



CHINA STRATEGIC ROLES OVER ARTIC REGION AFTER U.S- RUSSIA DIPLOMATIC DRIFT IN 2015 CRIMEAN CRISIS

Palupi Anggraheni

Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia
palupianggraheni@umm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Arctic regions, on the northern pole of the earth, have attracted many countries with various interests. The United States, Russia and several Scandinavian countries, each have claims over its regions, which are known to have abundance natural resource. Besides its potential, Arctic also become the most vulnerable area whom embrace the direct impact of global warming. Russia as a country with wide territorial borders directly to Arctic region, certainly has a big role in this region. But, Russia's relationship with several Western countries such as the US and Canada had not been in a good condition in 2015, since the Crimean crisis. Several psywar through mass media, even led Russian President Vladimir Putin decides to leave the G20 Annual Summit. Putin's gesture somehow was seen as Russia implied response to the world related to the Crimea crisis which boldly stated that Russia was not afraid of the threat. The instability of Russia's relations with its neighboring countries which incidentally also borders the Arctic region opens the role of other countries to participate in this region, including China. This articles focused on describing out the China Strategic Policy in the Arctic region by identifying its national interests, and what policies China has taken to achieve its goals. The concept of securitization developed by BarryBuzan and Ole Waever is used as an analytical tool to identify China's strategic role in the Arctic region

Keywords: *China, Securitization, National Interest, Artic Region*

Introduction

The Arctic region has embrace various transformation since the end of the Cold War. A vast region which was once monopolized by two superpower states, the US and the Soviet Union, has attracted many players to be involved in it. As of the past ten years eleven countries have decided to set representatives at the level of ambassadors in the Arctic

region (Gushcin, 2013). Generally, those countries average motives is clear, i.e. expanding possibilities for further implementation of each other interests in the Arctic, especially in estimating potential natural resources possessed by Arctic and the possibility of exploring the route of cargo ships from Europe to Asia. Besides, issue of global climate change is a major concern of environmental experts which has major implications for further formation of a political system and legal law. Moreover, strategic policies from several countries concerning Arctic natural resources, including further master plan in developing commercial shipping route, also viewed as an interesting issue to be examined. Since contemporary global political constellation is no longer heavily relies on two major powers, but tends to rely on multipolar nature, such cooperation among countries with similar interests will play significant role in the future. On the other side, Russia and the United States (US) still recognizes as two major powers whose role is quite influential on the stability of the region. Thus, Russia's relation with many countries, including several US's allied countries whose has direct border with Arctic is certainly an important part in the effort to maintain stabilization in the Northern Hemisphere.

US- Russia bilateral affairs in 2015 began to deteriorate, caused by different foreign political orientation between the two countries concerning to the Crimean crisis since 2008. Explicit support from Russian government to the Crimean belligerent also appeared in Crimean referendum in 2015. Moreover, Russia support also received heavy critics from nearby countries leader, especially state whom joined European Union. Russia action through in 2015 Crimean referendum was considered as a threat for regional stability, especially in Eastern Europe. Critics towards Russia foreign policy and its action in response of Crimean crisis was highlighted, after the shooting of MH17, a Malaysian-based civilian aircraft on route Amsterdam-Kuala Lumpur. Despite pilot's decision why it should pass through this dangerous route still debatable, further investigation proved that this civilian aircraft was shot by land missiles BUK made by the former Soviet Union (Knipp, 2015). This condition also arise protest from several countries origins of MH17's victim such as Australian and the Netherlands. Both of the two states' representatives urged that Russian government should held responsibilities for this action (Barnes, 2018).

As Russia's intervention in the Crimea is feared that many leaders of surrounding countries will affect European regional stability. This decision also has other consequences, such as: Russia should encounter few countries, that in the context of the Crimean issue, become US allies such as Australia, Canada and the core of EU countries, such as France and Germany. The world leader critical response which urge Russia to loosen its intervention in the Crimea seems to be continued at a higher level, such as the APEC Summit and the G-20 Summit. This condition, somehow is believed become the background of President Vladimir Putin's decision to leave the G-20 forum early. Some interrelated events show a series of indications that supports the authors argument that diplomatic relations between Russia and its neighbouring countries in response to Crimean Crisis are not working properly. This condition, can be said that the relations between the two countries are in one of the lowest positions in 2014 (Fishe, 2014).

