

The Indonesian Government's Response and Foreign Policy Values to The Formation of AUKUS

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Abstract

This research discusses the Indonesian government's response and foreign policy implications for the formation of AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) using a qualitative descriptive approach and constructivism theory. This research using qualitative descriptive method. Through a literature review, this research identifies that the formation of AUKUS has raised concerns among the Indonesian government regarding the potential for conflict escalation and its impact on regional stability, especially in the context of geopolitical competition between AUKUS and China in the Indo-Pacific region. This analysis highlights how constructivist views influence Indonesia's perception of developing regional security dynamics, where large countries compete with each other in global power arrangements. The results of this research provide insight into how Indonesia formulates diplomatic strategies to face new challenges in the regional security sphere, including efforts to maintain the balance of power and strengthen multilateral cooperation in responding to increasingly complex foreign policy dynamics. In conclusion, this research not only describes the Indonesian government's response to AUKUS contextually, but also outlines the foreign policy values that underlie Indonesia's attitudes and policies in facing changing global security dynamics.

Keywords: AUKUS, Foreign Policy, Indonesia, Values

INTRODUCTION

On September 15 2021, Australia, Britain and the US formed a new trilateral security pact called AUKUS for the Indo-Pacific region (Hakim, 2021). Responses to AUKUS varied from various countries in the region, including Indonesia which expressed concern over its impact. Two days after the formation of the pact, Indonesia expressed its concern about the presence of AUKUS. The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that AUKUS could change geopolitical dynamics with the potential to increase arms races and military power competition which could disrupt regional stability (Kemenlu, 2021). The Indo-Pacific region has become a focus in geopolitical studies in the last decade, defined as the region from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean that is strategic for global trade and geopolitics, influenced by countries such as the US, China, India, Australia, Japan and ASEAN.

The emergence of AUKUS as the latest security pact will influence Indonesia's perspective on regional stability, namely Indonesia responds implicitly to support or oppose AUKUS' presence in the region. In a statement of concern issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the response to the emergence of AUKUS, the Indonesian government explained. that this security pact will prolong the projected competition for the influence of regional big actors, namely China and the United States (Fajri, 2023). This statement is based on the fact that Indonesia does not want to side with any axis of power in the region. So the principle of free and active politics will create an Indonesian identity that is neutral in the midst of any power. Furthermore, the presence of AUKUS will certainly influence the geopolitical structure of the Asia Pacific region.

Indonesia has the principle of neutrality and non-intervention in every existing global conflict, especially in conflicts involving major powers in the region. In responding to the presence of AUKUS, Indonesia has also declared its neutrality by "following with great caution the regional geopolitical developments as well as the Australian Government's decision to have a nuclear-powered submarine" (Kemenlu, 2021). From this statement, Indonesia maintains its neutrality and does not openly support or oppose the presence of AUKUS. This neutrality reflects Indonesia's steps to maintain balanced relations with major countries and remain active in regional diplomatic politics without getting caught up in confrontation or ideological clashes (Nindya & Abiyya, 2022). On the other hand, Indonesia also adheres to the principle of non-intervention and maintaining state sovereignty, namely that Indonesia's free and active political values prioritize that it is the right and authority of every country to regulate internal matters without interference from external parties. The presence of AUKUS indeed touches on Indonesia's national interests and concerns, but Indonesia still respects this decision and prioritizes a dialogue approach to clarify the impact of AUKUS on the sovereignty of countries in the Asia Pacific region, including Indonesia (Connors, 2023).

On September 17 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia issued a statement of concern regarding the AUKUS trilateral cooperation forum, which was announced two days after the forum was agreed. According to the spokesperson for the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Teuku Faiz, this concern is based on the potential threat of an arms race and power projection in the Indo-Pacific region following the presence of AUKUS. The ministry emphasized that Indonesia does not want an increase in arms races and power projections that could threaten regional security stability. AUKUS, consisting of Australia, Britain and the United States, initially aimed to build nuclear submarines for Australia in response to China's increasingly strong influence in the Indo-Pacific maritime region (defense.gov). The presence of AUKUS as an opposing force to China in this region has the potential to have a significant impact on surrounding countries, including Indonesia. Indonesia's concern is not just an announcement, but also reflects the identity, values and culture that form the basis of Indonesia's foreign policy towards this phenomenon (Wintour, 2021). Therefore, the impact of Indonesia's foreign policy values on AUKUS is an interesting research subject.

