

Geo-politics, American Security Alliance and the North East Asian Regional Stability

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Abstract

This paper elaborates the geo-politics, the American security Alliance and the North East Asian regional stability during the Cold War period (especially in the early decades after the outbreak of the Cold War in Asia). The American security alliance in the North East Asian region is different with the American security alliance in the other region. The American formed bilateral security alliance with the pro-American powers in the North East Asian region; The U.S.-Japan Alliance 1951, The U.S.-South Korea Bilateral Agreement 1953 and the U.S.-Republic of China (Taiwan) in 1954. These bilateral agreements that were signed in the early years of the Cold War still effective and play their role in the today regional power configuration. The objectives of the study are: to explore why the American security Alliance with his alliance state in the North East Asia is totally different with the American security alliance in the other region. In the other region the American created multi-lateral alliance, such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in North Atlantic/Europe and SEATO (south East Asia Treaty Organization) in South East Asian region. There is no NEATO (North East Asia Treaty Organization) in the North East Asian region. This study concludes the factor of geo-politics, domestic and leadership factors in the American alliance state in the North East Asia and the structure of communist powers in the North East Asia influenced the American to create the bilateral security alliance rather than a multi-lateral. The Bilateral security structure give the American more power in controlling security decision and creating better degree of North East Asian regional stability.

Keywords: Bilateral; North east Asia; Geo-politics; Cold war; American security alliance

Introduction

This paper elaborates the Geo-politics, American security alliance in the North East Asia (bilateral security agreements) and regional stability during the Cold War period (especially in the early decades after the outbreak of the Cold War in Asia). The American security alliance in the North East Asian region is different with the American security Alliance in the other region (Middle East, North Atlantic & Europe, SEA and South Pacific). In the other region the American security alliance is characterized by the multilateral; North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the North Atlantic and Europe, South East Treaty Organization (SEATO) in South East Asia, Central Organization (CENTO) in the middle East and Australia, New Zealand and The United States (ANZUS) in South Pacific.

The American formed bilateral security alliance with the pro-American powers (South Korea, Japan and Taiwan) in the North East Asian region: The United States-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty of September 1951; The United States-Republic of Korea Defense Treaty of October 1953 and; The United States-Republic of China Security Treaty of December 1954.

Why the American created different model of security alliance with his allies in the North East Asian region? Many factors influenced the American policy makers in making such decision. The Communists threats, geo-politics factors and the domestic and the characteristic of anti-communists leaders (especially in Republic of China, Taiwan and South Korea) are among the factors that contributed to the American policy makers to form bilateral agreement rather than multilateral. These bilateral agreements that were signed in the early years of the Cold War (after the break out of Korean War of June 1950) still affective and still plays important role in the great powers' configuration in the North East Asian region.

The Objective of Study

There are three mains objectives in this study:

- i. To explore why the American security alliance with his alliance state in the North East Asia (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) is totally different with the American security alliance in the other region.
- ii. Why the American created bilateral (not multilateral as the United States created in the other region) security agreement in the North East Asia?
- iii. To what extent bilateral security agreement succeed in creating North East Asian regional stability?

Theory/model of Powerplay

Model of Powerplay elaborates the power relationship between small power-small power, small power-great power and great power-great power and, the types of alliance should be formed, whether multilateralism or bilateralism. The decision taken based on the political-security objectives and other related factors (would be discussed in the later part of this article).

Model of power play could be applied in this study in elaborating why the American created bilateral agreement with his allies in the North East Asia (bilateral security agreement with Japan in 1951, with South Korea in 1953 and with Taiwan in 1954). The bilateralism (Quadrant 3) decided by the United States for fulfilling his political and security objectives in the North East Asian region.¹

Quadrant 3 is the most suitable for the great power (the United States) in seeking control over target (small power in the North East Asia; South Korea and Taiwan).² Quadrant 3 also could be applied for Japan after 1945 because Japan under the Japanese Constitution of 1947

¹ Detail discussion about power play model, see Victor (2009).

² Quadrant 3 is suitable in achieving the American objectives in facing threat in North East Asia. There are three major possible threats to the North East/Asia Pacific during the Cold War. Firstly, the threat of communism, personified by Soviet Union; secondly, the rise of communist China and thirdly, a resurgent Japan. See Teichmann (1970).

(drafted and designed by the American) was not a great power as before 1945. The status of Japan in the international power hierarchy was like ‘Scorpion in the bottle’ (the Japanese Constitution of 1947).³ Japan is not a ‘real power’ because she cannot translate her economic strength to military power because of the Constitution 1947.⁴ She only can use less than one percent of her GDP for defend expenditure.

