

THE IMPLICATION OF THE US-TAIWAN RELATIONS TOWARDS THE US-CHINA RELATIONS UNDER OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Michelle Alysa
Universitas Pelita Harapan, Tangerang
e-mail: michelle.alysap@gmail.com

Abstract

President Obama obtained two terms of the US presidency during 2009-2016. He managed to steer the US into Asia using the Pivot to Asia strategy. The strategy is not only used as a method to spread the US influence, but also to balance the peaceful rise of China. The strategy also includes Taiwan, whom until now is a key leverage against China due to China's unresolved claim over Taiwan. With the US spread of influence on Asia and Taiwan, US-Taiwan relations impacted US-China relations under the Obama administration. The US-Taiwan bilateral relations become a trigger point to the US-China relations ignited several frictions. This research aims to identify implications and the result of the US-Taiwan relations towards the US-China relations under the Obama administration. Using the explanatory and historical comparative method with qualitative approach, this research indicates that the US and Taiwan relations impacted the US-China bilateral relations in several ways. It resulted in continuous and rising security dilemma, tension, and arms race in Asia. These implications are intensifying the existing differences between the US and China explained through the Offensive and Defensive Realism theories. Despite the unofficial status of Taiwan as a state, its relations to one of the major player in the world can affect the others as long as the three states remain connected.

Keywords: Bilateral Relations, Security Dilemma, Pivot to Asia, the United States of America, People's Republic of China

Abstrak

Presiden Barack Obama telah berhasil menjalankan dua periode kepresidenan Amerika Serikat pada tahun 2009-2016. Dalam kurun waktu tersebut, ia berhasil memimpin Amerika di Asia menggunakan strategi Pivot Asia sebagai strategi kunci. Strategi Pivot Asia tidak hanya digunakan sebagai metode untuk menyebarkan pengaruh Amerika di Asia, tetapi juga untuk menyeimbangkan kebangkitan yang damai oleh Tiongkok. Strategi tersebut juga meliputi Taiwan yang saat ini masih menjadi prioritas Tiongkok dikarenakan klaim Tiongkok yang belum terselesaikan terhadap Taiwan. Dengan menyebarnya pengaruh Amerika di Asia dan Taiwan, tentu terdapat dampak yang tidak dapat dipungkiri dan implikasi yang disebabkan oleh hubungan Amerika-Taiwan terhadap hubungan Amerika-Tiongkok di bawah administrasi Obama. Hubungan bilateral Amerika-Taiwan menjadi titik picu terhadap hubungan Amerika-Tiongkok yang menyebabkan beberapa friksi dalam hubungan bilateral tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi titik picu, implikasi, dan hasil dari hubungan Amerika-Taiwan terhadap hubungan Amerika-Tiongkok di bawah administrasi Obama. Penelitian ini menyampaikan penjelasan secara historis komparatif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Konsep yang digunakan meliputi kekuasaan negara, kepentingan nasional, distribusi kapabilitas nasional, dan dilema keamanan. Hasil yang didapatkan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa hubungan Amerika-Taiwan memiliki implikasi terhadap hubungan Amerika-Tiongkok. Sejauh ini, dampak tersebut sudah dihasilkan dalam bentuk perlombaan senjata di Asia. Implikasi tersebut memperkeruh perbedaan yang berlangsung antara Amerika dan Tiongkok yang dapat dijelaskan dengan teori Realisme. Dapat dilihat walaupun Taiwan tidak memiliki status resmi sebagai satu negara, tetapi hubungannya dengan salah satu negara besar di dunia dapat berdampak terhadap negara besar lainnya selama mereka masih saling berhubungan.

Kata Kunci: Hubungan Bilateral, Dilema Keamanan, Pivot Asia, Amerika, Tiongkok,

Introduction

The relations between the United States of the America (US), People's Republic of China (China), and Republic of China (Taiwan) remain in fluctuation, changing with each presidency and policies. Ever since the decision of the One China, China is the country that is recognized internationally, including in the United Nations Security Council. Taiwan on the other hand is not recognized as a country, more as an area with another government system that is still considered part of China. Usually, this is recognized with the term One China Policy (Cabestan, 2011, p. 16). US maintains both relations with China and Taiwan, diplomatically with China and non-diplomatically with Taiwan.