The presence of AUKUS also at least influences social interactions between Indonesia and AUKUS member countries, where the emergence of this pact has at least had a fluctuating impact on Indonesia's bilateral relations with Australia. Indonesia and Australia are two countries that are geographically close. The two parties have also maintained diplomatic relations since 1946, at least one year after Indonesia declared its independence (Kemenlu, 2021). After the formation of AUKUS, diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Australia were also under reasonable tension, with Indonesia always strongly criticizing Australia's decision to join and develop nuclear-powered submarines together with AUKUS. Indonesia is also one of the countries that has expressed concern about Australia's actions and indirectly this influence on other Asian countries. Indonesia sees the formation of AUKUS as a risky step for Australia to find an effective solution to aggressive actions that risk causing an arms race in the region (Wyeth, 2022).

Silalahi et. al. (2023) in their research explained that the presence of AUKUS has the potential to create tension in the ASEAN region. If AUKUS leads to a greater role for external powers in the region, this could impact the centrality of ASEAN to play a leading role in promoting regional stability and security. The results show that the emergence of AUKUS has brought ASEAN into a security dilemma, triggering an arms race in the region and potentially affecting the balance of military power. Indonesia, as chair of ASEAN 2023, is committed to building a stronger and united ASEAN to safeguard its interests and promote regional stability. At the same time, Gadisya et al. (2024) in their research stated that AUKUS also had an impact on tensions between China and the United States. The results of his research state that Indonesia

will continue to maintain national interests without involving itself in tensions between large countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Overall, Indonesia's concerns regarding the formation of the AUKUS pact reflect the complexity of geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region. With the potential for increased arms races and military power competition, Indonesia emphasizes its interest in maintaining regional stability. This response also reflects Indonesia's commitment to the principles of peace, security and cooperation which have become the cornerstone of its foreign policy. As a strategic region, the Indo-Pacific requires a collaborative approach that strengthens multilateral cooperation to effectively address common challenges

RESEARCH METHODS

This research will use descriptive qualitative research methods. This method focuses on explaining data descriptively and describing events or data with qualitative explanatory sentences (Moleong, 2014). Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena such as the behavior, perceptions, motivations and actions of research subjects holistically. This explanation is conveyed in the form of words and language, especially in a natural context, and uses various scientific methods (Kriyantono, 2006). This method allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the qualitative aspects of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative research aims to explain phenomena through data collection as in-depth as possible. This research does not prioritize population size or sampling, in fact other populations or sampling are very limited. Descriptive approach to create systematic, factual and accurate descriptions, images or paintings regarding the facts, properties and relationships between the phenomena being investigated.

In this research, the data collection technique used was literature review (Bungin, 2007). Literature review is a qualitative research method that produces descriptive data in the form of writing. This method allows researchers to collect information from various text sources relevant to their research topic, such as books, journal articles, and other documents. Literature reviews allow for in-depth analysis of a particular theme or issue, as well as allowing researchers to construct a strong theoretical framework based on related literature (Sugiyono, 2018). This research uses qualitative methodology to ensure that the data obtained comes from in-depth analysis of relevant texts. This approach allows researchers to explore and interpret various views and thoughts related to their research topic. By using a literature review, researchers can construct solid arguments and support their findings with a strong theoretical foundation, based on information obtained from the selected literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia Government's Respon and Foreign Policy Value towards The Formation of AUKUS

a. Purpose of Establishing AUKUS

AUKUS was formed by Australia, Britain and the United States with the initial aim of economic cooperation, but instead it turned into a new security pact covering the Indo-Pacific region. Through this defense pact, Australia received 8 nuclear-powered submarines as a result of technology transfer assistance from the United States and England. Although there is no official statement, the formation of AUKUS is allegedly to prevent the strengthening of China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region by increasing United States military activity (BBC News, 2021). China is indeed very superior in the Indo-Pacific region. With cross-border mega projects such as BRI or the Belt and Road Initiative, China has at least 70% global participation in the

continents of Asia, Europe and Africa (Sebayang, 2019). This mega project will certainly make China have a grip of influence on at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world both economically and militarily in the future.

