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China's Hegemonic Stability and the U.S. Pivot to Asia under Trump's first Presidency

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how China's economic and political policies from 2007 to 2017 reinforced its position as a regional hegemon and how the Trump administration's early Asia strategy attempted to counterbalance Beijing's rise. Drawing on hegemonic stability theory, it analyzes three pillars of China's economic ascent including (1) economic reforms and WTO entry, (2) Renminbi internationalization, and (3) the Belt and Road Initiative as well as China's political ascent including (1) grand strategy, (2) balance of power, and (3) liberal values and then assesses Washington's response in terms of (1) diplomatic posture, (2) alliance management, and (3) maritime operations. The study finds that while China consolidated its economic leverage, the U.S. pivot under Trump was marked by rhetorical shifts, uneven alliance signaling, and sustained Freedom of Navigation Operations, reflecting both continuity and disruption in American grand strategy.

Keywords: China, Hegemonic Stability, Political policies, U.S. pivot, Trump, Xi Jin Ping

INTRODUCTION

Hegemonic stability theory argues that a dominant economy underwrites open markets, stable currencies, and institutional leadership. China's rapid integration into the global economy has challenged the post–Cold War liberal order. Since the late 1990s, Beijing has pursued a multifaceted strategy to expand its influence in the international market. And beyond economic capacity, political authority is essential to enforce norms, resolve disputes, and maintain system coherence. Since the late 1990s, China has pursued a multifaceted strategy to expand its influence, integrating rapidly into the global economy while asserting political leadership through regional institutions and diplomatic outreach. These efforts challenge the post–Cold War liberal order traditionally upheld by the United States.

In response to China's efforts to enhance its hegemonic stability in terms of economic and political reinforcement, U.S. pivot to Asia under Trump administration can be seen as Washington's attempt to set its foot of foreign policy into Asian continents. While addressing key challenges, Trump's pivot to Asia policy further reflects a gradual change of international system from the dictatorship of dominant power and great powers to the challenge of status quo rising powers of its Asian partnership.

A theoretical question for this paper is that: In what ways did China reinforce its economic and political hegemony, and how did the Trump administration respond during its first eighteen months? On the set time frame from 2007 to 2017, this paper investigates how China has operationalized its economic instruments to assert hegemonic leadership and how the Trump administration responded during its first eighteen months in office. By linking China's key economic and political instruments including (1) domestic reforms, (2) currency internationalization, and (3) the Belt and Road Initiative to specific U.S. diplomatic and military countermeasures, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of great power competition in the Asia Pacific region.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

The framework of hegemonic stability guides the analysis of China's economic measures and U.S. counter-strategies. According to Gilpin (1987), four assumptions of the theory of hegemonic stability are as follows:

1. It is necessary for a volunteer of a hegemon to the liberal values in the international economy and to the provision of public goods such as an open trading system and stable currency.
2. The maintenance of the liberal economic system needs to be long-term following the role of the hegemonic power as the dominant economy.
3. Cheating and exploiting behaviors are common violations of the hegemonic power against the liberal emphasis of trading for mutual benefits.
4. The dominant economy will enhance the stability of world economy by performing certain roles such as creating international regimes, defining principles-norms-rules, and decision-making on important issues

Overall, this theory sustains liberal values in international markets while emphasizing the influence of hegemonic powers in their long-term commitment for norm-setting and issue resolution. The final outcome is to maintain the system stability in its rising of economic and political powers.

Research Design

Drawing on hegemonic stability theory as articulated by Gilpin (1981) and further developed by Keohane (1984), this study employs a qualitative theory-driven case study approach to examine the strategic interplay between China's economic rise and the U.S. response under the Trump administration. The methodology integrates document analysis (Bowen, 2009), comparative review (George & Bennett, 2005), and interpretive mapping (Yanow, 2000) within the framework of hegemonic stability theory to frame the evolving power structure in the Asia-Pacific region.

Data Collection

To study the phenomenon, the researcher collected primary sources of documents including articles from Foreign Affairs, peer-reviewed academic journals, and academic books in the field of political science and international relations. These sources were selected for their analytical depth, policy relevance, and scholarly credibility. Furthermore, temporal scope was set on academic works published between 2007 and 2017 to capture developments before, during, and immediately after the Trump administration's strategic shift in the Asia-Pacific region.

