

ASEAN CENTRALITY IN AUKUS STUDY CASE

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Abstract

This article aims to explain how ASEAN centrality position in response to AUKUS Pact. This article using security dilemma concept and problem of comparison in comparative regionalism concept to analyze problem that threatening Indo-Pacific and how ASEAN manage to solve security problem. The research method used in this article is analytical descriptive qualitative with study case approach, where action by some of the states in Southeast Asia support and criticize the regulation in AUKUS Pact. Techniques of data collecting of this article is through literature such as books and journals with some sources from the internet. The result of this article showed that AUKUS Pact establishment has threatened Indo-Pacific region and cause security dilemma especially in North Natuna Sea. The response from ASEAN member to AUKUS showed how fragile the ASEAN centrality is and it need to be more strengthening specifically in terms of region security problem in Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: *ASEAN Centrality, AUKUS, Indo-Pacific.*

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or known as ASEAN, is a regional organization for Southeast Asian countries. ASEAN covered by land 4,46 million km^2 or equal to 3% total land on earth, with population that almost reach 600 million people or equal to 8,8% total world population. ASEAN sea area is three times bigger than land area. ASEAN focus on fasten people economic growth and culture development in Southeast Asia Region, promote peace and stability region through honor for justice and law supremacy of relations between countries in region and bow to principle of United Nations Charter.

ASEAN was formed on August 8, 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand through the signing of the ASEAN Declaration, also known as the Bangkok Declaration, by the founding father of ASEAN. They are Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Philippines. On January 7, 1984, Brunei Darussalam joined ASEAN, Vietnam on July 28, 1995, along with Laos and Myanmar on July 23, 1997, and finally Cambodia on 30 April 1999 as the 10th ASEAN member state. The reason of the name "ASEAN" aims to promote ASEAN and its objectives and principles set forth in the ASEAN Charter. It should not be used for political propaganda or activities which might compromise the dignity and the integrity of ASEAN at risk.

ASEAN located between Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. So technically it belonging to Indo-Pacific region. Geographically, Indo-Pacific region refer to territory that stretched from east side of Indian Ocean to west side of Pacific Ocean and connected to Malacca Strait. Indo-Pacific has become center of geopolitics activities such as maritime, security, traffic, and environment (Michel & Passarelli, 2014).

On 22 August 2007, the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, make a speech in front of Indian Parliament titled “Confluence of the Two Seas” (Abe, 2007). For the first time name of Indo-Pacific has mentioned as a sea region covers Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean that connected by Indonesian sea (Medcalf, 2013). Indo-Pacific come as geographic concept that include Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean since Gurpreet S. Kurana uses “Indo-Pacific Strategy” on 2007 as a Marine Strategist and executive director of The New Delhi National Marine Foundation (Khurana, 2017). Ex president of United States, Donald Trump, said the concept of “Indo-Pacific” means pullout of democratic power such as India, Australia, Japan, Australia, and other Asia states in one frontline “against” China in new term of “Cold War” (Chen, 2018).

From couple of last decades, Indo-Pacific become the center of world economic. Indo-Pacific have a big role as contributor of Gross Domestic Product in 2017 has reached USD 43,5 trillion or 54% from world total Gross Domestic Product around USD 79,8 trillion (IMF, 2017). Furthermore, ASEAN traffic commodity in 2017 has reached USD 2,578 billion.

From World War I, most of International Relations expert consider “strategy” only focus on prevent and overcome “high politics” issues include politic and security issues. Until after the event of Cold War, “strategy” start to consider “low politics” issues such as diplomatic, economic, and

culture issues. Even there are two different perception about agglomerate the issue, basically every strategy will be used for political purposes, “the theory and practice of using and threatening the use, of organized force for political purposes” (Gray, 1999).

There are many strategies that ASEAN has to prevent region issues nowadays. ASEAN uses principle to protect ASEAN territory from harm by Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) to protect ASEAN from nuclear danger. ASEAN also put forward dialogue to solve problem peacefully as a respect to international law such as United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to protect the area especially for the maritime territory. For the last, there is Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) to promote peace, through eternal friendship and co-operation to strengthen the centrality of ASEAN.

