

## Regional Security Complex Analysis in Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) Viewpoint to the Rivalry between United States and China in Taiwan

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### ABSTRACT

AUKUS is a trilateral defense pact between Australia, United Kingdom, and United States formed in September 2021. Derived from the countries' initials, AUKUS serves a security partnership to strengthen integrated deterrence. The pact focuses on enhancing nuclear-powered submarines and developing trilateral cooperation on emerging technology. This study's discussion focuses on regional security complex analysis in AUKUS viewpoint to the rivalry between United States and China in Taiwan. The method used descriptive research with qualitative approach analysis. Tension between these two countries is seen as a manifestation of their respective national interests. The resolution of the regional security complex here can be observed through the strategies prepared to deter China and how AUKUS could achieve advantages regarding Taiwan's status

## **INTRODUCTION**

Australia, United Kingdom, and United States formed the AUKUS defense pact to strengthen defense networks, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, amidst regional security conflicts. China asserts territorial claims over Taiwan, which operates with a distinct governance system. In response to potential Chinese aggression, United States exhibits a partial stance favoring Taiwan. The establishment of a trilateral pact involving three influential nations is positioned as a response to China's increasing dominance in the Indo-Pacific region (Kube, 2023). China's economic and military supremacy in the Indo-Pacific region causes some unease for United States as a global superpower. Hence, the formation of AUKUS serves, in part, as a preventive measure against potential long-range threats targeting Australia. This urgency is driven by Australia's recognition of the intricate nature of regional security issues requiring heightened vigilance (Shugart, 2023). AUKUS has outlined various visions and missions to achieve stability in regional security. Beyond the exchange of information and nuclear submarine technology, AUKUS is dedicated to broadening maritime capabilities and transferring security technology. As outlined in the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information strategic agreement, the three nations will deepen their collaboration to enhance joint capabilities. This encompasses advancements in artificial intelligence, bolstering underwater munitions, strengthening cyber capabilities, and developing quantum technology (Parliament of Australia, 2021).

This paper is reinforced by the theory of regional security complex and the concept of unilateral deterrence which contributes to knowledge enrichment by exploring how major and powerful nations employ political strategies to achieve prosperity and their respective national interests. In this case, the United States and China engage in a power play on the Taiwan stage to demonstrate who excels in strategic planning. The paper focuses on the unique strategies meticulously prepared by AUKUS in deterring China, perceived as a threat to the overall prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. From this description, the author focused on the research question as 'How is AUKUS's viewpoint to United States and China rivalry in Taiwan through regional security complex analysis?' This research question is important to analyze to describe the effectiveness of AUKUS forming and the extent to which advantages could be earned regarding this situation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Regional Security Complex**

The Regional Security Complex is a theoretical approach to understanding the dynamics of security and all related aspects of a country's development within a specific region. In this context, it pertains to AUKUS and the region where the conflict between China and Taiwan (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). This theory is relevant to international security issues related to the power and peace of a country. According to Buzan, security is something related to the survival of human beings, commonly referred to as survival. He also argues that individuals are crucial entities for security (Buzan, 1991). As time progresses, more factors are included in the focus of international security issues, such as technology, commercial conflicts, energy supply, ethnic conflicts, religion, ideology, climate

change phenomena, infectious diseases, etc (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). There are two factors at play in the Regional Security Complex theory, namely internal and external factors. Indicators of internal factors are found in geographical location. This indicates whether a country is in the same region as other countries, triggering the possibility of reaching agreements on regional security rules. In addition to geographical location, another indicator is the alignment of the state system and the quality of interactions between countries. The alignment of systems owned by regional countries refers to the complexity of economic, political, social, and cultural systems, triggering an increase in the sense of belonging and solidarity among countries. The quality of interactions between countries as the last indicator is the close or distant relationships between regional countries, which can be used as a reference to determine whether these countries will work synergistically to create regional security stability. The external factors in this Regional Security Complex theory are divided into two indicators: the international situation and emerging hot issues (Stone, 2009).

