

Motives and Rivalry of Superpower Countries: the United States and China in Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis

Achmad Ismail

International Relations Department
Universitas Indonesia

Jl. Prof. Dr. Selo Soemardjan, Kota Depok, Jawa Barat 16424
ismailachmad@rocketmail.com

Submitted: July 10, 2018; accepted: September 4, 2018

Abstrak

Artikel ini berargumen terdapat motif politik dan ekonomi dibalik respon isu krisis kemanusiaan Rohingya yang merupakan bentuk rivalitas soft power Amerika Serikat (AS) dan China. Beberapa tulisan terdahulu menelaah rivalitas kedua negara dengan fokus isu keamanan dan isu ekonomi semata, namun belum ada artikel yang membahas rivalitas soft power keduanya. Artikel ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif studi kasus serta teknik pengumpulan data studi pustaka. Temuannya adalah pipa gas dan minyak di Rakhine, pelabuhan Kyaukpyu sebagai jalur lintas perdagangan, penyebaran pengaruh nilai demokrasi oleh AS, serta latar belakang permasalahan krisis muslim Uighur di Xinjiang merupakan beberapa kepentingan nasional yang sebenarnya ingin dicapai melalui rivalitas soft power dua negara.

Kata kunci: Amerika Serikat, China, krisis kemanusiaan, Rohingya, soft power.

Abstract

This article argues that there are economic and political motives behind the response to the Rohingya humanitarian crisis issue which identified as a form of soft power rivalry penetrated by the United States (US) and China. Some previous articles examined the rivalries of the two countries with a focus only on security and economic issues, but there are no articles discuss the rivalry of soft power between the two countries. To examine, this article utilizes qualitative research methods with case study approaches and data collecting techniques with literature studies. This article concludes the existence of gas and oil pipelines in Rakhine, Kyaukpyu port as a cross-trade route, the spread of democratic values influenced by the US, and the issue of the Uighur Muslim crisis in Xinjiang are the economic and political national interest wish to pursue through soft power rivalry of the two superpower countries.

Keywords: the United States of America, China, humanitarian crisis issue, Rohingya, soft power.

INTRODUCTION

As the changing policies since the presidency of Deng Xiao Ping to liberalize economic orientation, China has remarkably grown. From an economic standpoint, starting in the 1970s (the beginning of economic reform) until 2012, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rocketed at an average chain level of almost 10 percent (Morrison, 2013). Recently, China is the second largest economy after the United States (US). China's economy grew 6.9 percent in 2017, the fastest since 2015 (Hornby & Wildau, 2018). Another implication is around 500 million people in China have been freed from poverty (Morrison, 2013).

Furthermore, there are improvements in the fields of defense sector. China increased 8.1 percent of defense spending starts in 2017 which valued US\$175 billion (Rajagopalan, 2018).

With regard to the growth, Ikenberry (2014) and Morrison (2013) argued that 'The Rise of China' has changed international constellation. To some points, the rise of China implies threats for some countries especially for the US and their allies. Such as Australia which responds that the rise of China is referred as a threat from the past two decades (Goodman, 2017). Similarly for In-

Indonesia, China is a threat for Indonesia's economy and security (Wibisono, 2010). In regards to this phenomenon, the US helps its alliance countries in the South China Sea dispute while maintaining the US power in Asia, which further to maintain the US power in the international world.

The discourse about rivalry between great powers can be traced back to the late 19th century. It was between the two superpower countries marked by the rise of Germany which gave political friction to the US and Japan to continue the rivalry between the US and Soviet Union in the cold war (Syahrin, 2018). The rivalry of the two big power countries is often present in every international issue and has become an important aspect of regional issues in the next few years (Bendini, 2016). The rivalry between the two countries has spread throughout regions, including Asia Pacific, East Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and South-east Asia. The rivalry is not only limited to regional issues, but it extends into international issues. Not only on traditional issues (such as security, military, and borders-related issues) but also non-traditional issues such as the issue of Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

In recent years, the issue of Rohingya humanitarian crisis receives ample attention from the international community. The victims of this case are fairly large. Historically, the Rohingya humanitarian crisis has been going on for a long time. Since 1978, the Rohingya have been targeted in the destruction process carried out by the Myanmar government. In 1978, the socialist military dictatorship General Ne Win launched the first large-scale campaign against Rohingya in Rakhine State with the main goal of expelling them massively from Myanmar and then legalizing the systematic elimination of Rohingya group identity and legitimizing their physical destruction (Zarni & Cowley, 2014). This crisis continued and the discrimination of Rohingya was legally authorized by the Myanmar government. Rooted in 1982, the law of citizenship in Myanmar only recognized eight races (Arakan, Burman, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon, and Shan and their ancestors who stayed in Myanmar before being colonized by Britain in 1823) as 'national races' (Kingston, 2015).

The law also regulates matters of foreign citizens or groups of society who are willing to become part of

Myanmar's naturalized country. This became an opportunity for Rohingyas to get Myanmar citizenship officially. However it is difficult to realize under the condition that the law requires an age minimum of 18 years old, have parents whose Myanmar nationality or able to prove that they or their parents have stayed in Myanmar before the independence in 1948. However, official documents possessed by Rohingyas is not existed, even though they have stayed in Myanmar since 1823 (Kingston, 2015). Therefore, they are one of the largest human populations without citizenship in the world. Through the 1978 Nagamin operation, the Myanmar government took official Rohingya documents so that after the 1982 citizenship law was published, they do not have official documents (Ullah, 2016). The acts of discrimination were further aggravated during the time of President Thein Sein. In 2012, the Rohingya were the main target in acts of violence, hatred, murder, property deprivation, burning, thievery that aimed to destroy and move them from their long-occupied houses.

