

Relations between Australia and China in Asia-Pacific Region. Case Study: China's Expansionism in Asia-Pacific

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Abstract

The existence and power of China in the international eye can no doubt. One of China's efforts expanded its wings to occur in the Asia-Pacific region. Of course, behind this is China's interests and some other implications that make China an expansionism in the security and economy of Asia Pacific. Australia's proximity to the United States as the largest political, economic and military actor in the Asia Pacific makes Australia's position to be stretched with the Asian-Pacific countries. It is also due to the presence of China as a new force in the Asia-Pacific region which is considered to be an American competitor who has been regarded as a country that has great control over the Asia Pacific through its proximity and assistance given to Australia. China's presence as a force of United States in the region is also due to several historical factors. In this article, the author seeks to describe and analyse how Australia and China relations in the Asia-Pacific region due to China's expansionism by using national security concepts and foreign policy theories.

Keywords: Asia Pacific, Economy, Military, Policy.

Abstrak

Eksistensi dan kekuatan China di mata internasional tidak dapat diragukan lagi. Salah satu upaya China melebarkan sayapnya terjadi di kawasan Asia Pasifik. Tentu, dibalik hal tersebut terdapat kepentingan China dan beberapa implikasi lainnya yang membuat China melakukan ekspansionisme dalam bidang keamanan dan ekonomi di Asia Pasifik. Kedekatan Australia dengan Amerika Serikat sebagai aktor politik, ekonomi dan militer terbesar di Asia Pasifik membuat posisi Australia renggang dengan negara-negara Asia Pasifik. Hal tersebut juga disebabkan dengan hadirnya China sebagai kekuatan baru di kawasan Asia Pasifik yang dianggap sebagai pesaing Amerika Serikat yang selama ini dianggap sebagai negara yang memiliki kontrol besar di Asia Pasifik melalui kedekatannya dan bantuannya yang diberikan kepada Australia. Kehadiran China sebagai kekuatan penyaing Amerika Serikat di kawasan juga disebabkan oleh beberapa faktor sejarah. Dalam artikel ini, penulis berusaha untuk menjabarkan dan menganalisis bagaimana hubungan Australia dan China di kawasan Asia Pasifik akibat ekspansionisme yang dilakukan oleh China dengan menggunakan konsep keamanan nasional dan teori kebijakan luar negeri.

Kata kunci: Asia Pasifik, Ekonomi, Militer, Kebijakan

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Introduction

Australia in a global context is a country that has a distinctive geographical and demographic location and its military powers which are categorized as middle power (Schultz, 2014). When viewed through a regional context, Australia is categorized as a large political, economic and military actor. Australia in the Asia-Pacific region surrounded by different cultures and ethnicities makes Australia a must-have to survive cooperation and issue policies in terms of trade and security for the Asia Pacific. Therefore, Australia has a national and global interest that requires foreign policy and economic activity in a wide scope.

The Australian policy, however, is more inclined to the west, often creating polemic with the Asia-Pacific States (Politik & Negeri, 1974). Australian relations close to the United States and the United Kingdom often become barriers to establishing relationships with Asian countries, especially Asia Pacific (Athiqah Nur Alami, 2013). China has become one of the threat of Australian existence in the Asia Pacific region. China considers that countries in the Asia-Pacific region are easily vulnerable to propaganda and it is utilized by China to be the first step for expansionism in the Asia-Pacific region. China's goal to become a regional leader in the Asia Pacific is realized through diplomatic and economic activities with long-term ambitions of military and economic expansionism.

Australia, in close relationship with the United States as an ally, attempts to offset the power of China in the Asia-Pacific region (Athiqah Nur Alami, 2013). Australia puts the position as a counterbalance for China. In recent years, China's diplomacy is increasingly rising. According to a report from the United Nations General Assembly Meeting, China has increasingly dared to fight criticism and provide direct threats. As

was the case when China succeeded in exploiting the Australian relations with Fiji at the Climate Change policy after the Pacific Islands Forum in Tuvalu, August 2019.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said that Australia's actions have degrading countries vulnerable to climate change and accused Australia of "spreading the China threat fallacy among island countries" (Corro, 2019). China's allegations to Australia have made Australian governments decline in the Asia-Pacific region.

Then, the enforcement of Chinese aid in the Asia Pacific through the One Belt One Road Initiative (TORCH) policy has raised concerns for Australia. According to the Lowy Institute Report, some countries in Asia Pacific such as Samoa, Vanuatu and Tonga have owed much to China. China's presence and influence in the Asia-Pacific region has built a foundation for China to realize its goal of building military bases in the Pacific region. Although Australia is the largest economic and aid nation in the Asia Pacific, it will not be able to cope with its own expansionism made by China in the Asia-Pacific region (Larasati, 2020).

