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# Analysis of United States Foreign Policy in Asia Pacific and Its Impact on Regional Security Stability

### Widva Setiabudi Sumadinata

Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Padjadjaran

#### **Article Information**

# Corresponding Author:

Widya Setiabudi Sumadinata Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Padjadjaran Email:

w.setiabudi@unpad.ac.id

#### **ABSTRACT**

Interactions between countries in the Asia Pacific region have a direct bearing on the way in which security in that region evolves through time. Recent events have elevated the bilateral relationship between China and the United States to the status of an intriguing phenomena, largely due to the fast growth of China's economy and military. Because of this scenario, the emphasis of United States political policy, which had previously been placed on the Middle East region, has shifted to the Asia Pacific region. The presence of two countries, each of which is striving to achieve domination in the Pacific, will have an effect on the safety of the surrounding area. Therefore, the purpose of this article will be to attempt to study the political policies of the United States in the Asia Pacific region and to determine what influence such policies have on the stability of regional security. area that was implemented by China through the OBOR in order to compete with the United States as a major power in the Asia Pacific region and ended up perceiving the US rebalancing strategy as a response to China's domination in the Asia Pacific region.

**Keywords:** Political Policy, Pivot to Asia, Asia Pacific Region, Security Stability.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Asia-Pacific area is the fulcrum of global security; it is the most strategically important region on earth. The dynamics and interactions of security in this region have a significant impact on global security. The Asia-Pacific area also has the fastest economic expansion. This strategic location has made Asia-Pacific a major political hub on the global stage. This geopolitical location will undoubtedly lead to conflict configurations and collaboration involving not only countries in the region, but also superpower states from outside the region (Rachmat, 2017).

The active engagement of the United States (US) in this region has sparked numerous rumors regarding the region's security stability. The United States' post-Cold War security policy was heavily focused on the Middle East region, while the Asia Pacific region appeared to have been "forgotten." China's economic and military rise over the past three decades has reawakened the United States to the significance of geopolitics and geostrategy in the Asia-Pacific region. In the coming years, the US-China security rivalry will become the most significant regional concern (Al Syahrin, 2018).

In 2009 the United States (US) began to change its policy focus. Officially the US implements a rebalancing policy focused on the Asia-Pacific Region, so that the focus of US foreign policy is no longer on the Middle East Region but on the Asian Region. It began with the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. Withdrawal of troops from the Middle East Region strengthens indications of a strategic change in US military policy towards the Asia-Pacific Region. The troop withdrawal follows a fixed troop proportion of 60:40. This means that as much as 60% of US troops who were previously in the Middle East were placed under the command of the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), while the other 40% were deployed to other regional commands (Sutter et al, 2013).

The change in focus was carried out by approaching allied countries, through state visits and cooperation dialogues in various fields, especially intergovernmental security. The Asia-Pacific region has become the focus of changes in US foreign policy because it is considered to have experienced significant developments, especially in the economic and military fields. These developments raise the possibility of political and security impacts, both the possibility of conflict or cooperation between countries in the region, given the many opportunities and challenges in the era of globalization (Manyin et al, 2012).

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In 2011, Australia and the United States held the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) meeting in San Francisco, in this meeting Australia and the United States discussed increasing defense cooperation. Increasing defense cooperation between Australia and the United States which aims to respond to the dynamics of the strategic environment in the Asia Pacific region. In addition to increasing access to the United States military to Australian military facilities, this agreement also makes Australia one of its military logistics centers (Satake & Ishihara, 2012).

This fact is based on US foreign policy which wants stability, balance and global harmony, avoids conflict and prioritizes the principle of cooperation. As its closest partner and ally, the US considers Australia its parent and the relationship between the two is mutually beneficial. Awareness of the ability of global and regional hegemony, especially in the Asia Pacific region, requires a strong commitment from both US policy and its partners. Especially with China's "aggressive-expansionist" in the last three decades, it has made conflict maps difficult to formulate, both from a military perspective and in other fields. If the US does not have strong allies in this region, it is feared that a 21st century domino effect will occur and the closest one is Southeast Asia (Walis & Powles, 2021).

The problem is that Southeast Asia is a 'neutral' region and does not want foreign 'intervention' there, let alone being used as a proxy war arena for superpowers. Nevertheless, Southeast Asia is open to all partners who are considered to be helping the development of the region, both with China and with the US. Therefore, it makes sense for Australia to become a strategic friend who can follow the US rhythm in managing regional stability.

#### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Shannon L. Blanton and Charles Kegley, in accordance with the basic realist assumptions, the process of making foreign policy by every leader and other policy makers will always take the same choice. This term later became known as the state as unitary actors. Departing from this assumption, actors in rational choice make a policy based on the rational calculation of profits and losses. The state will adopt a policy which will cause minimal losses to the interests of the state. Furthermore, there are four stages of the foreign policy-making process using the Rational Choices Model as shown in the following chart (Blanton and Kegley, 2016):

# a) Problem Recognition and Definition

The first stage that will be carried out by policy makers is to identify and clarify the specific problems faced. At this stage policy makers will identify problems clearly and determine rational policies taken by the state as a solution to solving a problem. Policy makers identify and determine the characteristics of the problem by collecting all relevant information as follows: (a) All forms of actions and actions from external factors related to the problems faced; (b) The motivation contained in the action (in the sense of motivation from any other country's policies that have an impact on that country); (c) The capabilities of any other actors involved in the problem; and (d) Conditions and trends in the global international system.

# b) Goal Selection

After identifying the problem, policy makers determine the right solution to solve the problem. This solution will later become a policy set by the state. Solutions also describe goals and are based on the interests of the state. Therefore, it is important to first determine the goals to be achieved by the state. To determine the goals to be achieved by the state, decision makers identify and rank the overall values and components of existing interests such as security and the economy. This sorting process is then carried out in a hierarchical form starting from the best to the worst choice. The choice taken is a choice with the possibility of success to be achieved.

# c) Identification of Options and Alternatives

After determining the goals to be achieved, policy makers determine the solutions or actions taken to achieve these goals in the form of policies. Therefore, in order to maximize the goals and interests of the state, several policy alternatives must be made. These policy options are then sorted one by one and an analysis of their advantages and disadvantages is calculated. The policy alternative in this case is that the policy is able to change the situation and situation of the problems faced so that in the future it will be better. Therefore, the alternative policy taken is a policy which, on the one hand, although not very profitable, can secure the minimum interests so that the state does not suffer much greater losses. The intended interests can be in the form of security, economy and protection of the country's territory. In essence, policy makers must predict the consequences of each alternative policy so that later it becomes a solution to solve problems and at least be able to meet the minimum needs of a country.

#### d) Choice

After analyzing the calculation of the advantages and disadvantages of each policy alternative, of course with a rational approach, policy makers choose an alternative policy that has the maximum possibility of achieving the goals and interests of the state. For this reason, policy makers make policies based on an analysis of the pros and cons of each option. One way that can be used as a guideline by policy makers is to measure the gap (distance) between each option and the desired goal. This means that policy makers choose alternative policies that are solutions to problems and are in line with the country's goals.

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#### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This article makes use of a qualitative approach to research for its investigation. After gathering information from a wide variety of published sources, the author conducts an impartial analysis of the findings and draws conclusions in a descriptive format (Sugiyono, 2011). The Bible, books, journals, and other types of material retrieved from the internet are the sources that were used for the data in this study. Therefore, academically speaking, these sources are considered to be sources that can be accounted for. In addition, the materials used from the literature consist of thoughts, opinions, and ideas that have been picked by the author based on the grounds that they are appropriate for the debate. These concepts, opinions, and ideas come from a variety of sources. This pertains to the analysis.

# 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. United States Political Policy in Asia Pacific

Foreign policy is a strategy or action plan devised by a country's decision-makers for interacting with other nations or other international political units, and it is managed to attain certain national objectives as stated in the vocabulary of national interests. A country conducts a specific foreign policy as an initiative or in response to highly volatile international situational elements with the purpose of defining a course of action followed by attempts to achieve the implementation of diplomacy in accordance with preset policy guidelines (Hermann, 2001).

In this case, the pivot policy undertaken by America is one of the ways to carry out defense diplomacy and spread its hegemony in the Asian region through the concept of America's own defense strategy . America views the fluctuating situational factors in the Asian region, namely the magnitude of Chinese hegemony. Therefore, America has the initiative to establish relations with countries in Southeast Asia to get rid of the dominant Chinese hegemony in the Asian region (Silove, 2016).