Even though ASEAN centrality origin remain obscure and unclear. There are still misunderstanding or myths about ASEAN centrality that has to be understood and clarified (Acharya, 2017). ASEAN centrality is not about ASEAN itself, but it is about bigger terms of regionalism in the Asia Pacific and even beyond. ASEAN centrality means the “origin” of the first important regional grouping in Asia. It is the center of Asia even Asia-Pacific regional institutions, particularly the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asian Summit (EAS).

Recently, ASEAN centrality has to dealt with serious problem that test its centrality. AUKUS Pact is the newest case that have shaken Asia-Pacific security. AUKUS Pact allowed Australia to have nuclear submarines in ASEAN region where Southeast Asia territory has to free from nuclear energy through ZOPFAN Treaty. But each of ASEAN member has different response to AUKUS

Pact. It makes world questioning about ASEAN centrality and how it works.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dilemma Security Concept

Security dilemma concept means an action and reaction phenomenon between two or more countries when a state raise their security power, it will considered as an act to weaken other security states power (Jervis, 1978). Balance of power will be materialized when there is a balance between offense and defense power. If offense more dominant than defense, then security dilemma will raise and affect to other states to raise their own security power or known as arms race. On the other side, arms race could be prevent if defense more dominant than offense (Glaser & Kauffman, 1998). So basically, offense-defense theory can be use to analyze regional security matter.

Mislead and misperception of the aim of a state when they raise their security power could lead to a conflict. So the other states will try to prevent the conflict by raise their security power. It is cause by security dilemma and if any other states also raise their security power potentially will lead to arms race (Roe,1999). They afraid of one day they will be attacked by other states because there is trust issue between two or more states.

Problem of Comparison in Comparative Regionalism Concept

Regionalism could be seen as new political view that involve actor and non actor in one region from the various sectors. The multidimensional and pluralism are the result of regional phenomenon that born a lot of theories and approaches depend on what region will be analyze. (De Lombaerde et. Al., 2010). It uses different theories and approaches because in each region there will be different issues to face. With different background of

factor that establish one regionalism, it will affect the dynamicity on that region.

Regional study that analyze regionalism could classification each region to different categories. There are some factors to compare each region so we can learn regionalism completely. Regionalism depends on when one region has established, what causative factor and why that region has established, also depends on their capability to control their regionalism activities. As example for Indo-Pacific Region, it is focusing on economic and traffic activities. So when their region danger by security problem, it is hard for them to solve it because it is not their field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

AUKUS Pact is a trilateral agreement that initiates by United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. This pact covers cooperation in A.I. Technology, cyber, quantum, and long ranged attack ability for the next 18 months. The aim of AUKUS Pact is to prevent the expand of China military power that could danger and harm Indo-Pacific region. This pact also allowed Australia to have nuclear submarines. The submarine project is to continuing the built of Collins Submarine from Project Sea 1000 that has been postponed because of struggle to fill nuclear fuel and stunted by ZOPFAN Treaty. As we know from United Nations Security Council only give permission use of Uranium, a nuclear power, for China, United States, United Kingdom, France, and Rusia. But with help by United States, now Australia can get the nuclear fuel and technology that come from United Kingdom.

It is believe that the reason behind the establishment of AUKUS Pact is because United States mistrust about the estimate of China's military increasement in last five years. United States beware that China's

military will danger security of Indo-Pacific region and worsen relation between China and Taiwan. China increases its military budget by more than 10% in every year. Based on Secretary Defense of United States report on 2020, China have at least 420 ships including 130 surface combatants, 50 destroyers, 72 corvettes, 132 patrol ships, 36 mine sweepers. China also has 79 unit of submarines and 12 of them are nuclear submarines.

Besides increasing military power, China also budge to nuclear modernization. China has upgraded their nuclear forces. China also developing a new Ballistic Missile Submarine. It is use to Chinese maritime military and Militarization of North Natuna Sea. It makes them more aggressive and assertive on its territorial claims.

