

CHINA AGGRESSION IN INDO PACIFIC: U.S. STRATEGIES TOWARD INSTITUTIONALIZED REGIONAL SECURITY BLOC

Noraini Zulkifli

Department of International Relations, Security and Law
Faculty of Management and Defence Studies
National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM), 57000, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding Email: noraini@upnm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

China economic and military aggression in Indo Pacific has prompted the US to initiate strategic policy to strengthen its alliances in the region to a networked security architecture, capable of deterring aggression, maintaining stability, and ensuring free access to common domains, with possibility of Indo Pacific regional security alliance formation. For regional interest's sake or preserving U.S. hegemony after humiliating withdrawal from the middle east, the research will ascertain real motives and proof the hypothesis with empirical evidence. This research highlights three objectives namely, to evaluate China aggression threat to Indo Pacific, study the institutionalized of Indo Pacific security alliance possibilities, and the impacts of alliance towards regional stability. It applies a qualitative method using empirical evidence from secondary data and performs content analysis from journal and document from official government and academic websites to proof the evidence validity before forming solid conclusion of the research findings. The research utilizes regional security complex and balance of power theory in ascertaining aggression validity and its' relationship in influencing alliance formation that changes the geopolitics landscape, raising concern over its impact that will be analyzed to answer the research questions. Finding shows, the China threat is mere perception of the U.S concern about losing military hegemony and subsequently adversely impacting its economic might especially dollar as international currency while China coercion act is defensive act protecting its sovereignty. Justification for regional alliance is to preserve U.S. hegemony status quo at the expenses of regional member states. The U.S alliance would attract retaliation with China forming similar bloc that greatly impacted regional stability in four dimensions. The research concludes, China threats is self-defense act and manipulated by the U.S to justify its actions in forming regional alliance to remains a hegemonic at the cost of regional stability and members expenses.

Keywords: *Alliance, China, Hegemony, Indo Pacific, Security Bloc*



BACKGROUND

Since the declaration of the nine-dashed line area in South China Sea as its territories in 2009, China has aggressively embarked in a dual approach to assert its influence as through regional power with massive global economic initiative, BRI and rapid militarization development that perceived as threats to the region security stability by U.S. and regional states. Some analyst suspected, BRI is Chinese Communist Party, CCP's strategic move to achieve "hegemonic power" status while Narendra Modi, Indian Prime Minister cautioned the threat to states sovereignty from connectivity facilitated by BRI, this is strengthened by Mark Esper, U.S. Defence Secretary accusation that China is leveraging its investments under BRI to coerce other states into making suboptimal decision on security. Most experts argued, China move in shaping the regional political order aligned to its national interests using the "Belt and Road Initiative", supported by rapid military expansion and modernization is to challenge U.S. hegemony. For this reason, this research paper seeks to ascertain why China actions become a threat to the region particularly, the U.S. and its allies, besides other regional states.

In addition, on June 1, 2020, Patrick Shanahan, acting U.S. Secretary of Defence, in his department's report on Indo-Pacific strategies said, "Inter-state strategic competition, defined by geopolitical rivalry between free and repressive world order visions, is the primary concern for U.S. national security. In particular, the People's Republic of China, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, seeks to reorder the region to its advantage by leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce other nations." A year later, the U.S. government, on Jan 12, 2021, declassified a national security document detailing Trumps' Indo Pacific region strategy drafted throughout 2017. It specifies key roles that Japan will played in a well structure plan to "deny, defend and dominate" China aggressiveness currently regarded as serious threat for the region. The U.S. National Security Adviser, Robert O'Brien, regards this rare act of transparency as manifestation of U.S serious commitment for the region, its' allies and partners in providing "an overarching strategic guidance" for future actions.

