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DAFTAR ISI

China in the South China Sea Dispute: Between Status Quo and Revisionist

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Abstract: The paper is trying to look whether China is a status quo power or a revisionist power in the South China Sea dispute based on status quo indicator developed by Johnston and perspectives on conformity towards norms. Meanwhile, this paper argues that China is neither a status quo nor a revisionist in the South China Sea dispute to the extent of its compliance with the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DoC) in the South China Sea. Using status quo indicators developed by Johnston and also the perspectives on conformity and violation towards norm, it is found that China's position in the South China Sea is determined by its interests over the disputed area. A moral dilemma between expected behaviors in the South China Sea based on China's involvement in the DoC and China's other self interests. Moreover, China has been conducting activities which fall under both categories, both status quo and revisionist. China is lying in the middle between status quo and revisionist in the South China Sea dispute, between an obligatory action that is mandated by the DoC and the desire to act in order to pursue its self-interest such as its sovereignty claim, natural resources, and geostrategic position of the disputed territory. China's position in the South China Sea dispute as well as its moral dilemma in the end could be seen through its mixed and constrained actions indicated by an aggressive act and a justification related to the aggressive act.

Key words: China, South China Sea Dispute, Status Quo, Revisionist, Norm, DoC.

Abstrak: Makalah ini mencoba untuk melihat apakah Tiongkok merupakan kekuatan status quo atau kekuasaan revisionis dalam sengketa Laut Tiongkok Selatan berdasarkan teori transisi kekuasaan dan perspektif tentang kesesuaian terhadap norma-norma. Sementara itu, makalah ini melihat bahwa Tiongkok bukanlah status quo maupun revisionis di konflik Laut Tiongkok Selatan, terkait dengan kepatuhan terhadap Deklarasi tentang Perilaku Para Pihak (DoC) di Laut Tiongkok Selatan. Menggunakan indikator status quo yang dikembangkan oleh Johnston dan juga perspektif tentang kesesuaian dan pelanggaran terhadap norma, ditemukan bahwa posisi Tiongkok di Laut Tiongkok Selatan ditentukan oleh kepentingannya atas wilayah sengketa. Kepentingan ini, bagaimanapun, tampaknya bertentangan satu sama lain dan menciptakan dilema moral bagi Tiongkok. Sebuah dilema moral antara perilaku yang diharapkan di Laut Tiongkok Selatan berdasarkan keterlibatan Tiongkok dalam DoC dan kepentingan pribadi Tiongkok yang lainnya. Lebih lanjut, Tiongkok telah melakukan kegiatan yang termasuk dalam dua kategori, baik status quo dan revisionis. Tiongkok berada di tengah-tengah antara status quo dan revisionis dalam konflik Laut Tiongkok Selatan, antara tindakan wajib yang diamanatkan oleh DoC dan keinginan untuk mengejar kepentingan pribadi, seperti klaim kedaulatan, sumber daya alam, dan posisi geostrategis wilayah yang disengketakan. Posisi Tiongkok dalam konflik Laut Tiongkok Selatan serta dilema moral yang dihadapi Tiongkok pada akhirnya dapat dilihat melalui tindakan yang berbeda-beda namun terbatas yang ditunjukkan dengan tindakan agresif serta pembenaran terkait dengan tindakan agresif.

Kata kunci: Tiongkok, Konflik Laut Tiongkok Selatan, Status Quo, Revisionis, Norma, DoC.

Introduction

In the South China Sea dispute, China has been regarded as a crucial actor and attracts more attention than other actors. It plays an important role in shaping the future of the dispute, whether it would be a peaceful settlement or military standoffs in the dispute.[1] This situation is much related to the argument that the emergence of China as a great power in terms of economic and military figures will destabilize regional security. Related to the economic figures, China's economy grew almost at a rate of 9 percent annually from the

[1] See, Amitav Acharya, "Seeking Security In The Dragon's Shadow: China and Southeast Asia In The Emerging Asian Order," *Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies Working Paper*, No. 44 (March 2003): 4; International Crisis Group, "Stirring Up The South China Sea (I)," *International Crisis Group Asia Repor*t, No. 223 (23 April 2012): 1-

mid-1980s through 2005. Its economic reached its highest point in 2006 and 2007, when the growth reached 11,1 percent and 11,4 percent.[2] Besides the economic figures, People's Republic of China (PRC) is also rapidly modernizing its armed forces. The PRC's military budget has experienced double digit growth for two decades. A research project conducted by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) revealed that China annual defense spending rose from over 30$ billion in 2000 to almost 120$ billion in 2010. China is expected to use and build anti-ship missiles, modern submarines and cyber and anti-satellite weapons with its big defense budget.[3]

In regards to China's current behavior in the international community, Alastair Iain Johnston argues that PRC has become more integrated into and more cooperative within international institutions than ever before. Nevertheless, he stresses that China might be more cooperative than ever before but it does not necessarily mean that China has become less violent.[4] In the South China Sea dispute, assertive action as part of China's South China Sea policy focuses mainly on two archipelagos, Paracels (Xisha) which is located in the northwestern part and Spratlys (Nansha) which is located in the southern part of the South China Sea. PRC occasionally uses military force to settle territorial disputes, especially when it is related to sovereignty issues. However, the signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DoC) in 2002 and China's decision to become more attached with ASEAN have brought optimism for the creation of a peaceful settlement of the South China Sea dispute. Nowadays China's engagement with ASEAN seems to flourish than ever before.

It is interesting to explore whether China is a status quo or a revisionist power in the South China Sea dispute. Therefore, the research question of this paper would be: Is China a status quo or a revisionist power in the South China Sea? Using indicators of status quo and perspectives on conformity of a norm, this paper argues that China is neither a status quo nor a revisionist in the South China Sea dispute to the extent of its compliance with the DoC. This paper will analyze whether China conforms to the DoC, violates it, or conforms as well as violates the DoC at the same time. The DoC in the South China Sea is chosen as the main concern since the declaration is the only norm agreed by all claimants to promote a peaceful, friendly and harmonious environment in the South China Sea so far. This paper will use a specific time frame, which is 2002 - 2012. Furthermore, this paper will also use secondary/qualitative data which is conducted based on literature research.

