overriding goal of each state is to maximize its share of world power, which means gaining power at the expense of other states (Mearsheimer, 2001). Their ultimate aim is to be the hegemon. This perspective can explain China's striving for power in the Indo-Pacific region. According to the realist perspective, the most desirable outcome for a major power is establishing regional hegemony and potentially exerting control over a neighboring region that can be easily accessed by land (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Therefore, based on the premises of realist theorists about power, I can conclude that power – as the sum of military, informational, economic, and other potentials that a country obtains, also called component capabilities – is always a part of the state's personal interest. In addition to component capabilities, while talking about a state's power, neorealists also consider relative capabilities – components of power that are considered depending on other states, that is, when we compare the power of different countries with each other.

However, Andrew Moravcsik, who is the representative of the liberal theory of IR, has a different perspective on the importance of the state's national interest. Moravcsik argues that the concept of the national interest is often overemphasized in discussions of state behavior (Moravcsik, 1997). He believes that states are not unitary actors with a

single, coherent set of interests. Instead, he contends that states are composed of many different actors with diverse interests and that these actors often compete with one another to shape policy decisions (Moravcsik, 1997). Moravcsik also argues that political leaders often use the concept of the national interest as a rhetorical device to justify their policy decisions (Moravcsik, 1997). He notes that political leaders may use the term to gain public support for their policies, even if those policies are not actually in the interests of the state as a whole.

Edward Carr, a historian and international relations scholar, shared a similar view on national interest in his book "The Twenty Years' Crisis" (1939). Carr argued that the concept of the national interest was often used to justify aggressive foreign policy decisions that ultimately led to war and conflict. Carr considered the idea of national interest controversial because it might be interpreted in various ways, and different groups within a state may have conflicting views on what the national interest was (Carr, 1939). He argued that political leaders frequently used the national interest to support their personal national interest rather than the entire state's interests. Carr also criticized the idea that states should put their own national interests first (Carr, 1939). He noted that this approach to international affairs emphasized power and competition above cooperation and collaboration. On the other hand, Carr advocated a more cooperative and internationalist approach to foreign policy based on the concept of collective security and the idea that states should cooperate to create peace and prosperity (Carr, 1939).

While some may criticize realism for its focus on power politics and the potential for conflict, its proponents argue that pursuing power can help promote stability and deter aggression. In this view, a balance of power can be established through the formation of alliances and other strategic relationships between states. Furthermore, this is a point where I can evaluate the significance of the role of alliances in balancing against potential threats. In pursuing their national interest, states may form alliances with other states to balance against threats from other states or groups. Kenneth Waltz argued that alliances allow states to gain power and guarantee their security in the international system (Waltz, 1979). According to Waltz, alliances are created out of a shared interest in countering prospective threats (Waltz, 1979). States can join alliances to combine their resources and

capabilities in order to deter possible aggressors and raise their relative strength in the system. Waltz also argued that alliances might assist in alleviating the security dilemma, which holds that the government's attempts to improve its own security can unintentionally contribute to insecurity for others (Waltz, 1979). States can convey their intentions to other states by forming alliances, reducing the possibility of misunderstandings or miscalculations that could lead to violence.

On the other hand, Waltz noted that alliances might be a doubtful advantage. While they might give security benefits, they can also generate entanglements and dependencies that limit a state's flexibility and freedom of action (Waltz, 1979). Furthermore, alliances help establish competing blocs or coalitions, increasing the risk of war. While Waltz argues that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no higher authority to regulate interactions between states, he contends that states must rely on their own capabilities to ensure their survival and security, which can lead to a lack of trust between them (Waltz, 1979).

Creating alliances entails interdependence between states. Thus, this notion of interdependence implies that the actor has less freedom in making decisions, which means that the state needs to defend its interests.

Mearsheimer, who sees states as rational actors primarily motivated by national interest, claims that states must be cautious about placing too much trust in others, as there is no overarching authority to regulate interactions between them. (Mearsheimer, 2001). Mearsheimer sees cooperation between states as a relative advantage. The state's main goal is to ensure survival, and the only way to ensure this is to maximize its influence, that is, to become a regional hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001).

In his work "Cooperation under the security dilemma," realist scholar Robert Jervis also argues that creating alliances might be challenging in a state's efforts to follow its national interest (Jervis, 1978). He discusses the "security dilemma," which refers to the situation in which a state's efforts to increase its own security can inadvertently lead to insecurity for other states (Jervis, 1978). He argues that this can lead to a lack of trust between states, as they may interpret each other's actions as aggressive or threatening (Jervis, 1978).

To sum up different points of view provided by the prominent scholars, I can summarize that creating the alliances does not diminish the role of the state's national interest or does not put it in second place either. Likewise, states can join the alliance with an urge to promote their national interest. Due to the presence of offensive military capabilities among states and the inherent uncertainty surrounding the intentions of other states, a sense of mistrust persists between them. This mistrust can potentially undermine the effectiveness of alliances.

1.3. Australia's national interest in the AUKUS Partnership in order to increase its power and security through stronger military ties with the US and UK

As described previously in this work, from the realist perspective, states prioritize their national interests, particularly their security and survival. According to Waltz, the state's primary goal is survival, which requires the acquisition of power, which can be military, economic, or diplomatic (Waltz, 1979). The presence of power is necessary to deter potential threats and ensure that the state can defend itself against aggression.

Given the definition of a state's national interest, I can analyze different aspects of Australia's national interest in the AUKUS partnership, which involves Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, established in order to strengthen regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The partnership involves cooperation in defense technology, cyber security, and other critical areas of national security.

First, participation in this partnership enhanced security and defense capabilities, which have been a long-time concern for Australia, including a rising China, instability in the Indo-Pacific region, and maritime security concerns. By joining the AUKUS partnership and gaining access to advanced military technology, Australia will significantly enhance its military capabilities, strengthening its ability to prevent potential threats and defend itself against aggression. Realism theory in international relations is based on the idea that states are motivated primarily by national interest and seek to maximize their power in the international system. The acquisition of military capabilities is a way states can increase their power and enhance their ability to project that power

globally. In this context, Australia's joining of the AUKUS partnership can be seen as a means of increasing its military capabilities and thereby enhancing its power in the international system. For example, acquiring advanced nuclear submarine technology can give Australia a significant advantage over other regional states and help strengthen its deterrence capabilities. Apart from this, the partnership will also include cooperation in the field of cybersecurity, which can help enhance Australia's ability to defend against cyber threats.

The AUKUS partnership encompasses a broad defense-technology partnership consisting of 17 joint working groups, including nine focused on submarines and others devoted to advanced military technologies such as underwater drones, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber defense, hypersonic missiles, and electronic warfare (The Economist, 2023). According to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute report, China currently holds a global advantage in 37 out of 44 critical technologies, measured by “high-impact” research papers (ASPI, 2022). The partnership aims to leverage the resources and expertise of the three countries to enhance their competitiveness and narrow the gap, mainly through collaboration on submarine construction and AI.