The US and China relations has been one of the most important bilateral relations in the world as it involves two major power in the 21st century. On one side, US remains as one of the most powerful country in the world leading with its economy and military forces. On the other side, China quietly emerged as the rival to US as a growing market with significant economic power and a country with the largest population (Tao, 2010, pp. 3-5). With the different dynamics between US, China, and Taiwan, any action taken by the US in relations to Taiwan will impact US relations to China, especially in the world with growing interdependence among countries. The US decision to return to Asia Pacific as its rebalancing strategy to contain the rise of China may be caused by many aspects, one of which was the situation and its relations with Taiwan (Jin, Canrong; School of International Relations Studies and Renmin University of China, 2016). China's increasing tension with Taiwan poses risks to US democratic interest to China, prompting Obama to intensify their actions in Asia, especially increasing ties with Taiwan although without a diplomatic clearance. China also was forced to reconsider

their position with the increasing relations among US and Taiwan. Therefore, even with its unofficial status as a state, Taiwan's relations with the US remains as an important consideration and calculation for US presence in Asia to counter China policies and for the advancement of US democratization effort in Asia (White III, 2015, pp. 206-209).

Literature Review

For the sake of understanding theories and concepts needed to build a comprehensive and contextual framework of this research, there is the need to gather relevant information from multiple literature resources. The following literature reviews will be separated into three categories that consists of (1) The bilateral relations between US and China (2) The bilateral relations between US and Taiwan (3) The bilateral relations between China and Taiwan.

US-China Bilateral Relations

Within the writings of James Johnson titled *the US-China Military & Defense Relationship during Obama Presidency*, the dynamics of relations between the two countries are based on high risk security dilemma (Johnson, 2018, pp. 21-23). The ambiguous nature of their relations challenges the conception of security dilemma that is heavily equipped with military capabilities and regional security issues. With China's increased military capabilities by heavily invested in long-range ballistic missiles, cyber and space exploration, and intelligence gathering, the US is put in a disadvantageous position with little-to-no room for adjustment but to re-assess and adjust their military to rival China if they want to continue to maintain their presence in the Asia-Pacific region. Johnson also mentions the concept of asymmetric challenge that China pose to the US, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy of increased security dilemma between China and the US (Johnson, 2018, pp. 102-103). The argument made by Johnson is

supported by the writings of Peter Navarro in his book titled *Crouching Tiger: What China's Militarism Means for the World* (Navarro, 2015). He explored the capabilities of China's military, the rise of China's militarism and its effect to US-China relations. The book mentions the relations between US and China is based on interest, geopolitics, economy, ideology, and US presence in Asia. The cause of China's increased military capability can be traced back to several triggers and flashpoints between the two countries and their proxy states in Asia such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Both Navarro and Johnson concluded that China and US will remain in the dilemma between them as long as there is conflicting interest between their domestic international or regional activities. Contrast but complementary to the previous sources, the writings of Aaron L. Friedberg on his book titled *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* introduced a different perspective in analyzing US-China relations apart from material capabilities (Friedberg, 2011). Friedberg approached the relations between US-China from seven factors that encompasses the difference in their background from history, politics, ideology, and values. Those factors are the narrowing power gap, ideological divide, trade interdependence, China's sign on democratization, multilateral relations with regional and international institutions, the presence of common threats, and the possession of nuclear weapon (Friedberg, 2011, pp. 38-57).

Findings from these sources acknowledged and further explained the current situation of US-China relations. It helped explain how the relations between the US and China are in a security dilemma that lead to persistence of creating balance of power that in the end will produce a self-fulfilling prophecy. It also shows how concepts such as military power and national interest play into the dynamics of

the security dilemma between the US and China.

US-Taiwan Bilateral Relations

US - Taiwan bilateral relations under Obama administration is more interactive and intensified in number of meetings compared to the previous administrations. The approval of the long-withheld approval of sales and the increase number of visitations by the US officials marked the increasing relations between the US and Taiwan (Kan, 2010, pp. 10-15). Yet, before the positive development, US and Taiwan relations has always been blurred. In the book titled *US Taiwan Policy: Constructing the Triangle*, author Tunsjø mentioned how US perceived Taiwan relations with dilemma (Tunsjø, 2001). At one side, there is the idea to support Taiwan as they had continuously before since the time of Japanese occupation. On the other side, China's increased pressure and military development is answering to the US support to Taiwan, leading to a US-China security dilemma (Tunsjø, 2001, p. 89). The relations developed over time, still maintained under the prospect of trading.

As seen in the journal article by Zhang Xu Cheng titled *US-Taiwan Relations in the 21st Century*, US-Taiwan relations governed under the Taiwan Relations act has become the basis of trading between Taiwan and the US (Zhang, 2013, p. 32). The relations strictly on the basis of trading, especially in military arsenal and offensive capabilities of Taiwan. Specifically under the Obama administration, the article explains the reason why US-Taiwan relations are maintained due to US interest to make Taiwan its extension of power in Asia, especially with Taiwan's reputation as stable democratic country in Asia (Zhang, 2013, pp. 42-43). The article also mentions that Taiwan is very crucial to US Pivot to Asia, that was the agenda of Obama presidency in 2010. Despite the constant protests from China regarding the

weapon sales made to Taiwan, Taiwan continued to purchase from the supply that the US offer. Yet, the continuous arms sale definitely caused tension in the Taiwan Strait so far that it is protested by and re-evaluated by the US Congress.