This difference of opinion is of course also developing not only limited to political rhetoric but also affects other sectors, including trade cooperation. While Russia's relations with US's allied countries are deteriorating, on the other hand there are opportunities for

other countries including China to play their strategic role with Russia in the Arctic region. Offshore cooperation with Russia seems to be of particular concern from China. For 15 years, China's activity off the Arctic coast has always increased systematically as the need for energy is increasing (Kuersten, 2015). The emergence of China and the strategic role that it brings must have positive and negative consequences, especially on the geopolitical dynamics of the Arctic Peninsula region. This article focuses on describing out the China Strategic Policy in the Arctic region by identifying its national interests, and what policies China has taken to achieve its goals.

Research Methods

This study uses qualitative research with explanatory case studies as research method and using library research as data collection methods. The aim of this study is analyzing China's foreign policy orientation in Arctic region as US-Russia diplomatic drift over Crimean Crisis. The unit analysis for this research is China foreign policy motives over Arctic region whom explained using energy security concepts. But, before further explaining on China's foreign policy, the researchers explain first the process of securitization of energy security discourse in Arctic whom increased in accordance with its regional instability as an effects of Crimean Crisis.

Conceptual Approach

In this part, the authors will use Barry Buzan concept on securitization, on describing the process of securitization in the context of Crimean Crisis, and then analysing China's increasing strategic role in the Arctic region by Energy Security concept. The first concept is used to describe the securitization process through the elaboration of three basic components of securitization, according to the Macro Securitization concept of Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver. The secondly, China Strategic Role in Arctic will be elaborated through Energy Security concept.

Barry Buzan's Macro Securitization Concept

This article will use Barry Buzan concept of Macro Securitization as a framework to describe several factors on China Strategic Role over Arctic. Besides, a brief definition of national interest, will briefly use as a medium to conceptualize China's motives first.

The Macro Securitization concept based on the concept of securitization, which is closely related to the Copenhagen School which is depicted as a synthesis of constructivist and classical realist approaches to security studies. Barry Buzan explained securitization as a formed process of certain issue into a threat, which mostly is declared by the political elite inside and then accepted by the audience (other actors around it) (Stone, 2009, p. 8) The idea of Macro Securitization departs from the same assumptions but on a larger scale, especially the goals that realize the formation of security issues, agendas and their relationship to the larger system base. (Stone, 2009) This system base can be in the form of universal construction of the threat itself or referring to certain objects. The emergence of the system base as explained by Buzan can arise due to two causes, globalization and trust in a universal ideology. The basic components of securitization are:

- a. Securitizing actor / agent: an entity that makes a securitization statement
- b. Referent object: an object that is threatened and needs to be protected
- c. Audience: the target of securitization actions that need to be convinced and accept these conditions as a security threat (Buzan, Barry : waver, 1998).

In addition, securitization can be seen through five sectors, namely politics, military, economy, social and environmental conditions. Furthermore, securitization often occurs by involving more than one basic component.

The author's argument uses this concept because there are actions and statements from the leaders countries around Russia which addressed that Russian intervention in Crimea is seen as a regional threat and thus expected Russia to change its foreign policy orientation. Regardless of whether this is successful or not, the issue of securitization actually has an impact on the emergence of new actors in the Arctic region that allow China to play a strategic role in the region.

Energy Security

Energy Security concept emphasize on the new challenging on security, especially in the context of preserve, distribute and securing energy resource. For more globalized world, when energy consumption is dominating As the derivatives concept under Security Studies framework, this concepts also helps describing how actors identify and creates response around energy scarcity issue for the sake of each states national interest (Klare, 2008). Furthermore, Klare argues that one main challenges in understanding energy security is the lack of common understanding between states in defining their own perception of energy security. States mostly lay their foundation on security based on their subjective values such as: geographical location, resource endowment, level of economic development, system of governance and many other factors, which somehow led into differences paradigm and prone to create conflicts. Moreover, even the element of energy security itself has wide-range of scope, Luft and Korin classified two different type of energy security challenge based on their usage sector, i.e. a). Transportation b). Electricity.

The distinction above shapes each country perception about energy security and thus helps us understanding each countries action to identify and solve their threads. Based on conceptual proximity of energy security to this article focus, i.e. analysing China strategic role over Arctic Region, security studies will be used as foundational concept to analyse the case.