Table 1: Powerplay: Bilateral versus Multilateral

	Target State: Small Power	Target State: Great Power
Small Power (s) seeking control over target	Quadrant 1 MULTILATERALISM	Quadrant 2 MULTILATERALISM
Great Power-seeking Control over target	Quadrant 3 BILATERALISM	Quadrant 4 MULTILATERALISM

Source: Powerplay: Origin of the U.S, Alliance System in Asia (Victor, 2009)

Four Situations under Power Play Model-who control whom and what type of alliance should be formed?

We could formularize four situations from the above Power Play diagram. The four situations are: -

- i. If control is sought by a small power over a great power- Quadrant 2 (Multilateralism). Small power has the voice as the great power has. The great power cannot exploit the small power. Even the small power is weaker, but they have similar position in the Quadrant 2.
- ii. If control is sought by a great power over another great power-Quadrant 4 (Multilateralism). All of the great power has similar position and any great power cannot force another great power to follow her desire.
- iii. If a small power seeks control over another small power- Quadrant 1 (Multilateralism). All of the small power has same position. They have to follow the majority voice.
- iv. If a great power seeks control over smaller powers, a bilateral alliance is preferable-Quadrant 3 (Bilateralism). In this Quadrant 3, the great power has more power towards small powers. The small power has to follow the desire/decision of the great power. The small powers position becomes very weak because she deals with a great power. Most of the decision would give more advantage and benefited the great power.

To contain communists threat

The American interpretation towards East Asia dramatically changed after the outbreak of Korean War in June 1950. After Chinese Civil War October 1949, the American accepted the reality of Communist position in mainland China (under President Mao Tse-Tung) and Kuomintang in Taiwan (under President Chiang Kai-Shek). The American accepted the concept of Two Chinas before the outbreak of Korean War in June 1950.⁵

The North Korean invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950, however changed the American threat perception dramatically, by appearing to pose a broader communist challenged to the North East Asian region. With the new interpretation of communist

³ See Yazid (2017)

⁴ See Kang (2003)

⁵ See Tucker (1994)

expansion in East Asia, the American declared a new defense commitment to South Korea and Taiwan; bilateral defense treaty with South Korea and with Taiwan was signed in 1953 and 1954 respectively.

Both countries must be protected in containing the whole pro-American states in East Asia from communist. After the Korean War 1950, the American policy makers understood that the Chinese Civil War 1949, Korean War 1950 (and First Vietnam War 1946-1954) were not solely domestic issue and struggle for independence, but as a part communists expansions in the East Asian region and a strategy of international communist movement led by Soviet Union.⁶ This political development cannot be avoided in the bipolarity structure after World War II. With the support by Soviet Union under Thirty Years Treaty between China and Soviet Union, the position of China Communist in the bipolarity structure became stronger.⁷ The earlier plan by General MacArthur was to use military operation on China communist. Military operation, bombing on Chinese Communication Centre and landing Kuomintang forces on South China was rejected by the American authority. The U.S. tried hard to avoid the major war between communist states (led by the Soviet Union) and the United States in the North East Asian region.⁸

To constrain anti-communist allies in the region

The American established bilateral alliance with South Korea and Taiwan not only to defend against communist, but also to inhibit the highly unpredictable leaders of South Korea and Taiwan from provoking conflict with North Korea and China Communist that might embroil the American in a larger war on the Asian mainland.⁹ Both leaders, Chiang Kai-shek and Syngman Rhee had a plan to unite their country through military operation. The great ambitions of the two pro-American leaders most probably would create another larger war between two ideological blocs. The United States must play their role to stop the military operation that planned by the two pro-American leaders. With bilateral agreement, the United States could utilize his power to choose better way without larger war.

Chiang Kai-Shek military ambition towards mainland China

Chiang Kai-Shek made no secret of his ambition to retake and control mainland China by military action. Chiang Kai-Shek told President Eisenhower of the United States in 1953 that he could mobilize sixty divisions (500,000 ground forces) to an invasion of the mainland China.¹⁰

Chiang Kai-Shek military ambition contradicted with the goals of The United States-Taiwan security alliance with two main objectives; firstly, to stop China Communists/Mao Tse-tung expansion and, secondly to keep Taiwan/Chiang Kai-Shek under control by the

⁶ See Yazid (2017).

⁷ See Yahuda (1996)

⁸ See Teichmann (1970)

⁹ See Victor (2009)

¹⁰ Victor D. Cha, 2009, 'Power play: Origin of the U.S Alliance System in Asia', **International Security**, vol. 34, no. 3, p. 169.