The report titled “ASPI AUKUS Update 2: September 2022 One-Year Anniversary” by Marcus Hellyer and Ben Stevens published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), provides an update on the progress made by the AUKUS partnership in the first anniversary of its formation (ASPI, 2022). The report highlights that the partnership has progressed on several fronts, including the announcement of the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines by Australia, the establishment of working groups to coordinate on technological, strategic, and logistical aspects of the partnership, and the signing of several memoranda of understanding between the three partners (ASPI, 2022). The report also notes the challenges faced by the AUKUS partnership, including diplomatic tensions with France, which was not consulted before the submarine announcement, and China's condemnation of the partnership as a provocative move (ASPI, 2022). The authors argue that despite these challenges, the AUKUS partnership has the potential to enhance the security of the Indo-Pacific region and strengthen the

alliance between the three countries. The report provides valuable insights into the progress made by the AUKUS partnership and the challenges it faces. It highlights the partnership's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region's context and its potential to enhance regional security. However, the report focuses mainly on the political and strategic aspects of the partnership, and it would be useful to complement it with literature that analyzes the partnership's economic, technological, and social implications.

Secondly, just like Waltz emphasizes the importance of alliances to acquire power and ensure security, the AUKUS partnership will strengthen relations with Australia's key allies, namely the United States and the United Kingdom. The AUKUS partnership will bind three countries together in a shared long-term scenario for the future. By cooperating closely with the United States and the United Kingdom, Australia can also benefit from their military capabilities and project greater power on the global stage. This can enhance Australia's position in the international system and potentially increase its influence in global affairs. What is more, it will benefit military cooperation as the partnership will facilitate increased cooperation and coordination between the three countries' armed forces. This will allow for better joint training and exercises, intelligence sharing, and joint military operations, which can enhance the military capabilities of all three countries.

Thirdly, Waltz also notes that economic power is a form of power that states can use to enhance their security and influence (Waltz, 1979). The economic benefit is another outcome for Australia in the AUKUS partnership, particularly regarding job creation and investment in the defense industry (The Economist, 2023). One potential benefit is the creation of high-tech jobs in industries related to developing and producing nuclear submarines. The development of this new technology will require skilled workers, engineers, and technicians and could boost the Australian economy. In addition, the partnership could open up new trade opportunities for Australia, as the realist theorists discussed the positive side of creating alliances earlier in this chapter. The United States and the United Kingdom are two of the world's largest economies; closer economic ties with these countries could lead to increased trade and investment opportunities for Australia. This could also counterbalance China's growing economic influence in the

region. Furthermore, the AUKUS partnership can enhance Australia's geopolitical standing and ability to project regional power. This could increase investor confidence in the country, increasing foreign investment and economic growth.

Finally, one of the most significant benefits of the AUKUS partnership for Australia is the opportunity to become the first non-nuclear state to own nuclear-powered submarines. This is a significant step for Australia, as it will provide the country with strategic capability and deterrence that it has not previously had. By having nuclear submarines, Australia will be better equipped to monitor and respond to potential nuclear threats in the region, particularly those coming from China, which has nuclear power and has been seeking to expand its influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, the decision to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines also has implications for Australia's strategic influence and security. By aligning with the US and UK in this partnership, Australia will gain a greater sense of security and will be able to enhance its strategic influence in the region. This is particularly important given the current geopolitical environment, marked by growing competition between China and the US. In this context, the AUKUS partnership offers a way for Australia to position itself as a key player in the Indo-Pacific region and to better respond to potential security threats. These objectives are consistent with Buzan's realist view of the state's national interest in international affairs, which stresses the pursuit of security and power as states' main motivations in global politics (Buzan, 1993).

Conclusion of Chapter 1

In this chapter, based on the definitions by realist theorists Waltz, Mearsheimer, Buzan, and Morgenthau, I defined the concept of the state's national interest: The state's national interest is the central motivation for its behavior, including the pursuit of power, security, and prosperity.

I also analyzed the role of power as a component of the state's national interest and the role of alliances in international relations. The role of power as a component of the state's national interest is a central tenet of realism theory in international relations.

According to realists, the anarchic nature of the international system means that states must rely on their own capabilities to ensure their survival and security. One of the most influential realists, Kenneth Waltz, argues that states seek power to ensure their survival and that a balance of power is necessary to prevent one state from dominating the system. Similarly, John Mearsheimer argues that states are driven by a desire for security, which requires them to seek power and maintain a balance of power in the system. Both Waltz and Mearsheimer see power as a means of deterrence against potential adversaries. Schelling argues that states can use the threat of force to deter potential aggressors and that the ability to project power is key to effective deterrence. Barry Buzan has argued that power can also serve as a security source by creating mutually beneficial relationships between states. In this view, states can use their power to shape the international system to promote stability and cooperation. Forming alliances can be beneficial for states to gain power and guarantee their security in the international system. By combining their resources and capabilities, states can deter potential aggressors and increase their relative strength in the system.

Additionally, alliances have the potential to reduce the security dilemma by enabling states to communicate their intentions to other states, thus minimizing the risk of misunderstandings and miscalculations that could lead to violence. However, it is essential to recognize that alliances can also create entanglements and dependencies that may limit a state's flexibility and freedom of action. Furthermore, establishing competing blocs or coalitions can increase the risk of war. The security dilemma is also a concern, as a state's efforts to increase its own security can inadvertently lead to insecurity for other states.

Using the main statements of the realism theory of international relations discussed in this chapter, I analyzed how Australia has pursued its national interest by joining the AUKUS partnership to increase its power and security through stronger military ties with the US and UK. This was observed in four significant areas: defense capabilities, increased cooperation with the USA and Great Britain, economic benefits as a form of power that states can use to enhance their security and influence, and nuclear control in the Indo-Pacific region. By participating in this partnership, Australia has positioned itself

as a stronger and more influential player in the region, particularly in the face of China's growing assertiveness. With increased military technology and expertise, economic growth, and enhanced nuclear monitoring, Australia has leveraged the AUKUS partnership to enhance its power and security in the global community.

Chapter 2. The AUKUS Partnership and regional power contestation

The AUKUS partnership, announced on September 15, 2021, is a trilateral security partnership between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The partnership aims to strengthen cooperation on defense, technology, and other areas of shared interest in the Indo-Pacific region. This chapter will discuss the history and development of the AUKUS partnership, including the role of the US, UK, and Australia, and analyze its potential implications for the region.

2.1. The interest of the US and the UK in the Indo-Pacific region

The AUKUS partnership was officially announced on September 15, 2021, during a virtual press conference attended by US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison (U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Australia, 2021). However, the idea for the partnership had been in the works for several months before the announcement. According to a joint statement issued by the three countries, the partnership was formed to address the "increasingly complex and contested security environment" in the Indo-Pacific region, characterized by rising tensions between China and its neighbors (The White House, 2021).