The calculation on whether to continue or cut off arms trade relations with Taiwan is explored in the journal article of Chen Ping-kuei, Scott L. Kastner, and William L. Reed titled *A Farewell to Arms?: US Security Relations with Taiwan and the Prospect for Stability in the Taiwan Strait*. The article compares the two scenarios and consequences if US cut relations with Taiwan and if US maintained or even increased relations with Taiwan (Chen, Kastner, & Reed, 2017, p. 223). Aside from heavy arms trade relations, the US and Taiwan maintained trade relations under the Trade Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) (Huang, 2011, p. 101). The writings of David Huang in the book *The Future of United States, China, and Taiwan Relations* explains how TIFA allowed bilateral agreement, investment agreement, paved way to the creation of US-Taiwan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and opened the possibility of Taiwan in the TPP at that time. Alas, all of the previously mentioned sources explained how US relations to Taiwan remains as a source of conflict between the US and China.

China-Taiwan Bilateral Relations

After analyzing the state of US-China relations and US-Taiwan relations, we need to understand the basis of China and Taiwan relations before moving towards the analysis of the trilateral dynamics of the three countries and how they mutually affect each other. As mentioned in the writings of Richard C. Bush titled *Untying the Knot: Making Peace in the Taiwan Strait*, China and Taiwan relations has been in a knot, with the most fundamental attributes are sovereignty and security (Bush, 2005, p. 6). Any indication of independence by

Taiwan will endanger the situation in the Taiwan Strait and lead to the other fundamental issue, which is security. Security issues among Taiwan and China is the other knot mentioned by Bush. Relations between China and Taiwan, mostly dubbed as the Cross-strait relations, heavily influenced by security aspects of both countries. Bush explained their relations as another security dilemma that is different from conventional security dilemma (Bush, 2005, p. 109). The difference with other security dilemma is that the dilemma does not increase by arms race or military power. Instead, China's insecurity over Taiwan increases by Taiwan's political initiatives and defensive capabilities, not its military nor offensive capabilities (Bush, 2005, p. 112). While Bush discusses the basis of tensions among China and Taiwan relations, John Q. Tian in *Government, Business, and the Politics of Interdependence and Conflict across the Taiwan Strait* introduces a different take on the relations (Tian, 2006, p. 18). Tian mentioned how the changing government within China and Taiwan, especially the duality of Taiwan political party the Kuo Min Tang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) played a big role on how China adjusts their policy to Taiwan. Contrasting to the previous findings by Bush and Tian, author Zhidong Hao analyzed the bilateral relations under the cultural and historical background that lead to eventual clash. (Hao, 2010) In his writing titled *Whither Taiwan and Mainland China: National Identity, State, and Intellectuals*, he mentioned how the challenges to peace between China and Taiwan not only lies on the political elements. Human action is as important as political elements that affected the peace process.

These findings show that bilateral relations between China and Taiwan is not peaceful all the time. It also shows how dependent Taiwan foreign policy with their leading party, whether it is the moderate KMT or more

extreme DPP. These findings ultimately help understand the later part of this research, the analysis of bilateral relations and how Taiwan play its role within the dynamics.

Research Method

To analyze the implication of the US-Taiwan relations to the US-China relations, there is the need to understand forms of national policies and conditions of each country, the US, China, and Taiwan. In addition, there must also a deep analysis on the changes on the US-China and US-Taiwan relations over the years, with the focus on year 2009-2016 during the President Obama's administration. By then, the research should be able to correlate or point out the implication of changes and bilateral relations between US and Taiwan to US-China Relations. It is important to see the changes and the policies between those countries as it shows whether there are implications to each country's national or foreign policies. Thus, this research examines and compares the data on the history of the relations. The data examined includes several statistics, documents, observations, making it considered as a historical comparative research. Historical comparative research investigates historical aspect from different countries and different time stamp. (Neuman W. L., 2014, p. 52) Historical comparative research is used to examine combinations of social factors that produce specific outcome (Neuman & Robson, 2006, p. 305). Thus, it is important to gather evidence, or in this case data, so that in synthesizing period, the research can conclude new concepts and create an explanatory model.