Data Analysis

The employment of document analysis allows for contextual interpretation of state behavior and strategic framing while comparative review highlights asymmetries in strategic objectives and reveals points of friction or convergence (George & Bennett, 2005). In particular, each of China's three economic instruments including (1) economic reforms and WTO entry, (2) Renminbi internationalization, and (3) the Belt and Road Initiative is evaluated against the four core assumptions of hegemonic stability theory. Another scope is China's three political instruments including (1) grand strategy, (2) balance of power, and (3) liberal values. These economic and political instruments are then juxtaposed with U.S. strategic responses in (1) diplomacy, (2) alliance management, and (3) maritime operations.

Since interpretive mapping helps trace hegemonic shifts and regional realignments through qualitative inference (Yanow, 2000), the final stage in data analysis procedure particularly emphasizes interpretive coherence over causal inference for the purpose of illuminating how competing hegemonic visions manifest in Asia's evolving strategic landscape.

CHINA'S ECONOMIC HEGEMONIC STRATEGIES

Economic reforms and WTO Entry

In terms of economic development, Marx's model of socialism emphasizes on the productive powers of agriculture and industry and these powers replace accumulation by exploitation in capitalism by accumulation by consent (Barratt-Brown, 1995). The assumption on social accumulation is for resolutions of world problems such as starvation and lacks of basic needs. Social accumulation also aims to erase the social class distinction and to maintain a voluntary system of contribution to the society. Beyond that, Marx's model of socialism claims to achieve a normal economic condition as opposed to the charge of surpluses for resources.

Going beyond Marx's model of socialism, according to Tyers (2014), the first measure of China in its hegemonic reinforcement initially links with certain reforms in its key economic policy at domestic and international level. The reform at the domestic level starts from early privatization in agricultural production-the dominant sector of Chinese economy in the early 90s-to early construction of urbanization. These policies included the ownership of farmer for their product, the legalization of the private markets for agricultural production, and the setting of 'special economic zones' in the southern cities around 1979.

These implementations resulted in the increasing productivity in agricultural sector and early urbanization as well as the attraction for foreign investments and semi-private manufacturing. Moreover, the domestic reform of Chinese economy also included the revision of laws indicating certain measures to regulate the ownership of property rights and to implement a new tax system including both income and consumption taxation.

In its early participation to the world economy, the emergence of stock market in Shanghai and Shenzen was also a success of Chinese economic reforms to expand opportunities for business activities and to accumulate more foreign investment. The membership of China into World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 resulted in China's self-determination for trade and related policies, improved foreign investment, and accelerated its GDP for several years since the 1990s.

Internationalization of the Renminbi

According to Eichengreen (2017), since 2009, the goal to internationalize RenMinBi (RMB) has been an implicit initiative in Chinese economic policy. For Chinese policy makers, the push to internationalize the RMB involves steps to promote its use in several functions such as "unit of account, means of payment, and store of value for banks, firms, and governments undertaking international transactions" (p.157). The internationalization of RMB is also seen as a way for China to have their freedom from dependence of U.S. dollar. In the early date of 1994, China's unification of the exchange rate aimed to maintain the rate stability with U.S. dollar dominance in the international market (Tyers, 2014) and until now, China authorities continue to manage the dollar-RMB exchange rate to limit fluctuations in cross-border business and capital investment.

In October 2016, the International Monetary Fund officially recognized renminbi (RMB) for its Special Drawing Rights. It means China's currency is now available as the monetary value for IMF loans to other countries, besides other dominant currencies such as U.S. dollar, British pound, the euro, and Japanese yen. According to People's Bank of China's announcement, this event affirmed the success of China's economic development in its subsequent stages of economic reforms for open market. Moreover, the IMF's recognition also marked the leading global currency of RMB and the advancement of China to become a world leading economy.

In further step to reinforce the hegemonic power in world economy through internationalizing RMB, Chinese policy makers will "have to figure out a way to open its financial markets and banking sector while maintaining the unique hybrid, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics,' where economic planning and state control coexist with markets, foreign investments, private property, and individual initiative" (Eichengreen, 2017, p.160). To overcome these challenges, China authorities encourage RMB transactions in trade settlements to make deposits from foreign investments with local banks. Another strategy is to develop RMB transactions in offshore markets through direct trading with the offshore financial centers and currency swap-agreement of RMB credit line in foreign banks.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative is emphasized as a foreign policy that China ambitiously promotes economic activities and infrastructure building across different regions. Initially addressed by Chinese President Xi Jin Ping at the end of 2013, OBOR was subsequently reinforced in the following speeches in November 2014, April 2016, and August 2016 with the aim to address the benefits of promoting the Belt and Road Initiative for the local and regional residents. While the first and second speeches focus on specifying the following key concepts of Asian connectivity and the Silk Road spirit, the third speech in August 2016 aims to emphasize the missions that China will perform as a trusted partner in economic and cultural exchanges with other countries.