In the heart of the AUKUS alliance lies a commitment from the United States and the United Kingdom to support Australia in constructing no less than eight nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) which do not possess nuclear weapons. Previously, Australia had intended to purchase diesel-electric submarines from France to replace its current ones, dating back to the 1990s. However, nuclear-powered submarines can remain submerged for much more extended periods. While they can carry conventional missiles, their capabilities in collecting intelligence and deploying special forces onshore are just as important. The new submarines, designated SSN-AUKUS, will be jointly designed by Australia and the United Kingdom, based on the British next-generation attack submarine SSNR and bolstered by American technology, such as the vertical missile tubes (The

Economist, 2023). The initial batch of submarines will be produced in Barrow, England, and is expected to be completed by the late 2030s. On the other hand, the submarines intended for Australia will be manufactured in Adelaide and potentially stationed at Port Kembla in New South Wales. However, it is anticipated that their completion will likely occur after 2040 (The Economist, 2023).

Using nuclear energy to fuel a submarine does not necessarily imply the presence of nuclear weapons on board. The proposed Australian submarines are unlikely to possess the ability to launch missiles armed with US nuclear warheads as such missiles can only be launched from the Virginia or Astute submarines (The Economist, 2021). Suppose Australia's proposed submarines possess reactors similar to the US and Britain. In that case, the country will require highly enriched uranium (HEU), which is utilized to create nuclear weapons. The Economist article "AUKUS reshapes the strategic landscape of the Indo-Pacific" (2021) explores the possibility of HEU being used in Australia's submarines, which would render it unique among non-nuclear-weapons states according to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). While the NPT permits HEU possession for specific applications, Australia must ensure that it is held under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to prevent its misuse for weapon development. If Australia can effectively utilize HEU in its submarines while complying with IAEA safeguards, it could establish a favorable precedent for the NPT (The Economist, 2021). However, failure to adhere to such safeguards could have negative implications and possibly result in accusations of weapon development.

The prerequisites for concluding the AUKUS partnership include political will and strategic alignment among the US, UK, and Australia. The decision to form the partnership was likely based on a shared recognition of the growing security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly concerning China's military modernization and assertiveness. In addition to political will and strategic alignment, other factors likely influenced the decision to form the AUKUS partnership. These may have included concerns about the effectiveness of existing regional security arrangements, such as the Quad (Tarapore, 2023), and the desire to enhance the military capabilities of Australia in the face of growing regional threats. Based on the prerequisites for the conclusion of the

partnership and the regional situation, I can conclude that the AUKUS partnership has three main components: 1) the development of a nuclear-powered submarine capability for Australia; 2) increased cooperation on cyber and emerging technologies; and 3) collaboration on regional security issues such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

As I analyze this partnership through the lens of the realism theory of IR and the concept of the state's national interest, this partnership benefits each side serving its interests. In order to analyze the history and development of the AUKUS partnership, I will examine the aims of the USA and the UK in establishing the AUKUS partnership, as Australia's national interest was discussed in the previous chapter. The US decision to establish the AUKUS partnership reflects a realist approach to international relations, in which states act in their own national interest to maximize their power and security. The US national interest behind this partnership was to strengthen its security alliances in the Indo-Pacific region and enhance its strategic position, considering the long-time competition between USA and China. AUKUS' benefit for the USA is maintaining collective defense capabilities with other allies and counterbalancing China's growing military assertiveness in the region. Another US intention was to deepen its economic ties with its partners and advance its technological capabilities, given that the US is a key player in the AUKUS partnership, as it provides the technology and expertise needed to develop nuclear-powered submarines for Australia. The US has a long history of nuclear submarine development and deployment, and it is the only country in the world that has ever used nuclear weapons in combat. The US is also a key security partner for Australia and has been involved in numerous joint military exercises with the country in recent years, such as Talisman Sabre (Colonel et al.; W. C., 2010), a biennial joint military exercise between the US and Australia that has been held since 2005, designed to enhance interoperability and strengthen the military partnership between the two nations; Pitch Black, a biennial air combat exercise organized by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and has been conducted regularly since 1981 (The Australian, 2023), and others.

For the UK, still recovering from the recently happened Brexit, except for strengthening its defense capabilities and economic and security ties with the US and

Australia in the Indo-Pacific region, the AUKUS partnership marks a significant shift in the Australia-UK bilateral relationship since the 1970s (Hall, 2022). At that time, the UK withdrew from East of Suez and joined the European Economic Community, which shifted its focus towards the defense of Western Europe and trade and investment with that region. These changes had a considerable impact on Australia (Benvenuti, 2007). In addition, they encouraged Australia to turn its attention to emerging Asian economies for economic opportunities as it had lost a significant portion of the British market (Joshi, 2017). Thus, to make the AUKUS partnership work, the two states will need to consider some diplomatic cooperation and interconnection, as there are deep-seated Australian concerns about British intentions and capabilities, and the UK has doubts about Australia's reliability due to previous problematic defense partnerships and other factors (Hall, 2022). The UK's national interest in the AUKUS partnership also focuses on sharing its submarine design and technology expertise. The UK has a long history of submarine development and deployment and currently operates a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines. The UK has also been expanding its presence in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years, including through the deployment of its new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, which besides enhancing the UK's military capabilities, raised some concerns, namely escalating tensions with China, which sees the UK's increased presence in the region as a threat to its interests (Detsch, 2022).

The AUKUS partnership will bring significant changes for the US and UK regarding naval posture. As a temporary solution, the US plans to deploy up to four Virginia-class attack submarines, rotating continuously through Australia's HMAS Stirling naval base near Perth as early as 2027. Similarly, the UK aims to send one Astute-class submarine, which constitutes around 14% of its future fleet (The Economist, 2023). Additionally, Australia plans to purchase three to five Virginia-class submarines in the early 2030s to bridge the gap between the retirement of its current submarines and the arrival of the new nuclear-powered ones (Crowe, 2023). This may strain the US Navy, which is struggling to increase production. It is important to note that the submarines will be nuclear-powered but not nuclear-armed. The uranium in their reactors will be highly enriched and welded shut-in units supplied to Australia. The fuel will not require refueling

during the subs' time in service. Even upon decommissioning, it cannot be used for weapons without processing in facilities not available in Australia.

The establishment of the AUKUS partnership puts Australia in a complicated position. The decision to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines significantly diverges from Australia's previous plans to acquire conventionally-powered submarines from France. According to a statement by the White House, the decision to pursue nuclear-powered submarines was made “to expand their individual and collective undersea presence in the Indo-Pacific, and contributes to global security and stability” (White House, 2023). Additionally, U.S. officials have noted that nuclear-powered submarines are better suited for long-range missions and can operate silently, making them ideal for intelligence gathering and other regional strategic purposes.

The announcement of the Tripartite Security Partnership between the United States, Great Britain, and Australia ended the Attack-class submarine program agreed upon by France and Australia in 2016. Australia terminated a contract worth US\$37 billion with a French company that manufactures diesel-powered submarines. Adding to this, France, a historical ally of the Western world, was informed about the new partnership only a few hours before it was announced publicly, making the situation worse. Consequently, one of the most acute diplomatic crises between the two countries had begun.