United States.¹¹ With bilateral agreement (quadrant 3 of Power Play), the United States could stop the Chiang Kai-Shek planning to launch a military operation toward mainland China. The possibilities of Chiang Kai-shek to gain mainland China and unite China Communist from Mao Tse-tung is impossible because the Soviet Union would protect the China Communist under the Thirty Years Treaty¹². The geo-political factor also would influence Soviet Union to involve in any conflict involving China Communist. For the Soviet Union survival in the bipolarity structure, Soviet Union would not be quiet when China Communist attacked by any democratic power. The United States tried hard to avoid a major war involving China Communist and Soviet Union.

Syngman Rhee's military policy-Korean Unification by force

Syngman Rhee (South Korea's first president from 1948 to 1960) made no secret of his desire to unify the both Koreas (South Korea and North Korea) by force. President Rhee's official policy towards North Korea was "March North for Unification." He rejected peaceful co-existence with North Korea.¹³

In April 1953, Rhee demanded that President Eisenhower to withdraw all of the American troops from the South Korea if an armistice was to be signed, declaring that South Korea would rather fight alone against the North Korea. Syngman Rhee had planned to move North as the North Korea started to move into South Korea in June 1950.

Rhee military plan contradict with the American strategy in the North East Asian region. Rhee military action toward North Korea could cause the South Korea to collapse and produce a domino effect in the North East Asian region. When the South Korea fall to Communists power, the other parts of free states (non-Communists in the Northeast Asian region: Japan and Taiwan) will follow like domino. Based on the geo-politics factors and domestic situation (the position of the Japan Communists Party in the 1950s), Japan would be in the dangerous situation. The United States would face difficult situation in the North East Asian region. Syngman Rhee military plan towards North Korea must be controlled by the United States. The bilateral Agreement (Quadrant 3 of Power Play) is the best way to control the situation and stability in the Korean Peninsula.¹⁴

The United States-South Korea alliance has three functions; firstly, it would serve as part of a network of alliances & military installations designed to ring the Soviet/Communism. Secondly, it would deter a second North Korea attack. This second function of the security alliance also means to stop Soviet expansion towards East Asia and accept the existing border of dividing Korean Peninsular at 38 degree.¹⁵ The American-South Korea security alliance

¹¹ Truman administration disagreed with General MacArthur to run military operation and bombing action toward mainland China. Truman administration tried to avoid a direct confrontation with China Communist and paved the way to another major war in the North East Asian region. See Teichmann (1970).

¹² See William (2003)

¹³ See Victor (2009)

¹⁴ The Syngman Rhee political and military invasion only could be controlled by the bilateral agreement. i.e. the major role played by the U.S. in making decision. Military operation would create great risk and greater conflict in the North East Asian region. The Korean unification would not be an easy process with the closed relation and the position of China Communist and Soviet Union in the 1950s. See Teichmann (1970)

¹⁵ See Gordon (1990).

1953 could be considered as a strong support to South Korea and a warning for the North Korea. The American would involve in protecting the security of the South Korea and, thirdly it would control the South Korea from engaging dangerous military action. Any action and military decision must be consulted by the American. Syngman Rhee could not make any military decision and attack the North without the American consultation. The main objective was to avoid a major conflict between Soviet Union and the American in the North East Asian region.

With bilateral agreement, the American has maximum power in controlling and influencing the decision of Chiang Kai-Shek and Syngman Rhee military plan towards China Communist and North Korea. In this case the multilateral treaty (Quadrant 2 of Power Play) is not guarantee in controlling Chiang Kai-Shek and Syngman Rhee. The best choice is Quadrant 3 of Power Play-Bilateral Agreement. The aggressive behavior of Chiang Kai-Shek and Syngman Rhee towards Mainland China and North Korea (i.e. unwanted larger war with communist states) could be controlled by the American under bilateral agreement.

Why the United States choose bilateralism (quadrant 3)?

The American created bilateralism (Quadrant 3) alliance structure in the North East Asian allies with the objective to gain maximum control over the American allies, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan (smaller powers- of the powerplay concept (Quadrant 3). The process of making decision only between the United States and one of the American allies in the North East Asia. The strong position of the United States makes all of the decision gave more benefit to the United States. The main objective of the United States policy was to create North East Asian regional stability without major war with China Communist or Soviet Union. The small United States allies cannot object the United States decision even they disagreed.¹⁶ The situation would be different if the United States formed multilateral; the United States and the United States allies, i.e. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan stay at same position. Let say the other three small allies co-operating in their decision, they could withdraw the United States decision. The US might be cannot stop Taiwan to implement military invasion towards Mainland China (in the case of multilateral alliance).

The American created a series of bilateral alliance in North East Asia (with Japan 1951, South Korea 1953 and Taiwan 1954) to contain Communists threat (by The China Communist and Soviet Union) with American decision, he can plan more effective strategy in containing the communist threat. The United States could over rule the domestic problems easily. If the alliance is in multilateral, all of the allies (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) have same position the United States would face more difficult decision. The United States cannot implement his security strategy; because not all of the American strategies agreed by the leaders in South Korea and Taiwan.