The Regional Security Complex encompasses regional security issues that impact national security. Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States form a group that creates system alignment because of improved relations between one country and another, closer relations than before, and the ability to obtain international security protection and support on a small scale. International security is perceived as one of the aspects related to conflict. Conflict is a vital part of the history of interstate relations triggered by the fact that each country has goals to achieve that often are not compatible with each other.

## **2. Minilateral Deterrence**

Minilateral Deterrence is a concept in problem-solving theory that involves a small group of countries collaborating on a small scale to suppress the movements of an aggressor through innovative development of regional order and improved decision-making processes (Perket, 2021). This concept serves as a strategy where small countries work together to counter threats or invasions collectively. This could mean that subgroups of countries form coalitions or alliances focusing on specific security challenges, either at the regional or global level. Minilateral Deterrence can be applied in various situations, such as regional security agreements or coalitions of countries with shared interests in countering specific types of threats. The effectiveness of this concept is likely to depend on specific situations, the nature of the threat, and the capabilities and efforts of the involved countries. A characteristic feature of minilateralism is its emphasis on shared interests rather than identical values or ideological orientations. This allows countries to collaborate on critical issues without having to agree on everything or share the same worldview (Mladenov, 2023).



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the background previously outlined, the author establishes a framework as a reference in this research. This framework includes:

- a. China-Taiwan Conflict: Comprising the relationship between China and Taiwan, Taiwan's separation from China, Taiwan's efforts for independence, leading to escalating tensions between the two countries. The theory of Regional Security Complex and its perspective on the tension between the two nations will also be explained.
- b. The Establishment of The AUKUS Defense Pact: Exploring the background of the AUKUS' establishment, one of its objectives being to assist in resolving the China-Taiwan conflict.
- c. United States' Existence in the Conflict: The history of relations between the two countries, the conflict between China and Taiwan, making the United States as a major power involved in achieving national interests and creating security in the Indo-Pacific region. The views of the United States and China on the function of the trilateral defense pact AUKUS will be discussed.
- d. U.S.-China Rivalry Through the Lens of Regional Security Complex & Minilateral Deterrence: These two theories serve as a strong and relevant research foundation, supporting the alignment of the title with the precision of the case study analysis.
- e. Regional Security Complex Analysis in Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) Viewpoint to The Rivalry between United States and China in Taiwan: This becomes the core focus of this research.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a method of descriptive research with a qualitative approach analysis by utilizing primary and secondary data sources. The descriptive methodology centers on thoroughly describing the acquired data and subsequently analyzing it in accordance with the problem formulation. In this study, the focus is on the tension between the United States and China regarding Taiwan as the research object based on the issue of regional security complex in the Indo-Pacific region. This aligns with one of the objectives behind the formation of the trilateral cooperation pact AUKUS.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

### **A. China - Taiwan Conflict**

Taiwan, an island separated from China by the Taiwan Strait, officially became independent from China in 1949. China claims sovereignty over the entire area, including Taiwan and other islands. Taiwan is considered part of a yet-to-be-unified region. The relationship between China and Taiwan heated up with the beginning of President Tsai Ing-Wen's leadership in 2016. Tsai decided to reject the proposal approved by the previous president, Ma Ying-Jeou, regarding the issue of increased cross-strait structures between China and Taiwan. China's stance on their relationship has been aggressive, including flying fighter jets into the border area. China also asserts that there is only 'One China,' with Taiwan being an integral part of it. The Chinese government claims that only their administration is the legitimate government of Taiwan (Courtney Kube, 2023). In 2000, Chen Shui-Bian was elected as President openly expressing support for Taiwan's independence. China responded to this by enacting the Anti-Secession Law in 2005, declaring China's right to use "non-peaceful means" against Taiwan if Taiwan continued to try to separate itself from China (BBC, 2024).