This paper will be divided as follows: the first chapter will be the theoretical framework, which uses status quo indicators developed by Alastair Iain Johnston and

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[2] See, Christopher Layne, "China's Challenge to US Hegemony," *Current History* 107, No. 705 (January 2008): 13; "GDP growth in China 1952-2011," China ability, accessed January 18, 2013, http://www.chinability.com/GDP.htm.

[3] See, "The Dragon's New Teeth," *The Economist*, April 7th – 13th, 2012, 25-28.

[4] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?", *International Security* 27, No. 4 (Spring 2003): 5-56.

perspectives on conformity towards norms developed by Vaughn P. Shannon. Moreover, the second chapter will explain about China's interest and strategy in the South China Sea. The third chapter will explain China's status quo and revisionist approach in the South China Sea. The fourth chapter will analyze China's position in the South China Sea, whether it is part of the status quo or outside the status quo. The final chapter provides a thorough discussion of the findings and the conclusion as well as the implications of the research.

Theoretical Framework

The rise of a nation as a great power in the international arena oftentimes lead to fears that it would destabilize the international order one day, especially when emerging states are not satisfied with the existing international order.[5] It is related whether a state is satisfied and become a part of the status quo or dissatisfied and become a revisionist state. According to Johnston, there are five indicators to determine whether a state is part of the status quo or outside the status quo.[6] From those five indicators, the first three indicators are the most important indicators. It is related to the rules of the game in the international institution. State's participation and its behavior in regards to the formal and informal rules of the international institutions are important because state's satisfaction could easily be spotted when it becomes a member of an institution. State's participation in the international institutions could monitor what is being done by the state and what is not. It does not only describe what states claim or agree but it shows state's satisfaction by conforming to the rules of the game.[7] Therefore this paper will only use the first three indicators which related to the rules of the game. These indicators are:[8]

1. The actor's participation rates in the international institutions. In its simplest form, a revisionist state is a state that could be but not involved in many international institutions. A state becomes more status quo power if they are involved in many international institutions as it helps relationships between states.
2. The actor's acceptance and compliance towards norms within the international institutions. A state could be involved in many international institutions, but what matters most is a state's compliance with the rules, norms, and goals of these institutions. If a state still breaks the rules, it might still be considered as non status quo.
3. An actor's behavior towards the rules of the game. This factor is whether or not a state seeks to change the rules of

[5] See, "The Power Transition," A. F. K. Organski, accessed November 21, 2012, http://psclasses.ucdavis.edu/POL-ARCH/pol003-2002-01-wtr/assignment5/read1.pdf

[6] See, Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?".

[7] Steve Chan, "Can't get no satisfaction? The recognition of revisionist states," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 4, No. 2 (August 2004): 216-221.

[8] See, Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" 11.

the game in terms of changing the original purpose of the institution.

Institution itself could be defined as: "a set of rules that stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with each other. It prescribes acceptable forms of state behavior, and proscribes unacceptable kinds of behavior."[9] In this regards, rules could also be interpreted as norms especially because both terms have been used interchangeably although it is believed that norms are the basic foundation before it goes into rules.[10] Scholars like Buszynski argued that norm is "standards or patterns of expected behavior,"[11] while Keohane defines it as "bound of legitimate and illegitimate behavior."[12] However, norms and rules are the foundation of an institution and it does give a clear measurement on what to do and not to do for its member. Prescriptions and parameters are present in the institution as the norm within the institution regulates how state should behave in a particular environment. Prescription is the part of a norm informing actors about what to do (or what not to do), while parameters informing actors under what condition the norm's prescription applies.[13]

A state's conformity and violation of a norm within an international institution is often associated with state's social needs and self interest. A social need is an interaction between agent and the social structure, which can creates normative constraint that relates to what is acceptable based on state's participation in international arena. The decision of conformity also related to what actors supposed to do, especially in situations of limited time and incomplete information and in a relation to build social approval and positive social image. These behaviors which related to state's social life would create normative constraint that will encourage state to conform to the norms. Meanwhile, state's self interest is state's desire to act based on national interest that could challenge expectations of appropriate behavior.[14]

A combination of states social needs and self interest could place state into a moral dilemma situation. A situation in which a state is faced with a normative constraint and desire to act based on its self interest at the same time. With this moral dilemma, the state tries to please all audiences and tries to accommodate all interests. This situation in the end put the state in the middle between norm-driven obligatory action and utilitarian action. A state which is affected by moral dilemma situation will be indicated by a policy or action

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[9] John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institution," *International Security* 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994-1995): P.8.

[10] See, Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.:Princeton University Press, 1984), P.57-58. Mearsheimer, *"The False Promise of International Institution,"* P.8-9. Leszek Buszynski, "ASEAN, the Declaration on Conduct, and the South China Sea," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 25, No. 3 (December 2003): P.344-346.

[11] Buszynski, "ASEAN, the Declaration on Conduct, and the South China Sea," 344.

[12] See, Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy.*

[13] Vaughn Shannon, "Norms are what states make of them: The political Psychology of Norm Violation," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, (2000): 295.

[14] *Ibid.* 298-299.

that is mixed and constrained, between expected behavior and desire to act. In a moral dilemma situation, a violation towards a norm may occur, but any norm violation should be followed with excuses, apologies, justification or denials. An apology recognizes fault for an inappropriate behavior. This action at the end leads to a plea for forgiveness. A denial is an act to assert that the allegation is not true and also refuse the responsibility for it. An excuse is an attempt to lessen or relieve the blame related to the conduct in question, while a justification means a reason to defend the conduct in question. These excuses, apologies, justification or denials shows that state's action is constrained by a normative constrains which resulted from state's participation in international arena. Shannon refers it into what Snyder, Bruck and Sapin called as statecraft: "the art of combining the desirable and the justifiable." The situation of moral dilemma often leads to norm violation, especially when the parameter and prescription offer rooms for justification in order to support state's violation of norm.

