


Chapter 5

QUAD and AUKUS: A Smart Power Approach to Indo–Pacific Maritime Security

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines Indo-Pacific maritime security through comparative analysis of the QUAD and AUKUS frameworks. The QUAD employs soft power through UNCLOS advocacy, maritime domain awareness, capacity-building, and infrastructure development to foster rules-based cooperation and regional trust. AUKUS deploys hard power via nuclear-powered submarines, advanced military technologies, and joint patrols to provide credible deterrence against coercion. The analysis demonstrates that while each framework operates distinctly, their strategic integration produces synergistic outcomes: QUAD surveillance capabilities inform AUKUS enforcement operations, while AUKUS military assets secure QUAD infrastructure investments. The chapter argues that effective Indo-Pacific maritime security requires balanced approaches combining QUAD's normative influence with AUKUS's deterrent capabilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Pacific region, situated at the crossroads of global trade routes, geopolitical rivalries, and strategic maritime corridors, has emerged as a focal point of 21st-century security dynamics (Hiep et al., 2024). The region confronts complex maritime security challenges, including territorial disputes, freedom of navigation issues, and increasing militarization. Regional and trans-regional actors struggle

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to balance cooperative diplomacy with military deterrence to maintain maritime stability. China's economic growth and military assertiveness, particularly regarding territorial claims in the South China Sea, have exacerbated tensions and prompted the United States to expand its regional presence to counter Chinese influence (Tertia & Perwita, 2018; Kiet et al., 2025b). Besides, additional threats including piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing further compromise regional stability (Rahman, 2013).

Comprehensive security cooperation has become essential to address these interlinked threats in the Indo-Pacific. Two distinct frameworks have emerged: the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, and the trilateral AUKUS pact among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Both the QUAD and AUKUS play significant roles in shaping regional maritime security architecture, particularly in response to China's growing assertiveness (Hiep et al., 2024). While both alliances address common security challenges, they employ fundamentally different approaches. The QUAD emphasizes soft power through multilateral diplomacy and normative influence (Zhang, 2022), whereas AUKUS prioritizes hard power capabilities (Shi, 2022). AUKUS complements the QUAD by providing advanced military technologies, particularly nuclear-powered submarines, which enhance Australia's defense capabilities and strengthen regional deterrence (Lubis et al., 2024).

This study investigates how these contrasting strategies affect maritime security outcomes in the Indo-Pacific. The research question asks: How do the soft power approaches of the QUAD and the hard power of AUKUS influence regional maritime security outcomes, and what impact do these different strategies have on stability and deterrence in the region? Through comparative qualitative analysis of policy documents, joint declarations, and regional security assessments, this study evaluates each framework's effectiveness in addressing threats including maritime disputes, freedom of navigation challenges, and territorial coercion.

The research findings indicate that the QUAD and AUKUS embody complementary yet contrasting roles. The QUAD creates inclusive partnerships to reduce tensions through cooperative engagement in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), fostering a rules-based order and promoting democratic values. The alliance established its framework for cooperation through collaborative disaster response to the 2004 tsunami (Lubis, 2022). Concurrently, regional actors including Japan and South Korea have increased defense spending and modernization efforts to counterbalance China's growing assertiveness (Cheng, 2022). AUKUS signals resolve through tangible military capabilities. Their coexistence underscores a broader paradigm shift in regional security that increasingly calls for a hybrid strategy combining diplomatic engagement with credible deterrence.

By bridging debates on the efficacy of soft and hard power, this analysis contributes to scholarly and policy discussions on navigating the complex Indo-Pacific

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