The conflict was continued by the robbery and rape of the Rakhine woman named Ma Thida Htwe on May 28, 2012 (Hartati, 2013). In this case, the Myanmar police have sentenced three perpetrators that the two of whom are the Rohingya ethnic. The case worsened by the attacking action between the two ethnic groups. During 2016, attacks on police posts killed nine police officers, and at the same time, there was a group emerged calling itself Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) - while the Rohingya Solidarity Organization was responsible for the incident (BBC, 2017). Ata Ullah as the leader of ARSA said that this was an act of Rohingya youth who were angry at the acts of discrimination carried out by the Government of Myanmar. Besides, ARSA aimed to protect the Rohingya Muslim minority from acts of discrimination by the Myanmar government. Seeing the ARSA action, the Myanmar government responded quickly. The government conducted 'clearance operations' by killing men, children, shooting them, raping women, burning and looting their homes, forcing Rohingyas to cross the river (BBC, 2016). The number of deaths and Rohingya refugees was increasing. The Myanmar government claimed that 'clearance operations' would continue to be carried out in order to protect the sovereignty of its citizens from ARSA actions.

At the end, the acts of terrorism carried out by ARSA were used as an excuse for the Myanmar government to take military action to protect its sovereignty so that the anti-Rohingya movement emerged which made the Rohingya more cornered.

The continuation of violence in the Rohingya has caused many victims to date. In August 2017, more than 671,000 Rohingya had fled from Rakhine State in Myanmar to avoid the large-scale ethnic cleansing campaign of the military (HRW, 2018). Furthermore, UNICEF reports that an estimated 693,000 Rohingyas have been pushed to Bangladesh (in April 2018) and more than half of them are children (UNICEF, 2018). Seeing these conditions, countries in the world give more attention and help to solve the existing problems. Countries in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Bangladesh were accepting Rohingya refugees to reduce acts of violence experienced in Myanmar (Sari, Prastiti, & Hidayat, 2018). On the other hand, some countries provided financial and goods assistance to Rohingya refugees. On 28 September 2017, China sent 150 tons of aid, including 2,000 relief tents and 3,000 blankets, to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (Gao, 2017). Furthermore, China provided three solutions to solve the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, such as promoting a ceasefire, promoting fair efforts, and poverty alleviation (Kompas, 2017).

The existence of China on the issue of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis triggered the US to present in solving the problem. This intensified influence is seen as a rivalry of influence between the two countries. Following the China's path, during the United Nations (UN) summit in New York, the US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley said the US would provide an additional US\$185 million in humanitarian assistance, of which US\$156 million would be given to Rohingya refugees and people in Bangladesh, so that the total aid for the Rohingya crisis was US\$389 million in the past a year (Brunnstorm *et al.*, 2018).

Despite its appearance, the presence of the US and China focuses on helping victims of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, but there are intention hidden of their presence. Starting from here the rivalry between the two (in the fields of economy, politics, security, and so on) increas-

ingly surfaced. Furthermore, difference in attitudes and mutual criticism of policies related to the Rohingya humanitarian crisis such as the US urged the UN to form a fact-finding team (FFT) to conduct an investigation into the Rohingya region, while being opposed by China because it was a domestic Myanmar problem. The US criticized China's actions for protecting Myanmar from United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions for military actions against Rohingya ethnic cleansing (SCMP, 2018). The US has imposed economic sanctions on several Myanmar military commanders (Aung Kyaw Zaaw, Khin Maung Soe, Khin Hlaing, Thura San Lwin, the Burmese Army's 33rd Light Infantry Division and the 99th Light Infantry Division regarding Rohingya crisis) (Wong, 2018).

Concerning on Rohingya ethnicities, the international world has increasingly condemned the actions of the Myanmar government for violating human rights towards their citizens. For the international community, this clearance operation commonly considered as ethnic cleansing. The international world calls for resolving this problem promptly. Besides, the international called upon financial assistance by raising funds and providing humanitarian assistance. China which has a direct border with Myanmar is no exception, it provided financial assistance and so on. In the same circumstance, the US also plays a role in resolving the issue of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis by providing humanitarian assistance. The description above explains where the Rohingya humanitarian crisis should not be responded to as purely a humanitarian issue, but the presence of the US and China made the Rohingya humanitarian crisis serve as a 'stage' of rivalry to struggle for their hegemony. Therefore, this article tries to identify deeper the various motives of the presence of the US and China on the issue of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar as a rivalry between the two countries' power.