When the Biden administration began talks with Australia and Britain about a new strategy to counter China, a three-year contract worth US\$37bn or more for a dozen submarines built mostly by the French had already begun to unravel. The submarines were based on propulsion technology so limited in range and so easily detected by the Chinese that it would be obsolete by the time the first submarines were launched, perhaps 15 years later. After all, an obvious alternative in Australia was nuclear submarines deployed by the Americans and the British. However, it is not for nothing that France learned about this in advance. If the French knew that one of the most significant defense contracts in their history was about to be terminated, they would almost certainly try to disrupt the alternative plan or try to prevent it.

According to French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in a Franceinfo interview (Politico 2021), Australia had informed France on the same day as the AUKUS announcement that it was content with the advancements being made in the submarine program. However, following the announcement, the Barracuda project became inactive. This led to French President Emmanuel Macron's unprecedented step of recalling France's ambassadors from Washington and Canberra on September 17th. As a result, France, the primary military power in the European Union, may perceive this move as confirmation that their longstanding skepticism towards the trustworthiness of English-speaking allies has been validated. The decision has been criticized by the French government and others who see it as a betrayal of trust and a breakdown of diplomatic relations. The Australian government has acknowledged these concerns but has emphasized that its priority is to ensure the security and safety of its citizens and that it believes the AUKUS partnership is the best way to achieve this goal (Scott, 2020).

Regarding the decision to cancel the submarine contract with France, the Australian government has stated that it was a difficult but necessary decision to ensure that Australia's national security needs were met (Australian Government, 2022). The government has emphasized that it remains committed to its partnership with France in other areas and that it values its relationship with France as a key partner and ally in the region (Joint statement by France and Australia, 2022). While Albanese and his government have confirmed that they will remain committed to AUKUS and the Quad (Australian Government Department of Defence, 2023), their recent statements on China also indicated that further cooperation between France and Australia would be possible as their approaches were more aligned than during Morrison's running the government. Thus, increased cooperation between Australia and France can help create a regional power balance.

Beyond the implications for France and Australia's relationship, this episode portrays trust as a secondary consideration in international relations from a realist perspective. Realists maintain that the international system lacks a centralized authority, resulting in a state of anarchy where no overarching power exists to govern or regulate interactions among states. In such a system, states must rely on their capabilities to ensure

survival and security. This means that states may prioritize their interests over the interests of others, which can lead to a lack of trust between states. Furthermore, realists believe that states are rational actors primarily motivated by national interest. This means states may act in ways that appear untrustworthy or even deceitful to achieve their objectives. In such a system, trust must be earned, and states must be cautious about placing too much trust in others, significantly if it could jeopardize their security (Jervis, 1978). The article “Testing the limits of international society? Trust, AUKUS and Indo-Pacific security” argues that trust is a fragile concept that becomes challenging to restore once broken (Barnes, Makinda, 2022). The breach of trust among the AUKUS members has resulted in divisions between allies and partners, eroded the assumption of trust between EU member states and AUKUS participants, and established a concerning precedent that undermines the international rules-based system. The article also emphasizes the importance of adherence to the norm of *pacta sunt servanda*, which can help socialize states to develop habits of trust in international society and facilitate international cooperation (Barnes, Makinda, 2022).

2.2. The interest of China and the reaction of other countries in the region

Australia and China have long-time established relations. China-Australia relations have always been a combination of collaboration and friction. Australia was one of the first Western countries to establish diplomatic ties with China in the 1970s. Since then, the two nations have maintained close economic connections, with China serving as Australia's primary trading partner. Australia supplied various raw materials, although at a relatively low pace. However, China's market reforms in the 1990s resulted in a growing demand for coal and ores, and by the 2010s, China had become Australia's biggest trading partner, buying not just bulk materials but also high-end seafood and wine (Golley, Agarwal, Laurenceson, Qiu, 2022). Despite this, Australia's political leadership avoided a proper debate on the risks of relying on trade with China for economic prosperity and an alliance with the United States for security. However, in recent years, China's aggressive behavior has brought this contradiction to the forefront, making it harder for

Australia to ignore or tolerate. Also, tensions have escalated due to concerns about China's influence in Australia and Australia's growing alignment with the US in its strategic competition with China. Human rights violations, cyber-espionage, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and suspicions of Chinese interference in Australian politics have all strained the relationship further.

After establishing the AUKUS partnership, China has imposed a range of restrictions on Australia (Jackson, 2023): imposing tariffs on a range of Australian goods, including wine, beef, and barley; applying restrictions on Australian diplomats in China; advising its students to avoid studying in Australia (Hare, 2021), which could have a significant impact on Australia's lucrative international student industry (Kuo, Murphy, 2020). Australia has also accused China of cyber attacks on its government and businesses (Galloway, 2021). In addition, Australia, which is the world's leading coal exporter, has received a severe blow as China has officially banned coal imports from the country following several months of uncertain limitations (Cave, 2020)

Accordingly, China is concerned about regional stability due to the alliance. Critics of the alliance are concerned that the relationship will provide the mid-sized South Pacific nation with missiles capable of striking thousands of kilometers from China's coast. China is hardly the only country to voice such concerns. However, considering the entire historical context of this regional situation, the arms race began long ago, and China has rapidly overtaken it. China's defense budget is growing at an impressive pace, and it now exceeds Australia, India, and Japan combined. From 2014 to 2018, the Chinese Navy, which currently holds the position as the world's largest navy, introduced warships with a total tonnage surpassing that of the navies of France, Germany, or India (The Economist, 2023). China has built 12 nuclear-powered submarines in the past 15 years and has announced it will increase defense spending by about 7% this year (The Economist, 2023). Australia is not the only regional power concerned by these trends, and Japan also accelerated its rearmament.

The AUKUS partnership can be considered a model for joined efforts by acting together against China's influence (The Economist, 2023). Despite the trade-off between sovereignty and capability, the AUKUS partnership serves as a model for this type of

cooperation. In this way, all three countries benefit from pooling their resources and expertise, leading to economies of scale and a way forward for effective cooperation. The development of AUKUS highlights the perception among Western allies that it is necessary to combine their resources and abilities to match China's growing power and may also ensure the partnership's longevity. Since February, the US and the UK have been sharing knowledge on nuclear propulsion technology with Australia, a sensitive subject that will remain confidential among the three nations. Another important aspect of this partnership is that collaboration in other domains, such as electronic warfare, could allow partners who share concerns about China, such as Japan or India, to participate in AUKUS.

For Australia, being between two hegemon takes work. The conclusion of the partnership caused different reactions in the region's countries. The AUKUS partnership has been welcomed by some countries in the region, such as Japan and South Korea, who share concerns about China's rising military capabilities. However, China has also criticized the partnership, which sees it as a threat to its regional interests. China has accused the US, UK, and Australia of forming an "Asian NATO" and destabilizing the region. Japan, Taiwan (Chung, Chun-mei, 2021), and India have expressed support for the AUKUS partnership as they perceive it necessary to counter China's expanding military power in the Indo-Pacific region. This sentiment is unsurprising, as these countries have been expressing concerns about China's assertiveness in the region for some time and have taken steps to increase their military capabilities in response.