Australia – China's bilateral relations in the last five years have consistently experienced tension. China has also been accused of affecting policies issued by Australia. The tensions of both sides were exacerbated by the massive cyber-attack carried out by the Australian Bureau of Metereology which was widely associated with China. Australia also believes that to build democracy with countries in the Asia-Pacific region requires greater cooperation and integrase than similar countries. In 2018, Britain announced that it was widespread diplomatic presence in the Asia Pacific by establishing new posts in Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga (Larasati, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

In order to produce the right analysis results, the authors will use the national security concept and foreign policy theory as an analysis tool.

A. National Security

Realists and other traditional concepts define the concept of national security as a condition free from military threats or any form associated with military attacks derived from external environments. In international relations. Every actor in particular the country will do everything to achieve the national security of his country. Historically, national security is a very important aspect and value, in which a nation or a citizen is hanging its life in it without exception. It can also be interpreted as a free sense of any kind of threat, anxiety, fear and danger. (*KEAMANAN NASIONAL, PERTAHANAN NEGARA, DAN KETERTIBAN UMUM Oleh: Dr. Kusnanto Anggoro, n.d.*)

B. Foreign Policy

The author uses the theory of foreign policy popularized by Alex Mintz or commonly called a decision-making theory that relies on individual, group, or coalition decisions that can affect the actions of a nation or an international community. Decisions that result in foreign policy are characterized by considerable uncertainty and risk. (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010a)

Foreign policy is a concrete step decision because it can form the final result of a choice. It shows that a decision maker can arrive in different results, depending on the decision of a process. Then, a decision is always influenced by cognitive limitations that can lead to deviations of a decision-making process. (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010b)

Literature Review

A journal titled "Kepentingan Strategis Amerika Serikat di Asia Pasifik" was written by Poltak Partogi Nainggolan, Volume 4 and published by Politica on May 2013. This article focuses on how the United States permanently realizes its interests in the Asia Pacific region after years of focusing only on the Middle East and Europe. This article is also part of the research report on U.S. security policy paradigm in the Asia Pacific region. The method used in the writing of this article is a qualitative method by combining the study of libraries and interviews openly as a data collection technique by revealing the relevance between the United States national interests and the orientation of United States security Policy in Asia Pacific (Nainggolan, 2012). The thing that distinguishes this article with the author journal article is the free variables used. The author's journal article uses Australian foreign policy as a free variable of Chinese research and expansionism as well as the Asia-Pacific region as a bound variable. The thing that equates both is the method used is qualitative method. More specifically, journal article authors are written using qualitative methods of descriptive.

Then, one of the Australian Journal of International Affairs, written by Thomas Wilkins titled "The New 'Pacific Century' and The Rise of China: An International relations perspective". Published by Routledge, Volume 64 number 4, August 2010, the discussion in this journal article is about Pacific Century and its application to contemporary empirical cases and its relationships with international relations theories. This journal article also discusses the improvement of Chinese existence in the Asia-Pacific region. With a multidimensional Analysis method, this journal article aims to form a reappearing debate on Pacific Century and demonstrate the advancement of theories

of international relations in the deconstruction of conceptual problems (Schultz, 2014). The thing that distinguishes this journal article with the author journal article is the focus of the discussion presented. This journal article focuses on Pacific Century, while the author's journal article focuses on the consequences of Australian foreign policy related to China's expansionism in the Asia-Pacific region. The methods used by both journal articles are also different.

Subsequently, one of the Australian Journal of International Affairs titled "Theorising Australia – Pacific Island Relations" was written by Jonathan Scultz, published in 2014 by Routledge with Volume 68 number 5. This journal article focuses on discussing Australian relations with the South Pacific using international relations theory and foreign policy analysis. This journal article explores three important ways in which international relations theory and foreign policy Analysis and the Australian – Pacific Island Relationship study can be mutually beneficial. The same thing between this journal article and the author's journal article is the scope of the discussion between Australia and the Pacific, although this article does not specifically address the foreign policy of Australia. (Schultz, 2014)

Analysis

A. Australia and Asia Pacific

Australia's foreign policy is based on its commitment in the cooperation of multilateralism and regionalism, as well as strong bilateral relations with his allies. Australia's major concerns in foreign policy include free trade, terrorism, refugees and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthened by economic cooperation (Wang, 2016).

