

Australian Foreign Policy Shift in China's One Belt One Road: The Role of Small Group and Multiple Autonomous Group

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Abstract: China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) Foreign Policy aimed at building a liaison infrastructure between Asia, Europe and even globally is welcomed by the Australian government as a country that offered to invest in the project. Australia under the leadership of Prime Minister Turnbull has a cooperative foreign policy direction towards China. Therefore, OBOR investments offered by the Chinese government to the Australian government initially received a positive and optimistic response to the huge returns from infrastructure investments in Northern Australia where it coincided with the Australian government that intensifying massive infrastructure development in Northern Australia. However, Australia's position in the OBOR cooperation was not clear with the rejection of the signing of the OBOR MoU by the Australian government. In this case, the author attempts to explain the shift in Australia's position in OBOR through group level of analysis by explaining small-group decision units as well as multiple autonomous units. Furthermore, to explain how then the unit's decision works, the author provide identification of the decision units contained in small groups and multiple autonomous groups, explaining how organizational structure of leaders to groups, as well as providing further small group analysis through the decision tree.

1 INTRODUCTION

Australia's foreign policy under the government of Prime Minister Turnbull centered on massive infrastructure development, investment growth and trading activity, in particular with the Northern Development Plan of Australia policy. The Australian government wants to make the northern part of Australia a state powerhouse of the economy. Before going further, Malcolm Bligh Turnbull's elected Prime Minister in 2015, has a foreign policy direction that is quite a contrast to Prime Minister Tony Abbott. One of them is related to how Australia sees its relationship with China where if former Prime Minister Tony Abbott is more likely to see Australia's relationship with China driven by the spirit of regional rivalry and tends to forge mutual cooperation with China's rival countries in other East Asia and Asia Pacific regions such as Japan. While Turnbull primarily has businessman-oriented traits, Turnbull positively views China's economic growth and the opportunities generated from it for Australia itself. However, with China's economic position it does not necessarily make the Prime Minister of Australia to always be a pro-party with foreign policy made by President Xi Jinping. PM

Turnbull seeks to avoid tension and emphasizes the existence of mutually beneficial cooperation between the two (Tyler, 2016).

Departing from the above statement, Australia can be said open to outside investments that give significant impact to their infrastructure development. This also applies to China's One Belt One Road initiative which, when viewed from the interests of trade and infrastructure, there is considerable consideration regarding OBOR cooperation. First, the Chinese government invited Australia's participation in the project investment by providing access and construction facilities in the maritime project or "road initiative". Australia has been spending enormous amounts of money for Chinese operating companies in countries that have agreed to invest through China's own Bank. More specifically, China offers substantial investments under OBOR to support governmental development in Northern Australia (Wade, t.t.). China is Australia's largest trading partner by an increasingly intense cooperation since the signing of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement or ChAFTA. OBOR then seen as an opportunity that make the Australian government should be able to expedite Australia's massive development plans especially in

infrastructure in Northern Australia. The OBOR initiative also became a major consideration for Australia especially after seeing the prospect of a non-promising Trans Pacific Partnership with the exit of the United States while Australia needs a lot of investment in infrastructure both to improve its previous projects mainly in urban transport (Eslake, 2017: 4).

Based on the statements above, it appears that Australia has more reasons to participate in this big project. However, in reality the Australian government has not shown a clear position in OBOR's participation with the signing of the One Belt One Road. According to the latest White Paper released by the Australian government in November 2017, the Australian Government's interest in OBOR policy is largely based on the government's hope that Australia's infrastructure development plan brings no debt and other losses to the region's, but inside of it also mention related to the policy that considered still in "cautious" position (ACRI, 2017). Australia's policy change on OBOR was also visible when the Australian government through the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Investment Steven Ciobo was optimistic about the benefits of OBOR investment in Northern Australia. OBOR needs to be considered further because it has not included informative and transparent issues after attending the OBOR Summit in Beijing (ACRI, 2017). The author then see that the consideration of the investment benefits mentioned in the previous section is challenged by other considerations. This is interesting because the considerations of actors representing economic, trade and infrastructure interests are not necessarily manifested in the form of an agreement signed by Prime Minister Malcolm Bligh Turnbull. It also imply that Prime Minister Turnbull in foreign policy making regarding China's One Belt One Road is considering the various aspects voiced by several actors in it. Therefore, through this paper the author seeks to explain what factors are influential in Australian foreign policy making and how the dynamics of the actors in it can play a role in determining Australia's position on OBOR.