Nevertheless, it is also important to mention that these countries may have concerns about the AUKUS partnership, such as how it may affect their relationships with China or alter the balance of power in the region. Establishing the AUKUS partnership has led to an uptick in the defense domain. Japanese officials have started to contemplate raising their military expenditure beyond the 1% of GDP threshold, which has been in place since the 1970s. Meanwhile, South Korea, primarily concerned with the danger posed by North Korea, has raised its defense budget by an average of 7% annually since 2018.

Establishing a partnership between Australia, the UK, and the US to provide nuclear-powered submarines is expected to impact the power dynamics in the Indo-

Pacific region significantly. This decision is believed to react to China's increasing military dominance in the region and may even result in an arms race. Furthermore, the partnership raises concerns about sharing sensitive nuclear technology with Australia and its potential impact on non-proliferation efforts. Certain nations in the region, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, view the AUKUS partnership as a possible security threat. Indonesia and Malaysia (New Straits Times, 2021), who have historically maintained a policy of neutrality, may feel pressured to take sides in a conflict between China and the AUKUS partners. Under the Albanese administration, the relationship between Australia and Indonesia, and Malaysia were progressing positively. However, the announcement of AUKUS in September 2021 was met with dissatisfaction from both countries (Patton, 2023). They expressed concerns over the possibility of AUKUS leading to an arms race in the region and the potential risks of nuclear proliferation. Other Asian governments have expressed fear or apprehension about angering China through their remarks or silence. Many leaders in Southeast Asia want the United States to remain a pillar of security. However, they also fear that an increasingly aggressive approach by the U.S. and its allies, such as Australia, will prompt China to retaliate, leading to a cycle of escalation centered on South East Asia. India has vacillated between border clashes with China and efforts to mend ties with its neighbor and has made no mention of the partnership. So is South Korea, which wants to maintain stable relations with Beijing while focusing on potential conflict with North Korea.

In September 2021, the announcement of the AUKUS partnership caught Indonesia off guard. The country expressed concerns that Australia procuring nuclear-powered submarines could trigger an arms race in the Indo-Pacific region, increasing tensions (Barrett, 2022). Indonesia's concerns reflect its reluctance to take sides in the geopolitical tensions between China and the US and its allies and its apprehension due to its geographic position, which will require the submarines to navigate close to its waters (Barrett & Rompies, 2023).

Indonesia has not strongly objected to the AUKUS relationship (Connors, 2021) but has urged caution and a focus on regional stability and collaboration in the Indo-Pacific (Hurst, 2022). To avoid the risk of an arms race or heightened tensions, Indonesian

authorities have emphasized the importance of openness and open communication among regional nations. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi has closely monitored the development of the AUKUS partnership and emphasized the need for transparency and open dialogue. She also stressed that any defense and security cooperation should enhance mutual trust and benefit all parties involved. Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto shared similar concerns and emphasized the importance of ASEAN centrality in regional security.

2.3. The power contestation of the key players in the Indo-Pacific region

Following the previous chapter and analyzing the strategic objectives behind the partnership, it is essential to consider regional security challenges that influenced the formation of the AUKUS partnership. Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, is another way to resist Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Quad is a strategic security dialogue that brings together the United States, Japan, India, and Australia to promote regional security and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region (Tarapore, 2023). The Quad was formed in 2007, but it disbanded owing to fears from certain members about aggravating China. However, it was resurrected in 2017 and has since become an increasingly significant space for discussing regional security problems, specifically China's increasing military activity. Quad focuses on maritime security, counterterrorism, and cybersecurity. In addition to security issues, the Quad seeks to promote economic growth and development in the region through increased trade and investment (Tarapore, 2023). All Quad's members share the same principles of transparency, inclusivity, and respect for the rule of law.

To sum up, I see three main functions of the Quad: the first one is a promotion of regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, the second one is a response to China's growing influence in the region and the opportunity for Quad's members to counterbalance China's assertive behavior, and the third important function is a perspective for smaller Asian nations to consider other alternatives but Chinese options, as it was aptly stated in the article "AUKUS reshapes the strategic landscape of the Indo-

Pacific” (The Economist, 2021). While analyzing the prerequisites of the AUKUS partnership, I see relations between these two partnerships. Besides sharing several member countries, who are influential actors in the Indo-Pacific region, both initiatives reflect a growing recognition among their respective members of the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the need for closer cooperation to address regional security challenges, particularly China's growing military assertiveness. United in a common goal of ensuring regional security and stability, the Quad focuses primarily on regional security issues and diplomatic engagement. At the same time, the AUKUS partnership is more focused on military capabilities and technology sharing, particularly in submarine technology. In this way, they work complementary. Thus, they can potentially reinforce each other's efforts in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, the AUKUS partnership could provide a framework for greater military cooperation and interoperability among its members, enhancing the Quad's ability to respond to security challenges. Similarly, the Quad could provide a forum for broader regional engagement and coordination, supporting the AUKUS partnership's goals and objectives.

In the book “Contest for the Indo-Pacific: Why China Won’t Map the Future,” the head of the National Security College at the Australian National University, Rory Medcalf, provided a comprehensive analysis of the complex geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region and offered insights into the strategic choices and challenges facing key actors in the region, including the United States, China, India, Japan, and Australia (Medcalf, 2022). Through a detailed examination of historical and contemporary trends in the region, Medcalf argues that the Indo-Pacific is undergoing a profound shift in power and influence, with China emerging as a significant regional power and challenging the dominance of the United States. Medcalf also explores the implications of these developments for regional security and stability and argues that the key challenge for regional policymakers will be to manage the growing strategic competition between the US and China in a way that does not lead to conflict. The author discussed the AUKUS partnership as a significant development in the Indo-Pacific region (Medcalf, 2022). Medcalf argues that the partnership reflects a growing sense of urgency among like-minded countries to counter China's rising power and assertiveness (Medcalf, 2022).

Medcalf notes that the AUKUS partnership is significant because it represents a major step forward in defense and security cooperation between the US, UK, and Australia (Medcalf, 2022). He argues that the sharing of technology for nuclear-powered submarines will enhance the ability of these countries to project power in the region, which is seen as a necessary response to China's growing military capabilities. However, Medcalf notes that the AUKUS partnership has sparked concern and criticism from some regional countries, particularly China and France. He argues that the key challenge for the US and its allies will be to manage these concerns and avoid a security dilemma that could lead to conflict. He suggests this will require careful diplomacy and a focus on building trust and cooperation with other regional countries (Medcalf, 2022).