Main arguments for the November 2014 elaborated the Asian connectivity of OBOR in two directions. First, OBOR initiative ensures that infrastructure, finance, and experts are three major platforms for China to connect the link with Asian neighbors. Second, the initiative ties the connectivity between China and its Asian neighbors in the understanding that China foreign policy gives top priority to friendship, sincerity, mutual benefits and inclusiveness.

The second speech in April 2016 mainly focused on the notion of Silk Road spirit in ancient Chinese history. During China's economic development in modern era, this spirit has a higher value for friendship than for trade and therefore includes features such as peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. The Silk Road spirit should be implemented in the Belt and Road initiative to maintain a proper balance between national interests and other countries' interests, to encourage participation of enterprises, and to promote economic cooperation and cultural exchanges.

The third speech in August 2016 visualized the identity of China as the cooperator for the expansion of prosperity to other countries in two main arguments. First, only a strong and prosperous country can open itself to the outside world with confidence, and openness in turn promotes further prosperity. Second, what is essential for China through the implementation of OBOR is to rebalance the world economy by fostering new demand and ensuring effective supply.

Overall, in terms of international competition, economic transformation, and economic restructuring, the OBOR Initiative reflects China's attempt to achieve its national interests through the upgrade of its identity and image as the cooperator and the revival of ancient Silk Road spirit.

CHINA'S POLITICAL HEGEMONIC STRATEGIES

Grand Strategy

In applying the theory of hegemonic stability in understanding the case of recent development China's economy in the international market, the three aforementioned methods in the previous section imply a dominant role of China in the setting of a long-term of liberal economic order. According to Nathan and Scobell (2015), China's grand strategy includes two important missions: to defend the manipulation of Asian region to the competitors and to expand its influence to the neighboring countries in the Asian connectivity. To maintain the success of these two missions in economic growth, China constructs its own foreign policy toward the goals of stabilizing an international market where there is equality among alliances in their participation of trading activities and in the attraction of access to foreign investments.

Another important task for China in the stability of the dominant economy is to perform its roles in the international regimes, the enforcement of principles and rules, and the decision-making on important issues (Gilpin, 1987). As mentioned in Nathan and Scobell (2015), apart from governing trades, China is increasingly pursuing its participation in the international regimes to involve in important decision-making of issues related to finance, nuclear threats, public health, environmental protection, and human rights. Meanwhile, at the domestic level, China implements virtual methods of protection for its economic growth including the regulation of RMB currency and of foreign investment to the local economy. Further protection methods are imposed into the governance of foreign-related civil society organizations, the immigration of foreigners and overseas Chinese, and the restrictions of international Internet access.

Balance of Power

A distinct characteristic of temporary Chinese economy is the integration of social-oriented elements with the international market. Marx's elements of a social-oriented economy in his model included social accumulation and ownership, normal economic condition, and cooperative production; and in the integration of these social-oriented elements with the international market, China is claimed to be in the clash of civilizations where the identity of revisionist power is the key challenge for the United States in the opposing force. Allison (2017) discusses challenges that the U.S. administration is facing while handling with Chinese exceptionalism-the key factor that defines China as a rising power to displace the established power of the United States. According to Allison, China is also exceptional with its revisionist intention via means of military force and therefore is ready to create tension if necessary.

The unique characteristic of China being a dominant social-oriented economy also poses the threat to the established dominant power of the United States in the global order. In response to the U.S. threat, China also has political strategies in their establishment of imperialism in military and economic power over the world politics (Shirk, 2017). Despite being an irresponsible political actor in world politics, China has shown their dynamic capability in recovering from economic crisis and in challenging the imperial status of the U.S.'s power in military force. Meanwhile, the U.S. was rather an idle actor in dealing with China's attempt to modify the existing structure in world politics

Liberal Values

The effort to rebalance the power with the U.S. also confirms with China's voluntariness to the liberal values in the international economy and to the provision of public goods. Feigenbaum (2017) analyzes strategies enforced by China to earn their status quo in political power and to enhance their imperialism in economic power over their participation international organizations. The author argues that China aims to establish their imperialism in the economic world by implementing the portfolio diversification strategy, the purpose of which was to enhance their control over the existing structures of international banking systems.