2 GROUP LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

In explaining the Australian government's response to China's OBOR policy, the author use the group level of analysis by agreeing on Hudson's (2007: 73) notes that a leader is incapable of creating and implementing foreign policy on his own, but foreign

policy in many countries is created through groups setting. This indicates that a leader regardless of the country's governance system (democracy or non-democracy) in some cases does not create a united foreign policy but there is some influences from the actors around it. The author then took Breuning (2007: 86) assumptions which states that the country policy can be created by several different decision units and at different times. Decision units explain the capable actors that have the abilities on shifting the decision-making circle (Neack, 2008: 67). The decision unit can simply explain who has access and the capability to "sit" with the leaders of the country or the executive ranks of foreign policy makers and has the capability to contribute to shape and influence both the policy-making process or the final decision.

Furthermore, to be able to use the decision unit that have mentioned earlier in explaining Australia's policy toward OBOR, the author then take some basic form of the decision unit that can influence the state leaders in formulating foreign policy. The decision unit can also be referred to as an advisory team for leaders where within the advisory team itself there are various aspects that can circle leaders and influence leaders in formulating foreign policy (Breuning, 2007: 88). The personality of the leader influences how the leader organizes the advisory team. Breuning (2007: 89) mentions three approaches, namely formalistic, competitive, and collegial approach. The author explains how a group of advisory works in the formulation of foreign policy under Prime Minister Turnbull. The author is more likely to choose a collegial approach where the approach emphasizes teamwork rather than competition between entities. Advisory team is further explained by the author through the explanation of small group where policy makers interact face-to-face to discuss decisions based on information and analysis provided by various government agencies and departments. Breuning (2007: 99) emphasizes the very limited number of policy makers. In this case no larger than the governmental cabinet and does not include members of parliament in the small group category. In this small group it basically puts the advisory group as a think-tank where each of the advisors has incomplete information and then became the source in decision making so that through the face-to-face interaction, policy-makers try to construct together and debate about how the best way to respond to these foreign policy issues (Breuning, 2007: 99). The small group in this paper itself refers to the ministers and relevant staff in the Australian

government who respond fairly frequently to this issue and the author tries to find relevance about how the responses or statements issued by the actors in the small group play a role in shaping Australia's foreign policy.

In this, the author took two decision units. In addition to the small group discussion described above, the authors also take multiple autonomous units. There are reasons behind author decision to choose these decision units, first, in a single group the author tries to search between individuals who are the representatives of departments or ministries within the Australian government who have influence in consideration of PM Turnbull. Second, there are groups that also have influence in foreign policy making but does not meet the characteristics to be classified as single or small group, namely parliament. The author first tries to explain the understanding of the two decision units. Neack (2008: 75) mentioned in multiple autonomous units, the actors involved are individuals, groups or coalitions of which some or all of them can simultaneously take actions for the government. But not all actors have the ability to decide and coercion other actors to obey or follow their thinking. This is due to the absence of an authoritative body that oversees members of this unit. Each of the members is entitled to protect the interests of the group or entity they represent or even the interests of each individual himself. In this case multiple autonomous units refer to the Australian parliament in which there is a coalition of parties that occupy the most seats and opposition parties (Gorbett, 2016). The author sees that parliament members in a country that believe parliamentary form of government have an important role in foreign policy decision-making and seek the significance of the Australian parliamentary vote against PM Turnbull's policy.