China's Interest and Strategy in the South China Sea

There is a debate in which category does the South China Sea lies in China's national interest. In 2010, it was reported that PRC has put the status of the South China Sea to vital interest or core interest category. Although there is no confirmation about the report, the event reveals that the South China Sea is important for China. As stated by Su Hao, the Chinese government and its people have to take a great care of the South China Sea issue as the territory is important for Chinese development and the issue also involves other countries.[15] Therefore, Chinese interests mixed two main elements: the self-interest of China and its social interaction with ASEAN counterparts. The interests such as sovereignty claim, natural resources, geostrategic position of the South China Sea territory and China – the United States (U.S.) strategic rivalry considered as the self interest of China which are part of the national interest that could affect its relation with ASEAN countries. Meanwhile PRC's social interaction is mainly related to China's social life which is related to its friendly relation with ASEAN countries.[16]

Since the beginning of the dispute in the South China Sea, the main issue is related to sovereignty claims. China asserts its sovereignty in the area based on historical basis and claims "indisputable sovereignty" over the Spratly and Paracel Islands which is believed become important part for PRC since long time ago.[17] The territory is of more

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[15] See, Su Hao, "China's Positions and Interests in the South China Sea: A Rational Choices in its Cooperative Policies," *Center For Strategic & International Studies* (September 12, 2011): P.6-7, accessed April 19, 2013, http ://csis. org/files/publication/110912_Hao_South_China_Sea.pdf. M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Strategy in the South China Sea," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 33, No. 3 (2011): P.296. Edward Wong, "China Hedges Over Whether South China Sea Is a 'Core Interest' Worth War," *The New York Times,* March 30, 2011, accessed 10 June 2013 http ://www. nytimes.com/2011/03/31/world/asia/31beijing.html ?_r=0.

[16] See, Hao, "China's Positions and Interests in the South China Sea: A Rational Choices in its Cooperative Policies," P.8.

[17] See, Shen Jianming, "China's Sovereignty over the South China Sea Islands: a Historical Perspective",

significance because it offers natural resources such as fisheries, oil, phosporic acid and lime mines on islands, and large quantities of metallic ores on the sea floor. The issue of the South China Sea also associated with geostrategic issues over the disputed territory. It mainly related to security of sea lines of international shipping that pass through the South China Sea. The South China Sea line is really important for China because over 80 percent of the oil imports transited the South China Sea and Malacca Strait.[18] Moreover, the South China Sea could also serve PRC's military interest. In this sense, China requires a place to protect its navy as well as a place for a good training ground in order to develop and maximize its naval capabilities.[19]

Apart from the above interests, the South China Sea issue is also related to Chinese peaceful intention within the region and political interaction with other Southeast Asian countries as well as with the United States. It related to friendly relations and social life between China and ASEAN counterparts. A friendly relation with ASEAN countries is an important matter as the Southeast Asian region is a region where China can spread its influence in order to diminish the argument of "China threat."[20] One of the reasons why China wants to discuss about code of conduct at the beginning is the fear of losing friendly relations with the ASEAN countries.[21] Furthermore, political interaction with ASEAN countries which based on friendly relation is believed to bring peace and stability which can support PRC's economic development. As noted by Hao, Chinese state councilor Dai Bingguo once pointed out that the world is now an "interest community,"[22] meaning that nowadays the world has become interdependent. Hao later stressed that China's need of peaceful relation with other countries influenced by an old proverb in the ancient times, saying that the obedience from barbarian tribes against China can build a stable and secure China.[23] This proverb means

Chinese Journal of International Law 1, No. 1 (2002): P.94-157. Ian Storey, "China's Bilateral and Multilateral Diplomacy in the South China Sea," *in Cooperation from Strength The United States, China and the South China Sea*, edited by Patrick M. Cronin (January 2012): P.54-55. Teshu Singh, "South China Sea.Emerging Security Architecture," IPCS Special Report 132 (August 2012), 5, accessed 10 June 2013, http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/SR132-SEARP-Teshu.pdf.

18 "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011," U.S. Department of Defense, 2011, 20, accessed July 1, 2013, http ://www. defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/2011_CMPR_Final.pdf.

19 See, Leszek Buszynski, "The South China Sea: Oil, Maritime Claims, and U.S.—China Strategic Rivalry," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, No.2 (spring 2012): P.145-148. Li Jia and Rona Rui, "China's Strategic Interests in the South China Sea," *The Epoch Times*, June 24th, 2011, accessed May 10th, 2013, http ://www. theepochtimes. com/n2/china-news/chinas-strategic-interests-in-the-south-china-sea-58120.html.

20 Chinese policy makers themselves seem to realize the importance of peaceful international environment for its development. The idea of "New Security Concept" in 1997 and "peaceful rise" are made in order to ensurethe world that China rises as a responsible power. See, Zheng Bijian, "China's "peaceful rise" to Great Power status," *Foreign Affairs* 84, No. 5, (September–October 2005): 18–24. Amitai Etzioni, "Is China a responsible stakeholder?," *International Affairs* 87, No. 3 (2011): P.540-542. Jia and Rona Rui, "China's Strategic Interests in the South China Sea."

21 Buszynski, "ASEAN, the Declaration on Conduct, and the South China Sea," P.350.

22 Hao, "China's Positions and Interests in the South China Sea: A Rational Choices in its Cooperative Policies," P.6-8.

23 *Ibid*

that China needs a conducive environment to support its development. The conducive environment nowadays could be pursued by promoting cooperation, such as East Asian Community, with neighboring countries which in the end could set aside conflicts.

In strategic dimension, China has to keep friendly relation with ASEAN countries because it needs to prevent any internationalization of the South China Sea issue. The internationalization of the issue will bring external power in the issue, especially the U.S., which the Chinese does not like.[24] China seems to avoid U.S. involvement in the issue since the U.S. considered as a super power that could harm Chinese interest. It seems that the U.S. is always present as an antagonist actor in most of the PRC's interest, from the issue of Taiwan, Tibet, to the U.S. naval presence in the East China and the South China Sea.[25] Thus, China needs to show its friendly and peaceful intention by getting closer to ASEAN countries and accepting the idea of norm which will regulate claimant behavior in the disputed area that discussed in multilateral forum. China's resistance towards that idea will only makes ASEAN countries closer to the U.S. through U.S. military presence in the region which could balance China in the region.