Another framework for energy security especially in China interest and foreign policy, comes from Xu Yi-chong who conceptualized several identification on how China government viewed energy distribution, as potential threat for its national interest (Chong, 2008, p. 45). Yi-chong argues that China behaviour which actively exploring potential energy resources, is affected by its increasing demand of energy consumption. As China's economy growth increased, China has had one of the fastest growths in energy demand in the world in the past two decades (Chong, 2008, p. 46). Yi-chong referred from China Statistical Bureau, China Statistics Yearbook, which shows that in several years even China had been an active consumers on energy since 1980's, only in 2000's showed that in the first time its energy consumption exceeded its annual GDP. It means the China government at least has already

alarmed that its economic growth also brought threat for its future energy resources. The steady growth of China economic also predicted will increase world's consumption rate on oil and gas faster than oil. Moreover, Yi-chong also highlighted how another state perceives China's action. China striving action for more energy resources is considered a threat to world peace more by American scholars and policy makers comparing to those European's counterpart respectively (Chong, 2008, p. 42). For American scholar, this assumption based on historical aspect as they reflect Japan expansive foreign policy orientation towards energy in early 20th centuries in order to further participate in global dominance of world politics whom consequently lead into several intertwining factors whom also plays significant caused for First and Second World War.

Furthermore, Sabrina Howel brings another conceptual explanation about energy security especially on China's foreign policy orientation. Howel describes several energy vulnerabilities which drives China in actively seeking alternative energy resources (Howel & You, 2009, pp. 208–235). First, China is located far from its petroleum supplier countries, and naturally possess considerably low natural oil endowment. Thus China had to heavily rely on long haul tankers from overseas straits. This distribution need extra attention since overseas oil tankers brings additional and prone to several security problem. Second, as an excess of economic growth, China is the second the world's second-largest energy consumer and in the same time the government still committed to increase living-standard of its people, including prosperity on energy demand for estimated 1,4 billion people.

Discussion

Securitization Process of Crimea Crisis and Its role as a Medium for China Strategic Role over Arctic Region

In this section the author will try explain first the processes of securitization of Crimea Crisis. And then explaining China's increasing strategic role in the Arctic Region. The securitization process is examined through elaboration of three basic conditions of securitization, according to the Macro Securitization concept of Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver.

Process of Securitization

A series of pressure from European and US countries on Russia related to the Crimea Issue is seen as a process of securitization. This argument is based on three basic components of the requirements for the formation of issue securitization: (a) subject of securitizing actors (Securitizing actors / agents), (b) objects of securitization and (c) audiences who need to be targeted to accept this issue.

First, securitization actors, which are defined any entities whom creates securitization statement. Based on several statements from their leader, it can be assumed that United States and its allied countries in Europe are the main actors. It can be viewed from their statement which urged Russia to stop intervention in the Crimea Crisis. Several countries, and even intergovernmental organizations such as European Union and G-20 members. Each leader's statements mostly urged Russian government to stop intervening in Crimean

Crisis. Furthermore, the statements itself is followed by further implications with significant impact, such as in economy aspect. This act can be observed on President Obama order after condemning Russia intervention on Crimea. Obama as the US president ordered a ban on the export of goods, technology and services to Crimea (“Ukraine crisis: Obama orders ban on Crimea trade,” 2014). Another representatives of intergovernmental organization such as EU and G-20 leaders also express similar statements. One of the leader’s statement can be observed from Germany chancellor’s Angela Merkel, whom proposed a “fact-finding mission” to Ukraine and an offer a political dialogue to President Vladimir Putin, even though international community also doubtful whether German can persuade Russian decision (Martinez, 2014). Similar response also been stated by the representatives of European nations, who held meetings on the Foreign Affairs Council, which called upon Russia to stand down in the Crimea and return its forces immediately (Martinez, 2014). At the same time, we can also observe that another emerging power in global politics such as China, took an appropriate distance to Russia foreign policy over Crimea, since it has significant impact on worlds market and economic stability.