AUKUS Pact gain some responses from states delegation and International Relations observer. The establishment of AUKUS Pact was reckless and without discussion first. There is no dialogue between United States with China or even ASEAN on establishment of this pact. So when AUKUS Pact has been announced, ASEAN did not have any information about it. It cause fear in Indo-Pacific region and security dilemma especially for ASEAN because their region flanked by two huge military power come from China and AUKUS Alliance.

Presence of AUKUS Pact cause higher tension in North Natuna Sea. Based on Indonesian Navy, they detect China and United States ships more than before. At least there are six China's ships including one warship and some of the United States's ships. It scares some of the ASEAN member especially they who nearby North Natuna Sea. They afraid North Natuna Sea will full of warship from China nor AUKUS Alliance that potentially provoke arms race in Indo-Pacific.

ASEAN Response to AUKUS Pact

Some of the ASEAN member directly said their opinion about this pact. From Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi, said that ASEAN must put forward dialogue as a organization to response AUKUS Pact for keeping in Asia-Pacific. From Prime Minister of Malaysia, Ismail Sabri Yaakob, said that AUKUS Alliance can provoke other power from Asia-Pasific and may violate Treaty on The Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Unlike Indonesia and Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore support the agreement. From Foreign Minister of Philippines, Teodoro Locsin, said that enhancement power of US military through AUKUS Alliance will help ASEAN respond to threats in the Indo-Pacific, especially comes from China. From Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong, said that Singapore will root this trilateral pact because it will lead to stability and peace in Southeast Asia.

Although Philippines and Singapore are member of ASEAN as same as Indonesia and Malaysia, but they have different opinion to response AUKUS Pact. Meanwhile the other member of ASEAN, willing to keep silent and choose to not decide. Those responses based on each state relation to AUKUS Alliance or China. Some of the ASEAN member states such as Indonesia and Malaysia economically rely on China support. Meanwhile some of the states like Philippines and Singapore rely on United States military power.

Different responses also influence the diversity perceptions of threats in different ASEAN member states. Indonesia and Malaysia thought that AUKUS Alliance military will bother security stabilization in Indo-Pacific. Meanwhile Philippines and Singapore thought that China military expansion sooner or later will danger not only

North Natuna Sea, but also Indo-Pacific region. This kind of dilemma from ASEAN member states could shake up ASEAN centrality as a regional organization.

As a regional organization, each of ASEAN member should make one solid statement that stands for ASEAN organization. In fact, there is still diversity response to one another that only represent for each country, not as ASEAN community. Yet again ASEAN still cannot manage to showed their centrality.

ASEAN Centrality

With different opinions and responses from ASEAN member to AUKUS indicate a unification response as a regional organization. With different responses explain that there is in cohesion from ASEAN to act against security constellation that potentially harm stability of ASEAN region. There is no discussion from AUKUS Alliance with ASEAN about this AUKUS agreement. It potrait that United States and its allies did not really see ASEAN as regional organization that relevant to security construction of Indo-Pacific territory.

Unification of ASEAN member states about their response to security problem such as AUKUS, will disintegrate united of ASEAN sooner or later. AUKUS also can said as a competition between two big states United States and China. So there are some possibilities that ASEAN will split into two side that close to US and China. In case it is happening, there will be a conflict between US and China in Southeast Asia territory.

For the response to ASEAN centrality, Indonesian Navy, ASEAN Navy, and Russian Navy initiate security practice ASEAN Rusia Naval Exercise 2021 or known as ARNEX-21. The subject of this training is “Joint Action to Ensure the Safety of the Maritime Economy Activity and Civil Navigations. It is for the first time that ASEAN Navy and Russian Navy did Naval training together. This Naval

exercise showed the development of ASEAN centrality to strengthen Indo-Pacific security region. This training also try to develop Russian and ASEAN Navy also to keep relations between Indonesia, ASEAN, and Russia. The point of this training is to focusing on cooperation maritime security to practice Sea Surveillance Exercise, Replenishment at Sea, Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO), Search and Rescue Exercise (Sarex), and some of the maneuver practice that tend for no war fighting.