Some of the previous articles examined the motives and rivalries between the US and China in particular sectors and regions. Their rivalry present in one sector in the procurement of primary weapons systems (armaments systems) (Armandha, 2016). He added the increasing regional complexity—especially in East Asia and Southeast Asia—happen due to the 'Rise of China' in weapons technology. Many countries increasingly need submarine weaponry

technology, so the rivalry between the two is evident in the Asian region. Their rivalry is present in the security sector in the Asia Pacific region. The existence of unilateral territorial sea claims on nine-dash lines by China as China's sovereign territory in the South and the East China Sea has become a trigger for the US to attend because it intersects with the US alliance's territorial boundary (Syahrin, 2018). Not to mention related to North Korea's nuclear problems, relations between China and Taiwan and several other strategic issues.

The rivalries are inevitable when the US and China carry the concept of pivot to Asia. In the financial institution sector, China with the initiative of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is contending the former similar institution from the US, Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Callaghan, 2016). Furthermore, both of states are also presence in the East Asia Summit (EAS) (Park, 2013). While in the African region, since 2002 China's trade cooperation with African countries began to rival US trade cooperation in Africa. The struggle for natural resources and a large market of Africa, plus security assistance in the framework of the war on terrorism, has become an essential agenda for China and the US (Safitri, 2014).

Based on the paragraph above, some articles more focus on the rivalries of the US and China in the security sector and regional financial institutions in the Asia Pacific, Africa, and other regions. This article strives to present research novelty that the rivalries of China and the US have begun to extend in various sectors, such as in the case of the humanitarian crisis in the Syrian conflict. In this case, the US and allies submitted a UNSC resolution related to the Syrian conflict, but were foiled by veto from Russia and China (BBC, 2011). Likewise, at the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, the US urged the UNSC to investigate atrocities in Rakhine but was confronted by China. The US and China are trying to play an influence on the Rohingya case by providing humanitarian assistance. However, humanitarian crisis assistance is not purely humanitarian aid, but there are other motives behind it. However, this is still a gap.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The international world pays more attention on the

issue of the Rohingya security crisis in Rakhine, Myanmar, purely as a humanitarian issue (Pratama, 2017). However, this issues is seen differently from the perspective of the two superpower countries (the US and China). Both China and the US see this issue as a form of their rivalry. The US urged the UNSC to investigate by forming a fact-finding team but got opposition from China. In other side, China sought to build Kyaukpyu port as an economic zone in the Rakhine region because there were gas and oil pipes connected to Yunnan, China.

The subsequent example illustrates that both are trying to drive in their power, even as if the issue of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis is a 'stage' of their rivalry. Scholars of international relations agree that power is an important matter for a country to serve its national interests (Spry, 2016). This is in line with the definition of power as power or ability to influence the behavior of other actors to produce actions that someone wants (Nye, 2004). In general, power is distinguished by two divisions; first, hard power uses this method as the ability of the state to change the behavior of others by using military force. Second, soft power focuses more on providing co-opted pressure. This method can be used through agenda-setting (manipulating the political choice agenda so that other parties fail to express a particular political preference because they feel that the preferences seem unrealistic based on the institution) or through attraction (an attraction that originates from culture, values, and policies owned) (Nye, 2004).

In this situation, soft power is considered cheap (Gray, 2011) and as an effective instrument strategy in foreign policies (Gallarotti, 2011). Nevertheless, it does not necessarily make the use of hard power by the state disappear completely. In fact some countries still need it especially in conflict-prone areas. Joseph Nye (2004) defines soft power as the ability to get what is desired through actions set on the agenda (co-opts people) rather than through coercive actions or financial actions (coerces them). The form of this power can be found in various methods such as cooperation, dialogue, or agreements, to instill value in achieving the goals of diplomacy. Therefore, some international actors today both state actors and non-state actors (IGOs, NGOs, to transnational society) are more fo-

cused on the use of soft power as an effort to embed their values and interests.

Joseph Nye (2004) identified at least three sources of soft power, namely culture, political values, and foreign policy. From the three sources, foreign policy is the one that frequently used by the state, such as bilateral cooperation, investment, and the provision of humanitarian assistance. Move to the core discussion of this paper, humanitarian assistance, according to Alexander Vuying (2009), is another way for all international actors (countries, NGOs, and civil society) to express the generosity of others and as soft power projections.

Billings (2010) identifies the provision of humanitarian assistance as an effort from one party to provide basic emergency response intended to continue life and to maintain human dignity everywhere when the government and local actors are unable or unwilling to act. The provision of humanitarian assistance is considered important as a form of and based on the value of solidarity (MOFA Malta, 2014). It is often interpreted as purely humanitarian aid, but behind the generosity rhetoric, there is a strong power signal. The presence of developed countries in the UN Peacekeeping operation encourages peace negotiations became a capable instrument for them as to foster a positive image as members of an international community that is responsible, peaceful, and generous. Thereby it is increasing their soft power in general (Nye, 2004).

Through the theory, this paper seeks to identify various motives from the presence of the US and China by using their soft power. The real contradiction of the motives of the two countries makes the rivalry between the US and China on several issues in the region, one of which is the issue of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. The difference between the US and China in addressing the issue of the humanitarian crisis becomes a complex that ignites the rivalry of both by the encouragement of some of the motives they want to achieve.

METHODS

This article uses qualitative research methods with a literature review and a case study approach. According to Neumann (2014), case study research intensively investigates one or a small set of cases, focusing on many details

in each case and its context. In this article also uses some data from books, scholarly journals, documents, and articles from online media related to the presence and motives of the US and China on the issue of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis as soft power which ends in the rivalry of both.