According to Lind (2017), China certainly commits itself to the liberal international system. On the states of the world's second-largest economy, China embraces some features of liberalism such as a dominant trading partner with many countries and the United States. China has gained its economic power in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; and in the country in turn benefits from the liberal economic order prosperity and expertise.

U.S. COUNTER-RESPONSE UNDER TRUMP

Diplomatic Posture and Alliance Management

There was a question for the emphasis on a liberal order of President Trump administration in his Asia policy. The puzzles about liberal internationalism in Trump administration were further reflected from the perspective of the U.S.'s allies in the three following articles written by Goodhart (2017), Hikotani (2017), and Fullilove (2017). In Goodhart's (2017) article, the author claimed that:

> The consensus in and around White-hall is that the Trump presidency represents a painful but useful wake-up call for liberal internationalism, which had begun to slip into a less robust universalistic globalism (and one free-riding on U.S. power to boot). The problem, however, is that Trump seems to represent not a more prudent internationalism but rather chauvinism (p.20).

According to Goodhart (2017), from a European perspective, President Trump was a producer of negative impacts on the liberal order of the international politics. There were different viewpoints from European about the current Trump's figure being an alien, compatible, and unsuited leader. In particular, European's views of Trump fall into three main camps: focusing less on responsible global leadership than on nativism, being more conventional than its rhetoric, and being unique for his unexpected actions.

Moreover, regarding the event of Brexit mentioned in Goodhart's (2017) article, Trump administration marked changes in attitude from Washington toward London as well as changes the U.S. policy for bilateral trade deals. Instead of an oppositional attitude, Goodhart viewed that Trump would start "unravelling the alliance in earnest", which indicates British Prime Minister Theresa May's skillfulness in preventing the boiling tensions with the United States and open gateways for her country.

A Japanese perspective on the theme of Trump's liberalism is revealed in Hikotani's (2017) article. The title Trump's gift to Japan infers two implications for the diplomatic policy between two countries. First, it is implied that "the U.S.-Japanese alliance is the viable means of guaranteeing Japan's security, leading to a strong preference for the status quo" (p.24). Second, to maintain the successful management of the bilateral relationship, Japanese Prime Minister Abe administration decides to employ a disarming and disengaging strategy, the purpose of which is to distract Trump from complaining trade deficit, currency manipulation, or budget for maintaining U.S. forces in Japan as well as to separate economic from security matter in negotiation for maintaining the alliance.

An interesting point made by Hikotani (2017) is the revisiting of North Korea and China as neighboring countries which are matters of concerns in the U.S.-Japan alliance discussion for reconsidering "how Japan can strengthen its own defense capabilities and how it can expand its policy portfolio" (p. 25). In the involvement of multitiered relationship, Hikotani described the role of the U.S. as "game changer" (p. 26) while emphasizing on the role of Japan as a strategic actor due to Japan's dependence on U.S. military technology and support. Furthermore, Japanese government is bothered by self-defense against possible missile tests from North Korea and by Chinese expansion in Asia-Pacific region for Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. Key questions for the U.S.-Japan alliance is largely a concern with military capability and economic front: especially when Washington implemented its calibrated practical approach to North Korea as well as the decision to withdrawal from the TPP causing the threat of regional economic order.

The third article written by Fullilove (2017) addresses an Australian perspective toward President Trump. Similar to Goodhart, Fullilove reserved a section to explain why Trump is unpopular in Australia. The three reasons from Fullilove's (2017) article are stated as follows:

> First, his personal style …Trump is high energy, Australian are low-key…
> Second, Australian have themselves been down a populist path and found that it leads nowhere
> The third…reason…is that his foreign policy instincts
>
> (Fullilove, 2017, p.29)

While the first reason is rather an attack into Trump's personal characteristic, the second and third ones are more related to political indifference than the former one. The term 'populist path' is used to associate Trump with Hanson-the right-wing senator in the Parliament. Fullilove explained that both Trump and Hanson are similar in gaining recognition for 'personal shortcomings' and the limitations of their partners. Also, Trump is criticized for his foreign policy pursuing 'a shrunken role', 'isolationism', 'hostile for free trade', and against globalization. These evidences reflect that his plan to 'make America great again' and his America first policies do not go along the way with current transitions of globalization following an open-minded attitude for cooperation and an open market for trading.

