

ABSTRACT

Title: China's Strategy towards ASEAN: A Case Study of Conflict in South China Sea

Field: Politics

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This research aims to study the role of China in Southeast Asia, especially its role in the South China Sea conflict and the security implications for Southeast Asia region. This research will focus on the ongoing problems and facts which occurred in South China Sea in order to make use of the findings to present common solutions of ASEAN members and make strategic recommendations for Thailand in preparation for security matters from the integration towards ASEAN Community.

This research found that Spratly Islands are indeed strategically important. If Thailand could claim ownership with sovereignty over the Islands, Thailand would be able in control of sea lanes and maritime strategies by being able to pressure China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea. However, if China took control of the said area, it would be able to block the expanding maritime influence of India and the United States and could exert its influence into Southeast Asia as well as Malacca Straits.

In sum, the international situation in Asia-Pacific Region in the 21st century is now in transition from the uni-polar structure to the multi-polar one because the economic crisis occurred in the U.S. since 2008 has greatly shaken the superpower status of the U.S. While the U.S. has been facing with this crisis, China has experienced strong domestic economic growth which serves as an important foundation for the emergence as superpower in Asia-Pacific. At the same time, China has also used this economic power to support its conduct of security policy towards Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century as reflected in the forms of aggressive policy without compromising its influence vis-à-vis other countries on the issue of South China Sea conflict.

In order to jointly solve this problem by the ASEAN members, it is important that every country must uphold all related international laws including the maritime law and ASEAN Charter. Every country must work towards building mutual trust and understanding amongst one another. This is what all states agreed in 2002. Aside from this, all parties should jointly seek further cooperation in various dimensions in the South China Sea and have counterbalancing and military strategies. For Thailand, it is necessary to have a strategy of security preparedness for the integration towards ASEAN Community in 2015.