

# Obama's "Pivot to Asia" Policy (2011- 2016): the Case of China

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## Abstract

It has been argued and stated that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is America's Pacific Century, the century or millennium of Asia, and century or era of China, the inevitable superpower. This paper explains the essence of the new changes when the Pivot Policy was announced by President Obama in 2011. The main question discussed is therefore the following: 'Why (and how) did President Obama adopt (and implement) the Pivot to Asia policy in 2011?' One probable answer to this question is that President Obama intended to prevent "China's hegemony" in East Asia through the Pivot Policy; however, "China's hegemony" was carried out by economic and military levers. The theory applied is Joseph Nye's "Liberal Realism," because the Pivot as a question of foreign policy is considered to be part of Realism and Liberalism simultaneously, and can be used for analysis at both global and domestic levels. The methodology used in this research is a mix methodology of Qualitative Content Analysis and Case study. The "Pivot" or "Rebalance" to Asia is a policy based on significant changes such as the rise of China and the US relative decline, at global and domestic levels, respectively. The Pivot is a regional coherent strategy from the Indian ocean to the Americas, a strategy of cooperation and competition toward China, implemented through "smart" leadership, rather than hegemony by economic and military tools like modern alliances, partnerships and institutions in order to prevent "China's rise" and lead it to a responsible emerging power when in the half of the millennium, 2050, it reaches its peak of progress. The U.S. tries to maintain its worldwide leadership status up to the 22<sup>th</sup> century through the implementation of the Pivot Policy in 2011.

**Key Words:** Cooperation and Competition strategy, the Pivot, Rebalance, Rise of China, U.S. global and regional leadership, U.S. relative decline

## Introduction

Politicians and scholars have stated that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is America's Pacific Century (Clinton, 2011, Oct. 11), the century or millennium of Asia (Geis II, 2013, p. 2 & Lowther, 2013: vii-viii), and the era of China, the inevitable superpower (Zhao, 2008 & Subramanian, 2011). The Obama administration expressed that this century's threats demand a new vision of leadership. The "Pivot to Asia" policy is a "broader shift" to the Asia Pacific region as the most dynamic region in today's world. This region should become a region of active cooperation between China and the United States. Scholars have called President Obama years as an entirely different period from the other American presidential predecessors (Lindsay, 2011).

In this light, the main question addressed in this paper is the following: Why (and How) did President Obama adopt (and implement) the pivot to Asia policy in 2011? Our main hypothesis is that 'President Obama in the Pivot to Asia policy was planning to prevent "China's Hegemony" in East Asia through cooperation and competition (coopetition), not conflict or containment policy. Rising China with its growing economic power and relative military strength and the US's relative economic decline but the strong military superiority are the main determining components for the two countries' ties. Cross relation between the said economy-security components led to the adoption of the Pivot to Asia policy and the use of networking security and economic leverages through leadership not hegemony to manage China'.

The Asia Pivot Policy has been discussed in numerous scholarly books and articles: Indian Scholars such as Muni and Chadha (2014) in "US Pivot and Asian Security" have covered related issues to the Pivot, as a comprehensive policy, and its implication in India. However, the authors put more emphasis on Pivot's

security component while the second component, economy, is not assessed. They consider the "Pivot" as continuity rather than a change policy. The principal drivers of the Pivot are, according to them, hegemony, while democracy, security and economic elements are also considered as highly important in the Pivot. Pant and Joshi (2016) in "the US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power" argue that the US Pivot and Indian foreign policy are shaped by China's miraculous rise and perceptions of relative decline in American prowess; yet, they do not explain the economic component and leadership model and their focus remains mainly on pure balance of power.

Europeans, Americans and Asian scholars have also contributed to the literature on the US Pivot Policy. French scholars such as Meijer (2015) in *Origins and Evolution of the US Rebalance toward Asia Diplomatic, Military, and Economic Dimensions* discuss the hopelessness of a US containment strategy against China, the multidimensionality of the Rebalance, the blending of elements of both continuity and discontinuity and the domestic and international challenges to the Pivot Policy. The milieu of talk is a kind of liberal hegemony. The findings of this book are interesting and somehow similar to part of this paper's findings, but still need further explanations about the relation among the regions, regional and global values, supply chains, the question of leadership and its model and smart power approach.

Binnendjik (2014), in a US-European joint study, in "A Transatlantic Pivot to Asia: Toward New Trilateral Partnership" argues that the U.S. policy of rebalancing or pivoting to Asia is a comprehensive policy, but the questions of leadership vs. hegemony and the importance of security and economic components by adding the role of human rights question is negating the core of the Pivot. Chow (2014) in "the US Strategic Pivot to

Asia and Cross-Strait Relations Economic and Security Dynamics” has raised his great expectation for Taiwan to be included in the Pivot; conversely, the South China Sea is the fulcrum of the Pivot. Huang (2016) in “Asia Pacific Countries and the US Rebalancing Strategy” focuses on regional actor’s responses to the Pivot, but rebalance itself is considered as continuity rather than no change policy and also hegemonic behavior of the U.S. in the Pivot. Goto (2016) in “Committed: US Foreign Policy in Asia and Completing the Rebalance” has repeated the pillars of the Pivot in general; his intention is to give recommendations to the next president in 2017. Kurt Campbell (2016 a) in “the Pivot” discusses the details of the Pivot and mentions its possible risks in the new presidency in 2017. However, he does not thoroughly refer to the question of domestic level, the relative decline of the US and the leadership role model, mainly concentrating on the global level and the China factor.