3 SMALL GROUP DECISION UNIT

In initiating the analysis of this case, the author refer to Neack's (2007: 67) paper to, first identify the decision unit in this case based on what has been mentioned above. The author analyze the decision units in small groups. First, what the author wants to offer is that Prime Minister Turnbull himself is the Prime Minister who prioritizes strategic foreign policy by trying to accommodate all the considerations related to Australia's own national interests. It can be seen from how Turnbull's PM is

detached from the direction of foreign policy that is leaning towards China, does not necessarily approve any foreign policy undertaken by China. Since the election of Malcolm Turnbull, several senior Liberal Government rulers have occupied positions in the Turnbull cabinet, some of which have served as ministers and senators. These individuals also serve as private advisory group of PM Turnbull in reviewing both domestic and foreign policy. Decision units identified by the author in small groups include; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Julie Bishop; Minister of Trade, Tourism, and Innovation, Hon. Steve Ciobo; Michael Pezzullo, Secretary of Immigration and Border Protection; and Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin, AC Chief of the Defense Force.

When the Australian government finally refused or "postponed" the signing after One Belt One Road Summit 2017 that was held in Beijing, it indicated the declining of Australia's interest and seriousness in OBOR. This is based on the views of Minister Julie Bishop and Minister Steve Ciobo who consider further consideration of Australia's involvement with the OBOR project. However, in this case the position of Minister Julie Bishop is more assertive than the position of Minister Steve Ciobo himself. It considered that the involvement of Australia in the OBOR project will not create a tangible advantage and will not encourage the extra investment of China. The argument expressed by Minister Julie Bishop is that the government is dissatisfied with the details contained in the Chinese proposal. In this case the OBOR proposal in reality does not meet the ideal investment standards as stated in the previous White Paper (ACRI, 2017).

The current situation still indicates the same thing. Australia's stance towards China is more clearly shown through the statements of the actors who are in the small groups. Nevertheless, the response does not necessarily indicate Australia refusing to engage in China's One Belt One Road investment. Minister Julie Bishop's remarks are also in line with Turnbull's repeated attitudes that Australia will withhold a decision on its involvement in OBOR because OBOR proposal is still under the Foreign Investment Review Board or FIRB and has not received approval recorded until November 24, 2017 (Department of Defense Minister, 2017). The relationship between Mike Pezzullo and PM Turnbull was established when Mike Pezzullo was named the best federal public service by the Australian government. Then, Marshal Mark Binskin often shared with PM Turnbull in a press release addressing defense issues including One Belt

One Road. Basically, there are other individuals who have the potential to be influential in the formation of OBOR's foreign policy, such as Greg Moriarty who served as Chief of Defense who has worked with PM Turnbull as chief of staff (Turnbull, 2017). The author see that the closest individuals of PM Turnbull are largely in strategic and security positions. The defense plays a complementing role in Turnbull's foreign policy making, This because of the character of this foreign policy are more open and contributed in recommending strategic consideration regarding OBOR Policy to PM Turnbull.

Judging from how the dynamics that run in small groups, it can be seen from how each of the individuals in the small-group has the authority and capacity to openly debate and vote to respond to the OBOR policy. Therefore, it became relevant if the author uses a collegial approach in viewing the management style used by PM Turnbull. In this approach the core weakness lies when the individuals within the group begin to have the same thoughts and exchange ideas that should happens more to be a mutual agreement. This point is what the author tried to take in referring to the Australian government's position that is still "gray" until now. This is because from the beginning, Australia looked optimistic but at the end they have considerations that began to shift the position to oppose OBOR. In this case the author refers to Minister Julie Bishop and in some cases, Minister Steve Ciobo but then the process of assessment increasingly making Australia's position blurred.

4 MULTIPLE AUTONOMOUS UNITS: THE ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

If refers to Breuning, the author place the members of parliament as a unit in which there are various groups or individuals with their respective powers. The author in this case includes the parliament in the identification decision unit because as mentioned by Breuning (2007: 94) that in the parliamentary system, the prime minister in defense of his position directly noticed the support available in the legislature. If there is one party that wins the majority seats in the parliament, the prime minister tends to get more influence from the composition in government and advisory system. However, if the seat of government is filled by some political parties

such as the government coalition cabinet, the emerging advisory system tends not to have or exhibits a common characteristic which in this case are the characteristics in addressing a foreign policy issue. In the Australian government formed from electoral elections in 2015, parliamentary seats are dominated by party coalitions. Then, the Australian government itself is filled by the Australian Labor Party as the and followed by other minor parties (Parliament of Australia, tt). There is a parliamentary role in influencing Turnbull's foreign policy. The author tries to seek an explanation of this by looking at the votes in the Australian parliament in response to OBOR policy.