China has increased the frequency and range of patrols around Taiwan, involving fighter jets and reconnaissance aircraft. Taiwan reports thousands of cyberattacks from China targeting government institutions. In 2016, Tsai Ing-Wen is committed to fighting for the freedom and democracy of Taiwan to address issues. Taiwan bears a heavy burden and will continue to strive to break free from excessive dependence on a single market (Phillips, 2016). China established a cross-strait communication mechanism with the main representative office in Taiwan, leading to restrictions on tourism to Taiwan and causing a decline in mainland Chinese tourists from over 4 million in 2015 to 2.7 million in 2019. China also exerts pressure on global companies, including airlines and hotel networks, to list Taiwan as a province of China. In 2021, after Lithuania opened a representative office in the capital of Taiwan, China severed trade cooperation with Lithuania (Maizland, 2023).

President Xi Jinping of China reiterated that China will definitely reunify with Taiwan and set the year 2049 as the target to achieve the dream of Taiwan's reunification (BBC, 2024).

The Regional Security Complex Theory sees the tension in the relationship between China and Taiwan as a result of political interests clashing between the two distinct nations. Through the four levels of analysis provided by this theory, it can be explained as follows:

1. Domestic Security: China's domestic security creates tension for Taiwan, perceived as a threat. Internal security factors in China can have a direct impact on the security dynamics in the Taiwan region.
2. Interstate Relations: The strained relationship between China and Taiwan influences the security systems of each country. The developments in this relationship can create instability at the regional security level.
3. Interregion Relations: In the Indo-Pacific region, China is not extensively engaged with neighboring countries to support its efforts to take control of Taiwan. This creates complex regional security dynamics with the potential to escalate tensions.
4. Global Power: China demonstrates dominance not only in its claim over Taiwan but also in its claims over the South China Sea, despite regulations established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). From the perspective of the Regional Security Complex Theory, the formation of AUKUS can be seen as a response to China's dominant stance, aiming to maintain a balance of power and security stability in the region around Taiwan.

Thus, this theory considers AUKUS as an effort to address China's dominance and preserve security stability in the region around Taiwan from deteriorating.

### **B. The Establishment of the AUKUS Defense Pact**

Leaders of Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States announced the formation of an expanded trilateral security partnership known as 'AUKUS' in September 2021. AUKUS aims to strengthen the government's capabilities in supporting their security and defense interests by building on existing long-term bilateral relationships. It will facilitate deeper exchanges of information and technology, as well as encourage greater integration of security and defense sciences, technology, industrial sites, and supply chains. AUKUS initiated an 18-month tripartite consultation phase with two related focuses. The first commitment under AUKUS is to assist Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. The second initiative aims to enhance joint capabilities and interoperability, focusing on cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technology, and additional underwater capabilities. On March 13, 2023, AUKUS partners agreed to establish the best path for establishing nuclear submarine capabilities in Australia as soon as possible while ensuring that all three partners adhere to the highest non-proliferation standards (U.S Department of Defense, 2023).

Joint Leader Statement on AUKUS stated that through AUKUS, the governments involved will enhance their capacity to uphold security and defense interests by leveraging their enduring and continual bilateral connections. The focus will be on advancing information and technology sharing, facilitating greater integration of security and defense-related science, technology, industrial

foundations, and supply chains. The collaboration will notably intensify in various security and defense capabilities (The White House, 2021). This Joint Leader Statement is analyzed by the Regional Security Complex as an approach to realizing the development of countries in the Indo-Pacific region. There are relevant internal factors within the Regional Security Complex that underlie the establishment of AUKUS: The quality of inter-state interactions indicates that Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States have a good relationship to protect shared core values and strive for prosperity and security stability. These three countries also have alignment in their national systems, they share similar economic and political systems, creating a sense of belonging to each other.

