



## LONG ROAD TOWARDS PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE EAST SEA

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### **I.**

In spite of the global crisis many countries of APR confirms by their achievements the prognosis of scientists that the focus of world policy and economy of the XXI century as well as epicenter of concurrence race and even possible new confrontation of the leading world players and its coalitions is moving there, on the boards of Pacific Ocean. It seems that it becomes a “Mediterranean of the future”. Just why the stability and predictability of the development of the situation in the region, assured by a set of broadening CBMs and deepening cooperation between the countries of APR in all aspects and in particular in exploitation of sea resources and most important sea lines of communications (SLOC) becomes extremely important for maintenance of peace and stability not only regional but global as well.

The conflict about the sovereignty over the islands of SCS belongs to a sort of relatively new conflicts which were absorbed by different structures of the “cold war” and now in the period of difficult creation of the new world order appears on the frontlines of the struggle and competition between the ASEAN countries itself, as well between some members of ASEAN individually and all together against non regional powers in the triangle China – USA- Japan.

The growing militarization of the islands in SCS inevitably leads to all kinds of incidents, which potentially could become a very serious conflicts capable to broaden itself in a quantity and quality of forces and dimensions of the space involved in it.

In spite of many dangerous incidents and even armed fights happened in region of Spratly islands in the past 2-3 years, with a considerably grown activity and hardness in actions of the CPR, in reality, the perception of the growing here threat for international peace and security until now did not passed beyond the limits of the experts community and is very far from the knowledge in the broad sections of world public opinion, especially in the West where in a certain times ago many people had a very skeptical



attitude toward some alerts of recently past away famous American scientist S. Huntington who predicted one of scenario of the future “conflict of civilizations” which easily could start precisely in this region of SCS.

The aggravation of the situation in the region began relatively recently (30-40 years ago) after the Chinese occupation of the Paracells islands in 1974 and then followed by the consecutive occupation of many islands of the Spratly archipelago. Since that times any efforts from the side of Vietnam and other interested countries of ASEAN, neither the signature of all kind of bilateral and multilateral documents, declarations, or statements on the principals of conduct of the Parties in SCS, neither the adoption by all sides of the UN Convention of 1982 on the Sea Law or the Declaration of 2002 signed by China, neither many joint communiques and statements of several summits or high ranked delegations of CPV and CPC – until now nothing could improve for a little the disputed situation of the temporary “frozen conflict”.

The sharp contradictions on the territorial property of islands and sea spaces with its resources remain unsolved and more and more deep. The real threat arises that the competition for possessing of energetic and fishing resources of SCS will aggravate the conflict in such degree that could produce a strong strengthening of nationalism in China as well as in other countries and the hole process will be out of control of the official authorities. In China, Taiwan, Filipinas, and SRV too local legislation already includes the islands in the national territories and national spiritual life and they became a certain national symbols and even a certain condition for the legitimacy f the governments for which the islands must be defended “by any price”. This makes the situation very indefinite, unpredictable and difficult to resolve.

## II.

China is the most important actor in the story. If at once it would be possible to convince the China leadership to solve peacefully the conflict we could see the light in the end of the tunnel very soon.

We know that the foreign policy course of China for predictable period is fixed in the decisions of the XVI and XVII Congresses of the CPC. It is based on the national interests of Chinese people how its are interpreted by actual generation of the CPC leaders. They concentrates all efforts on the solution of mane complex problems of the fast development of the country. For these purposes the country needs a long period of sustainable peace and political stability in its external environment.



There are two main direction of its policy in the APR: eastern and southern. The first including Taiwan and Japan is priority In the South were the interests of China mainly oriented for more distant perspectives? According the opinion of many analytics China will realize the strategy of stabilization of relations with neighbor countries and building a peace atmosphere around the country with the accent on the diplomacy and search of political solution of the problem of sea resources by the cooperation on the win win principals.

The military solution is unprofitable and not needed for China. This is actual position. But what will be the position of the future generation of Chinese leaders who will come to the power in the 2012 is still unclear. And until now in the problems of SCS they refuse any secessions to their “strategic partners” as far as well.

In its military doctrines China naturally das not exclude the use of military force or the threat of force for protection of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The military-political line of China for a near future is clear and predictable, according the opinion of our most respectable and experienced expert in Chinese affairs director of IFES RAS, academic Titarenko M. L. It is directed to the strategic gain of times for accumulation of forces in order finally to make China regional and then world power of the first rank. The more concrete targets of China consists in achievement of unconditional recognition of the world community of its territorial integrity and jurisdiction over Taiwan, Tibet, Singhtzan and its special rights in SCS. According to his opinion it is very few probable that for these objectives China could deploy a military expansion.