Analysis on Implication of the US-Taiwan Relations towards the US-China Relations

Actions that the US took in pursuit of its Pivot to Asia strategy is not without consequences nor implications. Its strategy includes interaction and increased cooperation

between a disputed state Taiwan, which ties it directly to China. Seeing both the US-Taiwan relations and the US-China relations and how it shifted with each trigger, this section of research analyses specifically what implications caused by the US-Taiwan relations towards the US-China relations under Obama administration.

Political and Security Implication

Politics and security are factors that correlates with each other. Despite the US relations with Taiwan lacked legitimacy compared to US relations with China, it still has implication to the whole situation with China in East and South East Asia. Two main causes of political and military implication to the US-China relations are the US arms sales to Taiwan and the Pivot to Asia strategy. As previously mentioned, the US-Taiwan arms deal has increased in heavily in technology and number of capabilities. This leads to the implication that the US disregards the concept of One China Policy and China's national interest (Deng, 2014, p. 122).

Second, the Pivot to Asia strategy directly positioned the US within the China's sphere of influence and reach. The US strategy to includes itself to Asia's security especially Taiwan, leads to China having to reconsider its strategy on the US-China relations and China's relations to its neighboring country. Not to mention, due to the US increase in military budget and capabilities, China reassess their capabilities and aims to also increase their capabilities albeit for different reasons. The US increase of military capabilities is in line with its national interest to become a global hegemon. As previously mentioned, the US pursuit of becoming a hegemon needs to be complemented by its power and security maximization (He, 2010, p. 1127). Thus, the US needs to possess the highest level of military capabilities in order to legitimize its status as a hegemon.

For China, that is not the case. China's core interest revolves around the safety and prosperity of its country and the CCP. China's perception of the US increase of power is not as a rival for China's capabilities, but as a benchmark of development. China has an idea to win without fighting and it is achievable when your adversary acknowledges your superiority in capabilities. (Navarro, 2015, p. 59) In order for the potential danger to security, namely the US to lay off China's territory, China needs to have great capabilities that can deter any incoming attacks from the US. This form of mindset leads to China developing its own military capabilities at such short span of time and to the level it is now.

China's Military Modernization

The most concerning element of the expansion is the increase of Chinese military in such a short span of time with no indication of diminution. China's military modernization and expansion is conducted in secret with a minimum level of transparency. The high level of secrecy thus creates a great cover for China's peaceful rise in Asia. This can be considered as the implication of the US Pivot to Asia strategy. Due to the US focusing its military deployment to Asia, China needs to increase its capabilities to safeguard its territory. China's rapid economic revolution and development leads to the funding of military expansion. The core of Chinese military expansion is through increasing command through sea that includes industrial capacity to produce naval fleet. Naval fleet is effective to secure trading route and for the sea to serve as bases for vessels (Navarro, 2015, p. 53). This leads to Chinese establishment of the First Island Chain as a goal to be surpassed.

The First Island Chain is the imaginary line between countries that limits China's expansion. Areas considered within the First Island Chain are South Korea, Japan, Taiwan,

Okinawa, Philippines, Europe, and Borneo (Navarro, 2015, p. 35). China's goal is to expand its territory to the chain so that its territory grows bigger. This is where China's unification with Taiwan remains as China's core interest because Taiwan holds the key to break the chain. China has the goal to amass large number of naval capabilities in order to secure its country from incoming foreign aggression, which is why China's expansion starts with the sea (Navarro, 2015, p. 55).

China's national army, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is divided into several level of military. Levels are People's Liberation Army Army (PLAA) for the ground forces, People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) for naval level, People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) for aviation level, People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces (PLARF) for missile-based capabilities (US Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019, 2019, p. 31). China's military modernization and development covers all the level of military, namely the ground forces, naval forces, and air forces.

The PLAA as a whole continues to adapt to structural and command changes, which leads to its current standardized and combined-arms brigades as primary PLAA forces. Each brigade is responsible for specific combat and support functions, covering artillery and defense. Combined arms battalions of the PLAA is outlined into three types which are the heavy type that focuses on tracked armored vehicles, medium type that focuses on wheeled armored vehicles, and light type that focuses on mobility (US Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019, 2019, p. 32). Compared to previous report made by the US Department of Defense in 2007, China's army capabilities was reported to only based on its

ground forces with trainings, not as specialized as the current report (US Department of Defense, p. 4). We can see that China's military modernization on PLAA further equips its ground forces to more specialized capabilities. China even assigns a new-type of combat unit that was described as highly mobile force that can be assigned to three-dimensional combat operations (US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 32). Ground troops are effective in strategies focusing on direct on-land assault, effectively putting the acquisition and entering Taiwan as subject target.