A country's national interest emerges from its own demands. This curiosity stems from the country's own internal conditions, which include its politics, economy, military, and culture. For the State to have an effect on state considerations and acquire global recognition, interests are also founded on a "power" that desires to be developed. It is undeniable from the perspective of the international community that a country that builds ties related to policies abroad plays a role in providing material as the basis of national interests. The concept of national interests is then applied to explain a country's international actions (Wang, 2014).

During President Obama's term of office, he had a policy of increasing cooperation with countries in Asia, especially Southeast Asia after the Vietnam war, America tried to restore its diplomatic relations with countries in Southeast Asia as well as to spread America's influence in the region. ASEAN itself during the Obama administration was also worried about Chinese hegemony plus the issue of the South China Sea dispute. ASEAN really wanted to take advantage of America's pivot policy to ward off Chinese hegemony and help resolve the South China Sea problem.

At the end of 2011, the United States Government under President Barrack Obama signed the 2012 Fiscal Year Decree regarding the defense posture plan and troop placement under USPACOM. Prior to the tragedy of September 11, 2001, U.S. strategy centered on the fight on terror. Efforts to combat terrorism are concentrated in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, as they are regarded as the headquarters of the international terrorist network Al-Qaida. Early in 2012, after determining the fiscal year, the Barrack Obama administration published a policy regarding the United States' defense. The publication Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense contains this policy. After 2011, the focus of US foreign policy shifted from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region, which is sometimes referred to as the "Pivot to Asia." (Shambaugh, 2013).

According to the official declaration of the United States, "Pivot to Asia" describes a policy centered on the Asia-Pacific area. The strategy is a concentration of foreign policy directions that advance the national interests of the United States. This policy focuses on promoting economic cooperation, strengthening alliance countries, and ensuring joint security through regional institutions in order to facilitate the peaceful resolution of territorial boundary disputes. The primary purpose of the "Pivot to Asia" policy is to exert greater influence over economic, social, security, and military developments in the Asia-Pacific area (Logan, 2013).

This approach also refers to the United States' purported efforts to rectify George W. Bush's perceived neglect of the Asia-Pacific area. Prior to the inauguration of President Obama, many Southeast Asian leaders in the region thought that the United States had disregarded them. This word was also used in order to dispel the perception that the United States is shifting its focus from other regions to the Asia-Pacific. The United States employs a soft balancing strategy in the Asia-Pacific area to avoid the formation of countries with the potential to become hegemonic and disrupt the regional balance of power. US military policy is implemented through the establishment of a defensive coalition with Asia-Pacific nations that share common interests and recognize China's possible hegemonic ambitions. (Davidson, 2014).

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In the Southeast Asian region, it plays a significant role in the US military policy in the Asia Pacific region. Among them is carrying out multinational joint military exercises between the United States military and the military of Thailand and several other Asian countries which are carried out routinely in Thailand every year, known as the Cobra Gold Exercise which aims to show the commitment of the United States and Thailand as their allies for the security and stability of the Asia Pacific region. The United States government also held a joint Exercise Balikatan military exercise with the Philippine military which was aimed at increasing the capabilities and responsiveness of the two countries' militaries in carrying out military missions at a broader level in early 2012. The United States government then held further dialogue with the Philippine government related to the planned placement of the United States' littoral combat ship in Philippine waters (Chalid et al, 2016).

Apart from that, the US also plans to deploy surveillance aircraft on a rotational basis in the Philippines and to increase the intensity of joint military exercises. Even though it is still in the form of a cooperation plan, positive signals from the Philippine government are increasingly visible with the issuance of the Joint Statement of the United States-Philippines Ministrial Dialogue in April 2012. The plan is seen as a US strategy in increasing the presence of its military forces in the Asia Pacific region .

# 2. China's Policy in Instilling Influence in the Region

China did not adopt an integrative regional policy targeting the Asia-Pacific area until the late 1980s. China's foreign policy and bilateral relations are becoming more strategically focused, with an eye toward the country's geostrategic objectives (Hwang & Dongxiao, 2010). China has proposed a number of efforts to manage its relationship with the US in light of its rising economic and military might. During a visit to the United States capital in 2012, Xi Jinping advocated for the creation of a platform titled "A New Type of Great Power Relations in the 21st Century." China has taken the initiative to avoid a conflict between the two giants by creating this platform. Some Chinese academics see the Chinese endeavor as a continuation of research into Beijing's and Washington's 2008 "G2" and "Chimerica" plans for managing bilateral ties.