This paper is an attempt to explore the new important strategic environment, the two level analysis, global and domestic contexts, with regards to a rising China and a relative US decline, two vital security-economic components, and the need for a ‘Change policy.’ We will then discuss the new U.S. strategy through leadership rather than hegemony via a new security-economic architecture supported by human resources and sufficient budget to prevent the Chinese hegemony. Meanwhile another contribution of this paper consists of briefly discussing President Trump’s Administration’s continuation of the Pivot Policy with different tactics. Therefore, grasping the Pivot as a structure will be a necessity for future studies. In this light, the continuation of dynamic developments in the Asia Pacific, such as the Chinese response to the Pivot by “One Belt, One Road” and “Polar Silk Road” plan in 2013 and 2018 in turn, and Quad “Australia, America, India and Japan Joint Infrastructure Scheme” (Reuters, 2018, Feb. 19) as an alternative to

China's plans, are highly important. The other contribution of this paper, depicting the new strategic environment, is for strategic planning of the other political units.

This research applies Nye's "Liberal Realism" theory. According to Nye (2011, pp. 218-220 ):

A smart power strategy requires that the old distinction between realists and liberals gives way to a new synthesis that we might call liberal realism. It would start with an understanding of the strength and limits of American power. Preponderance is not empire or hegemony. The United States can influence but not control other parts of the world. Power always depends upon context, and in the context of transnational relations, power is diffuse and chaotically distributed. Military power is a small part of the solution in responding to these new threats. These solutions require cooperation among governments and international institutions; combine hard power with soft power into smart power. The objective would have the key pillars of providing security for the US and its allies, maintaining a strong domestic and international economy, avoiding environmental disasters, and encouraging liberal democracy and human rights at home and abroad where feasible at reasonable levels of cost.

Nye's analysis concerning the new strategic environment or new context refers to the level of analysis in international politics. He explains the levels of analysis through Waltz's three levels of causation for war, but he further adds:

Nonetheless, parsimony suggests a place to start. Because systemic explanations tend to be the simplest, they provide a good starting point. If they prove to be inadequate, then we can look at the units of the system or at individual decision makers, adding complexity until a reasonable fit is obtained." He has suggested that

“American smart power strategy as prudence rests in understanding both international and domestic limits and adjusting objectives accordingly (Nye & Welch, 2014: 57-65).

At the global level, “based on globalization-information revolution and complex interdependence, [Nye] likened the context of politics today to a three-dimensional chess game in which interstate military power is highly concentrated in the United States; interstate economic power is distributed in a multipolar manner among the United States, the EU, Japan, and the BRICs; and power over transnational issues such as climate change is highly diffused. The world is neither unipolar and multipolar, nor chaotic; it is all three at the same time. Contextual intelligence today requires a new synthesis of “liberal realism” that looks at all three boards at the same time” (Nye, 2011, pp. 212-213).

At the domestic level, concerning the US decline, Nye rejects the theory of hegemonic stability and refers to two types of power shifts: diffusion and transition (Nye, 2011 pp. 214-215). Indeed, two great power shifts are occurring in this century: a power transition among states and a power diffusion away from all states to non-state actors. In power transition, Nye rejects the American decline, because absolute decline is in the sense of decay or the loss of US ability to use resources effectively, which does not correspond to the US. However, a relative decline happens, according to him, when the power resources of other states grow greater or are used more effectively. In this light, barring political uncertainties, China’s size and high rate of economic growth will almost certainly increase its relative strength vis-à-vis the US. Among the range of possible futures, those that could happen more likely are ones in which China gives the United States a run for its money but does not surpass it in overall power in the first half of this century, even though American economic and cultural

preponderance will become less dominant than their original state at the beginning of the century. The second reason to reject an absolute decline is Nye's concern that such analysis "can lead to Chinese adventurous policies or the United States to overreact out of fear" (Nye, 2011, pp. 154-157). He hopes that the U.S. utilizes "a rise in the power resources of many others, both states and non-state actors; thus recommends using power with others as much as power over others through combine domestic reforms with smart strategies for the conversion of American resources into external power" (Nye, 2011, pp. 203-204).

Nye believes in a US relative decline in power transition and power diffusion at the global level based on his definition of power; yet he is not certain whether this power will increase in the second half of the twenty-first century. Thus, the US power must be strengthened by the rest, Asia and China, to sustain a US preponderance. He puts the priority in US strategy on the rise of a "hostile hegemon" in Asia, China (Nye, 2011, p. 127). He recommends a policy that welcomes China as a responsible stakeholder, but hedges against possible hostilities by maintaining close relations with Japan, India, and other countries in Asia that welcome an American presence.

Nye believes that since Thucydides have noted, rapid power transitions are among the leading causes of great power conflicts and hegemonic wars. Therefore, "there is a strong consensus that the period after the Cold War was one of rapid power transitions with the rise of the United States and China and the decline of Russia" (Nye & Welch, 2014: 352). In this light, Nye has proposed a model in which his liberal realism theory is implemented through leadership rather than hegemony or empire role; this leadership is a smart or transformational leadership:

Charismatic leadership is the special power of a person to inspire fascination and loyalty and Transactional leaders use various approaches, but all rest on reward, punishment, and self-interest; depend on the hard power of threat and reward. But Transformational leaders appeal to the collective interests of a group or organization, empower and elevate their followers, ... use conflict and crisis to raise their followers' consciousness and transform them, mobilize power for change by appealing to their followers' higher ideals and moral values rather than their baser emotions of fear, greed, and hatred and depend more on the soft power of inspiration. Achieving transformational objectives may require a combination of both hard and soft power; this combination may change over time, in appropriate contexts (Nye, 2008: 54, 62-64).

Overall, Nye's theory will be applied to the Pivot; although the closeness of Nye to the architect of the Pivot, Campbell, and Nye's previous post during Bill Clinton's presidency raises the issue that Nye's theory may guide this policy, the Pivot, its influence cannot be ignored.

The methodology adopted in this research is a mix Qualitative Content Analysis and Case Study. Indeed, the topic is "Obama's Pivot to Asia policy," and the case under research is "China," a dynamic-single-present case. Our emphasis is on the dynamic present development in Obama's Pivot to Asia policy by examining the case of rising China, with a particular focus on China. The context unit, based on two level analyses, is System & State; our samples (units) consist of first and secondary documents such as statements, speeches, interviews, remarks and testimonies by President Obama and his administration (the White House-National Security Council, the Department of State, Defense, Commerce and the Intelligence organizations) and scholars from 2011-2016. Coding units are "pivot to Asia" and "rebalance to Asia."