These recent developments in the Indo Pacific between the U.S. and China would surely change overall Indo Pacific security structure as the region has experience after the conclusion of second world war. The establishment of SEATO, a U.S. and western-backed regional defence alliance, in 1954 with affirmed commitment to prevent all out communist assertiveness into the region by uniting regional states under single security cooperation. It was officially disbanded after suffering various difficulties in 1977. There are also other multilateral formations with focus on regional economic, trade and security stability. The U.S. led four regional organisations, ANZUS, the TPP, RIMPAC and the QUAD, while, China led two, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. All these multilateral regional organizations, would have to deal with the impact arising from the competition of U.S and China for bigger influence over Indo-Pacific region. Rory Medcalf of Australian National University added, "This confirms that U.S. strategic policy in the Indo-Pacific was in substantial part informed and driven by allies and partners, especially Japan, Australia and India," Could this pave the way for the



integration of military forces of U.S. allies and other littoral states under one command like NATO?

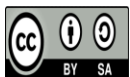
Therefore, this research would study the likelihood of the formation of an institutionalized regional security bloc as a strategic policy move by the U.S. to deter and mitigate potential threats arising from China aggressive act in the regions. Firstly, by ascertaining the threats and their seriousness that prompted the U.S. to make such a move and to secondly, to study the impact of such institutionalised security bloc have on regional stability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review considered studies published over a period of 10 years, from 2011 to 2021 and these materials are sourced from several research database including JStor, Google Scholar and Scopus. It also included data from several U.S. allies' online news websites including, USNI News, Washington Times and The Japan News. Using research and data collection methods in systematic literature reviews, a good number of academic research papers, journals and books have been reviewed and it can be concluded that these literature reviews can be break into three main themes.

A. China Aggressiveness in Indo Pacific

China aggression in the Indo Pacific region in recent years has spark the interest for future evaluation of these threats and the degree of its seriousness to regional states. Miyagi (2019) argued, the rapid expansion of China military and economic power relative to the QUAD members and its activities in the region that perceive aggressive, it would be fair to infer the emergence of threat to the four countries. According to Joshua Andresen (2019), since World War II, no country has pursued a combined vision of economic and commercial growth supported by military expansion more than the US and it makes no secret of the tightly interwoven relationship between its military and economic interests. Heath, (2018) argues China is seen as filling a global stability vacuum left by western powers and China's increased role in the global order is aided by America's latest international recalcitrance. The United States' recent rejection of global institutions and partnerships, as evidenced by its threats to the International Criminal Court, withdrawals from the Human Rights Council, the Paris Agreement, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, all bolster China's self-positioning as a defender of the rule of law, global institutions, and international stability. A view supported by Joshua Andresen (2019), where China faces growing instability in the global order with an anti-globalist U.S. President, a fractured European Union, the rise of populist and nationalist movements across the West, and unabated armed conflict across much of the Middle East and Africa, which reduce China trust on western powers to maintain global economic, trade, and energy stability. Liu Chang (2017) added, in the current environment of increased security threats, European uncertainty, and American unilateralism, many in China perceive a "global governance deficit" and are making explicit calls for increased Chinese engagement. Joshua Andresen (2019) further argued, China's increasing economic and military presence around the world, simply a respond to fill a power vacuum left by western dysfunction. Moreover, it is doing so in the name of developing nations around the world, through international institutions, and with an emphasis on the rule of law, especially non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states as enshrined in international law.



Lockett (2016) asserted, China's reclamation projects for militarization purpose in several locations in Spratly Islands is to strengthen its territorial claims, despite multiple protest by regional states including Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Beech (2018), added, the construction of military infrastructure such as ports and runway with offensive and defensive weaponry on the reclaimed land led to "escalation of tension in the region," while AMTI (2019) cautions that China reclamation activities in seven locations in the Spratly Islands represent serious threat. Gladstone and Wald, (2013) raised concern over possible conflicts arising from China enforcement of its own ADIZ that overlap with those of South Korea and Taiwan. Bonnie S. Glaser (et. al, 2017), infers China super power ambition, by quoting President Xi vision articulated during 19th CCP Congress on October 18, 2017, of becoming "a global leader in terms of comprehensive national power and international influence."