Nowadays, China's behavior in the South China Sea is described as quite assertive based on its occupation of features, the use of force, and the exploration concessions especially comparing to China's behavior related to other territorial disputes.[26] Nevertheless, China's strategy related to the South China Sea is believed to remain the same as in the past. The strategy is to delay any resolution concerning the dispute while at the same time trying to strengthen China's claims in the South China Sea, which focuses on modernizing its naval capabilities and diplomatic efforts. The main objective of this strategy is to prevent other claimants to develop natural resource-related projects and other activities that do not involve China. Besides, it also intended to deter other claimants from strengthening their claims and focus on how to consolidate China's ability to exercise jurisdiction over the waters that it claims.[27]

In regards to the South China Sea dispute, China has been modernizing its navy by producing missile-armed fast attack craft, equipped its destroyer with phased-array radar and develop aerial maritime strike capability as well as planning the construction of large support vessels.[28] The focus of naval

[24] See, Leszek Buszynski and Iskandar Sazlan, "Maritime Claims and Energy Cooperation in the South China Sea," Contemporary Southeast Asia 29, No. 1 (April 2007): P.155.

[25] Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "How China Sees America," Foreign Affairs 19, No. 5 (September/October 2012): 32-47. See also, Allen S. Whiting, "ASEAN Eyes China: The Security Dimension," Asian Survey 37, No. 4 (April 1997): P.299-322.

[26] See, M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Behavior in its Territorial Disputes and Assertiveness in the South China Sea," Center for Strategic and International Studies (October 2011), accessed January 30th, 2013, http:// csis.org/ files/ attachments/ 111128_Fravel_China_Behavior_Territorial_Disputes.pdf.

[27] See, Fravel, "China's Strategy in the South China Sea."

[28] Dean Cheng, "Sea Power and the Chinese State: China's Maritime Ambitions," Heritage Foundation,

modernization would be on the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) South Sea Fleet (SSF). One of the improvements of the SSF now is that the fleet has modern destroyers, modern amphibious landing platform dock (LPD) and also a modern infrastructure in the SSF naval base in Yulin at Sanya on Hainan island which can accommodate ballistic missile-carrying submarines (SSBNs) and provide new docks for surface combatants.[29] These modern navy capabilities can support China to assert its sovereignty in the South China Sea, such as to detain and apply the fishing ban to Vietnamese fisherman.[30] Another important factor in China's delaying strategy is the use of diplomatic efforts. Through the diplomatic efforts, China wants to make sure that it can buy some time in order to give more time to strengthen its claims in the South China Sea and prevent other claimants from strengthening their claims. As we know, China always insists that the dispute should be solved through bilateral negotiations instead of the multilateral dialogue.[31] At the same time, other claimants prefer the use of multilateral approach to settle the issue due to the fact that ASEAN could play more prominent role in balancing China.[32] Since the objective is to delay any resolution and to prevent other claimants from strengthening its claims, China should insist the use of bilateral approach while at the same time need to open any negotiation related to the dispute.[33]

China's Status Quo and Revisionist Approach in the South China Sea

Based on Johnston's indicators, a state will support the status quo and then participate within the status quo only if the state satisfied with the rules of the game, which is the DoC in this sense. Thus, China's participation in the South China Sea based on the DoC will be regarded as status quo approach while actions that breaks or challenge an agreed norm considered as a revisionist approach. China's status quo approach could be seen from its diplomatic conduct and joint development activity in the South China Sea. On the other hand, China's revisionist approach is a violation to the DoC which seen by other claimants, in this regards by the Vietnam and the Philippines, as an assertive action.

China's status quo approach: diplomatic conduct and joint development

China's diplomatic conduct started when China's delegation visit the Philippines.

July 11, 2011, accessed July 1, 2013, http:// www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/07/sea-power-and-the-chinese-state-chinas-maritime-ambitions.

29 See, Fravel, "China's Strategy in the South China Sea," P.308.

30 See, Carlyle Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea and Southeast Asian Response," Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs 30, No. 2 (2011): P.84-87.

31 Aileen S. P. Baviera. "The South China Sea Territorial Disputes in ASEAN-China Relations," East Sea Studies (2011), accessed June 19th, 2012, http://southchinaseastudies.org/en/datbase-on-south-china-sea-study/doc_details/196--aileen-sp-baviera-the-south-china-sea-territorial-disputes-in-asean-china-relations.

32 .See, Whiting, "ASEAN Eyes China: The Security Dimension."

33 See, Fravel, "China's Strategy in the South China Sea," 300.

On September 2003, Wu Bangguo, the Chairman of the National People's Congress, proposed a joint development on petroleum between China and the Philippines during his visit to Manila.[34] Following China's proposal on a joint development in the South China Sea, PRC then became the first ASEAN dialogue partner that accede the TAC in Southeast Asia on October 2003.[35] China diplomatic effort to ensure peace and stability in the South China Sea continued when China proposed a joint development in the South China Sea in November 2003. The proposal received a positive response from other claimants, especially from the Philippines. In July 2005, the Vietnamese president Tran Duc Luong visited Beijing. The visit stressed the importance to build peace, friendship and long-lasting stability in China – Vietnam border, and also agreed over oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea between China and Vietnam. Then in October 2005, China's Vice-President Zeng Qinghong makes a statement related to China relations with Vietnam. He stated that China was ready "to actively push forward the joint exploration of the disputed areas in the South China Sea."[36] As a follow-up of the previous meeting, China and Vietnam once again agreed on basic principles guiding the settlement of maritime issues existing between the two countries in 2011. The new agreement stressed that China and Vietnam will committed to friendly consultations in order to create peaceful situation in the South China Sea.[37]Another important event related the South China Sea dispute and the DoC was the meeting between China and ASEAN that discussed the guidelines to implement the DoC. On 21 July 2011 in Bali, after nine years of negotiations, all claimants who previously involved in the DoC agreed and adopted the Guidelines to implement the DoC.