But it is clear that with the growth of its economic power its role in the regional and world policy will grow up too. And we all in Russia or in Vietnam or in ASEAN in general have to recognize that China has its one important interests in the region. In this case I want to quote former president of Filipinos Fidel Ramos who recently wrote: “ We have to accept the reality that we have to live with the great presence of China in every spheres” and in order to assure a lasting stability in the APR “we need to pass from “Pax Americana” which was assured by a strong military presence of the USA to the “ Pax Asia Pacific” in which the major countries and sub regional groups could contribute and share the responsibility for peace and stability in APR”.

The greatest danger for China as well as for all its neighbors are the possible euforia of masses by its undisputable success and a strong upraise of nationalism and shauvinism. It is very important that a political leadership of China fully understands this danger. The president Hu many times mentioned this in his speeches in recent



celebration of the 60th anniversary of the CPR. They understand that the perception of Chinese growing might makes afraid not only its neighbours but in the West too were people see China as serious concurrent first of all in the economic and commercial sphere. The perception of China as the threat could spoil the Chinese programs of the modernization and realization of the policy of openness and reforms.

All Chinese officials more and more seriously regard the force of public opinion in the country and in the world. Consequently everybody who wants to push a reasonable political solution of the conflict has to promote the building of the properly informed public opinion in most important countries. It demands a lot of time and means. But all reasonable suggestions and acceptable projects in this sphere have much more chances for success if they receive a strong support from the broad sections of the public opinion in many countries which help to isolate the hardliners too.

The sharp contradictions on the territorial property of islands and sea spaces with its resources remain unsolved and more and more deep. The real threat arises that the competition for possessing of energetic and fishing resources of SCS will aggravate the conflict in such degree that could produce a strong strengthening of nationalism in China as well as in other countries and the whole process will be out of control of the official authorities. In China, Taiwan, Filipinos, and SRV too local legislation already includes the islands in the national territories and national spiritual life and it became a certain national symbol and even a certain condition for the legitimacy of the governments for which the islands must be defended "by any price". This makes the situation very indefinite, unpredictable and difficult to resolve.

It may still be possible to find a political, "win-win" settlement. If the political will can be generated to reach a negotiated settlement, there is a window of opportunity to pursue progress. Military conflict would threaten the interests of all parties to the dispute, since the political and economic costs of military escalation would be higher than any single party is currently willing to bear. No country in the region currently possesses the military capabilities needed to assert and maintain its claims, relations in the region are generally cooperative, and no claimant has yet discovered commercially viable quantities of oil or natural gas. In time, however, all these factors are subject to change, especially as China, and perhaps other claimants, acquire the military strength to impose their claims by threat or use of military force.

Taking in consideration the real transformation of the region into dangerous flashpoint of international tensions at the end of previous century in scientific community



already we can see many ideas and projects. The new initiatives still appears in order to diminish the tension. Among them I may mention the demilitarization of disputable islands, the convocation of the multilateral summit of the involved countries, the including of the issue in the agenda of the UN GA, the creation of the Joint Resource Development Authority or the appointment of the EPG from all claimant or some non claimant countries in order to prepare the basis for future official talks. Many times there were proposals to start negotiations through the third party mediation or even to open the case in ICJ of UN. All those possibly reasonable projects had one week point: all of them contradict the official policy of China which is exposed in so called “Three No”: no to any internalization of the conflict; no to multilateral talks; no to any specific body to deal with this problem. The only acceptable for China was and remains are informal bilateral negotiations with each of claimant parties individually. All of them are much weaker than China and have different nuances in bilateral relations with it. As result we can see a deep deadlock.

Unfortunately there is not a common position among claimants ASEAN countries too. The mechanism for dispute solution in ASEAN does not exist yet. Probably the ARF could accomplish this mission in a future. But to-day the conflict management is realized not by famous “ASEAN way” but by the “China way”. Many years the conflict management remains totally in hands of the Chinese diplomacy.

On the basis of analyze of real situation in ASEAN and ARF some experts come to conclusion that it is absolutely impossible to find out the proper solution in a framework of ASEAN or ARF. So the best option for all is to keep actual military and diplomatic status-quo. But in reality there is no status-quo. The development of the situation becomes more and more dangerous together with growing arms race in the region. Thus why there is a need not of discouraging skepticism of the expert’s community but new constructive initiatives. It is obvious that the elaboration of the acceptable agreement demand many years and a lot of patience, efforts on all levels and means. Let us remember that recently finished talks of SRV with China on the demarcation of the land border took 20 years. And the same talks of SU and then Russia with China took 40 years.