The PLAN is considered as the largest navy capabilities in the region. It's modernization process covers anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-submarine weapons and sensors that sums into China's A2/AD strategy (US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 35). In the previous report, China's navy capabilities are limited to submarines, nuclear-powered submarines, and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) (US Department of Defense, p. 3). China now has developed more submarines and nuclear-powered submarines, anti-ship cruise missile conventional submarines, and China's nationally produced nuclear submarines SHANG and JIN-class (US Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 35-36). For its surface combatants, it now has guided-missile cruisers, destroyers, frigates that significantly upgrade air defense, anti-ship, and anti-submarine capabilities. These are effective against neutralizing incoming missiles attacks. Not to mention, China also develops its own AAV, aircraft carriers titled the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier (US Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 36-37). These capabilities are very much able to deter any incoming attacks to China both from the air and sea. Taking the assumption that most of the attacks are coming from the US naval fleet and carriers, PLAN can effectively neutralize the target.

The PLAAF is also the largest aviation forces in the region with goal to achieve a full long-range power projection capability. After modernization and reorganization, PLAAF is stationed in existing air bases and six new air bases throughout China (US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 40). In addition to air bases, PLAAF is equipped with fighters that are far advanced than ten years prior. Before, they reported to only possess F-10 and F-11A fighter jets (US Department of Defense, p. 4). Currently, they possess J-20, FC-31, and Su-35 advanced fourth generation fighters which are far more advanced than the F-fighters. In addition, PLAAF also possess bombers with long range capabilities, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for reconnaissance purposes, and air missile defense capabilities in the form of long-ranged surface-to-air missiles (SAM) (US Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 41-42). Separated from the air force, China also possess specialized rocket and missile forces named the PLARF. PLARF is responsible to train, operate, and deploy China's land-based nuclear and conventional missiles. China now possess almost all level of missiles depending on their uses. China's conventional missile force includes short-range ballistic missile (SRBM), middle-range ballistic missile (MRBM), ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM), anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM), land attack missile (LACM), and intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM). (US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 44) PLARF also continues to enhance its intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capabilities. ICBM can reach to the US continent, making China's missile capabilities a legitimate possible threat.

As a reference, SRBMs can reach the whole region of China and Taiwan. MRBMs and GLCMs can reach Russia, Afghanistan and India. ASBMs and ASCMs can reach Iran, greater Russia, and most of Middle East. IRBMs can reach so far as Eastern Europe. In

addition to the conventional strike capabilities, China's nuclear ballistic missile capabilities can be latched to its ICBMs, making their range as far as 13,000 km to the American continent (US Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 45-46). China has the capability to directly strike the US through the use of nuclear ballistic missiles.

These advancements in China's PLA strives for the afro mentioned A2/AD aspiration of China. Currently, China's A2/AD capabilities covers the First Island Chain area with goals to expand until the Pacific Ocean. A2/AD capabilities includes deployment of long-range attacks against enemies that operate in the Pacific Ocean. A2/AD includes the conventional military capabilities with non-conventional areas such as space, electromagnetic, and information domains (US Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 54-55). On information domain, China uses the information blockade strategy, which is to control the information in battlespace. It combines military capabilities in space and cyber domains with advanced electronic warfare systems, counterspace, and cyber operations. China's cyber capabilities aims to seize cyberspace superiority to deter any incoming cyber activities against China. It aims to deter intervention, return the attacks to infrastructure, and to prevent any attacks altogether. China's space and counterspace capabilities begins as a command and control (C2) capabilities (US Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 56-57). Seeing the rapid foreign presence proliferation in its nearby continent, China enhance C2 operations to include surveillance, reconnaissance, and warning system for communications and intelligence capabilities, leading to the establishment of C4ISR.

C4ISR is an essential part to the whole level of PLA. It provides a reliable and secure communications to posts, rapid and effective decision making, and distribution of data and

intelligence in regard to battlefield information making it vital to any point during armed confrontation. Its reconnaissance surveillance capabilities also support China's data gathering to provide the best possible decision-making process (US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 63).

The reason behind China's military modernization clearly portrays China's national interest to protect its national security from any foreign aggression, including Taiwan and to maintain its territorial integrity from foreign presence as mentioned in China's White Paper on Military Strategy. It is mentioned that its necessary against the US Pivot to Asia strategy that can lead to unlawful foreign intervention. Thus, in order to maintain China's national interest, China must be able to eliminate all possible confrontation, maintain all dimension sovereignty which includes Taiwan (China's Military White Paper 中國的軍事戰略 (全文), 2015). The paper directly mentions the Pivot to Asia as element that prompt China's military modernization due to its connection and interaction to Taiwan.