DISCUSSION

ROHINGYA HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: THE PRESENCE OF MOTIVES AND RIVALRY OF THE US AND CHINA

China's economic raising causes the international world increasingly give more attention, including the US. It can be seen from the fundamental changes in the US foreign policy by President Bush, especially in Asia in the case of Taiwan and the North Korean nuclear crisis (Zhao, 2005). It was then followed by the US foreign policy under President Obama, named pivot to Asia. The rivalry between the US and China concerning the Rohingya crisis has become one of the high intense issues for the international community.

The presence of the US and China to overcome the Rohingya humanitarian crisis have motives for their national interest. The Chinese government was providing protection for 3.000 Rohingya Muslims who fled from conflict to their territory by establishing houses and providing treatments to hospitals in Yunnan Province (Ferida, 2016). The issue of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis can be said as an excellent opportunity and momentum for China to ensure its image as a strategic partner for neighboring countries, especially countries in Southeast Asia. Where before, the image of China seemed to deteriorate marked by several South China Sea disputes, a nine-dash line made by China that increased political tension in the Asian region. China understands that the best way to be taken is not doing much intervention over the domestic politics of Myanmar.

Moreover, China convinced the international community that the actions to pressure the government of Myanmar—in the form of sanctions and criticism—to resolve the Rohingya humanitarian crisis were ineffective. So China recommends three-stages resolutions. First, there should be a ceasefire from both sides to restore stability and order so that no more people are forced to escape

from the motherland. Second, Myanmar and Bangladesh work together to find solutions to carry out the process of repatriating the refugees to their home regions. Third, inviting the international community to rebuild the territorial/community order (Lee, 2018). Finally, China campaigned that the Rohingya humanitarian crisis is Myanmar's domestic problem and part of Myanmar's sovereignty. China's stand was proven by vetoing the resolution of the UN General Assembly that preferring a peaceful settlement process. China has defended the position of the Myanmar government in international forums, including the UN forum, and called for understanding efforts to promote 'social stability' (Sun, 2018). In this action, China seemed to send a message to the international community that none could intervene in the domestic affairs of the country.

China's actions can be related to similar experience that Myanmar has. As Yun Sun argued, China is now connecting Myanmar's Rohingya crisis with the problem of its Uighur Muslim militants in Xinjiang Province (Sun, 2018). Therefore any international criticism of the crisis handling by the Myanmar government can negate China's long-held non-intervention policy regarding its repressive policies towards the Uighur minority. Uighurs are a Muslim minority (around 45 percent), most of them in the Xinjiang region. The UN claims that there are one million Uighur Muslims in China detained and re-educated in political camps built by the Chinese government. It was accused that there are some extremist/radical among Islamic Uighur Muslims who caused the conflict in the region (BBC, 2018) Therefore, China insists on asking the international community not to intervene in their domestic problems. Thus any criticism and international sanctions against the handling of the Rohingya crisis by the Myanmar government made the absence of non-intervention policies by China that paved the way to criticize its repressive policies towards the Uighur minority.

Furthermore, China continues to support the second phase of the three stages proposed to resolve the Rohingya crisis. It called Myanmar and Bangladesh to find the right solution to repatriate Rohingya refugees. The reason is that by carrying out this peaceful repatriation, Rohingya refugees do not come to China even more. In 2016 alone,

there were 3.000 refugees who were displaced and taken to hospitals in Yunnan, China (Reuters, 2016). On the other hand, this also proves China's consistency in resolving the Rohingya crisis as a peaceful signal that China is a good neighboring country (The Daily Star, 2018).

If the resolution adopted, Myanmar government can provide assistance to rearrange the development of Rohingya Muslims in the region. It is then can be an entry point for the presence of Chinese motives, starting from development assistance with poverty alleviation through educational projects. September 2018, China's ambassador to Myanmar, Hong Liang said China donated K200 million (US\$150.262) to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Assistance and Resettlement for Rakhine State by providing scholarships for university level and internship programs (Yiqian, 2018). In addition, China provides development assistance in infrastructure and agriculture. China provided ¥33.33 million (US\$5.31 million) for the project, which included the development of social infrastructure, vocational training, income generation assistance and building (Yiqian, 2018).

Development assistance also presents in the investment sector, marked by the development of Kyaukpyu as a special economic zone. In the Rakhine area, there are profitable and controversial projects, such as the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone, and the gas and oil pipes that pass from Rakhine to Yunnan, China (Joy, 2018). China's ambition to pursue these two projects is the main motive to get greater economic benefits. The Kyaukpyu port where the port provides greater access to the Indian Ocean and is an entry point for oil and gas imports as China's energy needs from the Middle East to improve global trade connectivity. Kyaukpyu Port has a great economic value for China up to the state-owned investment company China, China International Trust Investment Corporation (CITIC). It provides 85 percent investment of the US\$7.3 billion of costs needed in the Kyaukpyu seaport project with a capacity of 7.8 million tons of cargo bulk in Western Rakhine State. CITIC also develops a US\$10 billion Kyaukpyu special economic zone (SEZ) on Ramree Island (Mahalingam, 2018).