John Hurley (et. al, 2018), conclude, "BRI has led some relatively poor countries, to face significant risk of a sovereign debt defaulted if these BRI projects, mostly financed by sovereign loans, are implemented in a haste without clear and sustainable purpose." The Japanese's Defence White Paper (2019) argued BRI infrastructures gives PLA greater access for expansion into Indian Ocean towards Europe and Africa. Admiral Philip Davidson (2020), the commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's added BRI is a key instrument to advance Chinese security ambitions. While Taiya Smith (2018) argues, China's "assertiveness" with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) appears to be catching up with environmental issues of host states. Jue Wang (2018) asserts China increased active economic involvement with the UN, G20, and IMF is aimed at establishing itself as significant player in international monetary system, while reducing the reliance on U.S dollar as international currency even slightly. Robert J. Hanlon (2017) asserts Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is an excellent example of China's alternative approach to lending in support of development in accordance with its own values of non-interference in the local politics of the receiving country. BRI is using similar approach to its development support.

B. Institutionalized Regional Security Alliance

China military and economic growth has altered the global balance of power in the Indo Pacific region and its aggressive stance on regional politics and territorial disputes suggesting China is set to be a "benign" hegemon. As China manifests its dominance in Indo Pacific, current U.S. bilateral defence alliance partnerships are deemed insufficient to balance the China power, raising the needs for stronger alliance. The re-activation of QUAD with active Indian participation, together with the U.S., Australia, and Japan provides significant opportunity to deter Chinese aggression and help restore peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. Despite, its nature as security dialogue lacking the structure to project collective deterrence power, Capt. D. Myers (2020) viewed QUAD recent development would path the way for formation of U.S led regional defence institutions. Miyagi (2019) argues, the shared threat perception of the QUAD countries towards China and their shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific region have contributed to the re-emergence of the QSD, a new insight in the field of alliance formation in IR. In addition, Jim Mattis (2018) asserts that the policy statement in the U.S. National Defence Strategies 2018 underlined the needs for strengthening alliance capability is critical in achieving the objective prosperous, free and open Indo-Pacific region, while providing security and deterrence against all aggression and ensuring free access to common domains, thus, regional stability. This strategy imply the U.S. focus on having a strong



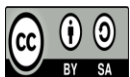
collective military and economic might via alliance with its regional allies that translate into security institution led by the U.S. Moreover, Joseph Tertia, Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, (2018) concludes Indo-Pacific needs a comprehensive maritime security cooperation to preserve increasing seaborne activities while maintaining SLOCs stability.

However, Aaron Bartnick (2020) argued, the institutionalisation of Indo-Pacific into an alliance would be extremely difficult, hinting regional states dependency on China economy and current internal dispute over territorial claims among states. Cheng-Chwee Kuik and Abdul Razak Ahmad, (2021) concludes, coercing smaller states in the region to take sides would create unnecessary divides, triggering a vicious cycles of action-reaction diminish existing cooperative platforms. Bartnick (2020) also hinted, China likely retaliation to any attempts at creating a multilateral military alliance in its backyard. Jason Begley (2020) added, the U.S. unreliability as an ally and the absence of robust, repeatable processes to integrate multinational, multiagency competitive efforts. Bartnick (2020) also offers alternatives in building the Indo Pacific security alliance by extending the existing constructs like the QUAD while revitalizing the Trans-Pacific Partnership as economic replacement for BRI. Some suggested, the need for SEATO-like establishment to mitigate China aggressiveness is justified, while others view the regional alliance is an exaggeration response when numerous existing multilateral and bilateral cooperation is deemed sufficient.