As a follow-up to China's proposal on a joint development in the South China Sea in November 2003, energy company from two countries, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOC) and the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC), agreed for a joint exploration of oil and gas in the South China Sea through a letter of intent between the two sides. An agreement then signed by the two companies for a joint seismic work in the Sino-Philippines disputed area in the South China Sea.[38] This agreement is the first agreement on joint development in the disputed territory of the South China Sea. One of the important breakthroughs in joint development between claimants in the South China Sea is the agreement between the CNOC, PNOC, and PetroVietnam. On 14 March 2005, they agreed to conduct joint

[34] Buszynski and Iskandar Sazlan, "Maritime Claims and Energy Cooperation in the South China Sea," P.155.

[35] "ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, accessed March 4, 2013, http://www.asean.org/news/item/asean-china-dialogue-relations.

[36] Buszynski and Iskandar Sazlan, "Maritime Claims and Energy Cooperation in the South China Sea," P.156-165.

[37] "China, Vietnam sign accord on resolving maritime issues," Xinhua, October 11, 2011, accessed March 8, 2013, http:// news. xinhuanet. com/english 2010/china/2011-10/12/c_131185606.htm.

[38] Zou Keyuan, "Joint Development in the South China Sea: A New Approach," The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law 21, No. 1 (2006): P.103-104.

seismic surveys over a three-year-period in an area in the Philippine claim zone, which worth as 15 million US dollar joint marine seismic in the area of 143,000 km2.[39] This cooperation means that China, and also other claimants such as the Philippines and Vietnam, complies toward the DoC. This multilateral agreement has shown China's cooperative intentions in the region based on the article of the DoC, as suggested by the DoC through the article 6 and article 7 which stated that "the parties concerned may explore or undertake cooperative activities",[40] such as marine environmental protection; marine scientific research. Soon after the agreement was signed, China visited Malaysia in May 2005 to deliver a message of peaceful cooperation.[41] In July 2011, China set up the China – ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund worth RMB3 billion. This cooperation is to provide financial support to any cooperative activities and projects within the DoC framework.[42]

China's revisionist approach: tension with the Philippines and Vietnam

Since 2007, Beijing's behavior seems to be more assertive, especially from the Vietnamese point of view, which resulted in more tension in the South China Sea territory.[43] In April and July 2007, China's authorities seized, detained and even fired on a Vietnamese fishing boat killing one sailor. In response to this incident, Vietnamese officials travelled to Beijing and both sides then agreed to maintain stability in the area.[44] China also reported to be very aggressive towards world energy companies by warning them to stop exploration or face unspecified consequences in their business dealings with China.[45] In May 2009, China issued another controversial policy related to the South China Sea by implementing the unilateral fishing ban in the South China Sea. The moratorium on fishing in the South China Sea was set from 16th May to 1st August 2009 and intended to preserve fish stocks and prevent illegal fishing, especially because of the Vietnamese fishing season. Related to this policy, China deployed eight modern Chinese fishery administration vessels

[39] See, "Philippines, China, Vietnam to conduct joint marine seismic research in South China Sea," People's Daily, March 15, 2005, accessed February 23, 2013, http:// english. peopledaily. com.cn/200503/15/eng20050315_176845.html. Buszynski and Iskandar Sazlan, "Maritime Claims and Energy Cooperation in the South China Sea," 155-156. Keyuan, "Joint Development in the South China Sea: A New Approach," P.104.

[40] "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea," Association of Southeast Asian Nations, accessed February 15, 2002, http://www.asean.org/asean/external-relations/china/item/declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea.

[41] Buszynski and Iskandar Sazlan, "Maritime Claims and Energy Cooperation in the South China Sea," 155-156.

[42] "ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations."

[43] Tran Truong Thuy, "Recent Developments in the South China Sea: Implications for Regional Security and Cooperation," Center For Strategic & International Studies, 7, accessed March 8, 2013, http://csis.org/files/publication/110629_Thuy_South_China_Sea.pdf.

[44] Ian Storey and Carlyle Thayer, "The South China Sea Dispute: A Review of Developments and their Implications since the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties," 5-9, accessed March 8, 2013, paper available at http:// www. scribd. com/doc/32797440/Storey-and-Thayer-South-China-Sea-Tensions.

[45] Scot Marciel, "Maritime Issues and Sovereignty Disputes in East Asia," Testimony before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, July 15, 2009, accessed March 9, 2013, http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2009/07/126076.htm.

to enforce the ban.[46]

Tension between China and Vietnam continued to happen in May 2011 when China involved in confrontation with Vietnamese seismic survey ship at least in two occasions. The first incident happened on 26 May, involved the Vietnamese seismic survey ship, Binh Minh 02, and China's Maritime Surveillance ships. It is reported that Chinese Maritime Surveillance ship cut the cable of the Vietnamese survey ship that was towing seismic monitoring equipment. According to Vietnamese officials, this incident took place within Vietnam's EEZ and considered as a violation towards international law and Vietnam's sovereignty. Related to this incident, Vietnam sends a diplomatic protest with China's Ambassador.[47] The second incident, which was also a cable-cutting incident, happened on 29, 31 May and 9 June. The incident involved Viking II seismic survey ship and Chinese vessels. The Vietnamese official accused that Chinese vessels equipped with cable-cutting device and conducts a provocative movement near the Vietnamese seismic survey ship.[48]

In 2011, the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) claimed that Chinese ships and aircraft have violated the Philippines' sovereignty. There are at least three major incidents that highlighted in the relation between China and the Philippines.[49] The first incident took place in one hundred and forty nautical miles west of Palawan island on 25 February. At the time of the incident there were three Filipino boats which were threatened by using a threat of gunfire from PLAN's missile frigate. The Chinese warship fired three shots at the vessels F/V Jaime DLS, F/V Mama Lydia DLS and F/V Maricris 12 even though the Filipino vessels already prepared to leave the area.[50] On 2 March, an incident occurred between Chinese patrol boats and the MV Veritas Voyager, a survey ship operating in the Reed Bank area off Palawan. It is reported that Chinese patrol boats forced the MV Veritas Voyager to stop its operation and leave the area by conducted a threatening maneuvers. Related to Philippines' survey operation in the South China Sea, The Chinese embassy in Manila reaffirmed China's "indisputable sovereignty" over the area.[51] Another major incident also happened related to suspicious activities done by China

[46] Carlyle Thayer, "Recent Developments in the South China Sea" (paper presented to International Worship on 'The South China Sea: Cooperation for Regional Security and Development' co-organized by Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and the Vietnam Lawyers' Association Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam November 26-28, 2009).