With the investment, CITIC gained the rights to operate the Kyaukpyu port for 50 years with the prospect of

extending for 25 years, providing significant benefits for China in maintaining their existence in the Indian Ocean. The Rakhine region, specifically Kyaukpyu's special economic zone, seems to be a 'paradise' for China. Because there are offshore gas fields in the region that have gas and oil valued 11 trillion and 23 trillion cubic feet and US\$10 trillion is already invested (Dariyanto, 2017).

Besides the oil and gas imported by China entered through the Kyaukpyu port, the Rakhine area also provided oil and gas pipelines to connect a line from Rakhine to Yunnan Province called the Shwe pipeline. China must secure the Shwe pipeline for the continuation of the oil and gas lines as China's energy security to lower the costs. The importance of these two projects helps China to be more confident with its ambitious project 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) in 2013. These two projects, aside from being an entry point for China for oil and gas imports from the Middle East, are also strategically valuable since Kyaukpyu Port is projected as a Chinese naval base. So China worried the Rohingya humanitarian crisis poses a threat to its regional ambitions that could hamper its economic progress.

Moreover, by means of peace and development, it can be interpreted that China continuing support to the resolution as an effort to frame the conflict as a matter of economic development. Therefore the stability is created by poverty reduction by which one of the ways is 'expansion of Chinese investment.' Presenting itself as Myanmar ally by promoting the principle of non-interference to Myanmar's sovereignty make the right strategy in the pursuit of Chinese interests. The narratives of economic development, investment, and an image as 'closest friend' increasingly convinced Myanmar that only China whose serious intention in helping resolve the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. Thus Bertil Lintner suggests China's goal is not to solve the problem of Rohingya ethnicity in Myanmar, but to take advantage of them for their geostrategic reasons (Chauduri, 2018).

China overactive assistance to resolve the Rohingya humanitarian crisis has driven the US concern about the growing influence of China in the Southeast Asian region, especially Myanmar. To this condition the US does not remain silent, it provides assistance intensively in rebal-

ancing China's influence in the region. Financially, the assistance provided by the US to Myanmar loomed largely. After the UN meeting in New York this year, through the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley announced the US would provide an additional US\$185 million for Rohingya, of which US\$156 million would be given to refugees and the people of Bangladesh as hosts, so that the total funding for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis has reached almost US\$389 million since last year (SCMP, 2018). This assistance was raised after the alleged issue of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Myanmar military regime.

Financial assistance is given continuously to Myanmar. Starting from the assistance of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) of US\$18 million then it followed by the assistance from the US billionaire George Soros during the administration of Barrack Obama which amounted to US\$375 (Webb, 2017). The presence of the US assistance was intended to promote democratic and liberal value in Myanmar where anti-democracy has been constructed. The assistance of US\$375 between 2012 and 2014 (under President Obama) was intended to establish 'democratic institutions' and increase 'economic development' to encourage new forms of government in Myanmar (Webb, 2017).

During Myanmar's 2015 elections, USAID's assistance of US\$18 million and promotions from the international community had an important role. Because the aid was used for funding the National League for Democracy (NLD) party led by Aung San Suu Kyi to win the election with the hope that the election of Aung San Suu Kyi to become an entry point for the US to promote democratic values (Mahalingam, 2018). Interestingly, the magnitude of the US influence by providing such assistance has escorted Suu Kyi to win the election as a leader of Myanmar.

If analyzed further, acts of ethnic cleansing in the Rohingya crisis indicate Myanmar government has done human rights violations. It drove the US to provide financial assistance and training so that the Myanmar government accommodates Rohingya fundamental rights, as part of democratic values. Basically, the US through USAID supported a peaceful and prosperous Burma that respects the human rights of its entire people. They worked dili-

gently in overcoming the human rights and welfare crisis in Rakhine State, agreeing to Burma's transition, strengthening respect for and protecting human rights and religious freedom (US Department of State, 2018). The winning of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2015 is perceived as one of the motives behind the US aid to Myanmar in response to the Rohingya crisis to change the values in Myanmar into more democratic and liberal.

After the election of Suu Kyi to become the leader of Myanmar, the US continued its efforts to establish its influence. The official announcement was made by President Obama, in 2016, to revoke economic sanctions given to Myanmar since 2009 after the occurrence of ethnic cleansing intended for Rohingya ethnicity. This was realized after Suu Kyi and Obama's meeting in the White House. Suu Kyi is also the one who supports the lifting of economic sanctions by the US. Besides, the US feels that Myanmar has then changed better and was no longer as a threat for the US (Samosir, 2016).

Many countries, ASEAN institutions, and the UN have their respective important roles in resolving the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. However, the explanation above shows that China and the US are two countries that are active in resolving the Rohingya humanitarian conflict. Their presence on this issue has different motives. With these differences in motives, the conflict of interest and perpetuate power rivalry both in many international issues is undeniable. Responding to this case, the US and several developed countries strongly opposed and imposed economic sanctions on Myanmar. However, the sanctions have increasingly loose up after the implementation of democratic elections in Myanmar which marked the entry of Aung San Suu Kyi to parliament in 2010 and her successful in Myanmar 2015 elections. Through this progress, the United States of America hopes that Suu Kyi becomes a good sign for Myanmar's democracy.