### **C. United States' Existence in the Conflict**

The United States, with its policy towards East Asia in the early Cold War era, contributed to tensions in the Taiwan Strait region. From late 1949 to the early 1950s, the United States authorities allowed Chinese forces to cross the strait to defeat Chiang Kai-Shek. In the mid-1950s, after the outbreak of the Korean War, the United States sent its fleet to guard the Taiwan Strait to prevent the conflict from spreading southward. In the following years, United States formed an alliance with Taiwan. Openly, the United States discussed the possibility of signing a Mutual Defense Treaty with Chiang Kai-Shek, seen by China as a threat to national stability and its leadership role in Asia. The United States policy with Taiwan was designed to ensure that Taiwan retained control of its territory, including offshore islands, without the United States directly confronting China (Office of the Historian, 2021).

Jake Sullivan, United States National Security Advisor, responded to China sending numerous fighter jets to Taiwan's air defense zone for four consecutive days as a concern for policies that disrupt regional security stability in the Taiwan Strait. He is ready to take appropriate action to protect Taiwan whenever needed (BBC News Indonesia, 2021)

United States President Joe Biden stated the need for an effort to defend the free and open Indo-Pacific region, as well as to maintain a peaceful and strategic environment around Taiwan for regional security stability. Meanwhile, United Kingdom National Security Advisor Sir Stephen Lovegrove stated that AUKUS is not just a nuclear submarine collaboration agreement; AUKUS is far more powerful as the world's strongest minilateral group in six decades capable of deterring China (Wintour, 2021). In response to the formation of AUKUS, China, through Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Li-Jian, called it an irresponsible agreement formed by Cold War-minded countries based on ideological prejudice. AUKUS will only damage peace and security stability in the region with unnecessary arms competition (BBC News, 2023)

The establishment of domestic security by China in the Taiwan region prompted the creation of AUKUS as a counterbalance to China's influence. Throughout the latter part of 2022 and 2023, General Secretary Xi continued to stress the imperative for China to ready itself for challenges stemming from what he perceives as adversarial actions by the United States and its allies. Specifically, Xi has consistently urged Chinese officials and citizens to foresee extreme and

worst-case scenarios, terms that imply the possibility of increased tensions with the United States, significant economic repercussions due to measures such as sanctions and export controls, and heightened strategic competition, potentially leading to an open conflict over Taiwan Xi has called on the nation to fortify itself against worst-case scenarios in his address at the 20th Party Congress in October 2022, underscoring the need for China to respond to strategic risks and uncertainties in the global landscape by maintaining Party control and embracing a fighting spirit to resist being swayed by misinformation, intimidated, or pressured (U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION, 2023).

#### **D.U.S.-China Rivalry through the Lens of Regional Security Complex & Minilateral Deterrence**

The dynamics of the relationship between the United States and China originated with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

- a. In 1949, the United States provided support to the Nationalists in their resistance against the invading Japanese forces and also backed the exiled Republic of China government in Taipei led by Chiang Kai-Shek. This marked the beginning of several decades characterized by limited relations between the United States and mainland China.
- b. In the Korean War of 1950, swift intervention by the United Nations and the United States aimed to protect South Korea, prompting China, in support of communist North Korea, to respond as U.S., UN, and South Korean forces approached the Chinese border.
- c. By the spring of 1955, the United States had issued a nuclear threat against China, leading to negotiations in April where China claimed a partial victory following the Nationalists' withdrawal from Dachen Island.
- d. Crises emerged again in 1956 and 1996. The United States, working alongside the United Nations, criticized Beijing for human rights abuses in Tibet. Concurrently, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) commenced support for the Tibetan resistance in the late 1950s (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).
- e. In 1964, prompted by earlier indications from the United States regarding the potential use of nuclear weapons, Mao Zedong advocates for China to establish its own nuclear deterrent.
- f. In 1971, following a cordial interaction between rival players at the World Table Tennis Championships in Japan, a delegation of American players receives an invitation to visit China. This opportunity arises despite China having been inaccessible to Americans since the Korean War.
- g. In 1979, led by Democratic President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, and the reform-oriented Deng Xiaoping, the two nations released a Joint Statement on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, symbolizing the normalization of their ties. The United States also embraced the One China Policy and transferred diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. This legislation functions as a diplomatic resolution, facilitating the maintenance of trade, cultural, and other aspects through the American Institute in Taiwan, a non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, DC.