A range of preventive diplomatic mechanisms and approaches might be used to dampen tensions, forestall the outbreak of conflict in the South China Sea, and provide the basis for a political settlement. There are several concrete objectives that could be attained. The claimants could formalize a code of conduct for the South China Sea and adhere to it. They could dispense with nationalist rhetoric and legally unsupportable area



claims. They could build a web of functional co-operative arrangements in marine environmental protection, marine scientific research, navigational safety and search and rescue. And they could negotiate a set of specific voluntary guidelines regarding military activities in the disputed area.

ARF is still relatively new regional body it is step by step becoming an important instrument for maintaining the harmony and stability in APR. All attempts of ARF to elaborate and introduce a system of CBMs in the region are especially important. In this respect the experience of a group of Black Sea countries who have created a special body called “Blackseafor” could be useful too.

We all know that the work of ARF and ASEAN summits is more and more effectively complemented by a nonofficial process of so called “Double track” by many research centers and all kind of NGOs. The Indonesian-hosted Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea have provided important opportunities for cooperative action on technical issues, but it has thus far not been possible to generate any meaningful discussion in these meetings on the critical sovereignty issue. Nevertheless, an effort might be made to upgrade these informal meetings to address such questions as sovereignty or mechanisms for joint exploration of resources. It is necessary now to go far beyond the expert community and start to work again with many peacemaking NGO. With so called leaders of public opinion in order to build up a properly informed and influenced moement for peace and security in the region.

### III.

Now a few words about the official positions of Russia.

The South China Sea is situated rather far from Moscow and it seems that its problems must not to be in priorities of Russian foreign policy and interests. But it is not so because Russia is and will be for ever a great maritime power of the Pacific and our country is deeply interested to assure that the region has a sustainable international status with assured freedom of navigation and sea communications.

The APR represents a sphere of vital interests for Russia. Russia is connected by relations of strategic partnership with China as well as with SRV. Such a partnership is a certain form of organization of common activity of states in fundamental spheres and planned for a longue predictable perspectives and based on the mutual recognition, respect and promotion of each other interests fixed in a treaties and oriented for achievement of common or similar vital objectives.



Just why Russia as other countries of the region is deeply interested in such a way of development of the situation in SCS zone which could permit to keep it in the framework of peaceful mutually respectful negotiations of participants involved in the conflict on all disputable issues' and could lead to creation in this dangerous region of an atmosphere of peace, stability, mutual trust and cooperation.

Russia proved many times its attitude toward ASEAN as to one of influential centers of the World and its interest in a strong sustainably developing Association of states of SEA. In Russian academic community there are many experts expresses their conviction that further deepness of the integration processes in the East Asia and the strengthening of interdependence of the nations of the region inevitably will lead to some mutually acceptable solution of existing problems of SCS on the ways of joint exploitation of natural richness of the region.

The creation of East Asia Community still is the target of the indefinite future. Nevertheless, on this phase of its construction a logic question of the Russian participation in it arises. Unfortunately this question mentioned by Russian president already in 2005 in Kuala-Lumpur remains open. In actual situation in is difficult to consider as reasonable the attempts of some countries to evince Russia from full participation in integration processes in the region. Its could bring a serious consequences for Russia if it would lead to creation of a closed commercial bloc and exclusive coalition of states under domination of one or two major powers. It is obvious that Russia could not passively observe the deep economic and geopolitical transformations near its eastern borders.

The coming II Summit ASEAN-Russia which probably will be next year here, in Hanoi could change this very strange situation. Its agenda will include the whole complex of interaction of Russia and ASEAN and as result of it summit could adopt a joint political document which will reflect the common approaches of Parties toward a future architecture of security and cooperation in APR. So it is difficult to overestimate the meaning of coming Summit.

In last July 2009 out MFA S.Lavrov during the ARF meeting in his lecture in the university of Bangkok said:

“Our countries have a broad space for common actions for strengthening peace, stability and security in APR. Russia always stands for equal and transparent architecture of security and cooperation in the APR, based on collective effort, recognized norms and principals of International Law and using only dialog, consultations and negotiations as



instruments for solution of all complex problems. This is just what we call “ASEAN Way.” For this Way it is no need any military supremacy, no arms build up, no damage for security of other states, no building military bases in APR, and military alliances , deployment of regional AMD systems capable to destroy the strategic balance. Such architecture may only be set up by the development of multilateral diplomacy, contacts between regional organizations and forums and what is most important – through mutual respect and consideration of each others interests”.

Really it is difficult to say anything more clearly.

Thank you for your attention.