The good relations between Myanmar and the US were realized at a historic visit when Suu Kyi visited the White House to meet President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The meeting was at least to reestablish good relations between the two countries which had previously been alarmed after the imposition of economic sanctions by the US and seeking assistance to the US to re-

store peace in Myanmar. The historic visit is a problem of concern for China (Mahalingam, 2018). The problem is the worries of China's interests that exist today. Moreover, the US military presence in the Rakhine region is adjacent to Yunnan Province and responds by placing several military fleets in the region. The more visible of the rivalry is when Hilary Clinton's statement in a 2013 private speech, quoted by WikiLeaks, said, "We will call China with missile defense. We will put more of our fleet in the area" (Mahalingam, 2018).

The close relations between the US and Myanmar did not last long. From the several interactions carried out lately, Myanmar is inclined to China. Suu Kyi has visited Beijing twice since becoming Myanmar's leader but has missed an invitation from Washington to attend a meeting of Southeast Asian foreign ministers in the capacity as Myanmar's Foreign Minister (Mahalingam, 2018). China utilizes this momentum to the fullest. China, which supports promoting the peace process in Myanmar without any repressive (sanctions) resolution, looks more promising for Myanmar. In the end, the foreign policies taken by Suu Kyi were increasingly visible to China. This is consistent with the statement of Suu Kyi who has expressed her belief that China will do everything possible to promote the Myanmar peace process (Mahalingam, 2018).

The US regretted Myanmar's foreign policy change under Suu Kyi, which was closer to the US during President Obama administration but it has tendency to China in the more recent period. The US disappointment to Myanmar was seen when the US and its allies admit the pursuing of ethnic cleansing against Rohingya ethnic by the Myanmar government. Therefore the US offers a resolution by bringing the Rohingya humanitarian crisis case to the UNSC. However, this has received opposition from China. China feels that this is a preventive measure taken by the Myanmar government to protect its sovereignty from the Rohingya rebels (ARSA). China's efforts to banish the issue of the Rohingya crisis into the UNSC agenda was failed. Several countries urged the UN to take the initiative to form a Fact-Finding Team (FFT) to see the real conditions in Rakhine. Despite the resistance from the Myanmar government to the Rohingya FFT to enter its territory, the team continued to find the facts.

After the UN FFT conducted an investigation related to the Rohingya, the UN FFT also urged the UNSC to uphold justice in the case of Rohingya ethnic. This was stated at the annual UN meeting in New York in 2018. The UN FFT found that there was genocide treatment that occurred in Rakhine, Myanmar (The Guardian, 2018). Another finding is that there are at least three gross human rights violations committed by Myanmar, there are criminal war, criminal humanity, and genocide. However, this was denied by the Myanmar government which made Myanmar absent from the UN 2018 annual session. This condition makes China stated that sanctions or harsh criticism directed at Myanmar would not help resolve the current Rohingya humanitarian crisis. China play a 'constructive plan' (VOA News, 2018), so that China provides three stages of a solution to resolve the Rohingya humanitarian crisis starting from a ceasefire, promoting fair efforts, and poverty alleviation.

Not only power rivalry at the international level, but the power rivalry of both also emerged in the struggle for resources in Rakhine. The abundance of oil and natural gas reserves of 11 trillion and 23 trillion cubic feet contained in Rakhine seemed to make the Rakhine region as a site of 'struggle' for the two countries. In reality, the mass cruelty of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar is a product of inter-imperialist capitalist and greedy competition and contest the US, Chinese and local business people to get full power from oil and natural gas reserves in the state of Rakhine, where the Rohingya live. More importantly, the US made the suffering of the Muslim minority of Myanmar to identify the rise of China as the dominant force in Asia.

Furthermore, the natural gas and oil pipelines (Shwe pipeline) located in Kyaukpyu are important elements contested by the US and China. Shwe pipes connected to China that began operations in October 2013 and August 2014, respectively, which end the US ability to impose a blockade on Chinese oil supplies and as a main strategic option (Joy, 2018). This Kyaukpyu seaport and Shwe pipeline allow China to avoid the Malacca Strait, which is a high traffic trade route. So that China will strive to make the Rakhine region conducive. It became clear that the Rohingya people in the strategic area were forced to step aside in inhuman ways. However, the US imperialists take

other advantages. They were making the issue of ethnic cleansing in Rakhine as a narrative of human rights violations issue that must be resolved by the international community. In the name of Human Rights, the US hopes to disrupt Myanmar conducive conditions in accordance with China's expectations and thwart China's regional supremacy in the Asian region. The Pentagon saw that Myanmar's corridor as an important supply line for China, so that by binding to Rakhine under the auspices of the US/NATO it became an effective way to block Chinese influence projects.

In general, the Rohingya humanitarian crisis has drawn international attention to it. The reason is, it not only resulted large casualties, but also the presence of developed countries competition to take advantage of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis to influence it. It is obvious when the US and China are present. The motive for the race to spread power in the region, abundant natural resources and several other differences of interests is another entry point of rivalry between the US and China in the Rohingya humanitarian crisis.

CONCLUSION

The threat from China rise and its presence in the Rohingya humanitarian crisis issue has made the US regarded them as a rival in its effort to maintain hegemony in South East Asia. The rivalry of both countries encompasses economic, security, and political issues which are concealed under the humanitarian issue. In one side, China is trying to protect the track of oil and natural gas pipelines that stretch through Rakhine to Yunnan Province. China also intended to build investment in Kyaukpyu port which was projected as an entry point for Chinese imported goods from Middle Eastern countries. Furthermore, China uses resolution for Rohingya crisis through peaceful means since China wants to cover a similar problem that happened in its region which occurred to Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. More importantly, it is as an act of spreading power in the region as China rebalancing effort to the US power.