Security Dilemma between the US and China

The concept of security dilemma best describes the situation between China and the US in the region as a result of military arms race and proliferation under the Obama Administration. Security dilemma can be briefly described as a condition where the more one state arms itself to pursue their safety and protect their national security interest, the more threatened the armed state actually become, which led to the constant increasing in self-arms (Viotti & Kauppi, 2013, p. 56). The case of Taiwan shows that the US can increase their military budget spending in the East Asian region, deploy numerous carriers to circle the surrounding ocean, and launch the Pivot to Asia strategy as a way to deter

Chinese threat against Taiwan (Johnson, 2018, pp. 3-6). With the implication of the US Pivot to Asia, China's assertiveness in terms of military and economy starting year 2008, and the new model great power relations coined by president Xi, a rising tension and security competition is unpreventable (Johnson, 2018, pp. 21-22). The creation of a self-fulfilling security dilemma is both the result of the US and China action in Asia that was caused by the implication of US-Taiwan relations. This is not the first security dilemma that both parties encounter, but this is a security dilemma that reach such a high level.

As previously mentioned, China's military capabilities rapid proliferation raises concern towards the US. The US, who aspires to be a hegemon, cannot be a hegemon if they cannot establish peace in the region. To establish peace, they need to have undeniable and advanced security capabilities to deter any possibility of conflict in the region. With China's increased capabilities, the dilemma falls to the US whether it also has to increase its capabilities. The US answer is through the deployment of the Air Sea battle strategy that equips the US Navy and Air Force the necessary budget to increase their capabilities (Johnson, 2018, pp. 37-38).

Despite both parties stating that their military modernization is for the sake of their own interest, a sense of mistrust cannot be avoided. Mistrust and misperception of both parties' efforts leads to both parties locked in a vicious cycle of military spending and proliferation. China's A2/AD strategy directly challenges the US projection of military strength to Asia, prompting the US deployment of the Air Sea Battle. While the US considers the strategy to restrict the freedom in the region, China on the other hand sees the strategy as a way to deter foreign intervention in the region (Johnson, 2018, p. 40).

The danger of the US-China security dilemma is not only highlighted by the increase of

military capabilities and tension in the region. Due to the ambiguous and secretive nature of China, it is hard to gauge how modernized has China's military is. As the opposition force in the region, the US is only able to assume how far China has gone. The ambiguity, bias against China, limited transparency, A2/AD strategy, and China's defense strategy lead to the US making assumption. The assumption made leads to US misinterpretation of China's military modernization (Johnson, 2018, p. 41). The US only conducted capacity-based threat assessment, thus leading to the vicious cycle of military proliferation. The more the US trying to level China's military capabilities, the more China is going to increase its capabilities so that China can overcome the US (Johnson, 2018, p. 54).

Not to mention, security dilemma between the US and China is not strictly limited to conventional military standoff. China's nuclear strategy uses both conventional and nuclear missiles, in addition to China's minimal deterrence of nuclear proliferation. While the US and Russia both agreed to sign the START treaty to limit their nuclear missile proliferation, China does not sign and agree to such treaty (Johnson, 2018, p. 125). China nuclear capabilities focuses on its ability to survive the first strike and to be able to respond with unparallel damage to its opponent. China maintains its no-first-use policy, which means China will not be the first to launch any missiles or attacks, but it will respond with greater force. Despite the existence of no-first use policy, the benchmark of the first use depends on China's perception. If the enemy forces is using conventional attacks, China may choose to retaliate through the use of nuclear (US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 65).

Seeing the US history, it has made several preemptive attack strategies to neutralize the target before the target even moved. This strategy is what China is counting on. The first

strike by the US against China will be met by China's larger and higher quantities of missiles to neutralize the US (Navarro, 2015, p. 127). Thus, to respond to such attack, China must possess better and more advanced military capabilities than the US.

Moreover, we can see that China and the US has different approach to security competition. The US chose to take Offensive Realism route, due to its national interest of becoming a hegemon. Offensive Realism is a theory that explains that all great power aspires to become global hegemon, leading the world to the current state of multipolar world with states becoming hegemon in their region (Lobell, 2010, p. 6652). The US aims to be hegemon that establish peace in the region, deterring any potential conflict namely conflict between the US and China. The US needs to be unchallenged in terms of military capabilities and must be able to be present in the region. (He, 2010, p. 1127)

China chose to take Defensive Realism route due to its national interest to protect its region from any foreign intervention and protect its territorial integrity. Defensive Realism theorizes that state pursue maximization of security to preserve the existing distribution of power and avoid losses. Pursuing hegemony is self-defeating for states because it is leaving their own state weaker and prone to dangers (Lobell, 2010, p. 6660). China's sees the US Pivot to Asia strategy as a display of the US intervention on China's domestic issue with Taiwan. The US adds on the pre-existing limited arms deal to a potential military joint activity with Taiwan. China cannot condone with such intervention; thus China needs to increase and modernize its own military so that it can prevent the US from further engaging with Taiwan. Both parties then locked in security dilemma with no potential cessation.