C. Impacts of Security Alliance to Regional Stability

The Indo Pacific regional security alliance would create various impacts to the regional stability. Kai He (2019) suggested having a dynamic security alliance helps regional states address security challenges particularly, regional political uncertainty caused by US-China competition for hegemony in the Asia Pacific. Joseph Tertia (et. al, 2018), asserts that no country is capable of addressing multifaceted security challenges by themselves, thus, collaboration between regional actors is critical. Saroj Bisboyi (2015) agreed that “an Indo-Pacific Regional Security Architecture will be very handy in addressing the common security concerns and threats.” Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General during the review of Alliance’s strategic operation for 2030, said, “we need to work even more closely with likeminded countries like Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea to defend the global rules and institutions that have kept us safe for decades.” While, James Hildebrand (et. al. 2020) suggested NATO must take the lead to become strategic counterweight to China’s rise.

NATO experience inferred, Aaron Bartnick (2020) views, regional alliance in Indo Pacific would reap similar benefits in ensuring regional stability in the form of having structure resilience to withstand Chinese pressure and project stronger deterrence capabilities. Scott W. Harold (et.al, 2019) asserts, the primary consideration driving the Japan and India to deepen cooperation has surely been their shared perception of a growing threat from China to a free and open Indo-Pacific architecture. Secondly, enhance capacity and capabilities to mitigate traditional and non-traditional security threat better through collaborative efforts. Some studies view alliances would lead to greater economic values and improve social and cultural landscape. There is also perspective that a better stability and peaceful environment is achieved by having two superpowers curbing each other actions on the opposite directions while, some views potential volatile security when there is trade embargo by either side of the opposite parties besides spiral occurrence of



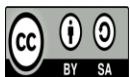
threat and retaliation. Moderate perceived the regional security institutionalization itself as a mere illusion.

The literature review highlighted several gaps in the arguments. Firstly, most view is biased towards perception of China threats and incline to side the U.S point of views. Secondly, no material evidence presented to demonstrate China real threat or threat intention except inference of possibility of it happening based on normal human reactions. Thirdly, accusation of incursion into disputed territorial water is subjected to individual states recognition of international laws in. The sovereign debt defaulted argument also relates to project management effectiveness that can happen to any development project. On the institutionalized of regional security, inadequate literature limits the review to a few studies that looks at the unlikeliness of its establishment on economic overdependence and ASEAN neutrality with uncommon socio-cultural, political preference and past historical experience angle that support the views. This creates gaps in understanding a different perspective of alliance as instrument to balance regional superpower to enable effective deterrence posture with lose-lose outcome to hinder conflict and ensure stability. Thus, a detailed study on these gaps is required to ascertain its validity and to better understand possibilities of establishing a regional alliance as an effective strategy for the U.S to balance China increasing significant as hegemony.

China increasing aggressiveness has not escalated into any all-out war despites some engagements by frontline forces experienced close call on several occasions. A demonstration of strong leadership control by China as “bullying power” in the South China Sea, successfully reframed conflict from escalates in many instances. Puzzling the U.S. and regional states and dampen retaliation effort by the U.S. afraid of being label the aggressor if making the wrong choice. Reviews of literatures on the research topic highlighted grey areas that need to be blacken to understand the topic holistically with concrete evidences to support. Thus, this research will ascertain the threat of China aggression and study the possibility of its escalation leading to the formation of regional security alliance with the U.S as main anchor while analysing the impact of such organization has on regional stability. By doing this, the study aims to fill in the existing research gap in the field of Indo Pacific security studies.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The research, based on literature reviews has identified the significant of regional affairs of states as core element in the research context and the regional security complex theory (RSCT) by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003), which identifies a regional security complex as “a group of states whose primary national security concerns are so closely intertwined together that they cannot be extracted or addressed independently of each other”. It also views security interdependence as “a critical factor in the creation of regionally based clusters.” RSCT provides framework to enable the understanding of rationale in the decision made by actors while facilitate analysis and comparison of regional security of different regions. The traditional (realist), view world order as radical and demand principal actor to take lead by utilizing its power and security strength to balance the power of other countries. While, the neo-realism focuses on international system structure to explain the systemic outcomes and options conditioned by that structure. The Regional Security Architecture (RSA), a framework of standards, practices, relationships, and institutions created by states to explain regional security issues is also considered in the research.



ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



Figure 1.1: Research Framework

Source: Illustrated by author

The research analytical framework used during this research are regional security complex theory (RSCT) by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003), which identifies a regional security complex as a group of states whose primary national security concerns are so closely intertwined together that they cannot be extracted or addressed independently of each other. It also views security interdependence as a critical factor in the creation of regionally based clusters. The research also considered realist views, balance of power concept, together with regional security architecture (RSA) concept (regional framework of standards, practices, relationships, and institutions created by nations) to address issues of regional security in analysing research facts and evidence. Overall, the research identified five independent variables, divided into 3 themes and two intervening variables which were deemed relevant to explain the institutionalization of a regional security bloc in Indo Pacific as U.S. strategic policy approach to new regional geopolitics competition arising from China aggression.

Firstly, Security threat to the U.S., its allies and Indo Pacific Region. For this theme, the relevant IV selected are China military aggressiveness, that cover examination of the extent of China military deployment, modernization, expansion, incursion into disputed territory translated into a threat to the Indo Pacific particularly, the U.S. and its allies. Second, China economic initiatives, that focus on studying the security threat, bring about by the China BRI, CPEC and Iran economic assistance initiatives. The first and second variables were significant to explain the security threat to the Indo Pacific Region.

Second theme is Institutionalisation of Regional Security in Indo Pacific. The Independent Variable for this second theme are the significant of China threat, that examine the level of threat impact to Indo Pacific Region and ascertain its seriousness that could result in establishment of regional security bloc. The Economic Cooperation that examine the inter-allies relationships and disputes that would impact the outcome of regional security bloc establishment and includes their dependency on China economy, trade and security. The third and fourth variables were core determinants in influencing the institutionalization of a regional alliance decision in the Indo

Pacific, where the seriousness of threat impact and economic dependency on China by regional states is key in determining the decision of these states towards regional security alliance notion.

The third theme is the impact of regional security bloc establishment towards regional security stability. The Independent Variable for this third theme is regional security architecture of the established security bloc that examine its' structure, framework of standards, practices, relationships and operations impacts towards the security stability. This final variable, regional security architecture and operation of the established security bloc, significantly impacted regional stability. These independent variables have provided some empirical evidence that suggest the outcomes of the dependent variable to satisfy the problem statements and thus, answers the research questions, which will be elaborated later. Lastly, the U.S. and China leadership and foreign policy attributed as the intervening variables which are able to strengthen and weaken the notion of institutionalization of Indo Pacific regional security bloc or alliance.

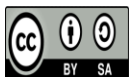
METHODOLOGY

This research would be using qualitative techniques using secondary data and content analysis. The secondary data used in the study would be collected and gathered from credible sources, printed and online, such as scholarly journal articles and publications, books, policy documents, white papers, government records, official documents and official news as illustrated in Figure 1.2. This research considered studies, facts and empirical evidences that have been published over a period of 10 years, from 2011 to 2021 and these materials are sourced from several research database including JStor, Google Scholar and Scopus. It also included data from several Indo Pacific states' governments official website besides U.S. and its allies' online news websites including, USNI News, Washington Times and The Japan News.

A systematic literature reviews approach is used as research methodology and data collection to fulfill the fundamentals of academic inquiries. I have used the standard data collection process as follows: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies (Y. Xiao & Watson, 2017). This systematic research methodology would attempt to collect, evaluate and synthesize available empirical evidence that fulfill the pre-defined criteria in order to answer a research question, satisfy problem statement and achieved the research aim in ascertaining the needs for U.S led institutionalized regional security bloc in redefining Indo Pacific competition space in countering China aggressiveness that impacts to the regional security stability.

Content analysis would utilise process tracing techniques in findings empirical evidence from official government and academic website and sources to support or reject the hypothesis made. As for data analysis, the research will be using the Regional Security Complex Theories (RSCT) and two key concepts which are the balance of power and the Regional Security Architecture (RSA).