In the context of the article “Offensive realism, thucydides traps, and the tragedy of unforced errors: classical realism and US–China relations,” the AUKUS partnership could be seen as a move by the United States and its allies to counter China's rising power and assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region (Kirshner, 2019). Joshua Kirshner, a professor of political science at the City College of New York, argues about how offensive realism in international relations may be used to explain better the dynamics between the US and China (Kirshner, 2019). The idea of the Thucydides Trap, which holds that a rising power will frequently conflict with an established power, is not inevitable, the author claims; instead, it is the product of unforced mistakes committed by both sides. The article indicates that the key to preventing them is to follow a policy of restraint and compromise rather than aggressive competition by using historical examples to demonstrate how these unforced mistakes may result in conflict (Kirshner, 2019). The article generally argues for a classical realist approach to US-China relations that emphasizes the importance of balance of power, deterrence, and avoiding unnecessary conflict.

Using the lens of offensive realism, the article would suggest that China may see this move as a threat to its security and attempt to respond in kind, potentially leading to a security dilemma and increased tensions between the US and China. This is similar to the dynamic described in the Thucydides Trap, where a rising power and established power conflict (Kirshner, 2019). However, the importance of avoiding unforced errors

and pursuing a strategy of restraint and compromise to avoid unnecessary conflict also plays a significant role in the case of the AUKUS. The US and its allies should communicate clearly with China about the purpose and scope of the security pact and take steps to ensure that it is not seen as a provocative or aggressive move. This could include assuring China about its security concerns and engaging in diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions. While the AUKUS partnership may be a necessary move to maintain the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region, it should be pursued with caution and a recognition of the potential risks and consequences of provoking China. Positioning submarines in proximity to the waters surrounding China, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula, where they are difficult to detect, has the potential to serve as a strong deterrent against the Chinese military. Their partnership could accelerate the buildup of arms in Asia long before the submarines enter service. That is why China's likely course of action will be to work on a preemptive step. In response, China may advance its military modernization, particularly with anti-submarine technology. China's leaders and military planners will consider military and diplomatic countermeasures, including new ways to punish Australian exports, which have already been hit by bans and punitive tariffs as relations have soured over the past few years.

Moreover, by reaffirming the Biden administration's determination to take on China's power in Asia, the new arms cooperation could prompt other big military spenders, such as India and Vietnam, to accelerate their weapons plans (Buckley, 2021). According to experts, Beijing can increase its efforts to develop technologies that can detect and disable nuclear-powered submarines before they are acquired by Australia (Buckley, 2021). This would result in a technological race rather than a general arms race. China quickly produces new naval ships and fighter planes, but its anti-submarine technology is less advanced than other capabilities.

Conclusion of Chapter 2

The AUKUS partnership between Australia, the UK, and the US has three main objectives: creating a nuclear-powered submarine capability for Australia, enhanced

collaboration on cyber and emerging technologies, and joint efforts on regional security matters such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. US and UK national interests within the AUKUS partnership are to expand their presence in the Indo-Pacific region, strengthen their defense capabilities, and collaborate on regional security issues.

However, analyzing the regional security situation, I determined that the implications of the partnership for regional security and international relations are complex and multifaceted. China perceives the partnership as threatening its regional interests and has imposed restrictions on Australia. Some countries in the region have welcomed the partnership, like Japan, Taiwan, and India. However, it has been criticized by Indonesia and Malaysia, who view it as a possible security threat. The key challenge for policymakers in the region will be to manage the growing strategic competition between the US and China in a way that does not lead to conflict. The partnership is seen as a way to counter China's rising power and assertiveness, but China may respond by stepping up its military modernization, particularly with anti-submarine technology.

Chapter 3. The influence of the AUKUS partnership on Australia, including its defense capabilities and security

In this chapter, I will focus mainly on the AUKUS partnership effect on Australia and the broader effects of the partnership on Australia's internal political and social environment, as well as its defense and security capabilities. It will also examine the possible obstacles, such as the increased risk of conflict and strained diplomatic relations with China, along with the advantages, such as economic considerations like trade and investment prospects. While identifying the influence of the AUKUS partnership on Australia, including its defense capabilities and security, through the realism theory of international relations, in my opinion, it is vital to admit that Australia is not the key player in this partnership. While every member has a national interest in the partnership, as I identified in the second chapter of this work, Australia can be seen as a tool or a performer in the hands of the USA and Great Britain. Thus, to distinguish the influence of the partnership on its defense capabilities and security, Australia is not on an equal footing in this partnership. The fundamental disparity between the US, Australia, and Britain can be attributed to varying levels of power, with the US possessing greater capabilities compared to its counterparts. However, from the field theory perspective, the perception of agency as a given is a contingent characteristic of the US national security field (McCourt, 2021). This field is exceptionally large and intense, with many stakeholders engaging in a fierce struggle that shapes policy-making concerning issues such as China's rise. In contrast, the national security fields in Australia and the UK are smaller in size and less geographically concentrated, resulting in less intense debates surrounding foreign policy (McCourt, 2021).

3.1. Domestic political and social implications of the AUKUS partnership

The AUKUS partnership has sparked debates and discussions within Australia's domestic political landscape. While some segments of the population support the

partnership as a means to strengthen national security and counter China's influence, others have expressed concerns about potential negative consequences, such as heightened tensions in the region or the risk of Australia being dragged into conflicts. The decision to join AUKUS faced opposition from certain political groups or society segments concerned about escalating tensions in the region or becoming too closely aligned with the United States.

The survey presented by The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll and conducted by the Social Research Centre (SRC) among 2,006 Australian adults between March 15 and 28, 2022, explores public perceptions of the AUKUS Partnership, as well as related defense and foreign policy matters. The results highlight that regarding the impact of AUKUS on Australia's safety, a slim majority of Australians (52%) believe that the partnership will make Australia safer. Meanwhile, 22% believe it will make no difference, and 7% think it will make Australia less safe. Regarding regional safety, around half (49%) believe AUKUS will enhance regional security, while 11% are unsure, and 8% have never heard of AUKUS (The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll, 2022). Speaking of the potential acquisition of nuclear weapons in the future, 36% of respondents are in favor, while 63% are opposed.

Another factor to consider is that the concerns about China may have influenced the decision, as the poll found that 63% of Australians believe that China is a critical threat to Australia's vital interests in the upcoming decade. This suggests that concerns about China's rising power and influence in the region may have influenced the decision to cancel the submarine contract and pursue the AUKUS partnership with the United States and the United Kingdom (The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll, 2022). Despite tensions caused by the AUKUS partnership, Australians continue to hold high levels of trust in France and confidence in French President Macron. Specifically, 73% of Australians have either a lot or some trust in France, while 68% have a lot or some confidence in President Macron. Around half of Australians (49%) say both countries are equally to blame for the tensions in the Australia-France relationship. A third (35%) say Australia is more to blame, and 12% say France is more to blame (The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll, 2022). Overall, the poll suggests that while there may be some concerns about the impact of the decision on the relationship with France, the majority of Australians support the

government's position and recognize the need to prioritize Australia's national security interests in the Indo-Pacific region (The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll, 2022).