## **New strategic environment**

As Nye's 'Liberal Realism' theory explains, the new strategic environment or new context demonstrates the level of analysis, both international and domestic limits and the need for countries to adjust their objectives accordingly. At the global level, globalization-information revolution and complex interdependence, power diffusion among non-state actors and power transition among states, and a rise in China are happening. At the domestic level, a relative US decline has happened because power resources of China grow greater or are used more effectively. In this light, the paper assesses the Obama administration at two levels.

The East Asia is the most dynamic region with new changes and US consequential relation with China, which changes the world powers, causes changes in the world conditions both at regional and national levels. President Obama stated, "Asia Pacific region is the most dynamic region in today's world...This region should become a region of active cooperation between China and the United States" (Obama, 2011, Nov. 12). With China there is "a healthy mix of competition and cooperation" (Biden, 2013, Jul. 19). "When China and the United States work together, the world is more secure and more prosperous. No more consequential bilateral relationship than the U.S.-China relationship" (Rice, 2016).

The reasons for the necessity of change and the imperative to restore American leadership are "Political decisions prior to the Obama administration, [US] economic crisis (Clinton, 2013, Jan. 29), and power diffusion. More countries than ever have "a voice in global debates," more paths to power opening up as nations gain influence through the "strength of their economies rather than their militaries." Political and "technological changes" are empowering non-state actors, like corporations and terrorist networks. The old postwar architecture is crumbling under the weight of new threats.

“The geometry of global power has become more distributed and diffused as the challenges we face have become more complex and crosscutting” (Clinton, 2013, Jan. 31).

In this regard, China’s developments are highly important. “China’s peaceful rise as a global power is reaching a “crossroads.” Its future course will be determined by “how it manages new economic challenges, differences with its neighbors and strains in its political and economic system” (Clinton, 2012). The U.S. and China comprise one quarter of the global population, one third of the global economy, and generate one fifth of the global trade. When they are pulling in the same direction on any issue, they can “bend the curve in a way that few other nations on Earth can accomplish” (Kerry, 2013, Sep. 19).

The same picture is stipulated in security and military documents. Today’s strategic environment is “fluid.” Power among states is more dynamic. Power is shifting below and beyond the nation-state. “Increasing interdependence” of the global economy and rapid pace of “technological change” is linking individuals, groups, and governments in unprecedented ways (National Security Strategy, May 2015). The United States is in “relative decline” and more the rise of the others. By the year 2030, no country will be a hegemonic power. Whether the United States can work with its partners to “reinvent the international system” is among the most important future variables (National Intelligence Council, 2012).

Kurt Campbell, former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs [architect of the Pivot], has articulated that “the stage for the pivot is with the Pacific century now fully under way, global momentum and energy are shifting to Asia minute by minute and on every measure. China plays the greatest role in the reemergence of the region. The history of the twenty-first century will be extensively written in the Asia –Pacific”

(Campbell, 2016a: 33-46). "China's economy surpassed the American economy in 2014, at least according to measures adjusting GDP for relative cost of living, known as purchasing power parity (PPP)" (Campbell, 2016a: 47). Scholars (Zakaria, 2011; Ikenberry, 2016; Sutter, 2009) have insisted on the rise of the Rest or China.

In sum, significant changes in the global and domestic security & economic environment are as follow:

A) Europe over the past decade has created a high degree of complacency about security issues. b) Territorial, fishing and seabed disputes could lead to further incidents and interstate conflict. Between 44% and 55% percent of all new shipbuilding will be Chinese. Chinese dependence on sea-lanes will increase significantly, especially from the Persian Gulf and Latin America. c) Japan shows signs of emerging from two dormant decades. d) The scope of armed conflict is changing. Many trend studies tend to concentrate on the future nature of warfare. e) Economic growth; the twenty-one economies in the Asia Pacific account for a combined GDP of \$39 trillion, or 56 percent of world economic output. f) Most trend studies indicate that the United States is in relative decline. Global Trends 2030 assesses that the United States will hold just under 20% of total global power by 2030, a decline from about 25% today. g) Global Trends 2030 projects that by 2030 Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power, based on GDP, population size, military spending, and investment in technology. China's power index alone as measured by the NIC surpasses that of Europe in the next few decades and surpasses that of the United States by 2045. h) Some trend analysts foresee additional global economic shocks. By 2025 China is

expected to contribute one third of global growth (Binnendijk, 2014 pp. 4-11, 20-26, 205-206).

The dramatic geopolitical and geo-economics transformations at both global and domestic levels caused the Obama administration to change its strategic thinking from a “weak China” to a “strong China” (Zhao, 2008 p. 26). Three main high-ranking official, even bipartisan reports have supported the need for a “change” like “Baker-Hamilton” in 2006, “Progressive patriotism” in 2008 and “Phoenix Initiative” in 2008. According to the abovementioned statements and practices, during its two terms, the Obama administration insisted on the priority of Asia and China. This project was named the ‘Pivot’ during the office of Secretary Hillary Clinton and ‘Rebalance’ during Secretary John Kerry’s office, in order to prevent the misperception of the other political unites, which assumed that the U.S. has neglected them. They both have believed in the need for a ‘Change policy”, and the regional priority of President Obama in his two terms presidency was Asia Pacific.

Comparing the strategic environment between the Bush Jr. and Obama administrations, the U.S. during Obama administration was not as an indispensable nation, but rather as an indispensable leader, and lead not in the spirit of a patron but the spirit of a partner. The U.S., because of relative decline, embraced greater cooperation among a greater number of actors not in a multi-polar world, but in a multi partner world. The U.S. agenda from Bush’s ‘freedom agenda’ changed to Obama’s ‘agenda setting’ strategy. Hence the U.S. foreign policy toward East Asia in history framework was continuity, in order to prevent regional hegemony. The Pivot, however, was discontinuity as a result of China rise and the necessary shifts toward East Asia after a decade of war in the Middle East during Bush Jr.

