AUKUS is nothing else than the evidence of structural change in world politics

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It would be very interesting to bring to the table some ideas of one of the most significant neorealist scholars. Kenneth Waltz, the founding father of Neorealism, had predicted the collapse of NATO before the unipolar moment started. The most recent agreement among the USA, UK, and Australia shows a future that is aligned with the neorealist structure. The dynamics of the current international system are driving world politics into a multipolar era that is unpredictable. Beyond its obvious geostrategic reasoning, AUKUS implies more than a single effort to contain China. What are the main issues that are implied by the AUKUS partnership?

It's all about politics.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new transformation of world politics took place. The US remained as a sole superpower. In this unipolar moment, a paradox had taken place; No other dominant power of a sum of them could/wanted to challenge the US. From the western side, the European powers were keen on building the EU structure and devoted themselves to economic growth. The presence of NATO's security umbrella in Europe remained sober and nations such as France and Germany could continue the institutional building of the EU and boost their exports. In other words, Europe stayed aligned with the US in that period. The Russian Federation had to manage a chaotic situation that was both internal and external after the disarray of the USSR. China was
only on its first steps of the following remarkable economic progress. The aftermath of those days was that the economy was being put as a principal priority for the great powers and the balance of power became something at least obsolete. Now, being in transition and looking forward to grasping the rising multipolar world, we are studying pieces with the liberal approach being poisonous about the "bad cost-benefit analysis" that Australia made in economic terms. Moreover, the never-ending articles and analyses that refer to "treason" that Morrison did to its French allies by abandoning the Franco-Australian submarines' contract. Maybe their missing point is that politics is finally above all. The balance of power is at the core of international politics and the geographic location is always the field of the struggle of great powers. These are crucial missing points that were in the absence of at least three decades.

*NATO is "back-stabbed" by structural change.*

Ignoring the so far referred points means we misunderstood the essence of the progress of history. We forgot on purpose the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and all politics that took place behind closed doors. We forgot that every state to fortify its vital interests does not feel guilty if backstabs another state, even if this state is an ally. In WWII we saw Italian behavior towards Germany during the WWII and in this last part. But what about NATO? Why is the North Atlantic Treaty not an exception to this rule? The issue is deeply domestic both inside and outside.

The problem with most international institutions is that they are inclusive. If a state could abide by the rules of an international organization, then it could be a member. A state is always seeking to augment its relative power. As the number of member states gets bigger and bigger, then the integration suffers. States usually make secret alliances within an international institution. Multilateral diplomacy is less "cooperative" than the officials and bureaucrats usually claim. NATO is the absolute paradigm. The bipolarity and binary structure of the Cold War made the sustainability of NATO possible. Middle powers and small states had direct benefits of being under the NATO security umbrella. The absence of the "empire of evil" after 1993 obliged the NATO officials to reinvent the reasons that made NATO irreplaceable in the transition period. In the US, a very important debate had been taking place during the '90s. The dilemma was if NATO should expand after the
collapse of the USSR or not. Most of the realists warned that the expansion of NATO would be more costly than beneficial. The American officials believed they made the right choice by integrating several post-communist states in zero-sum game logic. It was a great opportunity to kick Russia out of Europe. Putin's Russia changed the game. Russia pretended it was committed to following the western institutions and structures, but the Kremlin boosted its efforts to reconstruct its posture over Central Asia. But even more than Russia, China benefited from the revival of the Cold War. Meanwhile, both the USA and NATO tried to give a fresh look to NATO in order to renew its purposes. The asymmetric threats and hybrid war had become the epicenter of NATO's existence in the new era after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The inconvenient truth is that the new era included asymmetric threats, but also, a great distribution of power has been taking place at the same time. New powers such as Russia and China (BRICS) achieved to create a new type of ties with the West. Commercial interdependence became the tool of their expansion. Within NATO, the disagreements were obvious after the US operation in Iraq and the Franco-German axis differentiated its policy towards the previously traditional Euro-Atlantic Alliance. London, Rome, Madrid, and Lisboa preferred to follow their Atlantic interests, being closer to the US and its "War against Terrorism". Both NATO and the EU were breached. The systemic change inevitably brought the differentiation of interests between the US and EU. In order to achieve the economic growth, the EU put China and Russia in the first place (Beijing as an important commercial partner and Russia as the major hydrocarbon exporter). American foreign policy became more eager for this "unusual" special relationship among Brussels, Berlin, Moscow, and Beijing. The essence of "threat" and particularly the question "who is our enemy?" has totally changed since 2003. AUKUS is just another sign of NATO fragmentation. The US places its bets on the UK (in the aftermath of the Brexit era) and Australia. Unfortunately, in a multipolar world, vital interests could be shared only by a few with common interests. The mistrust within NATO means simultaneously that the US-EU relations are passing through troublesome times.
The lessons learned.

Being in the structural transition of international politics (uni-multipolar system as Huntington described this hybrid format of global structure) we have to renew our relationship with Realpolitik. There are no ideas and common attitudes that bring the states closer. An alliance prerequisite at least one sober condition and this is no other than having a common adversary. France and Germany have other necessities than the US and that's why the vision of "Decoupling" towards China is less accurate. Europe has already shown in several cases that it does not trust the US anymore (Nord Stream 2, the fast-track commercial deal with China in 12-31-2020, the policy towards Russia, the false promises -so far- of the TTIP). The US shares the same attitude. They believe the EU plays a game full of hypocrisy against Washington. But again, the issue is not moral. Accusing the US, UK, and Australia or France that has already recalled its ambassadors from the USA and Australia comprises the wrong answer to the wrong question. It is not "who wore it better?" or "to whom belongs the fault?". Change in international politics is less personalized and the only blind power that drives history is the imbalance of power that always brings new balances, new alliances, and definitely new interests. Realpolitik means that we can't reinvent the wheel, so we follow that wheel. The trend line is that the future belongs to regionalism. Maybe it is the most effective way to reduce the chaotic interdependence of the so-called "Globalization". The false promises of international institutions created the need to build less inclusive alliances and cooperation based on concrete and specific topics. It's all about politics because it's all about security first. AUKUS is nothing more and less than a new era of regionalism abiding by the wisdom of realism and low-risk calculations. Adopting Waltz's jargon, we could claim that AUKUS is a reaction of three powers to structural change which has as a geographic epicenter the Indo-Pacific Ocean. Pivot to Asia now begins.