ABSTRACT

Title **Thai-Cambodian Overlapping Maritime Claims Area: Problems and Ways to Approach**

Field **Politics**

Name **Dr. Suwanchai Sangsuk-Iam** **Course NDC (JSPS) Class 24**

Cambodia and Thailand made their claims to the continental shelf in the Gulf of Thailand in 1972 and 1973, respectively. The claims of both sides give rise to an overlapping maritime claims area. Both sides had negotiated on their maritime boundaries many times since 1970. Finally in 2001 under Thaksin Shinawatra's government, both sides concluded Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Area of their Overlapping Maritime Claims to the Continental Shelf which will be called for short as "MOU 2001".

Both sides have negotiated and proceeded in accordance with MOU 2001. But so far, they still have not been able to reach any conclusions. In 2009, Abhisit Vejjajiva's cabinet passed a resolution in principle to terminate MOU 2001 with a reason that Cambodian government had appointed Thaksin Shinawatra as its economic advisor which would directly affect the negotiations under MOU 2001. However, when Abhisit Vejjajiva's government ended its term, MOU 2001 still has not been officially terminated.

After Yingluck Shinawatra's government commenced its term, it is clear that MOU 2001 will not be terminated. Moreover, the government will accelerate the negotiation on the overlapping claims area with Cambodia. But recently, there have been many Thai people and scholars opposing MOU 2001 because of disadvantages on the Thai side. Furthermore, there are doubts and concerns on the conflicts of interests of both Thai and Cambodian politicians.

The objectives of this research are to study, analyze, and give suitable ways to approach the problem of Thai-Cambodian overlapping maritime claims area. The research results reveal that firstly, the continental shelf boundary lines claimed by Thailand are significantly more complied with international laws than those claimed by Cambodia. Secondly, MOU 2001 has totally changed the Thai negotiation framework which puts Thailand at a disadvantage. Thirdly, the concluding and proceeding of MOU 2001 might have been under the conflicts of interests of both Thai and Cambodian politicians. In this research, suitable ways to approach the problem and other related recommendations have been given.