Australia is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum. Australia has provided much assistance to neighboring Pacific Islands, as well as to Papua New Guinea. The Australian approach to countries in the Asia Pacific has been regarded as the "Arc of Instability". In August 2006, Australian Defence Minister Brendan Nelson has stated to the Australian Parliament that Australia not only has the responsibility to prevent and assist in humanitarian and catastrophic matters, but also must ensure that one of the Asia-Pacific countries is not a place of transnational crime and terrorism (Wang, 2016).

Since the beginning of 2008, the Australian government headed by Kevin Rudd has begun his strategy called 'New Approach' in the Australian and Asia Pacific relations by appointing a parliamentary secretary to the affairs of the Pacific Island, Duncan Kerr. This approach is one of Australia's partnerships and involvement in Asia Pacific (Roy, 2008).

Australia is a middle-weight power that faces new strategic challenges in the Asia Pacific region. After more than half a decade, Australian leaders have realized that the Asia-Pacific region is less friendly. Australia's foreign policy and the formal defense of the country today are considered to be contrary to perspective and predictive flow of realism. What is agreed upon by Australian policymakers and strategists is the necessity of coordinating all government responsibilities for emergency security services better so that the nation or society meets the growing responsibilities in the Asia Pacific region. National Security Strategy (NSS)-Strong and Secure: is an Australian national Security strategy compiled in January 2013, which clearly defines the major risks of Australian national security including espionage and foreign intervention, the instability of developing countries, cyber malicious activities, weapons polyferation of

mass destruction, terrorism and violent extremism, and other factors. Seeing these threats, then prime Minister of Australia Julia Gillard asked the government to address the dysfunctional policy mechanisms. At the same time, the Government applied significant cuts to the defence budget and a number of security policy objectives were not met.

Political scientist Michael Wesley argued that, since European colonisation, Australia has become a rich, isolated country, and the status quo. It has created a certain Australian stance on the outside world, and has made Australians think again about the world with different characters.

B. China in Asia Pacific

China continues to strengthen its influence across regions of the world in a variety of ways, not only by increasing its naval power by claiming the South China Sea, but also with the economic and military forces through trade activities and building military posts. In 2015, China established a bank called Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with the aim to enhance integrity, connectivity, and support the economy thoroughly as well as to increase the competitiveness of Asian countries (Tiongkok, Kawasan, & Pasifik, 2015). The establishment of AIIB is not separated from the criticism of the international community especially the United States. The United States argued that the establishment of the bank was not detached from China's interest in winning the international economic and political constellations. The establishment of AIIB was regarded as China's soft power to rival the hegemony of the United States through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and AIIB was considered too geopolitical (Tiongkok et al., 2015).

AIIB is one of the many enterprises of China spreading its wings in the Asia Pacific region. Indeed, it is undeniable that China has a very important influence and role in this region especially in the economic sector. China's position in the Asia Pacific is not entirely condemned and opposed, many supporting and affirmed China's position. In 2018 during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit (APEC), China called for the world's leaders to support its efforts to make free trade in the Asia-Pacific region (Dikarma, 2018). As was the case with political officials in Australia, in 2019 Australian Prime Minister Scott Morison regarded the United States as ' friends ' and China as ' customers ', until the statement reaping the condemnation of Chinese citizens (Ita, 2019). Unlike the opposition leader, Bill Shorten said that the Australian and Chinese relations were much more sophisticated and immediately denied the remarks made by Prime Minister Scott Morison. Bill Shorten considers that Australia and the United States are long-standing allies and that does not mean that China should be spearled (Ita, 2019).

C. Australian Relations with China

The relationship between Australia and China has increased rapidly since long. Both countries are actively involved in the cultural, political and economic sectors which include various organisations such as APEC, the East Asia Summit and the G20, which China is Australia's largest trading partner and have invested in Australian mining companies with the aim of helping to meet Australia's economic growth. In recent years, Australia's relationship with China is experiencing a tough time. Later, the relations of the two countries began to deteriorate in 2018 due to the emergence of the concerns of the Australian community in various sectors due to Chinese political influence including governments,

universities to Chinese media and attitudes that were deemed to have passed the boundary on the South China Sea dispute (Yuwen, 2018). It was frankly presented by the head of the foreign Department of Commerce of the Australia in a parliamentary session in Canberra. Australia considers China to be too confused with its country's political affairs. Australia was immediately remodel its intellectual law in order to address foreign interference with the political affairs of his country at a later date. Although Australia was specifically presented by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull that the overhaul of the intelligence law conducted by the Australian Government was not intended only for one particular country (Castelfranco, 2018).