[47] Thayer , "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea," 84-89.

[48] "Vietnam accuses China of harassing another boat," Reuters, June 9, 2011, accessed July 2, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/09/vietnam-china-sea-idAFL3E7H916L20110609. Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea," 86.

[49] Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea," P.78-79.

[50] Tessa Jamandre, "China fired at Filipino fishermen in Jackson atoll," ABS-CBN News, June 3, 2011, accessed July 1, 2013, http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/-depth/06/02/11/china-fired-filipino-fishermen-jackson-atoll. Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea," 78-79.

[51] "Philippines halts tests after China patrol challenge," BBC, March 8, 2011, accessed July 1, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12672889. Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea," 78-79.

Maritime Surveillance vessel and PLAN ships. As reported by the Filipino fishermen, the China Maritime Surveillance vessel and PLAN ships unloaded steel posts, building materials and a buoy near Iroquois Reef-Amy Douglas Bank one hundred nautical miles off Palawan.[52] Tensions between China and the Philippines continued to happen in 2012. In April 2012, an invitation for exploration which was made by the Philippines in the waters west of Palawan Province has lead into confrontation between China and the Philippines. The area is near the Spratly Islands. The situation became worse when China and the Philippines send their ships towards the disputed territory.[53]

Another important event in the Sino-ASEAN relations related to the South China Sea dispute is the last ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Cambodia, in July 2012. It was reported that the last ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Cambodia failed to issue joint *communique* for the first time in the 45-year history of ASEAN, and the failure was inevitably related to the latest confrontation between China and the Philippines at Scarborough Shoal.[54] Although China is not part of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, the latest event in the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting cannot be separated from the issue of Chinese interference against one of the ASEAN members that is a close ally of China.[55]

China Position in the South China Sea Dispute: Managing the Need to be in Between

As it was discussed earlier in this chapter, China's strategy in the South China Sea is a delaying strategy. The strategy is aiming to delay any resolution, trying to strengthen China's claim, preventing other claimants to strengthen their claims and preventing other claimants to develop project that not involving China. Above all, these strategy and objectives have to be compatible with Chinese interest. It should be able to facilitate the interests of China in the South China Sea. The interest to exercise sovereignty over the territory, to exploit the potential natural resources in the South China Sea, to secure the strategic trade lines which is important for Chinese trade and energy supplies, to maintaining good relationship with ASEAN counterparts as well as to deal with U.S. dominance. In simple way, the delaying strategy should serve Chinese interest.

However, China's interests in the

[52] "China denies 'invasion' of South China Sea," ABS-CBN News, June 2, 2011, accessed July 1, 2013, http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/06/02/11/china-denies-invasion-south-china-sea. Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea," 78-79.

[53] Flood Whaley, "Philippines and China in a Standoff at Sea," The New York Times, 11 April 2012, accessed November 7, 2012, http:// www. nytimes.com/2012/04/12/world/asia/diplomatic-resolution-sought-in-south-china-sea-standoff.html.

[54] "Asean nations fail to reach agreement on South China Sea,: BBC, July 13, 2012, accessed February 19, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-18825148. Ernest Z. Bower, "China reveals its hand on ASEAN in Phnom Penh," East Asia Forum, July 28, 2012, accessed February 19, 2013, http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/china-reveals-its-hand-on-asean-in-phnom-penh/.

[55] Prak Chan Thul and Stuart Grudgings, "SE Asia meeting in disarray over sea dispute with China," Reuters, Jul 13, 2012, accessed July 1, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/13/us-asean-summit-idUSBRE86C0BD20120713.

South China Sea do not seem to be easy to achieved since it combine between social need (China's relationship with ASEAN countries), and self interest such as to exercise national sovereignty over the disputed territory. As mentioned by Gupta, the issue of South China Sea is related to economic, political interaction with ASEAN as well as military moves which may not go hand in hand, especially for China.[56] This situation in the end will lead China into a moral dilemma situation. A situation in which state faced with a normative constraint, particularly a normative constraint that may arise from China's involvement in the DoC, and desire to act based on its self interest at the same time.[57] China's position in the South China Sea as well as its moral dilemma in the end could be seen through its mixed and constrained actions indicated by an aggressive act and a justification related to the aggressive act. This sub chapter will analyze how China conducts delaying strategy that answers its self interest and its social needs. After that, it will analyze where China's position in the South China Sea dispute is, whether as a status quo, revisionist, or in the middle between status quo and revisionist.

Tensions between China and other claimants had occurred because the DoC creates normative constraint related to the expected behavior in the South China Sea within the signatories of the DoC. Even though the DoC is not a legally binding rule in the South China Sea, the DoC is considered as a right step to build trust and good will among the claimants. All claimants from ASEAN seem to be satisfied with the DoC since it could encourage China to implement a more moderate policy toward Sino-ASEAN relation. Any assertive move done by China in terms of the South China Sea issue will put China's reputation and image as well as its friendly relation with ASEAN countries at stake.[58] Furthermore, it seems plausible that other claimants consider the DoC as an important step towards a more responsible China in the South China Sea since the DoC regulates a proper behavior in the disputed area. The DoC regulate what to do and what not to do through its prescriptions which mainly lie in the article 4 to article 10. Through all those article, all claimants agree to resolve territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means and friendly negotiations (article 4), not to conduct activities which could escalate tension (article 5) to conduct cooperative activities (aricle 6), and to respect, encourage and promote the DoC between claimants (article 7,8,9,10). These prescriptions in the end create normative constraint for all claimants, particularly China, in order not to be aggressive in the South China Sea.

In the South China Sea, China's behavior is often considered as an assertive behavior that violates the DoC by other claimants such as by Vietnam and the

[56] Sonika Gupta, "Chinese Strategies for Resolution of the Taiwan and South China Sea Disputes," International Studies 42, No. 3 & 4 (2005): 257-262.

[57] See, Shannon, "Norms are what states make of them: The political Psychology of Norm Violation."