Maritime Operations

The expansion of platform is defined as the comprehensive expansion of U.S. military capabilities into multiple areas from maritime sub-surface and surface and the air. According to Levin & Howard (2015), as the defense strategy into the Asia-Pacific sea region, the Department of Defense (DOD) plans to deploy the most technological-advancement surface ships and aircrafts into the region by 2020: for instance, USS America air-operated ship and USS Ronald Reagan aircraft. Seeing Japan as the strategic military center in the region, DOD plans to deploy Aegis-capable destroyers and F-35 airplanes in 2017, all of which are considered most expensive military weapons system in history. Moreover, the most recent budget reserved for military weapons also shows an investment of $9.9 billion by 2020 to produce 47 P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft which will be transited to Asia-Pacific region.

The expansion of platform as a defense strategy for maritime security resembles to the counter-ISIS plus approach in which the U.S military forces combine various tools (e.g. airpower, advisers, special operation forces, intelligence, and diplomacy) to destroy threats of terrorist networks and to pacify violation to human rights (Brands & Feaver, 2017). An important implication of the counter-ISIS plus is the maintenance of operation rather than the initiation for war conflicts among the local partners in the Middle East. Similar view is observed for the case of maritime security in how the U.S. navies consider maritime operations rather than war. The reason is that the United States has adopted a liberal view into its definition of world order since 2007 and therefore its strategic thinking involves the capabilities of U.S sea power in dealing with peace arrangement and operation (Bekkevold & Bowers, 2016). In the highlight of Naval Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Recovery (HA/DR) tasks, the manual strategy issued by Department of Defense in 2015 indicates the projection of naval forces as smart power in support for human rights (e.g. secure human lives and support human relief) and in assistance for natural disasters (e.g. 2010 Haiti earthquake, 2011 Japan tsunami, 2013 Philippines).

The partnership formation with countries in the Asia-Pacific region is also marked with the attempt of the United States to expand the platforms by means of oversea exercises and freedom of action. Some notable oversea exercises are listed as follows: the 2003 exercise conducted the U.S., Japanese, Australian, and French Navies on capturing the illegal cargo in the Coral Sea, the 2006 exercise between the U.S. and Thai Navy on ship hijack with military cargo in the Strait of Malacca, and the 2006 multi-national exercise on resolving terrorist threats from sea mines in the South China Sea (Parfomak & Frittelli, 2007). Meanwhile, freedom of action refers to the rapidness and effectiveness of U.S. capabilities in dealing with maritime challenges (Levin & Howard, 2015). The deployment of Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) in Singapore and other Southeast Asian States as well the Republic of Korea and deployment of Mobile Landing Platform (MLP) in the region are efforts to fulfill the attempt to eliminate piracy and to conduct missions related to disaster rescue.

Freedom of Navigation

The tension between the U.S. and China over claims on freedom of navigation in South China Sea comes from two primary resources. First, it is the United States Congressional objection in signing the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the signing agreement of the treaty also means that the U.S. will have to sacrifice its sovereignty on sea power (Cole, 2016). The objection to ratification also comes from the reason that there are oppositions encountered from U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, and DOD as related governmental agencies on sea matters. The United States is concerned that China would make use of UNCLOS to indicate its sovereignty on a vast area of sea territories in East and South China Seas as its own exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The second source that is causing tension in South China Sea is the fact that since 2005 more attention has been paid to the U.S.'s proposal of Freedom of navigation (FON) program through which Washington indicates the legality and consistency with international law in the preservation for freedom of seas and the role of naval and air forces in the maintenance of national interests (Odom, 2015). An important element of FON program is the defense strategy which is divided into diplomatic and operation efforts against excessive rights of sea territories. While the diplomatic effort refers to the U.S. Department of State's effort in encouraging other states to declare their sea claims against excessive claims by means of issuing official requests as formal objections, the operation effort refers to the DOD and Coast Guard efforts to conduct FON operation (FONOP) programs and activities which are considered as challenges to excessive claims.