Indeed, significantly the relationship between the two countries is increasing rapidly for the benefit of both countries. However, in the Australian political sector under Howard's reign previously chose not to pursue political and military relations that were too close to China and prefer to defend the role dubbed by George W. Bush as "America's Deputy" in the Asia-Pacific region (Squires, 2003). Australia is a country with a middle power with security stability that relies on the United States but a growing economic relationship and relies on China. A total of 77 percent of Australians regarded China as an economic partner, and 15 percent regarded it as a military threat (Squires, 2003).

China's increasing role and influence, China has become a new centre of gravity in the Asia-Pacific region, where a condition must be accepted by the United States. In addition to having enormous ambitions, China is also supported by economic strength so that the efforts of U.S. rebalancing strategy are increasingly difficult. Such difficulties are also evident from the complex of China's problems with Taiwan, the North Korean

nuclear, the South China Sea maritime territorial issue in which these aspects implicates the United States military presence in the Asia-Pacific region (Al Syahrin, 2018). Although China's foreign policy demonstrates soft play strategy and has indirectly challenged the power of the United States, China is also still trying to divert the forces of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. China's interests are to seek the establishment of a new political and security order in Asia, at least one point China has a sound equivalent to the United States on the issue of the region. China's most prominent and alarming fear is the construction and placement of military personnel around territorial territories that have a risk of breaking the boundaries of China. Given this fear, China has issued policies that define military strategy in the next few years. The threat to its territory claims in the South China Sea is an argument emphasized for this condition. China seeks to create naval powers that are capable of competing against the U.S. Navy and its allies. Control over this contested maritime region has led to an increased tension with the United States (Al Syahrin, 2018).

D. Australian Foreign Policy to Asia Pacific

In the last few decades Australia's decision makers often find challenges in establishing relationships with countries of the Asia Pacific, but Australia's national interests are not significantly changed. Australia's National achievement Strategy in the Asia Pacific relies heavily on the political dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region as well as the strategic culture adopted by its leaders.

Australian-issued policies in defense and security are organized into Australian White Paper with three key words, "Opportunity, Security, Strength". The United States has been a dominant force in

Australia and the Asia-Pacific region throughout Australia's history after World War II, and is currently emerging China's forces that are a challenge to the U.S. position. The White Paper states that China's economy has exceeded the United States economy and will continue to make alliances with the United States an Australian Security foundation. In White Paper it is also explained that if the United States withdrew from its alliance with Asia and pulled its aircraft carrier and submarine from the Pacific, then it could benefit the Chinese party. The White paper has warned the United States of America's withdrawal can lead to conflicts and threaten the stability of the Asia Pacific region. Because, without the support of the United States, the effectiveness and freedom of the regulations will decrease resulting in the level of security and the intended stability will decline.

The advances experienced by China have impacted the Australian economy and became the source of the anxiety of Australian decision makers because of the authoritarian governance of China. White paper suggests this by stating that Australia and China have different interests, values, political and legal systems. It causes friction between both sides.

E. China's Interest in Asia Pacific

China's foreign politics in 1990s demonstrated a different behaviour from previous times. In the 21st century, China has run more moderate foreign politics, described in "new grand strategy" or "security diplomacy" designed to create a positive impression on China and show that the country is a responsible actor in U.S.-dominated international systems. This positive impression was built through the strengthening of the soft power strategy

which was implemented in various foreign political agendas, such as cultural, institutional and alien assistance. Through this new strategy, China expanded its foreign relations and hoped all parties could accept it, forgetting the negative impression describing China as an aggressive country. China's strategy changes are conveyed by its leaders in various forums.

Although small in geographical breadth, population and economic potential, the region does not escape the attention of China. As has been stated above that China is not entirely a new player in the South Pacific. Chinese immigrants have already set foot in the South Pacific since the end of the nineteenth century, even long before that time. As Crocombe declared (2007) that the Austronesians who were the forerunner of the Chinese people landed in the Pacific about 10,000 years ago. They then migrated to various places so Ketersebarannya covered many places in the South Pacific. There are a number of Chinese descendants residing in the Melanesian sub-region (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia), Micronesia (Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Cook Islands). They are categorized into four types, namely Huashang (merchant), Huagong (contract worker), Huaqiao (migrants), and Huayi (Chinese descent who no longer have attachment to his ancestral land) (Willmot, 2007).