[58] Michael A. Glosny, "Heading toward a Win–Win Future? Recent Developments in China's Policy Toward Southeast Asia," Asian Security 2, No. 1 (2006): 38.

Philippines. Any objection made by other claimants related to PRC's assertive move in the South China Sea could eventually put China in a moral dilemma situation, where it faced with a normative constraint within the DoC and desire to act based on its self interest at the same time. The normative constraint is also related to China's friendly relations with ASEAN countries, while desire to exercise self interest in the South China Sea related to the desire to exercise sovereignty, control over the natural resources, geostrategic position and SLOCs as well as China – the U.S. strategic rivalry. Therefore, in order to deal with the situation, any assertive behavior or norm violation should be followed with excuses, apologies, justification or denials in order to pursue both China's self interest as well as China's friendly relation with ASEAN countries.

As part of its delaying strategy, China tries to strengthen its claims, prevent other claimants to strengthen their claims and prevents other claimants to develop project that not involving China. Consequently, PRC will make an assertive move when any claimants try to strengthen their claims or to develop project that not involving China.[59] Hence, when other claimants have raised objections to China's assertive move that may violate the DoC, especially article 4 and 5 which is an agreement not to use force and about self-restraint, China needs an excuse or justification in order to safe its reputation and good relationship with ASEAN counterparts. It could be seen in most of the Chinese press statement after an incident was occurred, which often related to the respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty. The most easily seen is China's justification related to the incident of cable cutting between Vietnamese survey ship and Chinese Maritime Surveillance ships. At first China responded to Vietnam's protest by saying that the action "was completely normal marine law-enforcement and surveillance activities in China's jurisdictional area."[60] After that, China again responded and justified its action by saying that,

> *"The law enforcement activities by Chinese maritime surveillance ships against Vietnam's illegally operating ships are completely justified. We urge Vietnam to immediately stop infringement activities and refrain from creating new troubles."*[61]

Another justification related to China's action in the South China Sea also occurred in the last military standoff between China and

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[59] For a further discussion about China's strategy, see Fravel, "China's Strategy in the South China Sea." M. Taylor Fravel. "Maritime Security in the South China Seaand the Competition over Maritime Rights," in Cooperation from Strength The United States, China and the South China Sea, edited by Patrick M. Cronin (January 2012).

[60] "China reprimands Vietnam over offshore oil exploration," Reuters, May 28, 2011, accessed July 2, 2013 http ://www. reuters. com/article/ 2011 /05/28/china-vietnam-idAFL3E7GS07E201 10528. Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea and Southeast Asian Responses," 86.

[61] "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Jiang Yu's Regular Press Conference on May 31, 2011," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Duong Danh Huy, "The Philippines and Vietnam at the crossroad," Vietnam Net Bridge, July 15, 2011, accessed July 2, 2013, http:// english. vietnamnet.vn/en/politics/10390/the-philippines-and-vietnam-at-the-crossroad.html. Thayer, "Chinese Assertiveness in the South China Sea," 86.

the Philippines. In response to the military standoff between two countries, Chinese official justified its military action to intervene the Philippines' war ship by saying that,

> *"it is the Philippines that violated China's sovereignty over Huangyan Island by forcing an inspection of a Chinese fishing vessel. Therefore, action was required in order to respond to this unnecessary provocation to let both the Philippines and any potential future provocateur know that such actions will not be tolerated."*[62]

Related to the above examples, it seems that China's assertive action which led to the violation of the DoC is possible since the prescription and the parameters of the norm offers rooms for justification.[63] In terms of the South China Sea dispute, the prescriptions and the parameters of the DoC itself do not give a clear measurement related to the situation in the South China Sea territory. The prescriptions of the DoC in the South China Sea mainly lie in the article 4 to article 10. Those articles stated important things to do in order to solve the problem of South China Sea. From seven articles which informed claimants what to do and what not to do, it seems that the article 4 and 5 are the most crucial that offer room for justification. Article 5 becomes important since it could be interpreted differently between claimants of the South China Sea territory. These articles give possibility to all claimants to violate the DoC. It is stated that all parties will not try to conduct activities that might complicate or escalate dispute. Moreover, the article also described the conduct of activities which could complicate or escalate dispute as inhabiting uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays and others. However, it does not say anything about other activities such as protecting sovereignty, building a structure, or making administrative government in the area that is already being occupied.[64] Thus, if China wants to build new structures in one of the island that is already being occupied, it does not mean it violate the DoC directly.

China's assertive action also cannot be separated from parameters in the DoC. It is discussed earlier that parameters of the DoC lie on the article 1 to article 3 and put emphasis on the UNCLOS, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. One of the most important parameters which is exists in all those parameters is about the respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty.[65] It seems that this principle gives room for any claimants in the South China Sea dispute to justify their acts in the name of the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity, especially to justify the use of force which is prohibited in the article 4, as it was used by the Chinese.

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[62] Rodel Rodis, "Scarborough will not be Mischief Reef redux," Inquirer Global Nation, May 2nd, 2012, accessed June 19, 2013, http:// globalnation. inquirer. net/35543/scarborough-will-not-be-mischief-reef-redux."

[63] See, Shannon, "Norms are what states make of them: The political Psychology of Norm Violation," 293-316.

[64] Glosny, "Heading toward a Win–Win Future? P.38.

[65] We can look that the respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty appear in the Treaty of Amity (point a.) and Cooperation and in the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (first principle).

China's assertive action in the South China Sea and the statement made by the Chinese official shows that China has a moral dilemma concerning its interest in the South China Sea. One of the statements showed that China has a moral dilemma in the South China Sea could be seen in the latest press statement related to China's decision to established Sansha City in Woody Island. In regards to the protest by other countries such as Vietnam the Philippines and also the U.S., China responded by saying that, "the recent establishment of the Sansha City is a necessary adjustment made by China to the existing local administrative structure and is well within China's sovereign rights."[66] Furthermore, the statement also questioned the U.S. involvement in the issue and reaffirmed that China stands ready to work with ASEAN. This statement shows that China needs to maintain its good relation with ASEAN countries, and also make sure that the U.S. is not involved in the issue as well as intended to exercise China's sovereignty over the island.