- h. In 1999, Relations between the U.S. and China deteriorated even more. In response, Chinese demonstrators pelted rocks at the U.S. embassy in Beijing, leading to the confinement of embassy staff for a period of three days.
- i. In 2000, with the implementation of the US-China Relations Act, China is conferred permanent trade relations status with the United States. As the leading importers and exporters globally, the trade between the two nations had been consistently growing since the establishment of diplomatic ties.
- j. United States 'Pivot' towards Asia in 2011 done by United States undertakes a strategic reorientation towards Asia to address China's increasing assertiveness throughout the region (Fitzsimmons, 2021).
- k. In 2015, the United States pressed China to halt the conflict in the South China Sea, particularly concerning on a chain of man-made islands and reefs in that region.
- l. In 2018, Trump imposed trade tariffs on China.
- m. In 2020, the United States ordered the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston, Texas, accusing it of being a center for espionage and intellectual property theft.
- n. In 2023, Joe Biden was compelled to shoot down a balloon operated by China off the southeastern coast of the United States, deemed as a threat, raising new concerns about the further deterioration of the tense relations between the U.S. and China, exacerbated by U.S. support for Taiwan and trade frictions (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

With the increasing military power of China and its tendency for regional aggression, the United States and its allies are increasingly concerned about deterring China. Their strategies aim to prevent China from disrupting rule-based norms in the Indo-Pacific region, such as invading Taiwan or conducting gray-zone operations in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. However, what AUKUS is doing against China through small groups of countries is more complex and challenging than traditional deterrence theory (Tarapore, 2022).

In this research, Minilateral Deterrence is used to describe AUKUS as a minilateral group that has a similar understanding of the threat China poses to Taiwan, how it will impact each member country, and the awareness of each country to maintain regional security stability while preserving national sovereignty. AUKUS's actions, limited to the three-member countries, make all efforts more flexible, structured, effective, and in proportion to each country's needs without the challenges of compromise compared to AUKUS having more members.

#### **E. Regional Security Complex Analysis in Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) Viewpoint to the Rivalry Between United States and China in Taiwan**

The projects and plans agreed upon by the three member countries of AUKUS to counter China in Taiwan include combining the design of British submarines with advanced U.S. technology, integrating military and civilian personnel of the three countries in British and U.S. submarine industrial bases starting in 2023, submarine force rotations in 2027, Virginia submarine sales in 2030, domestic Australian radioactive waste management assistance,

infrastructure and industrial capacity enhancements, etc. AUKUS will continue to strengthen security chains as a form of unilateral deterrence against China (The White House, 2022).

In light of the evolving dynamics in United States and China relations from 1949 to the present, AUKUS perceives their rivalry as a reflection of the progress in each other's security strategies. AUKUS identified by two of four crucial levels of analysis derived from the Regional Security Complex theory:

1. Interstate Relations: AUKUS possesses adequate influence through the positive relationships among its three member countries to establish regional security stability in the Indo-Pacific. In February 2022, a joint team consisting of representatives from Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States conducted assessments at various locations across Australia to evaluate nuclear management, infrastructure, workforce, and industrial capacities and requirements. The results of this evaluation were examined by the Joint Steering Group overseeing submarine matters, aiming to use the gathered information to determine the most effective path for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines (The White House, 2022). This analysis is deemed appropriately applied through the perspective of the Regional Security Complex because the three countries mutually influence each other for continuous development. Good relations can lead to the success of the United States together with AUKUS in maintaining regional security stability in Taiwan, generally in the Indo-Pacific.
2. Inter-regional Interaction: In its effort to enhance inter-regional interaction, the United States continues to extend international support by actively monitoring Taiwan's progress in public health, food security, environmentally friendly aviation fuel, as well as economic and political empowerment for women. Consequently, the United States advocates for Taiwan's involvement in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). On December 13, 2023, the United States and Taiwan conducted a bilateral meeting to discuss constructive and pragmatic steps regarding Taiwan's participation in the United Nations and other international organizations (Taiwan Today, 2023). In this context, the United States strives to become a new influential force in Taiwan alongside China. Taiwan, as an area that China consistently seeks to claim, prompts the United States to provide full international support to Taiwan.