On the other hand, the US uses the Rohingya humanitarian crisis to spread democratic and liberal values in Myanmar while rebalancing China's dominance in the

region. The rivalry between the US and China concerning the Rohingya crisis has become one of the high intense issues for the international community. The struggle over national interest of Washington and Beijing has extended to the international world. The issue of humanitarian crisis is one thing, while in other issue or in the future, the rivalry of both will continue to exist as long as both countries seek to pursue each national interests.

REFERENCES

- Al Syahrin, M. N. (2018). China versus Amerika Serikat: Interpretasi Rivalitas Keamanan Negara Adidaya di Kawasan Asia Pasifik. *Journal Global & Strategis*, 12(1), pp. 145–163.
- Armandha, S. T. (2016). Posisi Bebas Aktif Indonesia dalam Rivalitas Tiongkok Terkait Pengadaan Alutsista. *Jurnal Pertahanan*, 6(3), pp. 117–144.
- BBC. (2011, April 28). PBB Gagal Sepakati Resolusi Bagi Suriah. Retrieved January 11, 2019 from https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/dunia/2011/04/110428_unsyria
- _____. (2018, August 12). PBB Klaim Satu Juta Minoritas Etnis Muslim Uighur Ditahan di Kamp-Kamp Politik Cina. Retrieved November 19, 2018 from <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia-45154379>
- _____. (2017, August 31). Krisis Terbaru Rohingya: Bagaimana Seluruh Kekerasan Bermula? Retrieved October 20, 2018 from <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/dunia-41105830>
- _____. (2016, November 25). Myanmar Dituduh Lakukan ‘Pembersihan Etnik’ Rohingya. Retrieved October 20, 2018 from <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/dunia-38098109>
- Bendini, R. (2016). *In-Depth Analysis United States - China Relations: a Complex Balance between Cooperation and Confrontation*. Brussels.
- Billing, A. (2010). Humanitarian Assistance: an Introduction to Humanitarian Assistance and the Policy for Sweden’s Humanitarian Aid. *Perspectives*, 17.
- Brunnstorm, D. & Nichols, M. (2018, September 25). U.S. Almost Doubles for Rohingya in Bangladesh, Myanmar. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-un-usa/u-s-almost-doubles-aid-for-rohingya-in-bangladesh-myanmar-idUSKCN1M42B0>
- Callaghan, M. & Hubbard, P. (2016). The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Multilateralism on the Silk Road. *China Economic Journal*, 9(2).
- Chauduri, P. P. (2018, February 04). China Using Rohingya Crisis to Influence Myanmar: Japan Envoy. Retrieved November 19, 2018 from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-using-rohingya-crisis-to-influence-myanmar-japan-envoy/story-nWi4wPbVlmeCgFfq7TOhMI.html>
- Dariyanto, E. (2017, September 05). Kekayaan Rakhine, Kota ‘Rohingya’ yang Tersandera Konflik. Retrieved November 21, 2018 from <https://news.detik.com/internasional/3629853/kekayaan-rakhine-kota-rohingya-yang-tersandera-konflik>
- Ferida, K. (2016, November 22). China Berikan Perlindungan Bagi 3.000 Warga Muslim Rohingya. Retrieved November 18, 2018 from <https://m.liputan6.com/amp/2658612/china-berikan-perlindungan-bagi-3000-warga-muslim-rohingya>
- Gallarotti, G. M. (2011). Soft Power/: What It Is, Why It’s Important, and the Conditions for Its Effective Use. *Journal of Political Power*, 4(1), pp. 25–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2011.557886>
- Gao, C. (2017, October 2). China Aids Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh while Backing Myanmar Government. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/china-aids-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-while-backing-myanmar-government/>
- Goodman, D. (2017). Australia and the China threat: Managing ambiguity. *The Pacific Review*, 30(5), 769–782. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2017.1339118>
- Gray, C. (2011). *Hard Power and Soft Power: the Utility of Military Force as An Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century*. Pennsylvania: SSI Strategic Studies Institute.
- Hartati, A. Y. (2013). Studi Eksistensi Etnis Rohingya di Tengah Tekanan Pemerintah Myanmar. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 2(1), pp. 7–17.
- Hornby, L. & Wildau, G. (2018, January 18). China’s 2017 Economic Growth Fastest in Two Years. Retrieved January 27, 2018 from <https://www.ft.com/content/9bf532a8-66de-37bf-b515-03589957ada4>
- Human Rights Watch. (2018). Rohingya Crisis. Retrieved January 10, 2018 from <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>
- Ikenberry, J. (2014). *The Rise of China and the Future of Liberal World Order*. London: Chatham House The Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Kingston, L. N. (2015). Protecting the World’s Most Persecuted: the Responsibility to Protect and Burma’s Rohingya Minority. *The International Journal of Human Rights*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2015.1082831>
- Lee, Y. (2018). China Draws Three-Stage Path for Myanmar, Bangladesh to Resolve Rohingya Crisis. Retrieved November 18, 2018 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/china-draws-three-stage-path-for-myanmar-bangladesh-to-resolve-rohingya-crisis-id>
- Mahalingam, V. (2018). *Strategic Importance of Myanmar its Relevance to Countries and the Contests*. New Delhi. Retrieved from www.claws.in
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2014). *Official Development Assistance Policy and a Framework for Humanitarian Assistance*. Malta.
- Morrison, W. M. (2013). *China’s Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for The United States*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
- Neumann, L. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches ed. 7*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.
- Nye, J. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Park, J. (2013). *China-U.S. Relations in East Asia: Strategic Rivalry and Korea’s Choice*. Washington DC: CSIS.
- Pratama, F. (2017, September 08). Dubes RI untuk Myanmar Buka-bukaan Soal Latar Belakang Krisis Rohingya. Retrieved January