As Nye’s ‘Liberal Realism’ theory insists on two levels of

analysis with its definition for a change, the Obama administration depicted a new strategic environment with power diffusion, technological changes, increasing interdependence of the global economy, dynamic power among states and Asia Pacific as the most real new dynamic region with China rise as a global power and US relative decline in comparison to China. Thus, the Pivot is a change and reactive policy to 'reinvent the international system' in order to prevent the China's rise.

### **Security Component**

In Nye's theory, the objective with an understanding of the strength and limits of the American power would have the key pillars of providing security, maintaining a strong domestic and international economy, and encouraging liberal democracy at home and abroad where feasible, at reasonable levels of cost. Thus, security and economic components seem to be considered the most important components in the U.S. policy ends.

In the Obama administration, security is considered as the foundation of economy and China's commitment in regional security is imperative. "Economic strength at home is the foundation of leadership in the world including the Asia Pacific... First, security is the foundation of peace and prosperity. Where emerging powers contribute to regional security, and where disagreements are resolved peacefully...And more opportunities for cooperation with Beijing including greater communication between militaries to promote understanding and avoid miscalculation, to speak candidly to Beijing about the importance of upholding international norms" (Obama, Nov. 17, 2011).

Military and Security officials also pinpointed the threats by referring to the 21<sup>st</sup> century dependency of prosperity and the security of the US on the dynamic Asia-Pacific: the rise of new

powers, the rapid spread of information, goods, and technologies, innovation and economic integration, new security coalitions that take on shared challenges, world's largest militaries, and defense increasing spending, and a return to "great power competition" (Panetta & Liang, 2012; Carter, 2015).

Therefore, the regional status quo has changed. Complex security threats facing the US and its allies require a "principled realism" that is true to U.S. values and adapted to the new strategic environment (Hagel, 2013). America's strength is its military and technological superiority, as it has invested more than \$16 trillion in defense since 1990, and nearly \$4 trillion on research and procurement (Carter, 2015). Thus, to ensure not to lose the ground in the following decades will depend in part on an underlying balance of military capability and presence. China, over the long term, and its emergence as a regional power, is considered a potential to affect the US economy and its security. Therefore, China's development and growth is a "vital component" of the US strategy and the US involvement in Asia. Of course the US and China do not believe in the zero-sum thinking, but the relationship will be complex as the US continues to both compete and cooperate (Carter, 2013; Carter, 2016; Fisher, 2016; Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011).

Scholars have also insisted on China being deterred as an economic partner as well as a strategic competitor, not necessarily an adversary (Brzezinski, 2012 p.351-359; Ikenberry, 2016; Manning, 2014; Ikenberry & Mastanduno, 2003). Adopting a pragmatic look on values, the Pivot's ends are having strong economy and. In the security component, a 'principled realism' meant the US values were true, but the US has adapted to the new strategic environment: the China rise.

## **Economic Component**

According to President Obama, "US economic strength at home is a foundation of Leadership in the world including in the Asia Pacific. The United States remains the world's largest and most dynamic economy. But, in an interconnected world, we all rise and fall together... We've made hard decisions to cut our deficit and put our fiscal house in order. Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers are beyond our borders. This is where we sell most of our exports, supporting some 5 million American jobs. And since this is the world's fastest growing region, the Asia Pacific is the key to achieving my goal of doubling US exports" (Obama, 2011, Nov. 17; Rice, 2013).

Moran (2017) states that "What most "declinists" did agree on was that in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, America was, in the words of Stephen Walt, able to "manage the politics, economics and security arrangements for nearly the entire globe." America's military superiority was supported by a dominant economy which enabled it to play an instrumental part in creating the United Nations, the Breton Woods institutions, rebuilding Europe through Marshall Aid and founding NATO, effectively allowing the USA to shape the world in its own image" (Moran, 2017 pp. 265-279). In this light, the details of the discussion concerning the US decline or rise among scholars will be examined.

There are two main streams of idea. Certain scholars reject the US decline and demonstrate the rise of China as not durable. They believe in the rise of China but downgrade it as a challenge that will be triumphed like Nazism and Communism. Another reason is the fact that the Pivot constituted a challenge to declinism rather than an effort to "manage" decline as a way of prioritizing

domestic agendas for the goal of international leadership, rather than hegemony like pre-Vietnam war (Joffe, 2013; Kagan, 2012; Kupchan, 2012). They confess to the rise of China but scholars like Nye make a difference between absolute and relative decline and try to justify the latter, which is a gap between the US and China. The narrowing of the gap does not necessarily mean that China will surpass the US, but in reality reveals a kind of implicit relative decline, the fact that the US must share the power with the rest through smart power (Nye, 2012; Nye, 2011).

Certain scholars are pro US decline or relative decline and even seriously consider China as a next superpower. They refer to this matter strictly in order to alert the U.S. administration. However, these scholars refer to the phenomenon (rise of China) as an existing reality in the field by economic and military components (Kennedy, 2010; Subramanian, 2011; Leverret & Leverret, 2012). They express that the unipolar moment for America has passed, but its power is strong enough by 2030 or 2050 to utilize its great role in this environment to promote its interests multilaterally and to interact around the world with China. In sum, the majority of scholars believe that the relative U.S. decline is not an absolute one; they expect the rise of the US power consequently; the history of America has demonstrated certain difficulties, but it has overcome the challenges successfully.