Another example could also be seen in the latest ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Cambodia, which failed to issue joint *communique*. Although there is no confirmation about China's involvement related to ASEAN failure to issued joint *communique,* China still issued a statement that dismissed any accusation that blamed China for the failure. At the end of the statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China stressed the importance of the DoC and committed to developing strategic partnership with ASEAN.[67] The statement shows that China needs to maintain friendly relation with ASEAN counterparts, shows that ASEAN is important for China and China is not trying to split the unity of ASEAN. If China feels that its social life with ASEAN counterparts is not that important, why China should be busy to issue a statement to convince that China was not involved in the last event in the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting?

The above examples show that China is trying to accommodate all of its interests, both social needs and self interest, by conducting a delaying strategy. A delaying strategy which is done through a justification related to its aggressive move that constrained by the DoC for the social needs, and prevention of other claimants to strengthen their claims or to develop project that not involving China for its self interest. It also means that China has a moral dilemma related to its interest in the South China Sea. In this sense China has to react effectively since any assertive behavior which associated with China's violation toward the DoC could harm China's relations with ASEAN. Therefore, any assertive action in the South China Sea and

[66] "Statement by Spokesperson Qin Gang of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China on the US State Department Issuing a So-called Press Statement On the South China Sea," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, August 4, 2012, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2535/t958226.shtml.

[67] "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Weimin's Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2012," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, July 14, 2012, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t953026.htm.

followed with an effort to justified its action demonstrate that China need to comply with the normative constraint, which is the DoC, maintain its friendly relation with ASEAN and also securing its self interest in the South China Sea. By making a statement after a protest was sent by other claimants related to China's action means that China is trying to combine the desirable and the justifiable, between China's self interest and ASEAN's hope towards China as a responsible power in the South China Sea who complies with the DoC. Thus, where is the position of China in the South China Sea between 2002 – 2012?

From what has been described previously, China has interests in the South China Sea which are possibly conflicting of one and another. Chinese interest to comply with the DoC and maintain friendly relation with ASEAN countries in the end could collide with Chinese interest to exercise the indisputable sovereignty over the disputed area. It also could be seen, from China's status quo approach to revisionist approach in the South China Sea, that China has been conducting activities which fall under both categories, both status quo and revisionist. China seems to participate actively with ASEAN countries, by conducting joint development in the disputed territory, in order to solve the issue of the South China Sea under the mechanism of the DoC. On the contrary, China also conducts assertive behaviors in the South China Sea. China in the end did violate the DoC, such as by conducting activities that could escalate tension. China also accused of intervene the last ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Cambodia which was failed to issue a joint *communiqué*. Furthermore, by making a justification towards its action in the South China Sea, it could be seen that China does have a moral dilemma in the South China Sea. The moral dilemma eventually put China in the gray area, in the middle between obligatory action and utilitarian action, especially related to its compliance to the DoC. Hence, China is lying in the middle between status quo and revisionist in the South China Sea, between an obligatory action that is mandated by the DoC and the action to pursue its self-interest. It tries to accommodate its self interests by conducting actions that are considered as an assertive behavior by other claimants and then justified it as an answer to its moral dilemma. China's position in the South China Sea in the end characterized by China's proposal for joint development and action to strengthened its claims. China is not a pure status quo, but also not an aggressive revisionist.[68] A position in which the actor is willing to participate within the community but still pursue its self-interests and tries to push for a resolution that is to its advantage.[69]

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[68] See, Thuy, "Recent Developments in the South China Sea: Implications for Regional Security and Cooperation." Ted Galen Carpenter , "China as a Prickly, But Pragmatic, Revisionist Power," Cato Institute, January 17, 2013, accessed on 1 February 2013,http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/china--prickly-pragmatic-revisionist-power

[69] In the international system, Denny Roy stated that China belongs in the category of rising power with 'limited aims,' which is a combination of a status quo power and dissatisfied power. See, Denny Roy, "China's Reaction to American Predominance," Survival 45, No. 3 (Autumn 2003): P.74. See also, Gupta, "Chinese Strategies for Resolution of the Taiwan and South China Sea Disputes," P.257-258.

Conclusion

China's position in the South China Sea is determined by its interests over the disputed area. A position that seeks to accommodate not only its self interest in the South China Sea - such as sovereignty claim, natural resources, geostrategic position of the South China Sea territory and China – U.S. strategic rivalry - but also social need and friendly relations with ASEAN countries. This position should be able to support interests which may not go hand in hand. Therefore, China is trying to delay any resolution, strengthen its claim, prevent other claimants from strengthening their claims and prevent other claimants to develop project that not involving China. Between 2002 – 2012, China was lying in the middle between status quo and revisionist in the South China Sea dispute. It conducted activities which fall under status quo category, such as signing the DoC, participating and implementing the DoC through diplomatic conduct and joint development activity, and revisionist category, such as the establishment of Sansha City and cable cutting incident that considered as a violation to the DoC by other claimants. Furthermore, any assertive move in the South China Sea which may lead to moral dilemma or jeopardize China – ASEAN relation should be managed with a justification in order to accommodate China's social need. Therefore, it confirms the hypothesis which argues that China is neither a status quo nor a revisionist in the South China Sea to the extent of its compliance with the DoC in the South China Sea.

Given the fact that the South China Sea territory provides a lot of opportunities for all claimants, make it a high valuable territory, it seems that military conflict or war is not likely to happen since it means as high stakes and high costs of fighting. Related to China's behavior and action in the South China Sea, it seems that China is willing to work with ASEAN based on the DoC in order to achieve further regulation in the disputed territory such as the code of conduct, especially since ASEAN is an important partner for China. The problem right now is that China has to deal first with its moral dilemma, between its desire to control all the opportunities in the territory and its friendly relation with ASEAN. Besides that, China also has to put aside its rivalry with the U.S. and consider that all the natural resources, SLOCS, and geostrategic position of the South China Sea could be managed together with other claimants. If China can deal with its moral dilemma, a peaceful settlement over the South China Sea dispute is still possible. However, tension between claimants is still likely to happen in the near future as it happened in between 2002 – 2012, where China did its best to delay any resolution and strengthen its claims without losing too much of its face in the region.

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