Meanwhile, Australia's decision to build nuclear-powered submarines has become an issue for regional countries, especially ASEAN countries. Indonesia is one of the countries that has criticized the presence of AUKUS and plans to build nuclear-powered submarines. Through an official statement issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jakarta views that the formation of the AUKUS security pact will trigger regional tensions. Criticism of Indonesia's concerns has at least had an influence on surrounding countries. Malaysia, which is Indonesia's neighboring country, expressed the same attitude regarding this phenomenon. As former Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said, "We agree on the latest issue in the region regarding a country near our territory that is purchasing new nuclear-powered submarines," after his meeting with the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi (Reuters, 2021).

Meanwhile, for the United States, China's increasing military capabilities are interpreted as Beijing's efforts to exclude American influence from the Western Pacific region in the short term and the Indo-Pacific region in the long term (Zhang, 2020). Richard Haass, a former US Special Ambassador to Northern Ireland, expressed his view that the United States must re-increase its identity in the Indo-Pacific and develop a strategy to manage its interactions with China, which is increasingly strong and assertive in the region (Haass, 2021). The rise of China, both in military and economic aspects, in the Indo-Pacific will certainly be interpreted by the US as a phenomenon that will threaten its influence in the region. The bilateral relations between the United States and China have also experienced a downturn in recent years and even the US and China have also had several tense bilateral meetings regarding each other's views (Shugart, 2021).

In looking at the background to the formation of AUKUS, we need to know the driving factors that pressure AUKUS member countries to respond to certain security challenges that exist in the Indo-Pacific region. Constructivism uses a social approach that recognizes the large possible impact that structures and ideas can produce. Therefore, the construction of a country's identity and interests occurs through interactions between international agents as intermediaries for the meeting of ideas and concepts that influence the responses and actions taken by the international environment

b. Difference in Values between Indonesia and AUKUS

The differences in the values brought by AUKUS (Australia, UK and US) and the values of Indonesian foreign policy can be observed from several main aspects:

- **Security and Defense:** AUKUS aims to increase military strength and security in the Indo-Pacific region, especially related to military technology such as nuclear submarines. The value that AUKUS brings places greater emphasis on tougher security aspects and advanced military technology. Meanwhile, Indonesia tends to prioritize diplomacy, regional security cooperation and increasing independent defense capacity.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Indonesia prioritizes regional cooperation through ASEAN and other regional forums as a way to achieve stability and security in the region. AUKUS, although nominally located in the Indo-Pacific region, is not entirely focused on regional cooperation and emphasizes military partnerships with certain countries.
- **Non-Alignment and Independence:** Indonesia adheres to the principle of non-alignment and freedom to be active in its foreign policy, which emphasizes independence in foreign policy and alignment with the global balance of power. AUKUS, in this case, places greater importance on strategic alliances and close military partnerships with certain countries, especially in aspects of maritime security and defense technology.
- **Principles of International Law:** Indonesia emphasizes the importance of upholding the principles of international law, including in responding to security and defense issues.

AUKUS, with its decision regarding the development of nuclear submarines, raises questions regarding its consistency with international law and its impact on regional stability (Korwa & Wambrauw, 2023).