Statistics demonstrate the reality of the relative U.S. decline. In 2016, the US economy was in a strong position, the GDP, for example was \$20 trillion in the U.S. vs. \$13 trillion in China, and the GDP per capita with \$54,800 and in financial section with nearly 50% of all international trade and more than 85% of foreign exchange trading and 39% of the world's debt in dollars (Kimberly, 2016). However, in Gross Domestic Product-Purchase Power Parity and Trade indices, the U.S. was behind China (Campbell,

2016a p. 47). China has produced \$19.5 trillion, but the US has produced \$17.9 trillion. In trade, US trade deficit is \$532 billion, with a considerable amount of dependency on China and Japan, who have both owned \$2.4 trillion in US treasuries, which is the symptom of US weaknesses. This sum is one-fifth of the public debt held by foreign countries. China's role as America's largest banker gives it an advantage. China has the largest trade surplus, \$365.7 in the world with the US, which is detrimental to the US economy over the long term (Kimberly, 2015).

The US Secretary of Commerce and his high-ranking officials have stated the importance of the economic component in the Pivot; they insist on Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) as a core of this policy to put the US economy in order both at home and abroad. As discussed in this paper, with regards to the US's new strategic environment, the country cannot solve its economic weakness or relative decline. The world's largest and most dynamic economy cannot move alone, in an interconnected world with the diffusion of economic power, economic competitiveness, and the rising of the Rest especially China. At the domestic level, two costly wars and the 2008 financial crisis in a situation where more countries gain influence through the strength of their economies rather than their militaries, left the US with global economic instability, loss of jobs, a decline in standards of living in parts of the country, and a loss of influence abroad.

TPP is an economic strategy with the goal of economic growth and job creation. It strengthens the middle class and raises opportunities across the United States, and achieves long-term, shared prosperity across the Asia-Pacific region in a "strong regional economic architecture" (Kumar, 2010; Pritzker, 2014, Pritzker, 2017) on three pillars:

- a) Strengthening partnerships with long-established trading partners

- b) Helping emerging Asian economies to enter into the global, rules-based trade, investment system by developing the necessary infrastructure, both “hard” (the physical infrastructure) and “soft” (the legal and regulatory systems)
- c) Building and strengthening regional mechanisms.

In this light, concerning American medium-sized and small companies, 98 percent of exporters, by U.S. export-import banks and trade offices, besides international institutions and bilateral, multilateral, and global strategies through traditional alliances and new partnerships like ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), a \$2.5 trillion economic block, and its integration, which is the key to the US rebalance to Asia, have been used by the Obama administration.

Besides TPP, Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership, TTIP, and negotiations with the Europeans reinforce one another and “update and strengthen the global economic rules of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Biden, 2013). Taken together, this could account for over sixty percent of the entire world trade. In line of strengthening “regional and global supply chains” as well as “regional and global value chains,” the US has connected to the emerging adjacent area of the Asia-Pacific. Thus, the Pivot is to manage China by TPP with the share of 40 percent of world production, Asia and Americas, and in a vast scope to utilize TTIP agreement as a complement tool with the European assistance that in mix will cover 60 percent share of global production or two-thirds of the global economy and almost 65 percent of U.S. goods trade i.e., to promote “a values-driven trade regime” (Executive Office of the President of the U.S., 2015), which maximizes globalization’s benefits while addressing globalization’s problematic side-effects.

Scholars have expressed that US domestic economic needs have

been considered by the Obama administration to engage at the global level, rise of China, and to implement TPP as a core of the Pivot in order to tackle the Chinese plans in the region, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (Lake, 2008; Paal, 2012).

As Nye's liberal Realism theory insisted on two security-economic components based on US power, the Pivot's emphasis were on both "economy and security as a package, each reinforce[ing] and require[ing] the other" (Obama, 2011, Nov. 17; Obama, 2016, Sep. 08). In the Pivot's ends, strong economy and military are important and the values are in a pragmatic, non-ideological, patient and flexible response, especially when China is hardly to seek to undermine democratic systems of governance in a fashion reminiscent of the Soviet Union or the revolutionary China under Mao (Campbell, 2016a p. 190).

### **Strategy toward China "Cooperation & Competition"**

According to Liberal Realism theory, Nye believes that since Thucydides have noted, rapid power transitions are one of the leading causes of great power conflicts and hegemonic wars, as well as the rise of a hostile hegemon in Asia, China. The new strategic environment requires the old distinction between realists and liberals to give way to 'liberal realism,' new synthesis that requires cooperation among governments and international institutions to combine hard power with soft power into smart power. Thus, he recommends a policy that welcomes China as a responsible stakeholder but hedges against its possible hostility.

President Obama believes that he is a "realist" and "internationalist," and that his strategy regarding China is comprehensive and multidimensional:

President Obama as a Realist in believing we can't, at any given moment, relieve all the world's misery and we have to choose where we can make a real impact. In addition, Internationalist to strengthen multilateral organizations and international norms, because taking action multilaterally where direct interests are not at stake is that multilateralism regulates hubris. In terms of traditional great-state relations, President Obama believes that the relationship between the United States and China is going to be the most critical and if we get that right and China continues on a peaceful rise, and then we have a partner that is growing in capability and sharing with us the burdens and responsibilities of maintaining an international order. If China fails; we see the potential for conflict with China (Goldberg, 2016).

Hillary Clinton stated "Campbell as a key architect of our Asia strategy and in the National Security Council staff, Jeff Bader, supported our strategy" (Clinton, 2014 p.103). These two figures put China at a heart of the Pivot, likely the largest economy in the world within one or two decades and the second or third strongest military soon, in a larger strategy, not just in bilateral or G2 level. Campbell, in his book *the Pivot* (2016 a), acknowledges Nye who afforded him to practice diplomacy toward the region and serve under him at the Pentagon, and Jeff Bader, his close friend, as the senior director at the National Security Council (Bader, 2016; Campbell, 2016a: xi, 190, Campbell, 2016b).