In performing this research, some selective criteria have been used. Firstly, focus is on peer-reviewed academic articles with minimum judgmental and opinion piece. Nonetheless, these working papers are good publications that can strengthen understanding on the subject under reviews. Secondly, this paper is biased towards research studies published in English based Journal. This selection has no implication to the other journals or works quality or reliability. Thirdly, the selection of reviews is based on a simple and reliable inclusion criterion, as only the Social Science Citation Indexing (SSCI) papers are chosen for this study. Thus, all selected peer-



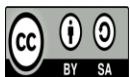
reviewed papers, have been published in the high-quality and reputable journals with high impact factors in academic research. Finally, the strategy and policy technical reports and online news publications based on countries or organizations would be thoroughly examined for accuracy before being considered as facts and empirical evidence for this research to ensure research quality.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Overall, the research identified five independent variables, divided into 3 themes and two intervening variables which were deemed relevant to explain the institutionalization of a regional security bloc in Indo Pacific as U.S. strategic policy approach to new regional geopolitics competition arising from China aggression. The first and second variables were China military and economics aggressiveness respectively, that explain the security threat to the Indo Pacific Region. The third and fourth variables were the significant of China military threat and economic cooperation respectively as core determinants in influencing the institutionalization of a regional alliance decision in the Indo Pacific, where the seriousness of threat impact and economic dependency on China by regional states is key in determining the decision of these states towards regional security alliance notion. The final variable is regional security architecture and operation of the established security bloc that impacted the regional stability. Lastly, the U.S. and China leadership and foreign policy attributed as the intervening variables which are able to strengthen and weaken the notion of institutionalisation of Indo Pacific regional security bloc or alliance. Based on these variables, this research established three hypotheses, which will be further discussed in the findings section.

China goal of becoming a global power, dictating in its strategic policy and recent aggressive actions provided strong empirical evidence that raises the regional security concern while the U.S. hegemony objective is regarded as another decisive element that influence the end outcomes. The most critical elements and play a significant role in determining the threat to the U.S and its allies in Indo Pacific were China military modernisation including militarization and economic initiatives, BRI, that enhance connectivity between China and the rest of the world that challenge the U.S. current dominance. The self-interest of the U.S to protect its hegemony and the entwining of regional states between dependency to China and fear of the U.S. It also highlighted key hinderance to alliance, the diversity of states political system, ideology and culture. Consistence with regional security complex theory by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003). More positive outcomes arising from regional alliance formation if key regional diversity can be amicably reached a settlement. The most crucial element is the strong correlation of intervening variables in influencing the regional stability outcomes and the importance of balance of power within the regional security architecture framework. China does have the intention to become global power as visioned by President Xi Jinping and has manifest these policy commitments through China embarkation of massive and rapid economic, Belt and Road Initiative to strengthen and expand its economy to ensure sustainability by leveraging onto regional states strengths and growth. A win-win program to uplift regional economy development and connectivity via critical infrastructure projects with significant multiplier effects upon completion. The research findings are summarized into three themes:

i. Threat of China Aggressiveness in Indo Pacific.



China military modernization and militarization program, inferring hegemony intent, provided credible security to its economic initiatives while providing effective deterrence against any threats to its national interests overseas and preserving its territorial sovereignty. These actions, similar to western strategy of the past, is perceived as threat by the U.S and its allies despite inadequate evidence to support the claim. Empirical evidence provided several small incidents or conflict in the East and South China Sea involving PLA and China Coast Guard vessels enforcing their sovereignty within disputed territorial water also claimed by other littoral states, a difficult security situation to ascertain its legitimacy despite international ruling, denying China assertion of nine-dashed line, which Beijing objected. Others provided a mere “prediction” of potential China threats which consistence with China willingness to withdraw its forces on numerous occasions showing its “considerate intention” while constantly assert its provocation reflecting “taking chance” tactic.

