

## ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ

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### MODERN TENDENCIES IN THE SOUTH CHINA

**Abstract.** This article is about the current situation of territorial disputes in the South China Sea and changes in the existing alignment of forces in this region and also the position of People's Republic China the event around territorial disputes in the South China Sea, as well as disagreements and contradictions between the states of the region and China.

*Keywords.* *People's Republic China, South China Sea, territorial disputes, South-East Asia, ASEAN, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia.*

A feature of China's foreign policy today is that China does not engage in open armed conflicts to defend its national interests, but instead uses economic expansion, including lending, investment, and soft power. China has never sought military action outside the country. Only as a volunteer can we see its participation in the Middle East problem. However, in recent years, China's military operations in the South China Sea have intensified, and it managed to build five military bases there [1]. China emphasizes that these military bases were built exclusively to maintain peace and that China adheres to the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes [2].

The South China Sea is the third largest in the world. Today, due to the claims of the states, the regime of the islands in the South China Sea remains unresolved and the political situation in the sea basin is deteriorating. This will undoubtedly threaten the security and sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific region. The following trends can be observed in the South China Sea today:

First, the primary reason for ASEAN and China's claims to the South China Sea islands is their ownership of offshore natural resources (seafood, energy reserves, wind and hydropower). The Spratly and Paracel Islands also have huge tourism potential.

Second, China considers the islands and reefs in the South China Sea to be historical territories of China and pursues a policy of reclaiming them.

Third, if China takes full control of the South China Sea, it will have leverage against the U.S. and other regional competitors in the Asia-Pacific region. Indeed, the most important trade exchanges for the Republic of Korea, Japan and the United States are carried out through the same sea trade routes. Disputed territories in the East China Sea with the Republic of Korea and Japan may also be resolved in their favor in China.

Fourth, Southeast Asian countries are relying on U.S. support to ensure national security.

Fifth, resolving the disputes in the South China Sea in China's favor will undoubtedly become the key not only to establish control over the Spratly and Paracel Islands, but also to resolve the Taiwan issue.

Sixth, a state that exercises control over a region will receive a military-strategic advantage in the fight

against other states. Paracel Islands and the Spratly Archipelago are convenient points for managing submarines, building bases to protect maritime communications and serving the military.

Seventh, the South China Sea could become the epicenter of World War III, which is expected to take place in the 21st century. Because to date, ASEAN countries have started an arms race. China mobilizes its military and builds artificial islands. It sets up its own fighters and other weapons on artificial islands. Demonstrations of multilateral military operations along with the US military are frequent.

By 2030, the Chinese navy is planned to be deployed in the western Pacific and Indian oceans. This indicates that China will become a strong military power, ensuring regional and global security.

There is no point in ASEAN countries appealing to international tribunals and courts to resolve problems in the South China Sea. In particular, the Philippines filed a lawsuit in January 2013 with the Permanent Chamber of the Trety Court in The Hague alleging that China's actions in the South China Sea violated international law. The Hague Tribunal issued a new ruling in July 2016, based on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which ruled that China had no grounds to sue any island in the South China Sea. China has not recognized the legal status of the Hague Tribunal and has ruled that the 2016 ruling also has no legal force. In turn, the country that has held bilateral talks with China is also losing out. Because all bilateral agreements and treaties will be resolved in China's favor, and relatively small states will be tied to China.

Another military-strategic importance of the South China Sea is that the area is a convenient area for underwater nuclear testing. The United States and China are also major nuclear powers. Therefore, the Southeast Asian countries should, first and foremost, get the Bangkok Agreement signed by the United States and China. The Bangkok Treaty is the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, signed by 10 countries on December 15, 1995 and entered into force on March 28, 1997. According to the agreement, not only the land areas of Southeast Asian countries, but also the continental shelf and economic zones are considered nuclear-weapon-free zones [4]. That is why

the great powers with nuclear weapons did not sign this treaty.

Today, the United States is actively involved in deciding the fate of the South China Sea. Until 2010, the United States had not been active in the South China Sea territorial disputes and had encouraged the parties to the conflict to resolve the disputes peacefully. Interestingly, the United States itself has not ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is the source of international law in disputes. This allows it to swim freely in the open sea, and even to enter the territorial sea of other states. Former US President Barack Obama tried to find a new policy against China and presented it with the G-2 format (US and PRC) - which meant that the two great powers would be jointly responsible for the fate of the world. However, China immediately rejected the offer. Convinced that China did not want to be the brother of the United States, Washington tried to keep the PRC with a soft policy. In doing so, America's main potential allies were undoubtedly the countries in the South China Sea basin. Because most of China's neighbors are worried about China's growing military power.