The Pivot is a strategy of global cooperation (transnational challenges like climate change), regional resolution or some degree of accommodation of China's rise, which is necessary, as is a certain degree of strategic rivalry with China. As a result, in the East Asia region, "China's policies increasingly conflict with US interests and threaten the region's equilibrium" (Bader, 2016). On

the global stage, China's actions and role are less potentially disruptive, even stabilizing; thus it needs a balance between accepting a larger global role for a constructive China while building barriers and coalitions against coercion in China's neighborhood. The Pivot is a truly "regional and multilateral" strategy, one that embraces and engages Asian states, and creates shared incentives on an orchestra conductor behavior or leadership model, supporting the prevailing Asian operating system and costs for undermining. "It is bilateral Alliance (focuses on US security alliances and partnerships to keep Asia free from domination while also providing benefits outside the realm of security), with a complex amalgam of elements of the transnational challenges along with the strong and determined parts of the China first school (puts China at the center of American Strategy in Asia in order to forestall or mitigate Chinese hegemony by co-opting China into a bipolar framework e.g., G2)" (Campbell, 2016a pp. 328-330).

The Obama administration has considered the world much more like "19th-century and 18th-century global diplomacy" (Kerry, 2014), a bifurcated, bipolar world. However, in reality, it is more complicated. Thus, there is no policy of containment or encirclement of China as a threat, or to limit its growth. In this light, rapid economic transformation has fundamentally created a new dynamic and the US unparalleled military might be used wisely [as a strong point]. As a result, believing that the US and China, an established power and a rising power, are somehow destined for conflict is not completely correct (Biden, 2016, Jul. 20; Rice, 2015). The US's design of a new model of major power relations means managing inevitable competition while forging deeper cooperation on issues where their interests converge in Asia and beyond (Rice, 2013). Indeed, to develop a predictable, stable, and comprehensive relationship with China is not to contain, but to lead in creating global networks of cooperation that benefit all. The

security and prosperity of the US is inextricably linked to the development of the Asia-Pacific, including in the maritime domain.

There are different polarities raised for the 21<sup>th</sup> century:

1. Uni-multipolar (US as a superpower and China, Russia, Japan and EU as great powers) (Buzan, 2004 pp. 68-70) to multi-power system (great powers and regional powers) (Buzan, 2011)
2. Uni-polycentric (one US center and several actors like China, Russia, etc., who do not have equal powers, but will evolve into a multipolar system later) (Spanier & Wendzel, 1996 pp. 151-177),
3. Regiopolarity (the sole regional powers of their home regions)
4. Decentered-multipolarity (economic and political interstate relations are not clustering regionally; there are no hubs or spoke structures, but nations manage to link with extra regional poles) (Buzan, 2011).

Based on the above-mentioned polarities, which depict the distribution of power in the current international system, the most logical polarity is ‘uni-multipolarity’ or what Chinese geopoliticians call “many powers and one superpower” (Zakaria, 2011). The term “balance of power” refers to any existing distribution of power between two states (alliances or coalition), whether it is at equilibrium, an approximate balance, or an imbalance. The US regional balance of power is a kind of imbalance where China is not a peer of the US, but a potential threat; the US is gathering great and middle powers to its networking alliance system to manage China. Kurt Campbell gives the details of the balance of power and power of balance:

“Complex new power dynamics between hegemony and a regional balance of power called for an addition to the historical focus on a balance of power, the Asia’s operating system; the complex arrangement of institutions, norms, and values that have facilitated cooperation and undergird Asia’s peace and prosperity, keep Asia free from domination by inside and outside attempts” (Campbell, 2016a, pp.135 & 195). “China rise was in many ways the kind of traditional balance of power problem with which American strategy had historically dealt. Thus with modified bilateral alliances, in concert with allies and partners by engage, manage and coordination in common cause, we agree on values like freedom of navigation or free trade, that shared consensus can elevate these principles and shape the behavior of recalcitrant emerging power such as China. This comprehensive approach will allow the US to foster a stable balance of power in Asia to prevent hegemony. In this light bolstering and integrating alliances means 21st century network building which is addition to the hub and spokes model of a tire that links allies to one another without interfering with their strong ties to the US hub” (Campbell, 2016a pp. 144 & 150-151). But as Kissinger argues “equilibrium works best if it is buttressed by an agreement on common values, thus while economic and military balance may be necessary to secure a peaceful Asia but balance must inhibit the capacity and desire of a state to rewrite the rules and revise the existing order to sustain regional stability. Its core components involve persuading China of the advantages of the current system, both as a status quo & revisionist power, while opposing it will result in corresponding costs” (Campbell, 2016a pp. 159, 161).

Scholars also have insisted on the importance of security-economic components and China as its heart in the Pivot (Green,

2017 p. 6; Ashbee & Dumbrell, 2017 pp. 265-321; Dueck, 2006 pp. 114-137; Brands, 2016; Brzezinski & Scowcroft, 2008 pp. 113-134). A number of them have approached to the core of the strategy of cooperation and competition toward China in order to prevent "China's hegemony" in the Asia Pacific region.

Nye's Liberal Realism theory supposed the US's relative decline and the rise of China in power transition, and probable hegemonic war with China, especially as it was not certain that the US power would increase in the second half of the twenty-first century. Therefore, cooperation and hedging (competition) policy, as opposed to conflict (Thucydides trap) were recommended. The Pivot was also a strategy of cooperation and competition toward China in order to manage the China's rise. The Pivot is a new model of major power relation, managing inevitable "competition" while forging deeper "cooperation," by a stable balance of power and partnership and a usage of institutions, the Asia operating system. Thus, the US-China relationships are not destined for conflict or containment, but rather for leading a stable and comprehensive relationship with China by creating global networks of cooperation that benefit all.

### **The Process of the Pivot**

Nye has proposed his model of implementing the Liberal Realism Theory through leadership rather than hegemony or empire role; it is a smart or transformational leadership. Charismatic and Transactional leaders depend on the hard power of threat and reward. However, transformational leaders appeal to the collective interests of a group or organization by a combination of both hard and soft powers, where the combination may change over time, in appropriate contexts. Nye recommends using power with others by combining domestic reforms with smart strategies for the conversion of American resources into external power i.e.,

welcome China but hedge against possible hostilities by maintaining close relations with Japan, India, and other countries in Asia, who welcome an American presence.