Even so, China is not a traditional player in the region. Since the Cold War, China has increased its attention in the region, not because of vacuum of power, but precisely because of the increasing attention and represence of Western countries such as Australia, New Zealand, France, the European Union and Japan. China has established diplomatic relations with the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Niue, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

China's attention is shown by providing financial assistance to the country, and China is listed as a donor country with significant amount of assistance. As a region consisting of many developing countries with a low average national income, China's presence is welcomed with open arms by the leaders of the Pacific countries on one side, but a source of threat to traditional players, in other parties. Western domination became one of the key elements that marked international relations in the South Pacific. The strong dominance is demonstrated by several indicators. First, Western countries are the colonial Powers in the Pacific: The U.S., England, France, Australia, and New Zealand. After independence the political system of these new countries is liberal democracy, at least procedurally. Secondly, the Pacific designation as the "lake (for countries) of the West" is seen from the financial aid received from the countries of former colonial powers. At least until the mid-1990, the colonial Powers still intensively overcame its influence there. Even after the decolonisation process, some territories were still officially the power areas of Western countries, such as Cook Islands, Tokelau and Nieu (under New Zealand), American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands (under U.S. rule), New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna (under French rule). Thirdly, some territories are still a U.S. military base (Northern Mariana Islands, FAS, Republic of Marshall Islands, FSM, Palau American Samoa and Guam). The US also collaborated with Australia and New Zealand to place its troops around the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Thirdly, Christian ideology carried by Colonial countries became a dominant religion in the South Pacific and also marked strong anti-communist sentiments.

In addition to being known as the 'western Lake' the South Pacific is a politically unstable region. The geopolitical

developments in the South Pacific were colored by various internal turmoil. The term 'The arc of instability' of the region is characterized by various instability events, ranging from coup and racial disputes (in Fiji), ethnic group disputes and low-level intensity conflicts (in Solomon, PNG, New Caledonia), weak law enforcement and order in almost all countries, high levels of transnational criminality, such as money laundering, smuggling and trafficking, illegal drug trafficking and small arms, theft of marine wealth, and so on. Normally, the status of South Pacific as the arc of instability makes some countries reluctant to interact with it, but China does the opposite. In some cases, China makes use of it, even one of the contributing factors to the creation of that status. Australia and New Zealand have indirectly invited China's intensive presence in the Pacific. China's penetration was increasing after Australia and New Zealand isolated Fiji After the 2006 coup d'état. Suva's government responded to the isolation by adopting the overseas political 'look North', by bringing closer to China. Australia and New Zealand's stance that suspended Fiji's membership at the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) opened the opportunity for China to be closer to the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) which was the 'competitor' to the PIF. China is the main supporter of MSG, an exclusive group in the South Pacific without involvement of Australia and New Zealand.

Conclusion

The Australian policy is more inclined to the West, often inflicting polemic with the Asia-Pacific countries. Australia, in close relationship with the United States as an ally, attempts to offset the power of China in the Asia-Pacific region. According to a report from the United Nations General Assembly Meeting, China has increasingly dared to fight criticism and provide direct threats.

Australia's foreign policy is based on its commitment in the cooperation of multilateralism and regionalism, as well as strong bilateral relations with his allies. Australia is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum. Australia has provided much assistance to neighboring Pacific Islands, as well as to Papua New Guinea.

The establishment of AIIB is not separated from the criticism of the international community especially the United States. The United States argued that the establishment of the bank was not detached from China's interest in winning the international economic and political constellations. AIIB is one of the many enterprises of China spreading its wings in the Asia Pacific region. Indeed, it is undeniable that China has a very important influence and role in this region especially in the economic sector. In recent years, Australia's relationship with China is experiencing a tough time.

Australia is a country with a middle power with security stability that relies on the United States but a growing economic relationship and relies on China. In addition to having enormous ambitions, China is also supported by economic strength so that the efforts of U.S. rebalancing strategy are increasingly difficult. Control over this contested maritime region has led to increased tension with the United States. Australia's National achievement Strategy in the Asia Pacific relies heavily on the political dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region as well as the strategic culture adopted by its dreams. The White Paper states that China's economy has exceeded the United States economy and will continue to make alliances with the United States an Australian Security foundation. Because, without the support of the United States, the effectiveness and freedom of the regulations will decrease

resulting in the level of security and the intended stability will decline.

The advances experienced by China have impacted the Australian economy and became the source of the anxiety of Australian decision makers because of the authoritarian governance of China. White paper suggests this by stating that Australia and China have different interests, values, political and legal systems. China's foreign politics in 1990-an demonstrated a different behaviour from previous times. Through this new strategy, China expanded its foreign relations and hoped all parties could accept it, forgetting the negative impression describing China as an aggressive country.

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