- 11, 2018 from <https://news.detik.com/berita/3633773/dubes-ri-untuk-myanmar-buka-bukaan-soal-latar-belakang-krisis-rohingya>
- Rajagopalan, R. P. (2018, March 07). China's 2018 Military Budget: New Numbers, Old Worries. Retrieved April 17, 2018 from <https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/chinas-2018-military-budget-new-numbers-old-worries/>
- Reuters. (2016, November 22). China Says 3.000 Flee Myanmar after Fighting Along Border. Retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-myanmar/china-says-3000-flee-myanmar-after-fighting-along-border-idUSKBN13H071>
- Safitri, I. A. (2014). Pemberian Bantuan Amerika Serikat kepada Somalia sebagai Bentuk Pembendungan Kekuatan Cina di Afrika. *Jurnal Analisis Hubungan Internasional*, 3(1), pp. 257–276.
- Samosir, H. A. (2016, October 08). Barrack Obama Cabut Sanksi AS Terhadap Myanmar. Retrieved November 21, 2018 from <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20161008104609-134-164166/barack-obama-cabut-sanksi-as-terhadap-myanmar>
- Sari, D. S., Prastiti, A., & Hidayat, T. (2018). Indonesian Government Policy on Rohingya Refugees. *Andalas Journal of International Studies*, 7(1), pp. 1–13. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.25077/ajis.7.1.1-13.2018>
- South China Morning Post. (2018, May 15). US Criticises China for Shielding Myanmar from UN Action over Rohingya Crisis. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2146184/us-criticises-china-shielding-myanmar-un-action-over>
- _____. (2018, September 25). US to Give US\$ 185 Million in Aid for Rohingya in Bangladesh, Myanmar. Retrieved November 21, 2018 from <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/south-asia/article/2165604/us-give-us185-million-aid-rohingya-bangladesh-myanmar>
- Spry, D. (2016, September 07). What Is Soft Power? Hint: It's Not Footing Sam Dastyari's Bills. Retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://theconversation.com/what-is-soft-power-hint-its-not-footing-sam-dastyaris-bills-65026>
- Sun, Y. (2018, February 14). China Finds Opportunity in Myanmar Crisis. Retrieved November 19, 2018 from <http://www.atimes.com/article/china-finds-opportunity-myanmar-crisis/>
- The Daily Star (2018, July 08). China Urges Myanmar to Start Rohingya Repatriation Soon. Retrieved August 12, 2018 from <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/china-urges-myanmar-to-start-rohingya-refugee-repatriation-soon-1601959>
- The Guardian. (2018, October 24). Rohingya Genocide is Still Going On, Says Top UN Investigator. Retrieved November 26, 2018 from <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/24/rohingya-genocide-is-still-going-on-says-top-un-investogator>
- Ullah, A. K. M. A. (2016). Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: Seeking Justice for the 'Stateless.' *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 32(3), pp. 285–301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986216660811>
- UNICEF. (2018). *Rohingya Crisis*. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/bangladesh_100945.html
- US Department of State. (2017, November 15). United States Assistance to Burma. Retrieved January 12, 2018 from <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275606.htm>
- VOA News. (2018, August 28). China: Sanctions, Criticism Won't Help Settle Rohingya Issue. Retrieved November 26, 2018 from <https://www.voanews.com/amp/china-sanctions-criticism-wont-help-settle-rohingya-issue/4547174.html>
- Vuving, A. (2009). *How Soft Power Works*. Toronto: American Political Science Association Annual Meeting.
- Webb, W. (2017, September 20). Oil, Gas, Geopolitics Guide US Hand in Playing the Rohingya Crisis. Retrieved November 21, 2018 from <https://www.mintpressnews.com/oil-gas-geopolitics-us-rohingya-crisis/232145/>
- Wibisono, A. (2010). *Political Elites and Foreign Policy: Democratization in Indonesia*. Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia Press.
- Wong, E. (2018, August 17). U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Myanmar Military Over Rohingya Atrocities. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/17/us/politics/myanmar-sanctions-rohingya.html>
- Yiqian, Z. (2018, April 02). China's Poverty Alleviation Efforts in Myanmar Help Ease Rakhine State Situation. Retrieved May 11, 2018 from <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1096305.shtml>
- Zarni, M. & Cowley, A. (2014). The Slow-Burning Genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya. *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal Association*, 23(3), pp. 681–752.
- Zhao, Q. (2005). America's Response to the Rise of China and Sino-US Relations. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 13(2), pp. 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185370508434256>