Implementing cooperation and competition simultaneously was named "Smart, Strategic and Principled Leadership" in Obama's administration. "Leadership is a wise convening allies and adversaries alike around a set of values and around a set of principles when US interests are best served when others lead with us" (Rice et al., 2008). "And leads by deed and example effectively from within [not behind] to establish a system of cooperation that will sustain over time and potentially more in the national interest of more states, existing powers, rising powers, emerging powers and others" (Obama, 2007; Clinton, 2011, Nov. 10; Kerry, 2013, Dec. 11.; National Security Strategy, 2015; Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011).

Based on NIC and the above-mentioned reasons, despite the rise of China, the US will continue to be a great power, but among great powers, without any leadership roles from 2030 or 2050. Thus, for the time being and the continuation of its preponderance, the U.S. needs to reinvent the international system since 2011 through leadership and strengthening relations with others, rather than through hegemony, in which as the world's superpower, it acts alone. The nuance between hegemony and leadership is the question of power that is now declining on the U.S. side; therefore, to regain that sole strong power, there is an immediate need to balance the power and participation by leadership.

Hegemony as Hegemony means a sole power to impose and follow its goals in different forms: hard, intermediate and soft power. During the Obama administration, the US was not a sole power; it was suffering a relative decline, as it was not in a position to dictate its goals to great powers. Hegemony as

Leadership is also in favor of a single dominant state, benevolent or coercive with the pretext of the public good of responsibility, but the US is not a single dominant state, and as a sole superpower is in a relative decline, facing the rise of other great powers like China. Leadership as Leadership is to leverage other actors to accept institutional preferences or framing of issues, and effective use of ideas that shape the way and generate a consensus; these goals are not egoistic ones, but common goals. In this regard, soft hegemony is still in its own norms and values, and in leadership, the goals are collective. It is to engage the full range of relevant players in important strategic arenas, across multiple axes of geopolitical and geo-economic alignments with the aim of finding areas of common interest and building productive relationships while simultaneously managing areas of disagreement (Antoniades, 2008; Destradi, 2008; Ikenberry, 2016; Kissinger, 2001; Leveret & Leveret 2012).

Campbell expresses that the US has often been a gardener in bilateral relationships with allies. However, with this strategy, it is now an orchestra conductor, working to not only engage and manage partners, but also to coordinate them in common cause to shape Asia's future. Thus, instead of encouraging the US to pursue either a bilateral diplomatic "grand bargain" with China or an adversarial stance against it, this more encompassing policy holds that Beijing's behavior, as well as the behavior of other recalcitrant states, are best influenced through a truly regional and multilateral American strategy (Campbell, 2016a: 150).

Consequently, like an orchestrate conductor, the US actively leads the other players and creates a balance of power. This obligation is the duty of a smart leadership, utilizing soft and hard power, smart power, in an appropriate and effective combination, situation by situation, through smart strategy. Indeed, the word "Pivot means the central or most important person or thing in a situation" (Pivot, n.d.).

The steps taken in the framework of “Asia-Pacific’s principled and inclusive security network” (Department of Defense, 2015; Carter, 2016; Carter, 2017) were to connect, cooperate, and contribute to regional security in the form of trilateral, bilateral and trilateral net worked mechanisms by region’s countries and multilateral regional security institutions, the centrality of ASEAN in a strategic partnership, to cement four main steps to negate the specter of a spheres of influence by China:

1. Force posture, 60/40, with the strategic and substantial investments in new capabilities, a comprehensive weapons modernization program, and complex and expansive training exercises from the sea, in the air, and under the water, transits, and operations.
2. Strengthening air superiority and the ground forces to win a full-spectrum conflict; modern deterrence.
3. Maintaining the U.S. presence, 368,000 military personnel in the region, while working together with allies like Japan and partners like Indonesia and India in form of bilateral force posture and persistent rotational presence
4. Maintaining a “Joint Strategic Vision” to both build regional partner capacity and improve regional maritime domain awareness and foreign military sales. US Air-Sea Battle (ASB) vs. Chinese Anti-access/area denial (A2/AD).

The implementation of the Pivot in the economic component has been done through TPP as a leading “Asia-Pacific regional integration initiative” (The White House, 2011) by allies, partners, rising countries and regional institutions in a network of like-minded states in order to integrate China into the rules-based global economy and prevent the Chinese hegemony. In addition, TTIP agreement too were used in this regard as a complement tool with the Europeans. The process is the same as the security component.

A network of more than 270 embassies and consulates, repositioned staff from other parts of the world to Asia, as well as embassies' staff increased from 210 to 299 from 2010 until 2013 with additional funds in the budget.

In this light, the Pivot toward China with a mix of cooperation and competition in security component, hard power with the agile and advanced military force posture with the modern deterrence ,alliance and partnership, The Asian operating system gathered the allied and new partners in a multilayer networking in Asia Pacific as a strong lever in competition context and in order to simultaneously have military cooperation with China through 'Strategic and Economic Dialogue.' Building greater transparency with China was based on three pillars:

- a) Pursuing sustained and substantive dialogue to develop common views.
- b) Building concrete, practical areas to cooperate.
- c) Enhancing risk reduction measures including bilateral and multilateral initiatives (Department of Defense, 2015).

In the economic component, economic strength was supposed to increase at home with the cooperation of Asian and Americas' partners in TPP and the complementary TTIP. Europeans, in a competition framework, turned toward China and simultaneously cooperate bilaterally with China through 'U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade.' If the US does not establish strong rules, then China will, like 'regional comprehensive economic partnership' (RCEP) in process.

Scholars have also considered TPP as a smart strategy in the Asia-Pacific integration at both national and multilateral levels to update rules, reform elites, reassure allies and rivals of the U.S. power, and strengthen novel institutions against "China's regional and global hegemony" (Lundsager, 2015; Solis, 2016).