Xi Jinping is currently using proactive diplomacy to promote the idea of a 'New Type of Great Power Relations' between China and the United States. However, there are many who see this idea as a Chinese "trap" for the United States. Meanwhile, optimists continue to view this strategy as a chance to bring China into the international system and build solid groundwork for US-China ties (Qin, 2011).

The United States has yet to clearly state how it feels about China's policy agenda, but it seems to be opposed to it. The Joe Biden administration has not made it plain that they back this idea, which originated in China. Chinese propaganda, however, implies both directly and implicitly that the United States has "accepted" it. It demonstrates optimism and zeal for spreading this idea. China has good reason to believe that the United States will "acknowledge" the idea. From a geopolitical standpoint, if the United States adopts this idea, it will be considered as a victory for Chinese diplomacy under Xi's leadership and an acknowledgment of China's standing as a "great power" (Qin, 2011).

When it comes to global leadership, Xi Jinping stands out as a formidable and forward-thinking figure. As opposed to his predecessors, Xi has been more proactive in advancing China's top priorities. Chinese interests include expanding the country's sphere of influence in the Western Pacific, fostering closer economic ties with regional nations, reuniting with Taiwan, and defending China's territorial claims in the South and East China Seas through increased military might and technological advancements in maritime transportation. Additionally, China's regional economic policies aim to increase connectivity while maintaining China's participation in preexisting international frameworks. Additionally, Xi wants to keep relations with the US on a positive track while continuing to prepare for potential strategic competition. Xi's efforts are meant to achieve this goal, but some worry that the rise of China's military might could disrupt international order (Dirlik, 1992).

Since Deng Xiaoping's era, China has'subtly' dismissed worries about the threat of its expanding influence through the 'Low Profile' and 'Peaceful Development' initiatives. This approach has worked for decades. In light of recent developments in Chinese diplomacy under Jinping's leadership, it is clear that China's strategy towards Asia emphasizes a "Harmonious Asia" approach. The locals love the phrase because of its positive connotation of community. China employs the methods of economic cooperation, strategic partnerships, and multilateral security in the formation of this policy. China's economic cooperation takes a multilateral strategy to developing and strengthening its ties to the Asia-Pacific region in the first strategic direction. Raising the share of trade and investment with other countries is one such example. Additionally, China has coordinated its trade with Australia, India, and South Korea, and it has signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with ASEAN. China is also working to improve relations with neighboring countries in the Mekong river basin. One Belt, One Road (OBOR) is exemplified by China's policy of connectivity between Asia and Europe. (Aoyama, 2016)

In addition, the second tenet of "Harmonious Asia" is to form strategic alliances for peaceful coexistence with neighboring countries. China's goal in developing these strategic partnerships is to fortify its bilateral ties with other nations. Despite this, many people are pessimistic, and this is especially true with regards to China's claims in the South China Sea case. It is still believed that this coordinated effort can successfully involve regional

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countries. China places considerable emphasis on the multilateral security fabric as its third strategy pillar. The 16th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2002 became a new reference for shifting China's perspective from a more pessimistic one. Prior to that, the Chinese were still quite traditional in their belief that international institutions would interfere with national interests. Active in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plus Three (ASEAN+3), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plus One (ASEAN+1) forums; also, the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asian Submit (EAS), and the OBOR initiative's Joint Maritime Security Initiative. China is also continuing joint military exercises with other countries and sending peacekeepers to crisis zones. In conclusion, the 'Harmonious Asia' policy is a successful reflection of the universal value of unity in modern Chinese diplomacy (Hwang & Dongxiao .2010).

China has become the largest manufacturer in Asia as a result of its robust economic growth and rapidly growing domestic market. Similarly, China has improved its export competitiveness, which has altered the business patterns of its Asian neighbors (Goh, 2007). China's rise to prominence as a regional power was facilitated by regional economic policy. The United States' withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the launch of China's new One Belt, One Road (OBOR) plan demonstrate the latter's growing economic might in the Asia-Pacific (Li & Kemburi, 2014). Dams, highways, settlements, and high-speed train projects are all part of China's ambitious OBOR infrastructure plan, which aims to connect the country's southern and western regions. China might be said to have "ruled" the Asia-Pacific region in this regard.