Thus, the differences in values between AUKUS and Indonesia's foreign policy values reflect different approaches in responding to global security and defense challenges, as well as how each country or bloc manages their interests in the regional and global geopolitical context. The differences between AUKUS' political values and Indonesia can be summarized as follows:

- Normative Value
 - AUKUS = Prioritize collective security, strategic military cooperation, technological dominance, and advancement of military capabilities.
 - Indonesia = Prioritize the values of sovereignty, neutrality, regional stability, and peaceful resolution through dialogue.
- Epistemic Value
 - AUKUS = Security Pact as a form of superiority in technological progress and military capabilities.
 - Indonesia = Diplomatic efforts, non-military resolutions, and the centrality of regional organizations.
- Perceid Value
 - AUKUS = Create global dominance and influence through technological advances and military capabilities.
 - Indonesia = Global power and influence can be controlled through non-military international cooperation and compliance with international law and agreements.
- Institutional Value
 - AUKUS = Operates as a security pact through full military activity.
 - Indonesia = Participate through diplomatic forums through the values of multilateralism and non-intervention.

Based on the differences above, it can be seen that at least several important points that underline the differences in values brought by AUKUS and Indonesia are the differences in identity and interests between the two actors. The conflicting values between AUKUS and Indonesian foreign policy can be analyzed from how the two actors perceive security and cooperation, AUKUS's emphasis on progress and military dominance is in conflict with Indonesia's non-aligned preferences and regional stability. In addition, AUKUS member countries perceive the security alliance as an effective forum for overcoming common challenges and regional issues in the Indo-Pacific region, while Indonesia sees that regional challenges can be accommodated with a dialogue approach formed through multilateral forums.

c. The Influence of Indonesian Foreign Policy on AUKUS's Response

For Indonesia, the presence of AUKUS has more or less changed its identity and foreign political views. The emergence of AUKUS marks that the United States and Britain have plunged deeper into the contestation of influence in the Indo-Pacific. The construction of the Indo-Pacific as an arena for multipolar hegemony has become stronger after the formation of AUKUS and has had an impact on the escalation of issues in the region. Of course, with these factors and discourse, Indonesia realizes that its importance in reinforcing the centrality of regional cooperation is crucial. However, on the one hand, Indonesia's free and active political principles do not recommend aggressive and confrontational policies. Indonesia's statement on the issue of confrontation with China in the Natuna Sea is indeed strategic, this can be seen from the synergy between government institutions and Indonesian defense institutions with an emphasis both diplomatically and militarily on asserting Indonesia's sovereignty (Rianda et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the formation of AUKUS can be understood as the US's entry into a deeper competition for influence in the Indo-Pacific region. The presence of the UK and Australia as members of AUKUS is a signal that Europe and Oceania are also starting to pay attention to the

Indo-Pacific region, making the map of actors and impacts of this stability issue even wider. This gives regional countries which in fact do not have significant power and influence the opportunity to carefully consider their involvement in this issue. This was the determining factor for Indonesia to take a more relaxed attitude in responding to the formation of AUKUS. The response of the Indonesian government, which initially tended to take a strategic defensive approach to the Natuna Sea confrontation, experienced a decline in reaction when responding to the formation of AUKUS so that it became passive defensive by expressing its "concern" over the geopolitical conditions of the region.

In the context of AUKUS (Australia, UK and US), the influence of Indonesia's foreign policy values on its response is very important. Indonesia has a foreign policy tradition that is based on the principles of non-alignment, freedom of activity, as well as sovereignty and territorial integrity. Therefore, Indonesia's response to AUKUS is reflected in several aspects:

- **Sovereignty and Regional Integrity:** Indonesia is very concerned about the integrity of its territory, including the waters around the strategic Natuna Islands. The presence of AUKUS, especially in the context of maritime security, can influence Indonesia's attitude regarding security in its territorial waters.
- **Independence and Balance of Power:** Indonesia tends to support a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region without excessive foreign interference. AUKUS, with its focus on security and military technology, could trigger Indonesia's response to strengthen its independence in the fields of defense and technology.
- **Regional and Multilateral Cooperation:** Indonesia tends to encourage solutions based on regional and multilateral cooperation, such as through ASEAN and other regional forums. Responses to AUKUS must be in line with these principles to ensure regional stability and security.
- **Bilateral Relations with Related Parties:** Indonesia's response to AUKUS is also influenced by its bilateral relations with Australia, the UK and the US individually. This bilateral diplomacy will play a key role in determining Indonesia's attitude towards the AUKUS initiative.