Economic Implication

As previously mentioned, China's core interests revolve in the stability of China's

political system, sovereignty, territorial integrity, national reunification, and the development of Chinese economy and society (Ai, Ye, & Chang, 2016, p. 64). China still regards Taiwan as part of China's territory, thus any actions involving Taiwan can be considered as violation against domestic affairs of China. Aside from political and military implication, there is also economic implication present from the US-Taiwan relations towards the US-China relations. Two of the main causes of the implications are the TPP and the US arms sales to Taiwan.

The economic implication is caused by the US choice to lead the TPP discussion and how Taiwan is voicing its interest to join the TPP. Previously, Taiwan is not a participant to international body nor treaty. Taiwan only joined the WTO after China decides to join, bringing both Hong Kong and Taiwan behind it. Its membership to WTO was not as a state, but under the term of special region that implies China's superiority over Taiwan (Charnovitz, 2006, p. 403). With the US agenda to promote a multilateral economic partnership, it is directly challenging China's position in the region and also challenging China-led RCEP, a similar economic partnership.

TPP is one of the strategies within the Pivot to Asia that shifted the economic focus from China. It gives another potential partner to Asia, whom has been mainly having trade relations with China. It also shifted the US position as part of a multilateral scheme, compared to previously restricted bilateral relations. For Taiwan and its interest of joining and potentially become member of TPP, it provides the long-desired international recognition as a separate entity to China. China is not a member of the TPP and Taiwan can represent its own country within the membership.

This possibility directly affects China's national interest and China's One China

Syllogism in three parts that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China (Chen D. , 2017). In addition, China specifically mentions that no foreign entity shall interfere with the unification of China and Taiwan nor they interfere to persuade Taiwan's independence. China regards the US TPP as potential challenge to RCEP and potential trigger to China-Taiwan relations. As a result, economic integration of the RCEP are intensified and China increases its economic integration with Taiwan in form of ECFA.

For the US-China relations, the impact of TPP is now China has to adjust its partners having relations and changes to their economic system. The TPP introduces standards, rights to labor union and inclusion of intellectual property law (Bjerre-Poulsen, 2017, p. 317). China has to adjust to the framework made by the TPP as the TPP aims to reinforce rule-based system of trade. Surprisingly, China has yet made massive shifts to the US-China relations, as both countries still maintain large economic interdependence with each other (Bjerre-Poulsen, 2017, p. 321). China especially under the presidency of Xi Jin Ping still more focused on military aspect of changes while economically still remains positive on the new model of great power relations (Deng, 2014, p. 87). Thus economically speaking, the efforts of the TPP and Taiwan's possible entrance to TPP has yet directly influences the US-China relations. The implication shall be seen once the TPP enters its full activation in Asia.

Conclusion

The research on the implication of the US-Taiwan bilateral relations on the US-China bilateral relations under Obama Administration is supported by many findings. We can connect several trigger points caused by the US-Taiwan as independent variable relations that created implications to bilateral relations between China and the US as dependent variable. Taking the example from

previous administrations before Obama, namely the Taiwan Strait Crisis, it can be seen as an implication to the US-China relations. The US-China bilateral relations were at a point where both countries ready to launch military attacks against each other once the threshold has been passed, which was the position of Taiwan at that point of time.

In Obama administration, President Obama makes it clear that he is expanding the US interest to Asia, deploying the Pivot to Asia strategy as the key policy to be implemented. In addition, the strategy also includes Taiwan as one of its key elements due to Taiwan position as strategic leverage for the US against China. The strategy was not met with direct military confrontation by China, but with increased Chinese capabilities and power projection in Asia. This leads to an ongoing security dilemma between the two most influential states in the world with each state pursuing its own interest.