President of Indonesia, Jokowi Dodo also pointed cooperation with Russia at economic to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This cooperation could lead to gain trust and erase rivalry culture. Through Russia’s support and engagement, it can reinforce the centrality of ASEAN and ASEAN’s prospects on the Indo-Pacific. This pace also try to prevent security problem that could cause arms race and power projection in Indo-Pacific.

CONCLUSION

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the regional organization of Southeast Asian countries. In fact, ASEAN not only centered on countries in Southeast Asia but also focused on Indo-Pacific region because of it is located between Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. On last decades, Indo-Pacific have a big role at world economic activities. Because Indian Ocean and Pasific Ocean is one of the most crowded traffic in the world.

However, recently a security pact was put in place, called AUKUS. AUKUS is a trilateral agreement that initiates by United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. The reason behind the establishment of AUKUS is to prevent expansion of China military power that potentially could harm Indo-Pacific region. Instead of being able to lower tension

in North Natuna Sea, precisely AUKUS receive critics and menace because it could worsen tension in Indo-Pacific also potentially cause arms race. AUKUS also stands to violate the Treaty on The Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or known as NPT.

Some of the ASEAN member states have different opinion and response to AUKUS. Some of them agree and support AUKUS to protect Indo-Pacific security from China military threat, and some of them disagree and refuse AUKUS because it could danger Indo-Pacific region with two big military powers gather at one economic region. Differences between ASEAN member states response to AUKUS showed that ASEAN still cannot manage their centrality.

It is kind obvious that ASEAN distress with AUKUS. Because basically ASEAN more focusing on economy and traffic economies in Indo-Pacific. As we know, Indo-Pacific region has become center of world economic. So when their region threaten by two big military power, they do not really know what to do. In fact There are some diversity responses between ASEAN member states because of different threat perception and different relations between each ASEAN member states to United States or China.

To protect their regional security, ASEAN uses strategies and ideas of regional order. Countries in Southeast Asia rely on two means of protecting their regional security, a combination of major powers and a complex equilibrium of influence (Goh, 2007). The purpose of the omni-enmeshment and complex balancing is to control the regional order of the region, not to bring about or prevent changes in power. Therefore, they choose to include all the various major power states in world multipolar system such as Russia, United States, China, India, etc.

But the fact is Southeast Asian states did not have powerful control in Indo-Pacific

region especially to manage cooperation with major power states. It can be seen that China have numerous military ships around Southeast Asia region and United States had made AUKUS Alliance for Indo-Pacific region without any discussion with ASEAN. From this AUKUS case can concluded that ASEAN centrality still have little impression to major power states so that major power states think that they can simply make some regulations or movements without considering ASEAN as regional organization.

ASEAN centrality must have become main concern for all of the ASEAN member states if they want to prevent security threat on their area. ASEAN member states have to raise their foreign policy investment to protect ASEAN security. Unification response to security problem that harm stability and region showed us that ASEAN still disable to strengthen their centrality.

One thing that ASEAN can do to keep their centrality is by an act through joint statement collectively to response security threat. Every state leader have to sit together and associate their voice to answer everyone who doubting ASEAN centrality. ASEAN must legalize some solid policy to responding security constellation that happen in ASEAN territory. ASEAN centrality revitalization can be done by develop trustworthy in each country in Southeast Asia through diplomatic way.

In AUKUS case, ASEAN member states could go through diplomatic and multilateral dialogue by ASEAN Regional Forum that need to be used as a forum to build communication with AUKUS Alliance and China. By communicate ASEAN will know better about AUKUS establishment and prevent mislead that have a chance to trigger a conflict in Indo-Pacific region.

ASEAN member states need to put their attention to various social effect of politic

and economy crisis either to raise global economy and to gain respect as a regional organization. Without unity and centrality, ASEAN role in Indo-Pacific or even world will become irrelevant. ASEAN need to keep and strengthen their unity also centrality in ASEAN territory will not be utilized as a proxy for some major power states.

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