In recent years, the modernization of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been accelerating. According to Philip Saunders, a professor at the United States National Defense University, China's actual military budget is 1.5 times higher than the official budget and amounts to \$ 159.6 billion [6]. By 2030, China's defense budget is projected to reach \$ 350 billion, and major naval forces will be stationed in the western Pacific and Indian Oceans. This indicates that China will become a strong military power, ensuring regional and global security. The White Paper on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region, published in China in January 2017, states: "China has a great responsibility to ensure regional and global security, as well as to build its military based on its international prestige and national interests in national security and development".

Army Although the level of Chinese People's Liberation maintenance is decades behind that of the U.S. military, China has become a major threat to Southeast Asian countries. Although the countries of Southeast Asia have embarked on an arms race, they can only rely on U.S. protection in the event of a serious military conflict. At the end of 2011, the United States announced that the Asia-Pacific region would no longer be the main focus of its foreign policy. It is no coincidence that it is stated that "we will strengthen the alliance with the Philippines, Thailand and expand cooperation with Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and other countries" [8].

Currently, the UK is also involved in the conflicts in the South China Sea. In October 2016, the concept of "Global Britain" was put forward and the UK was set to become the most powerful free economy in the world and a decisive player in world politics. To this end, the UK is trying to improve its relations with countries in different parts of the world. In February 2019, British Secretary of Defense Gavin Williamson announced that he would send a warship to the South

China Sea to land and fly planes known as Queen Elizabeth [9]. This was supported by the United States. The UK has invested heavily in Southeast Asian countries. The South China Sea accounts for 12% of the UK's annual trade turnover (almost £ 92 billion). If China becomes a hegemonic state in the South China Sea, there will undoubtedly be a new military and economic threat to Britain. On top of that, the economies of Southeast Asian countries are thriving and there are favorable conditions for the British to open up new markets. That is why the British must defend their interests. The UK currently has two military bases in the South China Sea basin. They are located in Serbia, Brunei, and Sembavangdegan, Singapore [10]. The task of these military bases is to combat the expansion of China in the sea basin, which requires a huge financial investment. China does not see the UK as a worthy rival. Because it is competing globally only with the United States.

Japan and the Republic of Korea are also working to strengthen control over the sea. Resolving the disputes in the South China Sea in China's favor will undoubtedly be the key to resolving the Taiwan issue, not just gaining control of the Spratly and Paracel Islands. Disputed areas in the East China Sea with South Korea and Japan could also be resolved in China's favor on their own. China's full hegemony in the South China Sea will be able to limit the supply of strategic resources to Japan and the Republic of Korea. That is why Japan is currently stepping up its economic, military and political activities in the South China Sea. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is urging the country's major investors to invest in ASEAN member states. Currently, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar are Japan's economic partners. For the countries of Southeast Asia, Japan is one of the important weapons in the fight against China. Despite the economic difficulties in the country, Japan is ready to provide financial assistance to ASEAN member states.

We know that ASEAN is an integration organization whose member states are directly involved in the South China Sea issue. However, the approach of ASEAN countries to this problem is different, which also leads to divisions within ASEAN. For example, today, based on the position of the countries of the region, they can be conditionally divided into three groups:

- Chinese: Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar. They prefer to receive economic assistance from China. Brunei also recently supported this position.
- officially neutral countries: Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand.
- anti-Chinese bloc: Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia [11].

In 2002, China and ASEAN signed the Declaration on the Movement in the South China Sea. In the summer of 2011, the basic principles for the implementation of the 2002 Declaration were developed and the basic principles for its implementation were adopted. Discussions on the Code of Ethics in the South China Sea between the ASEAN

regional organization and China over the past decade are scheduled to end in 2021. The code should serve to end disputed territories in the South China Sea and promote trust and cooperation between ASEAN member states and China, including in the field of fisheries.

Due to the disputed areas in the South China Sea, there is little opportunity to conduct geological surveys and accurately assess the reserves of available resources. Therefore, in March 2019, the Chinese Academy of Sciences invited Russian experts to participate in an expedition to study gas hydrates in the South China Sea, scheduled for July 2019 [12].

In short, China will never give up areas that fall within the “nine-point line” and, conversely, will continue to expand its territory by building artificial islands. Chinese President Xi Jinping has said that China's full sovereignty has been established in the South China Sea. For example, the White Paper on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region, published in January 2017, also states that China has full sovereignty over the Spratly Islands and adjacent territory [13]. The 21st century Chinese Sea Silk Road project is also very well designed, and the United States will never allow control of the South China Sea. Today, the South China Sea is an important area where Sino-American interests clash. U.S. intervention in territorial disputes in the South China Sea is further complicating the situation. The fate of the world in the near future will be decided by who will win the competition in the region.

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