The position of the opposition Labor Party in this policy is more likely to be optimistic in accepting such initiatives for economic and business interests. It is as mentioned by ACRI (217: 4) that Senator Penny Wong considers it is a necessary to look at the Belt-Road Initiative policy with optimism on the existence of mutually beneficial interests and complements and avoids the reflexive negative views. In addition, the Australian absence in following the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank may bring Australia's disparaging views. Broadly speaking, Senator Wong stressed that the gains or losses in BRI depend on how the Australian government can identify points that could benefit Australia's national interests. Within the Labor Party itself the response to OBOR is not homogeneous. There are other opinions that concerns about the Chinese dominance that feared can caused uncompetitive economic competition in the international market. The identity of the party groups in the decision unit does not necessarily represent the attitudes and interests of each of its members. However, these interests are ultimately manifested through voting mechanisms in which the dominating voice can be seen as the interests of this group.

In addition, the author view this parliamentary analysis with a bureaucratic-politics model because of several aspects such as the existence of fairly complex bargaining activities between individuals and government agencies. It is shown here by how each senate member has its own views in responding to OBOR. The condition also implies that the key actors are senate members, especially if the senate members are from a government coalition. Thirdly, that is related to the decision process within the Australian parliament itself. The choice of policy is determined from how the bargaining power and political maneuvers of each members of parliament. However, at this point the author do not clearly find

out how political maneuvering takes place but power bargaining can be seen from the ongoing parliamentary debate, one of them was happened on August 17, 2017 (Senate, 2017). The direction of senate support in the Australian government has a very powerful role. It can be seen from how PM Turnbull paid enough consideration to the considerations given both from and to the senate as seen in the composition of senate members and the making of agreements and laws.

5 SMALL GROUP ANALYSIS: DECISION TREE

The author in this case tries to find the problem solving contained in the small group mentioned in the previous section through decision tree by Charles F. Hermann (in Neack 2008: 70). There are several question that the author focused here (1) the members do not have a primary identity with the group, each head of the ministry and the government officials who involve in it do not have the attachment of a particular identity. Then, (6) all members do not have the same preference at first where in this case indicated by the position of Michael Pezzullo and Marshal Mark Binskin who from the outset had a different view of OBOR. In number (7) there was no rule of thumb that required all individuals in the small group to agree. Then, (11) the group was likely to continue even though on different issues this was due to the small group. In this case it is part of the government apparatus that has the authority and tasks associated with the issues raised. When speaking of foreign policy issues, the four individuals are likely to remain in the same small group. Finally, (13) there is no preference enforcement intense towards the minority votes. The result of the decision tree shows that the solution has a likely-subset solution. In this case the author tries to explain that the Australian government's temporary response by delaying the signing of the OBOR MoU is ultimately a small part of the major solution that can actually creating maximum results. In this case the author tries to explain that the unclear position of Australia is a safe way to avoid insecurities.

6 CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis, the authors conclude that Australian foreign policy in addressing China's

One Belt One Road policy has to do with the influence of the nearest individuals around the PM Turnbull as well as groups involved in the political bureaucratic process of the Turnbull government. More specifically, the group referred here is a small group as well as multiple autonomous units. Individuals who can be classified as members of small groups include Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Steve Ciobo, Immigration and Border Protection Director Michael Pezzullo, Defense Force Chief Marshal Mark Binskin and Greg Moriarty as Defense Chief. In this small group, initially there was a similar preference in the views of Julie Bishop and Michael Pezzullo who optimistically approved OBOR's investment in infrastructure development in Northern Australia. But, there was a shift in view with the postponement of the OBOR MoU signing by the Australian government. This has led the small group to have the same preference in addressing OBOR's investment, which is a further review of Australia's national strategic value. The individuals surrounding PM Turnbull are dominated by individuals from the security and defense fields. It can be concluded that there are dynamics within the parliament members regarding OBOR. But if reviewed further, the parliament members themselves do not directly affect the Australia's foreign policy but still play some roles in terms of forming and agreeing on the agreement.

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