Secondly, the object that is threatened and thus needs to be protected is Crimea. Statements from several countries leaders highlights Crimea Crisis as a threat which as to have a serious impact on European stability, especially if Russian refuses in decreasing its influence. Crimea economic performance is considered low, both before and after annexation. Before the annexation, tourism plays a major income source for this region. The occupation, has affected manufacture, trade, and tourism sector and has significant effects its people. But, despite low economic performance, geographically Crimea is important for a base for the Russian navy. The Black Sea fleet as one of the most strategic defence of Russia military power is located in Crimea Peninsula. The fleet’s strategic position helped Russia defeat Georgia in the South Ossetia war in 2008, and remains crucial to Russian security interests in the region. On the other side, Crimea demography still has been dominated by Russian population. Relations between Russia-Ukraine since the peninsula formally became part of Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 has increased rapidly in the past decade. Moreover, Crimea position under international law is also debatable. The Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurance, whom was signed in 1994 by Ukraine, the United States, Britain and Russia, to protect Ukraine’s territory and sovereignty after its Soviet nuclear weapons were removed over. Moreover, the documents often viewed as it is a diplomatic document rather than a formal treaty Also, the document also has complex legality position. It is said that the participants countries has moral obligations to intervene in the event that Ukraine is threatened, but it cannot be enforced (Mortimer, 2014). This point of view can be debatable, since threat definition itself could be formulated subjectively. Each actors in this ratified document has its own issue to interpret whether Crimea was in a thread or not. Thus, the possibility that each participants create securitization is widely opened. And in this case, when Russia government refuse to stop intervene in Crimea Crisis, their opponents countries viewed it as a chance to lift up this issue through statements and policies and construct a discourse that Russia involvement in Crimea *means* creating instability Eastern European region.

The third is the audience which defines as the target of securitization actions and is expected to accept these conditions as a security threat are all European regions, both those

living around the Crimean conflict area and even countries that are not directly bordered with Crimea but have national interests related to this issue like Iran and China. Since the crisis itself not only affect physical causalities, but also brings economic and social impact, several think tank group or market researcher also became the target of securitization. Since they will examine this process and creating output analysis which will transmitted into international society. This argument is supported by the fact that when Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country will not make a claim to Crimea, global markets rebounded, the Russian currency, Ruble improved, and Russia's main stock index, the Micex, rose 6% after falling 11% a day earlier (Martinez, 2014).

After describing the process securitization, when its process examines through 3 elements (actors, objects and target), we will examined how far securitization issue over Crimea Crisis are affected. Based on Barry Buzan concepts, securitization can be seen through five sectors, namely politics, military, economy, social and environmental conditions, and often occurs by involving more than one basic component. The first part is, analyses on how political factors effects securitization process of Russian intervention in the Crimea Crisis. Based on the logic of sphere of influence and power constellation, this crisis happened as an effect of US and its allied countries manoeuvre to minimize Russia put excessive influence in Crimea, especially after Ukraine joined in the NATO. The involvement of Ukraine in the military pact whom historically has considered as Russia rivalry (NATO and Warsaw Pact became prominent military alliance in Cold War era), makes the competition for securityinfluence in the region increased. The Russia government also viewed it as threat since Ukraine locations is very near to Russia territory. And thus invasion to Crimea through Russian perspective was considered rational output in foreign policy context, in order to maintain its national security

The second, the authors see that social factors also played important role in securitize issue. Historically, Crimea Crisis happens because of the similarity of identity that Russia and Crimea have that was part of its sovereignty area closer than Ukraine. It also supported by the Budapest Memorandum's interpretation, whom justified Russia actions over Crimea, as Crimea could be interpreted as a region which Russia could protect. Meanwhile, the Economic Factor also has contribution in the securitization of Crimea Crisis because of Crimea strategic location. Geographically Crimea is blessed with warm water topography, which if it successfully joins Russia, it will provide a harbour of warm water which is useful for Russian economic activity. At this point, Crimea is seen as potential target for sphere of influence, both of by Russia, US and their allied countries respectively. If Crimea fall into Russia's influence, of course it bring disadvantage step for US and its allied to gaining more sphere of influence in Eastern Europe,. By securitizing this issue, it makes Russian intervention in the Crimean Crisis a real security threat for international security and brings advantageous result for Russia's opponents. Securitization can explain why motives behind the act of several entities,i.e. the European Union, U.S and international forum such as G-7 and G-20 have issued policies concerning to Russian intervention in Crimea Crisis. Even though the policies are varied, but mostly aimed to undermine or deter Russia influence by bring economic sanctions on it.

Conceptualized China's Strategic Role over Arctic Region

When Russia-US diplomatic was declining over Crimea of course the international security mostly focus on the conflict management over Crimean Crisis and consequently undermines another potential security issue around it: the Arctic energy security and the involvement of country with non-Arctic background.