As Nye's Transformational Leadership model is concerned, the Pivot's smart, strategic and principled leadership is the same and 'proactive,' leading from within (orchestra conductor; manage partners and coordinate them in common cause), rather than behind (gardener; bilateral relationships with allies.) Thus, 'the means' utilized in the Pivot are a combination of hard power and soft power, called 'smart power', Nye's theory is therefore more in line of cooperation and competition, rather than conflict. It was Asia-Pacific's principled and inclusive security network and economic regional integration initiative, including China and the concert of both allied and partners together.

### **Conclusion**

Politicians and scholars have stated that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is America's Pacific Century, the century or millennium of Asia, and the era of China. A post American transitional period, in which the U.S. as an established super power, alongside with numerous rising powers such as China, are the main players of the international politics scene. This new development has caused to grasp the essence of these new changes, especially when the Pivot was announced by President Obama in 2011. In this light, the main question discussed in this paper was 'Why (and How) did President Obama adopt (and implement) the Pivot to Asia policy in 2011?' Our answer to this question was that the US adopt and implement the Pivot to Asia policy to 'prevent China's rise' while it was carried out by economic and security levers.'

In this research, Nye's "Liberal Realism" theory was applied; two levels of analysis were discussed: understanding the new strategic environment, and understanding international and domestic limits. Nye insisted on a two-level analysis with its definition for a change. The Obama administration inclined to

change policy because of the new strategic environment with the Asia Pacific as the most real new dynamic region, China's rise, and the relative decline in the U.S. in particular. Hence, the paper argues that the Pivot is a change and reactive policy to 'reinvent the international system' in order to prevent the China's rise.

The US foreign policy in the history of East Asia is continuity in order to prevent regional hegemony, but the Pivot has favored discontinuity when the region became aware of the importance of China's rise; the shifts started from a decade of war in the Middle East. Regional priority of President Obama in his two terms of presidency seemed to indicate that China and East Asia were the most real new dynamic regions.

In Nye's theory, 'the ends' with an understanding of the strength and limits of American power stressed two important security-economic components. However, promoting liberal democracy and human rights needed time and patience with reasonable levels of cost; it needed fewer Wilsonian calls to make the world safe for democracy, unless combined with Kennedy's rhetoric of 'making the world safe for diversity.' The Pivot's ends consist of strong economy and military, and put the values in a pragmatic way or 'principled realism,' especially when China is hardly to seek an overtly undermined democratic systems of governance like the Soviet Union or the revolutionary China under Mao.

According to Nye's Liberal Realism theory, 'the ways' based on the new strategic environment; power transition among states and conflict and hegemonic wars require the old distinction between realists and liberals to give way to 'liberal realism' or cooperation and competition among governments and international institutions, as well as to combine hard power with soft power into smart power. In new contexts, the world is neither unipolar and multipolar, nor chaotic; it is all three at the same time. Hence,

cooperation and hedging (competition), rather than conflict (Thucydides trap), were proposed as recommended policy toward China. The Pivot has also been a strategy of simultaneous cooperation and competition toward China, a new model of major power relations, managing inevitable "competition" while forging deeper "cooperation" by a stable balance of power and partnership and use of institutions, the Asia operating system. The new strategic environment was considered much more like 18th-century and 19th-century, which does not need conflict, containment, or encirclement, nor does it need to limit China's growth. Thus, the U.S. power will be strengthened by the Rest, namely Asia and China, to sustain U.S. preponderance.

Implementing Nye's Liberal Realism theory through transformational leadership (neither hegemony nor empire), appeals to the collective interests of a group or organization, using power with others as much as power over others. Like Nye's theory, Obama's leadership model was 'Smart,' 'Principled' or 'Transformational,' which convenes allies and adversaries alike around a set of values and principles. The word "Pivot" means the central or most important person or thing in a situation. Thus, the Pivot was to manage "China's rise" and direct it to a responsible emerging power when it reaches its peak of progress in the 2050s. Based on this policy, the preponderance, rather than hegemony status of the U.S. will persist until the 22<sup>th</sup> century.

The Pivot in practice is "Proactive" (as in Nye's leadership model) and is Leading from within (orchestra conductor), rather than behind (gardener). Thus, 'the means' utilized in the Pivot are a combination of hard and soft powers, called smart power, or Nye's theory of cooperation and competition, rather than conflict. In the security component, hard power with the modern deterrence, alliance and partnership, in competition context was utilized and

simultaneously met with military cooperation with China through ‘Strategic and Economic Dialogue.’ In the economic component, the cooperation of Asian and Americans, and European partners in TPP and TTIP, in a competition context with China was used to make the rules and simultaneously cooperate bilaterally with China through ‘US-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade.’

One might argue that with the rise of Trump to power, the new U.S. foreign policies are in a different track. However, the reality is that it is a continuation of Obama’s foreign policy with different tactics. Although Trump is rhetorically negating President Obama’s legacy declared in DAVOS (2018), NDS, NPR, and in NSS (2017), three elements of national interests are the same: 1) the components of the country’s foreign policy are still ‘security’ and ‘economy’, 2) there is a relative US decline and a rise of China at two levels of analysis, 3) US’s regional priorities remain the same; Middle East and East Asia (China).

However, these two presidents’ tactics are rather different in the implementation of these policies (Trump, 2015: 24-26). President Trump’s economic tactic is bilateral trade arrangement vs. regional and global arrangements (such as in TTP, Copenhagen, NAFTA). His ‘Military business’ is home grown to manage the US relative decline. In security, the modern ‘deterrence and alliance’ system will be the same, but it must be paid by other allied forces and governments. The unilateralist behavior of President Trump demonstrates his transactional leadership model vs. President Obama’s transformational leadership. Hence, the Pivot seeks a strategic and regional security-economic leadership on the one hand, and a multilayer networking leadership on the other.

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