Political parties and leaders have also responded differently to the AUKUS partnership. The government, in particular, has highlighted the security benefits and economic opportunities associated with the partnership, positioning it as a demonstration of Australia's commitment to regional stability. However, opposition parties have voiced skepticism, raising issues related to national sovereignty and the potential for entanglement in conflicts, which will be discussed further in this paper as the potential challenges partnership creates for Australia. As the partnership progresses, ongoing evaluation of its implications and public sentiment will continue to play a crucial role in shaping Australia's approach to regional security and its relationship with the United States and other partners involved in the partnership.

3.2. Potential Benefits of the AUKUS Partnership for Australia

The AUKUS partnership offers Australia several substantial benefits, main of which are enhanced security by deepening its defense cooperation with the United States and the United Kingdom, regional influence as a key player in the Indo-Pacific region, access to advanced nuclear-powered submarines, which will significantly enhance Australia's ability to deter potential threats and respond effectively to regional security challenges, economic opportunities as well as employment opportunities as collaboration in defense and technology sectors can lead to increased defense spending, defense exports, and trade opportunities. Additionally, it may attract foreign investment, promote local industries, and contribute to economic diversification. This unit primarily explores the benefits of the AUKUS partnership, including deterrence and stability, access to advanced military technology, particularly nuclear-powered submarines, and increased employment opportunities across multiple sectors in Australia.

Firstly, one of the primary benefits of the AUKUS Partnership for all countries, with a particular emphasis on Australia, is the containment of China's influence in the area. By boosting defense cooperation and sharing advanced military technologies, the

partnership can deter China's potential aggressive actions and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Thus, the AUKUS Partnership is a strategic response to China's forceful actions and expanding influence. It aspires to strengthen member nations' collective security, deter future threats, and improve their ability to solve regional concerns. By aligning their efforts and capabilities, the member countries can present a more coordinated response to any potential aggression or destabilizing activities by China.

Secondly, the AUKUS Partnership is expected to provide Australia with access to advanced military technology, particularly in the area of nuclear-powered submarines. Firstly, these submarines can operate for extended periods without the need to surface, making them highly effective for conducting long-range surveillance and intelligence-gathering missions. This will enable Australia to monitor better and respond to potential threats in the region (The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll, 2022).

What is more, nuclear-powered submarines are faster and more maneuverable than conventional diesel-electric ones, making them more challenging to detect and track. This will give Australia a significant advantage in any potential conflict scenario. Moreover, nuclear-powered submarines have greater endurance and range than conventional ones, which means they can operate further from home ports and remain on station for extended periods. This will enable Australia to project power further into the region and respond quickly to emerging security challenges. To sum up, all these factors will significantly enhance Australia's defense capabilities and security. In addition to submarines, the partnership is also expected to provide Australia with access to other advanced military technologies, such as artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, and space-based systems. These technologies will help Australia better deter potential threats and respond to regional security challenges.

Finally, the AUKUS partnership will likely revolve around generating employment and training prospects for engineers, shipbuilders, and submariners. The government maintains that the partnership will enhance employment opportunities across various sectors in Australia, including industry, the defense force, and the public service (Greene, 2023, March 13). According to the Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese,

AUKUS is expected to create a minimum of 20,000 new job opportunities for Australians over a span of 30 years (Australian Government, 2023, March 14). Defense Minister Richard Marles stated that the government would provide further details on its strategies to attract the required workforce (Greene, 2023, March 13). The construction and maintenance of Australia's new fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, which comprises hundreds of thousands of components, will offer an exceptional opportunity for Australian companies, according to the Australian government statement released in March 2023 (Australian Government, 2023 March 14). In addition to contributing to the construction and sustainability of the submarines, they will also become part of the supply chains for partner nations involved in the partnership. Australia's scientific, educational, and training institutions will also play a significant role in this endeavor. Australian individuals have already begun training and working on nuclear-powered submarines from the UK and the US and in facilities located in these countries. Furthermore, between 2027 and 2032, an additional 500 direct jobs are anticipated to be created to support the Submarine Rotational Force-West's presence of the US and the UK in Western Australia (Australian Government, 2023, March 14).

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute's report on Australia's nuclear submarine program provides insights into the development of this program, which has been ongoing for over two decades (ASPI, 2021). The report highlights the establishment of the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce by the Australian Government to determine the best pathway for incorporating nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) into Australia's naval capabilities. SSNs offer advantages such as extended endurance, greater range, and enhanced stealth compared to conventional diesel-electric submarines. These attributes enable more extended patrols, covert operations, and increased flexibility in responding to potential threats. The report emphasizes the government's recognition of evolving security challenges and the need to bolster Australia's maritime security and strategic deterrence capabilities. Australia aims to enhance its defense posture by pursuing nuclear submarines, deterring potential adversaries, and projecting regional power (Nicholls, Dowie, Hellyer, 2021).

3.3. Potential challenges of the AUKUS partnership for Australia

Regarding Australia's role in the AUKUS partnership, both general challenges apply to all members and specific challenges unique to Australia. In terms of the general challenges, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute highlights three urgent challenges that consistently emerge during the discussions (MacGillivray, Munro, & Brown, 2022). First, there is a lack of clarity regarding AUKUS's strategic purpose and shared goals among its partners (MacGillivray et al., 2022). This raises questions about its effectiveness in countering China and the potential for technology transfers to escalate tensions. Second, the absence of a clear narrative about the deal's purpose has led to confusion among allies and concerns about regional stability. Explicit discussions are needed to address these issues and mitigate Chinese disinformation. Finally, the role of the commercial industry, supply chains, and society in supporting AUKUS's aspect relating to artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and other emerging technologies needs to be addressed. The article emphasizes the need for shared infrastructure, comprehensive reviews of supply chains, and grassroots support to ensure success (MacGillivray et al., 2022).

Before moving to the direct impact of the partnership on Australia, I should note that considering that there are perspectives suggesting that the partnership is primarily driven by America's strategic competition with China and its desire to expand its own influence, Australia also uses AUKUS Partnership to restrain China's influence. Thus, Australia's primary objective in this context is to address the challenges posed by China's growing influence, heightened aggression from Beijing, and the recognition of Australia's strategic vulnerabilities in a challenging regional environment (MacGillivray, Munro, Brown, 2023).

Firstly, opponents of the AUKUS partnership argue that it represents a step that further entangles Australia in American war-fighting strategies, potentially diminishing Australian sovereignty (Greene, 2023). From their perspective, this partnership could lead to Australia being drawn into conflicts or military engagements primarily driven by the United States' interests rather than its own. They express concerns that Australia's decision-making autonomy could be compromised as it increasingly aligns with

American foreign policy objectives (Greene, 2023). Critics may also raise concerns about the potential lack of consultation or transparency in the decision-making process regarding military actions, leading to a perceived erosion of Australian sovereignty. They contend that such a partnership could limit Australia's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy or make sovereign decisions based on its national interests.

