



KOREAN REUNIFICATION AND CHINA'S STRATEGIC RESPONSE: ECONOMIC AND SECURITY DIMENSIONS

Selma Fawnia Adzani Ardana
22/496677/SP/30797

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines China's strategic response to the prospect of Korean reunification by analyzing how it balances its security concerns with its economic interests. Drawing on the balance of power framework, particularly the concepts of hard and soft balancing, this study explores China's efforts to maintain regional stability while preventing the expansion of the United States influence on the peninsula. Using a qualitative case study approach based on secondary sources, including academic literature, policy documents, and key events such as the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, this research demonstrates that China adopts a hierarchical balancing strategy in which security interests consistently take precedence over economic considerations. While China utilizes economic engagement, trade, and initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as tools of soft balancing, it is willing to incur high economic costs when its core security interests are threatened. The THAAD dispute illustrates China's readiness to weaponize economic interdependence in response to perceived security risks. Applying this framework to peaceful and sudden reunification scenarios, the study concludes that China does not oppose reunification itself but instead seeks to shape its pace and conditions to prevent unfavourable shifts in the regional balance of power.

Keywords: China, Korean reunification, balance of power, hard and soft balancing, regional security.

ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini menganalisis respons strategis Tiongkok terhadap kemungkinan penyatuan kembali Korea dengan menelaah bagaimana Tiongkok menyeimbangkan kepentingan keamanan dan ekonominya. Dengan menggunakan kerangka konsep balance of power, khususnya konsep hard dan soft balancing, penelitian ini mengkaji upaya Tiongkok dalam menjaga stabilitas kawasan sekaligus mencegah perluasan pengaruh Amerika Serikat di Semenanjung Korea. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kasus dan sumber sekunder, serta analisis peristiwa penting seperti penempatan sistem Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Tiongkok menerapkan strategi penyeimbangan yang bersifat hierarkis, di mana kepentingan keamanan secara konsisten menjadi prioritas utama dibandingkan kepentingan ekonomi. Meskipun Tiongkok memanfaatkan keterlibatan ekonomi dan inisiatif seperti Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) sebagai instrument soft balancing, Tiongkok bersedia menanggung kerugian ekonomi yang signifikan Ketika kepentingan keamanan nasional terancam. Kasus THAAD menunjukkan kesiapan Tiongkok memanfaatkan ketergantungan ekonomi sebagai instrument tekanan strategis. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa Tiongkok tidak menolak adanya reunifikasi tetapi berupaya mengendalikan tempo dan kondisinya untuk mencegah pergeseran keseimbangan kekuatan regional yang merugikan.

Kata-kata kunci: Tiongkok, reunifikasi Korea, kesetimbangan kekuatan, hard and soft balancing, keamanan regional