Since the 1990s, the Government of the People's Republic of China intensively invested in projects related to the Arctic region. The Chinese government rejects that the Arctic region can only be monopolized by those who have direct territorial borders (Rainwater, 2013). The Chinese government often uses "near-Arctic state" terminology and one of the stakeholders in the formulation of Arctic questions. Actors from China who play a role in this region are diverse considering the set targets also vary. One example is the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) is a government body that is responsible for the political problems of the North and South Poles, and several epistemic communities that help the government formulate policies such as the Polar Research Institute of China and the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (Lee, 2013).

Below, this article will identify China's national interests in the context of Energy Security in order to systematically analyse China's strategic role in the region:

Arctic as Energy Supplier and Strategic Shipping Route

China's energy consumption continues to increase from year to year along with increasing economic growth. This is certainly reasonable if then China looks at the Arctic region as a source of new energy reserves given its natural resource potential which consists of 13% of the world's total oil reserves, 30% of total natural gas reserves and 20% of total liquefied natural gas reserves (Kuersten, 2015). In terms of geopolitics, the Arctic location benefited China more in cooperation with oil imports with Russia. Through the Arctic, the Northern Sea Route shortens Russia's shipping lane by 40% to the northeast of Asia (Kuersten, 2015). This condition is certainly more profitable to China compared with oil dependency over Middle East countries, whom well-known for its unstable region. It also adds additional cost to China since the distribution must go through the Straits of Malacca and consume more distributional costs.

Arctic as China Sphere of Influence Target

The Arctic Region, like Africa is positioned by China as a place to spread its influence, which includes the economic, political and social sectors. In the political sphere China joined the organization of Arctic scientists. In 2013, China also joined as a permanent observer in the Arctic Council, an IGO place to form a policy formulation on the Arctic region. In the social sphere, China has actively approached Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Greenland and Iceland to explore the possibility of cooperation, especially in the energy sector. Especially for Iceland, China offered a package of financial assistance for economic recovery after the 2008 financial crisis. In the same year there was the formation of a free trade area (FTA) between China and Iceland.

Environmental Issue over Arctic with its Direct Implication to China

The Chinese government realizes that any climate change that occurs in Arctic greatly influences China's climate conditions. The government increases its capacity to encounter any possibility of climate change effects such as food security and flood hazards. It can be on the increasing research by Chinese epistemic community which aims to monitor and also provides various possible analysis over the Arctic region for the sake of state benefit.

China Strategic Role Concerning with the Securitization of Crimean Crisis

Securitization of the issue of Russian intervention in the Crimea Crisis has an impact on Russian economic activity and the Arctic region. Exxon Mobil's oil exploration and Russia's biggest oil producer Rosneft stopped because of the imposition of EU economic sanctions (Anonymous, 2015). In fact, not only Exxon Mobil, big firms like Enian Statoil must immediately close the cooperation contract with Russia as a result of the EU sanctions. But on the other hand, this has become a momentum for China to increase its strategic role in the region. At present Russia has entered into an agreement with the Chinese government to operate the rig (offshore oil platform) in Arctic, replacing Exxon's contract with estimated natural gas revenues of 11.9 trillion cubic meters and 750 million barrels of oil.

This agreement is certainly a step forward for the Chinese government, because previously the two countries had agreed to undergo cooperation in a similar field in the South China Sea. China even targets exploration cooperation in the Pechora Sea and the Sea Barrents not far from the Kara Sea in Russia. This is understandable, considering all Russian cooperation with other state companies such as the US and Canada because of these EU sanctions was declined. The principle of reciprocity applies here when China's increasing energy needs meet with Russia's desire not to rely too heavily on Western countries. Based on the identification of China's national interests in the Arctic region which includes the distribution of "sphere of influences", energy providers and shipping strategic lines, China's strategic role is focused on how the government seek as much as possible from countries in the region. The methods adopted are diverse, both in collaboration, observer of cross-government organizations or offering financial assistance.

Conclusion

The securitization issue over Crimean War carried out by US and its allied countries actually had an impact on the strengthening of China's strategic role in the Arctic region. When it is aimed to undergo Russia influence over military domination in Eastern Europe region and construct a form of threat to the regional audience, it actually opened up opportunities for other actors, i.e. China to achieve their national interests and expand the «sphere of influence» in Arctic Region. Since the securitization brings further policy in limiting Russia economic activity by imposing economic ban/ embargo, it effects Russia economic corporation with several MNC's (whom mostly their country of origin was supported the economic ban). This condition brings new challenge for China, in seeking new economic partnership with Russia on energy exploration in Arctic region in order to ensuring its energy capacity.

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