Following the first challenge, Australia, in particular, faces another challenge in the AUKUS partnership regarding the potential reliance on the United States. AUKUS presents a dual-sided situation where Australia may find itself uncomfortably bound to the United States and its foreign policy while simultaneously reinforcing America's commitment to Australia's security.

Thirdly, while the implementation of the partnership presents the possibility of new job opportunities, it also poses a challenge for Australia due to the existing shortage of engineers (Greene, 2023). To address this issue, the government must develop a targeted workforce plan to ensure an adequate supply of skilled workers. According to Martin Hamilton-Smith, the Director of the Australian Sovereign Capability Alliance, this implies that Australia needs to promptly provide training and enhance the skills of its domestic workforce (Greene, 2023). Manufacturing submarines of this nature necessitates the involvement of specially trained individuals. Consequently, the partnership's member countries are actively working on attracting and relocating specialists with expertise in submarine development to Australia. Such endeavors require significant financial resources and specialized labor, particularly considering Australia's geographic remoteness. Additional funds will be needed not only to facilitate the relocation of these specialists but also to provide the necessary training programs.

Finally, the timeframe for manufacturing and delivering the submarines to Australia is another potential challenge Australia faces. There is a concern that by the time Australia receives the submarines, they may no longer be relevant or necessary. This is particularly significant given the possibility of swift action by China, which might take action before the submarines are delivered. The heightened tensions in the region, coupled with China's immediate response to the AUKUS partnership, increase the likelihood of China taking action that may not be advantageous for Australia. This is one of the key

reasons why a significant portion of Australians oppose the partnership, as they view AUKUS as a direct trigger for escalation in the region.

Conclusion of Chapter 3

In this chapter, I identified and assessed the influence of the AUKUS partnership on Australia.

The AUKUS partnership offers substantial benefits to Australia, including enhanced security, regional influence, access to advanced military technology and intelligence sharing with key allies, resulting in enhanced security cooperation and regional influence, as well as economic and employment opportunities. The AUKUS Partnership is expected to significantly enhance Australia's defense capabilities and security by granting access to advanced nuclear-powered submarines, strengthening its ability to deter potential threats and respond effectively to regional security challenges. However, experts and stakeholders differ on the AUKUS Partnership and its impact on containing China's influence. Critics argue that such alliances may exacerbate tensions and fuel a security dilemma, potentially escalating regional rivalry between major powers. Challenges that the AUKUS partnership entails for Australia are the need for more clarity regarding AUKUS's strategic objectives and goals for each member, the potential for regional escalation, increased dependence on the United States, and the shortage of specialized individuals for submarine manufacturing.

CONCLUSION

This thesis came to the following conclusions.

In the first part of this paper, I revealed the essence of the term “state’s national interest” based on the definitions provided by realist theorists Waltz, Mearsheimer, Buzan, and Morgenthau and its role in the international system through the realism theory of international relations. The state’s national interest is the central motivation for its behavior, including the pursuit of power, security, and prosperity. In this way, I explained Australia's pursuit of national interest in the AUKUS partnership, aiming to enhance power and security through strengthened military ties with the US and the UK. This aligns with realism theory in international relations, where power is central to a state's national interest. Alliances, such as AUKUS, can be advantageous for states in gaining power and ensuring security by reducing the security dilemma. Australia's participation in the partnership was observed in key areas: defense capabilities, increased cooperation with the US and UK, economic benefits as a form of power, and nuclear control in the Indo-Pacific. Through AUKUS, Australia establishes itself as a more influential player in the region, particularly in response to China's assertiveness. Australia leverages the partnership to strengthen its power and security in the global community by utilizing military technology, economic growth, and nuclear monitoring.

In the second part, to single out the objectives of the AUKUS partnership and the role of its members, first, I discussed the history and development of the partnership and the relations between all the members, and then I examined the national interests of the US and UK within the AUKUS partnership, which include expanding their presence in the Indo-Pacific region, strengthening defense capabilities, and fostering collaboration on regional security matters. Furthermore, the main potential benefits for Australia are enhanced security and economic opportunities. There are also concerns about its purpose and implications for regional stability. Moving to the regional security situation, I described the partnership's impact on regional security as multifaceted, as China perceives it as a threat to its interests and has imposed restrictions on Australia. While countries like Japan, Taiwan, and India have welcomed the partnership, Indonesia and Malaysia have

expressed concerns, viewing it as a potential security threat. Policymakers in the region face the challenge of managing the growing strategic competition between the US and China without escalating into conflict. The partnership is a counter measure against China's increasing power and assertiveness, but China may respond by intensifying its military modernization efforts, particularly in anti-submarine technology.

Finally, in the third part of this paper, I identified the influence of the partnership on Australia, including its defense capabilities and security. As for domestic political and social implications of the AUKUS partnership, based on the survey presented by the Australian think tank The 2022 Lowy Institute Poll, I observed that perspectives on the AUKUS partnership and its impact on containing China's influence vary among experts and stakeholders, with concerns raised about potential escalation and the need for balanced engagement with China. Following my research in the first and second chapters, I identified the influence of the AUKUS partnership on Australia, which is anticipated to substantially strengthen Australia's defense capabilities and security through the provision of advanced nuclear-powered submarines. This enhanced technology will bolster Australia's capacity to effectively deter potential threats and address regional security challenges. As a result, the primary advantages of the AUKUS partnership for Australia encompass acquiring cutting-edge military technology and the opportunity for intelligence sharing with its crucial allies, the United States and the United Kingdom. I also determined the main challenges and benefits of the AUKUS partnership for Australia. These are enhanced security, regional influence, China deterrence, access to advanced military technology and intelligence sharing with key allies, and expanding job and economic opportunities. The most significant challenges are: regional escalation and tensions in the region as China's imposition of sanctions on Australian exports highlights the economic vulnerability that Australia faces due to its largest trading partner, the lack of clarity regarding AUKUS's strategic objectives, the potential risks of deepening dependence on the United States pose challenges for Australia, and the shortage of specialized individuals for submarine manufacturing. Overall, while the AUKUS partnership's access to advanced nuclear-powered submarines significantly enhances Australia's defense capabilities and ability to respond to regional security challenges,

clear communication of objectives will be crucial for Australia's long-term security and regional stability.

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ABSTRACT

Thesis

Topic: The AUKUS Partnership and its Implications for Australia

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Short

summary:

AUKUS partnership was announced in September 2021 as a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States to develop a class of nuclear-powered submarines and collaborate in Indo-Pacific cooperation. The AUKUS partnership represents a strategic shift among like-minded democracies in response to China's influence. It reshapes the Indo-Pacific landscape, reflecting the US and UK's support for Australia's interests and concerns over regional stability. This thesis examines the partnership's impact on Australia's defense capabilities, security, and national interest, analyzing its regional and global security implications. It examines the objectives of the AUKUS partnership and the interests of its members, along with describing the power contestation of the key players in the Indo-Pacific region.