Thus, both states use its national power and capabilities to pursue its national interest, one state pursues its aspiration as a hegemon while the other pursues its survivability as a state. The clash between Offensive and Defensive Realism represented by the interest of the US and China is the implication that is caused by the US-Taiwan relations. Taiwan becomes a part of the cycle as both countries pursue of interest covers Taiwan. Nevertheless, the intricate relations between the US and Taiwan causes implications to the US and China relations that perpetuate the ongoing dilemma between the two countries. Both China and the US project their respective power to the point that they are locked in a vicious cycle of security dilemma and arms race with each other as result of Taiwan position within the US and China bilateral relation

References

- Ai, Y.-M., Ye, X.-D., & Chang, T.-C. (2016). China's rise and its evolutionary narrative of core interest (1980-2016): An analysis from the perspective of power structure transition. *China Research*, 61, 63-81.
- Bjerre-Poulsen, N. (2017). Here we see the future: The Obama administration's pivot to Asia. In A. Edward, & J. Dumbrell (Eds.), *Obama Presidency and the Politics of Change* (pp. 307-327). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41033-3_14
- Bush, R. C. (2005). *Untying the knot: Making peace in the Taiwan Strait*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Cabestan, J.-P. (2011). Taiwan's political development and U.S.-China relations. In C.-Y. Lin, & D. Roy (Eds.), *The future of United States, China, and Taiwan relations* (pp. 13-28). New York, NY: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230118966_2
- Carrong, J. (2016, December). How America's relationship with China changed under Obama. *World Economic Forum*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/12/america-china-relationship/>
- Charnovitz, S. (2006). Taiwan's WTO membership and its international implications. *Asian Journal of WTO & International Health Law and Policy*, 1(2), 401-432.
- Chen, D. (2017). *US-China rivalry and Taiwan's mainland policy: Security, nationalism, and the 1992 consensus*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47599-8>
- Chen, P.-K., Kastner, S., & Reed, W. (2017). A farewell to arms? US security relations with Taiwan and the prospects for stability in the Taiwan Strait. In D. Lowell (Ed.), *Taiwan and China: Fitful embrace* (pp. 221-238). Oakland, CA: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.38.1>
- China's Military White Paper 中國的軍事戰略 (全文)*. (2015, May 26). Retrieved from Ren Min Wang 人民網: <http://military.people.com.cn/n/2015/0526/c52936-27057959.html#>
- Deng, Y. (2014). The unwelcome return: China reacts to the US strategic pivot. In P. Y. Chow (Ed.), *The US Strategic pivot to Asia and cross-strait relations: Economic and security dynamics* (pp. 79-96). New York NY: Palgrave MacMillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137360779_5
- Friedberg, A. L. (2011). *A contest for supremacy: China, America, and the struggle for mastery in Asia*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Hao, Z. (2010). *Whither Taiwan and Mainland China: National identity, the State and intellectuals*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5790/hongkong/9789622091009.001.0001>
- He, K. (2010). The hegemon's choice between power and security: Explaining US policy toward Asia after the Cold War. *Review of International Studies*, 36(4), 1121-1143. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000227>
- Huang, D. W. (2011). Lobbying for a "U.S.-Taiwan FTA" in the U.S. Congress: Which "Fast Track"? "What Target". In C.-Y. Lin & D. Roy (Eds.), *The future of United States, China, and Taiwan relations* (pp. 101-120). New York, NY: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230118966_6
- Johnson, J. (2018). *The United States-China military and defense relationship during the Obama presidency: new security challenges*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75838-1>
- Kan, S. A. (2010). Taiwan: Major U.S. arms sales since 1990. In S. E. Marshall

- Lobell, S. E. (2010). Structural realism/offensive and defensive realism. In R. Denemark & R. M. Bennett (Eds.), *The international studies compendium project* (pp. 6651-6659).
- Navarro, P. (2015). *Crouching tiger: What China's militarism means for the world*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Harlow, England: Pearson.
- Neuman, W., & Robson, K. (2006). *Basics of social research*. Toronto, Canada: Pearson Canada.
- Tao, X. (2010). *U.S.-China relations: China policy on Capitol Hill*. London, England: Routledge.
- Tian, J. Q. (2006). *Government, business, and the politics of interdependence and conflict across the Taiwan strait*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403982841>
- Tunsjø, Ø. (2001). *US Taiwan policy: Constructing the triangle*. London, England: Routledge.
- United States Department of Defense. (2019). *Annual report to Congress: Military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China 2019*. Retrieved from https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf
- United States Department of Defense. (2019). *Annual report to congress: Military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China 2019*. Retrieved from https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf
- United States Department of Defense. (N.d.). *Annual report to Congress: Military power of the People's Republic of China 2007*. Retrieved from https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2017_China_Military_Power_Report.PDF
- Viotti, P., & Kauppi, M. (2013). *International relations and world politics* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- White, III, L. (2015). PRC, ROC, and U.S interests: Can they be harmonized? In S. Hua (Ed.), *Reflections on the triangular relations of Beijing Taipei-Washington since 1995*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zhang, X. (2013). 二十一世紀的台美關係 [US-Taiwan relations in the 21st Century]. *Taiwan International Studies Quarterly*, 9(3), 27-47. <http://www.tisanet.org/quarterly/9-3-2.pdf>