# 3. Rebalancing Policy as an effort to maintain Regional Security Stability

The Asia Pacific region in US strategic history is positioned as a buffer region to secure its territory from various threats. Likewise, other countries position the Asia Pacific as a very strategic area for defense and attacks against other countries, especially for the US. This was proven by the strategy undertaken by Japan during World War II by destroying the front line of the US Navy at Pearl Harbor Hawaii as a first step before expanding into Asia. At the end of World War II, the US continued to place naval power in this region by opening several military bases in Okinawa, Guam and Hawaii to protect its allies in this region.

One indicator of the waning economic and military might of the United States in the Asia-Pacific area is the reduction of funding for domestic initiatives and overseas operations. With less money to spend on defense, the United States is even less able to maintain its once dominant position in the Asia-Pacific. There will be openings for other countries to exert dominance and influence in the Asia-Pacific region if the United States withdraws its military forces from the area. The continued arms race in the Asia-Pacific region has created a security dilemma for the region's countries and upset the delicate balance of power in the area. This has the added effect of raising fears of future conflicts and security concerns (Itasari & Mangku, 2020).

As a result of China's growing military might, the United States under President Barack Obama sought to rebalance the region's power dynamics. The policy's stated purpose is to counter China's growing influence in the region. The United States has three key goals in the Asia-Pacific region, all of which can be traced back to 2015 documents released by the Department of Defense: protecting maritime freedom, avoiding bloodshed, and bolstering the rule of law and international norms (Chen, 2013).

The United States must increase its military presence as a counterbalance to boost its negotiating position in the ongoing settlement talks. Considering Asia-Pacific nations means taking into account their generally inferior military might in comparison to China, which is undergoing constant development and modernization. Even though China, with its enormous power which continues to increase rapidly, is not a threat at the present time, without a counterbalancer, China has a high possibility of becoming a security threat to surrounding countries in the future. This is why the existence of the United States with its military strength is calculated to be able to offset and stem the rapid development of China's military power in the Asia Pacific region (Liff & Ikenberry, 2014).

This rebalancing strategy also refers to US efforts to correct alleged neglect of the Asia-Pacific Region by the George W. Bush administration. Before President Obama took office, many Southeast Asian leaders in the region felt they had been ignored by the US. The existence of the War on Terror policy and the commitment of the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan have created a rebalancing strategy intended to rebalance attention to this region. This term was also chosen to prevent the notion that the US is leaving its attention in other regions and turning to the Asia-Pacific.

The rebalancing strategy also reflects the need to articulate the United States' global priorities after the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, which freed up diplomatic resources from the US military to the Middle East over the last decade. The reduction in US federal military spending and budget also calls for a clear statement of the US strategic priority of allocating limited resources. For the US military, this came in the form of a January 2012 strategic defense guide signed by President Barack Obama, which stated it would balance needs towards the Asia-Pacific region.

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# 5. CONCLUSION

After the end of the cold war, US foreign policy focused on the Middle East. However, the rise of China with its economy and military in the Asia Pacific region seemed to jolt the United States of America's strategic position in the Asia Pacific region. To reduce China's domination in the region, the United States revealed a Pivot to Asia strategy which is one way to carry out defense diplomacy and spread its hegemony in the Asia Pacific region through the concept of America's own defense strategy. Particularly during President Barrack Obama's era, the Asia Pivot Strategy was used to ward off Chinese hegemony, especially in the settlement of the South China Sea. Meanwhile, for China itself, in increasing its hegemony in Asia Pacific, it puts forward the 'Harmonious Asia' strategy. This phrase means 'togetherness' which is of course very attractive to the people of the region. To develop this strategy, China uses three approaches, namely economic cooperation, strategic partnerships and multilateral security. In its development, with the strengthening of the Chinese economy and increasing Chinese hegemony in the Asia Pacific region, the strategy changed to OBOR or One Belt One Road which integrates the South and West regions of China, which means it is the Asia Pacific region. For the United States itself, in order to offset or reduce China's dominance, it made a rebalancing strategy policy which was intended to rebalance attention to this region by focusing on the balance of their military power against China which was increasing.

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