Overall, the influence of Indonesia's foreign policy values in the AUKUS context determines how Indonesia responds to this initiative, both in the context of security, regional diplomacy and bilateral relations. Through a constructivist perspective, a country's response to international phenomena is not based on power or desire factors. However, it is influenced by norms, social ideals and identity factors.

Comparison of Military Budgets of China, AUKUS, and Indonesia

Country	Nominal Budget (in USD)
Tiongkok	285,93 billion
AUKUS	368 billion
Indonesia	9,2 billion

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there is a gap in security capabilities between Indonesia as a middle power and China and AUKUS as the dominant actors in the Indo-Pacific region. If you look at this comparison, it is a challenge in itself for Indonesia considering that there is a very large gap between its security capabilities and China and AUKUS so that a foreign policy response based on a military approach will have very expensive consequences for Indonesia, both when trying to resolve disputes between ASEAN countries. with China regarding territorial disputes in the South China Sea and in responding to the presence of AUKUS (Statista, 2022).

The increasing power competition between big actors in the region presents its own challenges for other regional countries. Indonesia, which is classified as a middle power country, is trapped by regional political dynamics which are dominated by these big actors. As the leader of Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia bears a great responsibility to reaffirm ASEAN's

centrality which is increasingly threatened by the presence of AUKUS as the latest security pact that ignores the values of a non-military approach. Indonesia needs to change its foreign policy approach and strategy as a form of adjustment to regional geopolitical developments after the formation of AUKUS. In recent years, Indonesia has always tried to take action that leads to preventive efforts which have the impact of turning open conflict in the Indo-Pacific region into a regional cooperation movement. The formation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific is one of the successes achieved by Jakarta (Kharisma, 2021).

Indonesia does not assume that one great power is naturally superior economically, militarily, or morally. This is also reinforced by Indonesia's long strategic history, namely that every major power has attempted to weaken Indonesia's national order or taken actions that are contrary to its strategic interests. Through this approach, Indonesia has developed a vision of regional order that is oriented towards maintaining stability and legitimacy in the region, formulating strategies, and rejecting the hegemony of big powers in the region. All of these goals support Indonesia's foreign policy, which still largely has a negative view of regional dynamics. Although such diversion strategies have worked well in several previous cases, the great power competition between AUKUS and China still has its own challenges with its own unique problem characteristics (Kennedy et al., 2022). Therefore, Indonesia needs to adjust its free and active foreign policy to accommodate the interests of the primary actors in the power competition between AUKUS and China.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research illustrate that the Indonesian government responded to the formation of AUKUS with significant concern regarding its potential impact on regional stability in the Indo-Pacific region. As a country that prioritizes diplomacy and peace, Indonesia considers the escalation of conflict between AUKUS and China to threaten security and harm efforts to strengthen multilateral cooperation. This view is reflected in the constructivist perspective which emphasizes the importance of international actors' perceptions and interpretations of global security dynamics, where Indonesia's concerns do not only focus on military aspects, but also broader political and economic implications. This research shows that Indonesia tends to take a cautious and multilateral-based diplomatic approach in responding to the formation of AUKUS. By relying on foreign policy values that emphasize dialogue, cooperation and non-polarity, Indonesia seeks to maintain a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region without having to explicitly side with one of the regional security blocs. This reflects Indonesia's adaptive strategy in responding to complex geopolitical dynamics that have the potential to disrupt long-term regional stability.

This research highlights the importance for the Indonesian government to continue to develop a foreign strategy that is responsive and proactive to rapid global changes, including those related to the formation of AUKUS. By exploring more deeply the values of constructivism in the interpretation of foreign policy, Indonesia can strengthen its position as a mediator and driver of dialogue in efforts to build sustainable regional security. Overall, this research makes an important contribution in understanding how small countries like Indonesia respond to geopolitical dynamics influenced by increasingly complex global security strategies

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