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CHINA’S STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Introduction. This paper discusses the People’s Republic of China’s strategic interests in the South China Sea, and focuses on the maritime China’s strategy, the resource security and maritime disputes in the region. Undoubtedly, there are still many issues that should be studied, but in order to make this piece of research a manageable endeavor, it explores basically the problems of resources and security strategy and shows the factors which influence these issues.

The objective of this paper is to consider the problem area in relation to national security, governance, economics and society perspectives. It takes a close look at how dynamics in these multidimensional domains affects the drafting of strategies and policy-making, and the influence they have on state actions.

To understand the geostrategic importance of the South China Sea it should be mentioned that the South China Sea (which is also named «Biển Đông» or «West Philippines Sea») is located on the south coast of China, in the east of Vietnam and in the west of the Philippines. The Gulf of Thailand covers the western part of the South China Sea. The countries and territories bordering the sea include: China, Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Hence, due to its location the South China Sea plays an important role in terms of geopolitics. Furthermore, it is also one of the busiest sea routes in the world. Since the 1980s at least 270 cargo ships have crossed its water a day.

So, it seems to be clear that China is not the only country in the region that seeks to claim control or ownership of assets and shipping lanes in this location. Many Asia-Pacific nations have their own interest in the South China Sea, all of which interweave with the territorial and maritime claims that are contested and disputed in

bi- and multilateral settings. Surrounded by many countries the South China Sea is a crucial transit route for oil from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region. Japan, South Korea, Australia, as well as China, all heavily rely on it.

In fact, there are two kinds of dispute in the South China Sea. The first one is the territorial dispute between the countries surrounding the sea, and the second one is the larger set of disputes regarding the role of international law.

Concerning the territorial dispute there are a lot of issues which are put point-blank. The disputes over the territorial jurisdiction of the South China Sea include the accessory of islands and waters. Historically the Gulf of Tonkin and The Paracel Islands belonged to Vietnam, but his right has been argued by China. The territory of the Spratly Islands is disputed by six countries: China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei – these countries claim their rights to all or part of the Spratly Islands. The Macclesfield Beach (China) is the subject of dispute between China and the Philippines. The rights on the Pratas Islands are contested by Taiwan and China. Moreover, a frequent subject of dispute is related to the national interests, such as: a fishing, an extraction of natural resources (especially the oil and gas), control over the strategic positions, etc.

This second dispute set tends to involve the United States, which appear to have a much bigger stake in questions of international law, freedom of navigation, and access to the sea. The danger is that these disputes might overlap in some way and transform a regional contest between the relatively small militaries of the countries immediately involved into a larger, more international conflict that concerns major world powers like the United States [4: 65]. The problem is the China's foreign policy towards the states bordering the sea. China has been showing that it can do what is most beneficial and preferable for the Chinese authorities in the South China Sea – apparently without any fear of consequences. Of course, the USA is not satisfied with it. Although the governments involved are too sensible to opt for outright military conflict, some of them are currently behaving very riskily.

However, the People's Republic of China is a great maritime power. It has an extremely long coastline and numerous islands, vastly controlled by the Chinese authorities and the huge expanse of water biological resources of the ocean. Over the past few years, China has become one of the world's energy consuming countries of methane hydrates. The country has demonstrated the world highest rates of economic growth, the maintenance of which will largely depend on the use of marine resources [5]. At the same time, the sea is an important element for the country's participation in international competition, because the sea is the main vein of international trade.

According to preliminary estimates, by 2020 China's maritime trade will exceed 1 trillion dollars USD. The marine economy has huge development potential. More than 20 clusters were founded, that brings together a group of industrial production. In 2001, basic maritime industry amounted to 3.4% of GDP, had reached 5% by 2010, and thus became an important industry in the general structure of the national economy [5].

Conclusion. The growing interest of China to the South China Sea is explained by the China's strategists, who reasoned that all successful states rely on the three

strong pillars: prosperity, power and security. In order to solidify China's foundations and pillars the Government decided to invest heavily into education and research, infrastructure, the strengthening of institutions, overseas business development via sovereign funds, state banks, joint ventures and so on, and by developing a mighty military (air force, army and navy) [2: 4].

The short- and long-term rationale behind these expenditures is prosperity through economic growth, which ensures social stability and prolongs the continuity of a single-party state governed by a privileged few in the capital, Beijing. Obviously that for these reasons the natural and energy resources are essential. This is what keeps China buoyant and moving forward. And since it is believed that the South China Sea holds the promise of vast reserves of oil and gas, as well as an important sea conduit, the China's Government is focused on controlling the territories, resources and waters in the South China Sea. Not to mention the benefits which the South China Sea holds for the international trading.

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GLOBAL WARMING

Introduction. Global warming is the current increase in temperature of the Earth's surface (both land and water) as well as its atmosphere. Average temperatures around the world have risen by 0.75 ° C (1.4 ° F) over the last 100 years. About two thirds of this increase has occurred since 1975. In the past, when the Earth experienced a rise in temperature it was the natural causes but today it is being caused