Nonetheless, China true intention in building its military forces, is yet to be known, rebutting U.S claims of regional threats but more of a threat to U.S. hegemony. However, according to the analysis, the establishment of integrated fully weaponized military islands bases forming networks of “string of pearls” infrastructures along critical maritime routes within the region, does represent serious threats to regional security and the U.S., considering intervening variables in the threat equation. Meanwhile, BRI is viewed as an instrument of Diplomacy Debt Trap with malicious intent that pose serious threat to national security of host countries despite lack of empirical evidence to substantiate this claim except for a few cases of host countries temporarily surrendering control of their sovereignty and interest to contra their debts commitment. However, sufficient evidence does reflect BRI depriving locals of economic benefits besides negative repercussion of closure of local businesses due to cheaper China imports. In addition to espionage activities accusation by the African Union’s in 2018. As infrastructure projects would takes a long period of time to justify its return to investment, BRI effectiveness and success could only be assessed fairly in the future and it is very much influenced by political regime in power over the period.

Analysis also provided insight of reasons used to justify threat perception against China as reaching thin line of preservation of international rules and order by helping Iran and Pakistan to escape certain international sanctions but at the same time, Israel, a pro-western state committing worse atrocities was spared from punishment. Similarly, the pretext of preserving freedom of navigation excuse does not carried any weight as China has not demonstrated any violation of free passage except for those in its claimed territorial waters. Most researchers opinionated, the main reason behind the threat allegation against China is to protect the U.S. economy hegemony currently at stake if the U.S. losses its military dominance, a threat to dollar as international currency which have huge repercussion not only to the U.S economy but also other Western power dominating international trade of commodities and energy.

ii. Institutionalization of Indo Pacific into Regional Security Bloc

According to the analysis conducted, the Indo Pacific have experienced a formal regional alliance, the SEATO, to mitigate communism ideological intrusion into the region after the end of World War Two. However, it could not be sustained due to cultural and religion incompatibility besides members states internal issues particularly, political instability and economic under-development. Similarly, in today situation, where past issues of diverse cultural, race and religion including



political systems still significant, the establishment regional security alliance are deemed impossible endeavour. Evidence suggested the level of thrust and sincerity among members are questionable while their purpose for collaboration differed substantially despite having common enemy. Even the reliability of the U.S in its commitment is questions evaluating from its action of abandoning Afghanistan in recent years. Analysis also revealed the entanglement of middle power and regional states on interest over China and the U.S, as proposed by the regional security complex theory, limiting alliance formation possibility.

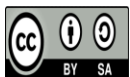
The proponent provided argument that the new regional alliance is a mere extension of existing defence pacts between the U.S. and regional states, offering adequate justification, however, deeper analysis revealed delicate issues unique to individual state that contradicted with others interest, and significantly influenced by regime change. Despite, the aim of projecting collective deterrence against, “imaginary” China threat is absurd, it does represent the most credible rationale as combined regional alliance forces should surpass China military strength with exclusion to nuclear deterrence element if not triggering another cold war. Regional alliance is more of benefiting the U.S hegemonic, at the cost of the other alliance member states.

iii. Impact of Institutionalised Security Bloc Towards Regional Stability

The analysis suggested positive correlation between institutionalisation of regional security alliance and regional stability in all the dimension, security, economic, political and international rules preservation. Firstly, it projected powerful security deterrence against any threat, traditional and non-traditional while strengthening members states military and limiting arm race between members, ensuring a stable region. Secondly, its contributed significantly towards regional economic growths and balancing income distribution, in turn, increasing prosperity to promote more socio-economic stability translated into political security despites some concern of its contagious effect as demonstrated by the Asia financial meltdown in at the end of last century. Thirdly, evidence showed the increasing cost of conflict under alliance, act to deter escalation of conflict as medium to solve problem while strengthen cooperation enable effective preservation of international laws. Lastly, the Indo Pacific regional stability greatly impacted by the institutionalisation of regional security alliance and required comprehensive and holistic policy approach.