According to Harry Harris, former Commander of the United States Pacific Command, "The AUKUS technology-sharing agreement that supports Australia in building nuclear-powered submarines plays a role as a deterrent against the possibility of China taking military action against Taiwan." Harris emphasizes that the addition of AUKUS power in the Taiwan region is an anticipation of China's negative behavior on an international scale (Shelbourne, 2023).

The establishment of AUKUS as a defense and security agreement among three countries can be defined by the Regional Security Complex theory through a distinctive power distribution. This power distribution is related to the involvement of global powers and dynamics at the regional level. The situation

arises when external powers align with countries in a specific regional complex. The presence of external powers in the Indo-Pacific region, namely Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, forming an alliance is a form of resistance against China's single-power dominance in the region. This situation is categorized by the Regional Security Complex theory as a logic of power balance, driving competing parties, namely the United States and China, to seek external support such as Australia and the United Kingdom siding with the United States. This logic also connects patterns of rivalry at both local and global levels in a balanced way (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

## DISCUSSION

This research's novelty demonstrates that AUKUS plays a role in preserving the security stability of the region. This is substantiated by the execution of responsibilities and commitments to safeguard the Indo-Pacific region, which includes:

1. Australia is set to acquire three nuclear-powered Virginia-class submarines from the United States.
2. The Secretaries and Deputy Prime Minister reiterated their joint dedication to upholding the highest standards of nuclear non-proliferation. They also expressed their approval for the consistent, open, and transparent engagement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) up to the present.
3. AUKUS is hastening the advancement of quantum technologies to enhance military capabilities in positioning, navigation, and timing.

The rivalry between the United States and China is grounded in key variables in the Regional Security Complex theory, formed by historical relationship perceptions and ongoing energy dynamics. The long-standing rivalry between the two countries or the existence of cultural ties in a civilizational region can influence the complexity of regional security and create a distinctive regional security identity. The situation of Taiwan, a country under China's control, with all its efforts to reclaim Taiwan, creates a state of alertness in the Taiwan Strait and the Indo-Pacific. The formation of this complexity arises from the interaction between anarchic structures, power balances, and pressures originating from regional conditions (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the five points explained above, it can be concluded that Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are genuinely preparing the best strategy to push back against China's invasion of Taiwan. AUKUS is in a challenging but advantageous position to gradually overcome the Asian Tiger. Responsibilities and commitments have been undertaken through Australia, which will acquire three nuclear-powered Virginia-class submarines from the United States. The Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister reaffirmed their joint determination to uphold the highest standards in nuclear non-proliferation. They also expressed their approval for consistent, open, and transparent engagement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to

date. Since the end of 2021, AUKUS has accelerated the development of quantum technology to enhance military capabilities in positioning, navigation, and timing.

The Regional Security Complex analysis used by AUKUS in this study explains that the long-standing Proxy War between the United States and China has triggered increasing tensions. These tensions are perceived as needing careful and mature control to achieve their respective national interests. The United States, aiming to expand its influence in the Indo-Pacific region, feels the imperative to confront China, which cannot be done alone. It needs the United Kingdom as a technological information exchange partner and Australia strategically positioned as the base camp for all AUKUS military activities.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

This research has a limitation to the scope of analysis which covers the Indo-Pacific region in general and Taiwan specifically. By employing the Regional Security Complex theory, this research demonstrates that it operates on a regional scale rather than a global one.

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