

**OBAMA'S PIVOT TO ASIA POLICY (2011-2016): IMPACT ON US-ASEAN
RELATIONS**

MIMI NUR ATIFAH BINTI AHMAD DAUD

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
(STRATEGY AND DIPLOMACY)**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES UNIVERSITI
KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA
BANGI**

2018

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.



30 August 2018

MIMI NUR ATIFAH BINTI AHMAD DAUD
P92761

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My greatest thankful to Allah S.W.T for giving me the strength to finish this study. With his guidance I have finally manage to finish this thesis as part of my final assessment to get my master degree. Secondly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. K.S. Nathan for his unconditional guidance, encouragement and continuous support from the beginning until the end process of making this thesis. I would also like to express my token of appreciation to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kuik Cheng-Chwee (the previous coordinator of Strategy and Diplomacy programme) and Dr. Mohd Ikbal Mohd Huda (the current coordinator of Strategy and Diplomacy programme).

I am also thankful to UKM Strategy and Diplomacy lectures Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ravichandran Moorthy, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sufian Jusoh, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sity Daud, Prof. Dato' Dr. Zakaria Haji Ahmad, Dr. Chin Kok Fay, Dr. Guido Benny, and Dr. Karminder Singh Dhillon who continued to give me their moral supports. Much of the their lectures in class has help me to understand my study in doing this thesis. My fifth gratitude goes to both of my parents, Ahmad Daud Ismail Mokhtar and Nurul Farhana Abdullah which has always been there whenever, I needed them and always being considerate to my study through the whole one year. Next, I would also like to express my appreciation towards my one and only big sister Mimi Nur Syazwani Binti Ahmad Daud for her encouragement to keep on pushing me into the finishing line. Looking back at the amount of supports they have given to me, I am speechless and only Allah S.W.T could ever repay their good deeds.

A big thanks to all the instructors, research and administration staff at Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) for their technical assistance and provided welfare. Not forgotten, my gratitudes towards all of my friendly and supportive classmates for always helping and being there for me when I needed them. The informations exchanged that we did through out this whole year, has clearly help us to progress in our study. In addition, I would also like to give a special thanks to Komander Murthi for helping me to find data and resources that only Defence Department have access to it. Lastly, I would also like to say thank you to all of the people who might or might not involve in the making of this study.

ABSTRACT

This study makes the assumption Obama's Pivot to Asia Policy (2011-2016) has strengthened US-ASEAN relations. Therefore, this study examines the validity of this assumption. The first aim of this study is to analyse Obama's Pivot to Asia policy and the core elements that constitute it. Secondly, this study also seeks to identify factors that influence and impact the Pivot policy vis-a-vis US-ASEAN relations. Lastly, this study also seeks to analyse how the China factor has contributed to strengthening US-ASEAN relations. The concept balance of power is used to analyse the United States Pivot policy and ASEAN's response to it. The research method for this study is mainly using qualitative data that is available through secondary resources. There are, however, four main factors that have been identified to have given impact on US-ASEAN relations. Firstly, the China factor that includes the SCS issue, China SCS assertiveness and US-China rivalry in Asia Pacific. Secondly, the US-ASEAN cooperation in the regional multilateral institutions. Thirdly, the US military presence in the Asia Pacific and fourthly, the US-ASEAN cooperation in non-traditional security. The study found that the Pivot policy has strengthened US-ASEAN relations in many ways. Although some ASEAN countries have different perceptions on the pivot policy (concern on US intentions), it did not prevent them from engaging more with the US and as a result, they have cooperated with the US either in military, diplomatic or economic areas of the Pivot policy.

CONTENTS

		Page
DECLARATION		ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		iii
ABSTRACT		iv
ABSTRAK		v
CONTENTS		vi
LIST OF FIGURES		ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS		x
CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION	
1.1	Background of The Study	1
1.2	Problem Statement	4
1.3	Research Questions	5
1.4	Research Objectives	6
1.5	Analytical Framework	7
1.6	Hypothesis	9
1.7	Scope of Analysis	9
1.8	Literature Review	9
	1.8.1 US-ASEAN Relation	10
	1.8.2 Barack Obama's Foreign Policy (2009-2016)	11
	1.8.3 Obama's Pivot to Asia Policy (2011-2016)	12
1.9	Methodology	14

1.10	Conceptual Framework	14
1.11	Significance	17
1.12	Limitations	17
1.13	Chapterisation	18
CHAPTER II	OBAMA'S PIVOT POLICY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION (2011-2016)	
2.1	Introduction	20
2.2	An Overview on US Presence in Asia Pacific	21
2.3	US Interests in Asia Pacific	22
2.4	Obama's Pillars in his Foreign Policy	24
2.5	United States Pivot to Asia Strategy (2011-2016)	27
	2.5.1 Pivot to Asia: Areas on Continuity	30
	2.5.2 Pivot to Asia: Area of Novelty	31
	2.5.3 Security or Military Dimension of the Pivot	34
	2.5.4 China's Military Advancement as The Key Behind the Change.	38
	2.5.5 Political or Diplomatic Dimensions of the Pivot	40
	2.5.6 Economic or Trade Aspects of the Pivot	41
2.6	Conclusion	43
CHAPTER III	IMPACT OF CHINA'S RISE ON US-ASEAN RELATIONS	
3.1	Introduction	44
3.2	The South China Sea Territorial Disputes and China's Assertiveness	45
3.3	The Dynamics of US-ASEAN Relations	48
	3.3.1 US-China Relations vis-a-vis the SCS Issue	48
	3.3.2 US-China Economic Rivalry in Southeast Asia	51

3.4	ASEAN's Response to China's SCS Assertiveness and US-China Rivalry in Southeast Asia	53
3.5	US Response to China's rise and Initiatives Taken to Enhance US-ASEAN Relations	56
	3.5.1 US-ASEAN Cooperation in Regional Multilateral Institutions	57
	3.5.2 US Military Presence in the Asia Pacific Region	61
3.6	ASEAN's Response to Obama's Pivot to Asia Policy	67
3.7	Conclusion	70
 CHAPTER IV IMPACT OF NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY ON US-ASEAN RELATIONS		
4.1	Introduction	71
4.2	US Policy to Combat International Terrorism	72
4.3	Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia	73
	4.3.1 US-ASEAN Cooperation on Counter-terrorism and Counter-Insurgency	81
4.4	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in Southeast Asia	86
	4.4.1 US-ASEAN Cooperation on HADR	87
4.5	Conclusion	91
 CHAPTER V CONCLUSION		
5.1	Summary	92
5.2	Research Findings	93
5.3	Suggestions for future research	98
 REFERENCES		 99