The China aggressiveness, both, the militarily and economically, is a threat to the U.S and its allies in Indo Pacific in term of the U.S. hegemony power preservation reasoning rather than a real threat to the region security stability. Evidence demonstrate China perceived military assertiveness in the South China Seas is act of self-defence, protecting own sovereignty legitimacy in disputed area rather than to intrusion with intent to coerce into neighbouring territorial for empire’s expansion as in its past history.

The research also pointed out that the economic assertiveness is a threat to U.S. economic hegemonic particularly its dollar as international trade currency if replaced by the Chinese Yuan could destroyed the U.S domestic economy and relegated it significant whereas, for the other regional states, it provided a new economic development and connectivity opportunities at unprecedented rate and a space to break free from U.S dependency. Thus, reflecting the U.S. self interest motives in creating “threat” perception against China using the resources of regional states and answering the first research questions of why China become threat to the U.S., its allies and



other littoral states within the Indo Pacific region while fulfilling the first research objective of ascertaining the threat.

From the analysis, there were supportive empirical evidence in favour of the second hypothesis from the U.S. perspective while from regional states, the evidence is non-conclusive due to individual state internal issue. China threat is significant to the U.S hegemony preservation and national interest that justify the establishment of Indo Pacific institutionalised regional security bloc led by the U.S. The evidence suggested, U.S declining domestic economy and loss of competitiveness has endangered its economic hegemonic as international currency to facilitate trade and business, while limited military funding jeopardized its military operations in multiple regions, as demonstrated by its withdrawal from the Middle East, reduces its capacity and capabilities as military hegemony that play crucial roles in preserving its economic hegemonic advantages.

The analysis revealed the significant of the U.S. to utilise alliance resources and capacity to extend its capability through basing and financial support of its massive military operations to balance the increasing power of China military in the Indo Pacific region as proposed by the balance of power theory. However, the feasibility of Indo Pacific in institutionalising an alliance is clouded by numerous differences in term of values, cultural, religion and political systems, among potential members which in most cases contradicting with each other and leading to conflict. Thus, the institutionalisation of Indo Pacific is significant to the U.S strategy in balancing the China power, answering the second research question and this development would re-defined a new competition space in Indo Pacific and satisfied the research second objectives of studying the institutionalisation possibilities.

The establishment of Indo Pacific security alliance of bloc will ensure regional stability in multiple dimensions and answer the last research questions of analysing the impact of regional security stability when Indo Pacific become an institutionalized regional security bloc. The findings pointed out the strengthening of security stability with strong collective deterrence credibility from the alliance and forecasted China retaliation with its own alliance, rising risk of possible new cold war, which in the past provided regional security stability. Evidence proved alliance promote greater economic prosperity while containing members' domestic political instability to further strengthening regional politic and stability.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research ascertained the threat arising from China military and economic aggression and study its significant to justify the institutionalisation of regional security bloc while analysing the impact of such alliance establishment towards regional security stability. Using secondary data methodology and content analysis focusing on regional security complex and balance of power theory, the research utilised analytical framework of five independent variables to fulfill three dependent variables in satisfying the problem statements of, “Does U.S. National Security Strategic Policy to strengthen its Indo-Pacific alliances into a networked security architecture, the solution to China aggressiveness and leads to establishment of an institutionalised Indo Pacific Regional Bloc to ensure regional stability.” Overall, the findings of the research analysis indicated the China aggression is mainly threatening the U.S hegemonic power in the regions and the justification for regional alliance institutionalization centered at preserving that



U.S. hegemony by utilizing regional and allies' capacity and capabilities to balance the rapid China military and economic expansion. However, the effectiveness of this strategy of the U.S in achieving its national interest very much dependent on regional security architecture framework of the alliance which influenced by regional security complexity that very complicated due to diverse values, cultural and political system, while, the intervening variables play decisive roles on the outcomes.

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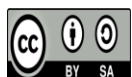
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