Beijing's process of military aggression on South China Sea can be explained in terms of the nation's interest in economic and strategic passageway of Asian waters through which China can reinforce its leadership in maintaining security in Asia (Heath, 2015). In dealing with it, the FON and FONOP programs can be seen as Washington's effort to cease Beijing's maritime advancement in South China Sea under the regulation of international law and military capacity since China concurrently expands a construction of a large artificial island of 1,379 acres around Mischief Reef in 2016 after China's reclaim for the 3,000 acres of Spratly Islands in early 2014 (Ratner, 2017).

The only main concern for this is the decline of U.S.'s activeness in resolving territorial disputes in South China Sea. The U.S. is facing the probability of increasing costs and risk for U.S operations regarding funding for strengthening military assets or even a possible destructive regional war between the two countries (Odom, 2015). In recent year 2017, the America's FONOP program and the prerogative to fly, to sail, and to operate (FSOP) have been questioned in terms of its effectiveness in controlling Beijing's moves in reconstructing and militarizing the South China Sea (Emmerson, 2017).

DISCUSSION

China in Trump's Asia Policy

The case of China is mostly mentioned in Trump's Asia policy. Articles of Gordon (2017), Kausikan (2017), and Lind (2017) addressed this region in the image of challenging power against the United States. China was the main challenger for the U.S. as it posed two major issues for consideration: sovereignty claim with South China Sea and U.S. deadlock attitude toward China's aggressive behavior. Gordon (2017) predicted that apart from the current challenge with nuclear war from Iraq and North Korea, the U.S. would likely to face a period of five to ten years in South China Sea; in order to respond to face the war threat, the U.S. would need to implement tougher economic measures so as to weaken military power. According to Lind (2017), the main factor that caused China's aggressive behavior is the country's establishment for revisionist power in its attempt to transform the regional balance of power with the U.S. and its Asia-Pacific regional partners. China's own revisionism is considered the cause of allies to respond with alarm on sovereignty issues in South China Sea.

In response to the fact that China's policy makers are not entirely advocates of liberal international system, Lind (2017) suggests that the ease of tension can be achieved if Trump administration pursue less amount of revisionist strategy. According to Lind (2017), it is especially true for China for the reason that its policy makers are not entirely advocates of liberal international system. Apart from military modernization, recent years have observed a greater influence in economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. However, a concern for a liberal economic development is what concerns observers of Chinese economic reforms

It was mentioned that the most frequent tactics used by Trump is the so-called art of negotiation. Through the emphasis on the art of the deal, Gordon (2017) predicted that Trump would use negotiation as the art to deal with his opponents; however, negotiation does not guarantee a successful implementation for its unpredictability and somehow even leads to open conflicts and confrontational policies.

U.S. policy in Asia Pacific

In the form of a review of recent works written by experts specialized in a discussion on current development of U.S. policy in Asia from Trump administration, Kausikan (2017) highlighted two important points about Asia policy in Trump era. First, during his administration, Trump feels compelled to emphasize how his decision-making for policies differs from his predecessor; however, it would have been better to stress the consistency of U.S. policy toward Asia-Pacific. Second, too often in the past, the United States has behaved as if it enjoys a monopoly on legitimate values. Ikenberry (2017) further examined the role of the U.S. in the maintenance of the liberal international order in the implementation of foreign policies. On the pursuit of a U.S.-led system in a liberal order, Ikenberry (2017) emphasized that the U.S-led system is important for the country to advance its economic, political, and security interests in the modern days.

Against all odds, the current administration is posing a question of Trump's revisionism for its warranty of a liberal democracy in the community. In such the situation, Trump's foreign policy has been criticized for an American first agenda where Trump has constantly implemented restrictions in economic development and immigration rules. In terms of economic development, Trump might probably turn Asia policy to be a zero-sum game in trading and commitment to open trade with countries in Asia-Pacific region. In terms of immigration rules, it is possible to envision that his Asia policy will tighten for immigration rules for countries with positing security threats from nuclear weapons and social injustices.

Will China's effort end in Tragedy?

As opposed to the liberal emphasis of trading for mutual benefits, China is also being claimed for its cheating and exploiting behaviors in the international market. Mearsheimer (2006) predicted that China is behaving similarly to the way the United States established its dominant power in the Western hemisphere by pushing away the greater influence of the European. China would probably not tolerate peer competitors and the country is certain to pose threats to its neighboring countries who prevents its ways from achieving the status of a regional hegemony. Nevertheless, in replacement of this tragic prediction, China will continue to reinforce its hegemonic stability by a vision of independence from the established dominant economic powers and an identity of a cooperative trader in the world market.