The other major objective was constrained anti-communist allies in the region (President Chiang Kai-shek of Taiwan and President Syngman Rhee of South Korea) that might engage

¹⁶ The United States allies had different view and security policy. In certain aspect contradicted with the United States view as explained in the previous part of this article. The United States allies in the North East Asia were not facing singular and common threat (Soviet Union) as his allies in the Europe. In the North East Asia Japan consider Soviet Union as major threat; Taiwan prioritized the China Communist threat and, South Korea worried about attack from North Korea (with China and Soviet supports). For more detailed, see Victor (2009).

in aggressive behavior against adversaries (mainland China and North Korea) that could entrap the American in unwanted larger war. The United States already recognized the position of the China communist and Soviet Union (including North Korea). With bilateral alliance and the United States make major position, all of decision made by Chiang Kai-shek and Syngman Rhee determined by the United States. It is could avoid the conflict and war between Taiwan and China Communist and the major war between South and North Korea. The United States could avoid the larger war in the North East Asia between communist and democratic states.

The other regional and local factors also influenced the United States to apply bilateral agreement with his allies in the North East Asian region. The two important factors were the geo-political factors and the position and historical background of Japan.

Geo-political Factor

The geographical elements of East Asia are totally different with the geography of continent of Europe. The geography factors influence the United States to implement different policy and security agreement with his allies in East Asia. In Europe the border between communist and democratic during the early decade of the Cold War was very clear, but not in the East Asian region. East Asia comprised a land and a maritime theater with no clear dividing line between Soviet Union and the United States sphere of influence. The geographical location of Japan and Korean Peninsular are very closed. The location of Hokkaido (Japan) and Soviet Union territory (which before Second World War ended as part of Japan) also very closed.¹⁷ The position of the United States in East Asia and his relations with regional power was different with the United States position in the Western Europe. The United States lacked of allies in East Asia both during and immediately after the end of Second World War in September 1945. With no strong allies in East Asia and no clear boarder (like in the European continent; the clear boarder between Eastern Europe and Western Europe), the United States had no choice except of bilateral agreement. The bilateral security agreement is the most suitable with the United States condition in the East Asia.

Japanese Position

The position and relations of Japan with her former colonies¹⁸ and former enemies¹⁹ influenced the American policy and type of security alliance. South Korea distrust with Japan and did not normalize their political relations until 1965. As a former Japanese colonist (1910-1945), South Korea had historical animosities with Japan. Australia and New Zealand were two closed American allies in the Pacific region, but in many issues disagrees with Japan, especially in the early decades of the Cold War. The situation in Asia Pacific region was

¹⁷ See Victor (2009).

¹⁸ Especially South Korea as one of the Japan colonies from 1910 until Japan was defeated in Second World War in 1945. South Korea did not normalize her relations with Japan until 1965. Detailed see Victor (1999).

¹⁹ Australia and New Zealand, two former enemies during Second World War (Pacific War 1941-1945) opposed the inclusion of Japan in SEATO. Detailed see Brands Jr. (1987).

different with the former enemies management and political development in the Western Europe. NATO members and Western Europe American allies were willing to add West Germany as a NATO member.²⁰ The situation was different in the Asia Pacific where Australia and New Zealand reluctant to create a mutual Security Pact which will include Japan. SEATO was a multilateral security agreement in the Southeast Asia membered by Great Britain, France, Pakistan, The U.S., the Philippines, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand but were not included Japan. New Zealand and Australia distrust with Japan and opposed to include Japan in SEATO.²¹ The position of Japan, historical background and her relations with Asia Pacific countries (especially Australia and New Zealand) were not impossible for multilateral agreement in North East Asia as in Western Europe.²² The Japan factor and her relations with Asian neighbours and former colonies in the early decades after Cold War is one the important factor that influenced the U.S. to choose bilateral agreement in the North East Asian region.

Conclusion

This study concludes that domestic and leadership factors in the American alliance state in the North East Asia and the position/structure of communist powers in the East Asia influenced the American to create the bilateral security alliance rather than a multilateral. Geo-politics factor also influenced the American to create the bilateral treaty in the North East Asian region. Geo-politics and level of power of the American allies in the Europe and the East Asian region were great different. The bilateral security alliance gives the American more power in controlling security decision and creating better degree of regional stability. The absence of major war between Communists and pro-Americans states in the North East Asian region during the Cold War strongly influence by the structure of bilateral agreement between the American and his allies.

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²⁰ In 1954, West Germany became a member of NATO without objection by the members.

²¹ See Duffield (2001).

²² John Ruggie argued that the situation on the ground there made that impossible for the U.S. to form multilateralism in the North East Asia. For detailed see Ruggie (1997).

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