The lack of liberal mindset in American legacy for foreign policies in Trump administration is probably due to the China's involvement in Australia as implicitly implied in Fullilove (2017). The American alliance with Australia is considerably affected by the bipolar consideration for the rise of China, the result of which is the debate for Australia to pursue a greater independence from the United States and a closer alliance with China. China's assertiveness and Chinese Communist Party have played an intervening role in financial sector in Australia. Therefore, Australian foreign policy is argued for a turning to accommodate China's economic rise and leaves a neglect for the United States alliance for security guarantee. Apart from China's economic rise, North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs are also the pragmatic consideration for Trump's China policy, especially when China and the United States pursue different national interests on Korean Peninsula. An Australian perspective for American foreign policy in Asia expects President Trump to adopt a firm attitude to deter China's effort to impose pressure on other Asian countries.

Opposition to U.S.' Stricter Asia Policy

Criticism against President Trump administration is considerably grounded on his violation to the theory of liberalism in international politics. The lack of cooperation in a peaceful manner for economic benefits and security enhancement with other countries and regions and the isolation of himself from the conventional foreign policy in Asia caused him to be termed as an erratic figure of presidency in the United States. Another point to consider is that his decision-making is unconventional as compared to his predecessors, especially to what he thinks to follow his statement of an 'American first' policy as a slogan during his campaign and even emphasized after his victory.

In the form of a review of recent works written by experts specialized in a discussion on current development of U.S. policy in Asia from Trump administration, Kausikan (2017) highlighted two important points about Asia policy in Trump era. First, during his administration, Trump feels compelled to emphasize how his decision-making for policies differs from his predecessor. Second, too often in the past, the United States has behaved as if it enjoys a monopoly on legitimate values. Moreover, the current criticism is posing a challenge of Trump's warranty of a liberal democracy in the community. Trump's foreign policy has been criticized for an American first agenda where Trump has constantly implemented restrictions in economic development and immigration rules.

Evidently, the critique gained from the selected articles can be categorized into a defensive realist perspective. It seems true to confirm that the United States has changed its foreign policy out of the offensive realist way to maintain its hegemony in the global politics like the country itself used to be. In political context of U.S. rebalance to Asia policy, the most challenging task for President Trump's foreign policies is given to the concern of how to defend domestic economy and domestic security against the threats of China's economic rise.

CONCLUSION

The current world politics in Asia-Pacific region can be classified into the system of great powers (The United States), the system of middle power (Japan), and the system of rising powers (North Korea, and China). In fact, the system of rising powers is the most challenging to handle due to the aim of challenging the status quo of the previous established power; at the same time reinforcing their stability in the international politics. It can be drawn from such interrelationship an address of key challenge for U.S. policy to increase its influence over Japan-the key Asian alliance, to form better deals with China for trade, and to minimize the threat of nuclear power from North Korea.

Findings from the present study also raise some puzzles for U.S. pivot to Asia. First, it is whether liberal perspective influences state calculation for its maximization of military and economic benefits. Second, it seems uncertain to determine whether President Trump follow the world opinion for the determination of his policies. Third, it is the extent to which economic dependence on trading with China will turn out to be beneficial, subject to China's role in Asia is doing harm to economic development around the Asia-Pacific region and. Last but not east, it comes with the question about globalization whether it will bring diplomatic ties among states to be mutual benefits or it will increase aggressive intentions of global dominance that exerts political influence of one state to another? Future studies can address these questions in the examination of similar research topic regarding American foreign policy in Asia-Pacific.

Another point to reconsider is realist emphasis on U.S. national security as in par with liberal emphasis on its maintenance of order. The presented case studies reveal that the U.S. intends to strengthen the freedom of water passageway for economic development and trades in Asia-Pacific waters. Regardless of increasing costs for operation, the U.S. pivot to Asia-Pacific waters can be seen as the possible means to minimize the risks of unfair sovereign claim of South China Sea from the revisionist China.

Therefore, to avoid criticism of government efficiency due to unresolved political tensions with allies in Asia-Pacific region, it would be smart for the United States to pursue a realist development of Asia policy-making that emphasizes fairness and benefits for its Asian partners. The grand strategy of Asia policy toward China can diminish China-oriented impacts if the United States maintains the consistency in dealing with economic and technological policies with key allies or its Asia policy will end in failure.

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