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THE PACIFIC: SCO VS ASEAN

Abstract

Integration and Disintegration Processes make the Modern world. Military associations made a key role throughout the history for the survival of the most powerful countries which led alliances during the two World Wars, and gained a victory over “the forces of darkness” and therefore determined the future of the Planet we are living in. The world has increasingly changed during the past 25 years, from the Dissolution of the Soviet Union and Fall of Berlin Wall on one hand, and Techno-tronic revolution and “galloping” Globalization on the other. The World Economic Crisis followed by hegemony, imperial politics and military operations, brought up great social differences nowadays and it made some parts of the world instability sources, which manifests specially as terrorism and extremism. On regional and global level this led to creation of new economy and military based associations, between great world powers of different religion, civilization and not rarely of opposite interests. Higher interests in the form of a struggle for survival and protection of their own positions and for the cause of military or economic doctrine development (or both of them) made associations such as SCO and ASEAN, that is Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Regarding the fact that the founders of these alliances are the world’s most powerful players, who have completely opposite and overlapping positions, are situated in the most dynamic part of the world - The Pacific, we can conclude that the modern international relations in this area will reflect their mutual competition and conflicts in trying to impose their own interests to each other.

Keywords: ASEAN, SCO, Geopolitical, Conflicts, Associations

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1. INTRODUCTION

For now, only media, diplomacy and economy conflicts between Japan and China, which are occasionally growing and which are being led because of small, uninhabited and seemingly unimportant Senkaku islands (Chinese: Dijaou) in the Southern Chinese sea, have especially escalated after the demonstrations in China and demolition of property of Japanese companies, in the same time bringing these two big and powerful countries of the wedge of commencing a war, drawing attention of the entire world public to the, a little bit forgotten Pacific. To the Europeans, Pacific seems distant and unimportant, since due to the effects of current financial crisis, risk of EU falling apart and terrorist attacks in its own backyard, the attention is most often pointed out towards Washington, because they are the ones who are, to a great extent, creating world, and in that way also European politics. Still, more often the glances and also practical consults reach Asia, and Russia from whom they are energy-dependent, as well as China, who is becoming bigger and bigger creditor, and a new world-wide and European investor.

Only merely mentioned parts of the planet represent the sole centers of world events, but to anyone who knows geopolitics and postulates set by one of its creators, Halford J. Mackinder, in the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century, it is apparent that Eurasia is the center of the world, and that the one who rules this region, rules the entire planet. Eurasia has two key poles – Europe and Pacific, where the first pole is gradually losing its former primate and historical significance, while the other pole is putting its, until now, big significance in the focus of current and future world events. There are many reasons for this:

First: Direct geostrategic and geopolitical interests for controlling the entire Pacific Ocean region, which is the biggest corridor for world naval transport and transit of goods are diffracting in the Pacific.

Second: In the middle of Pacific are located two out of three richest and most powerful worldly powers (Japan and China), and ASEAN – the community of countries of the South-Eastern Asia with more than 600 million of habitants and greater economic power than India and Australia, which are also present and very important in the region.

Third: There is also Russia with its far-East regions, rich resources of the North-Eastern Siberia, Kamchatka and Chukotka.

Fourth: There are until now dominant and unavoidable USA, not only by land with Alaska as its territory, but also by sea, with a powerful Pacific fleet, deployed throughout the entire Asian-Pacific region.

If we observe the entire region, from Australia, Indonesia, India, China, Russia, to South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, all to America, it becomes clear that most holders of the world economic and military power meet and clash in the Pacific. By its special contracts with Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, and South Korea, numerous military bases and patronage over the powerful ASEAN, America has, until now, unconditionally ruled this region. It is not clear if it will remain this way, since, from this point of view, it seems that we might be witnessing historical changes even in this region.

2. SIGNIFICANCE AND CONFLICT POTENTIAL OF PACIFIC

In order to have a better understanding of the relations in Pacific, this long suppressed focal point of different conflicts of interests, which is preparing to become in the near future the center of most important economic, and maybe even military-political events, the analysis would temporally start from the end of World War II at the latest. It is a period of ending the process of handing over the joystick by Victorian England – „the mistress of the sea“ and undisputed controller of trade in the Asian-Pacific aquatorium, the new number one world power, which has successfully taken over this primate, maintaining it until today and increasing it in comparison to the rest of the region, above all, by its military presence economic domination. Since World War II, up until today, there were several serious conflicts in this region, starting with the Chinese civil war which ended with Mao Tse-Tung's victory over Chiang Kai Shek, then the war of two Koreas over the 38th parallel, all to the wars in Laos and Cambodia and the American war with Vietnam, and let's not speak of interstate disputes, unresolved borders and aquatoriums, bigotries on the verge of military conflict, which are today present in almost all the states.

In all past conflicts in Pacific, during and after the Cold war, America was an unavoidable factor. Slowly, but surely, in many ways has it worked on gaining for itself the power over Pacific states, not only directly, by change of authorities and bringing disciplinants who will put all economic, energy and military resources into function of spreading American doctrine and military positions in Pacific, but also indirectly, by helping the states which were in conflict with their main nemeses – Russia and China, that is, the countries of their interest sphere; or by creating various interest, economy and military unions. Such activities were most visible during the period of Cold war against SSSR (as communist Russia), when USA helped South Korea in opposition to communist North Korea, or Japan in

opposition to SSSR regarding Kurile islands, and on the other side they supported Vietnam, India, Japan, Malaysia and Taiwan in their disputes against China.

Americans knew how to be pragmatic and to work on separating powerful allies for decades, or at least on weakening their influence. Once they have „heated up“ the breakup of Mao Tse Tung and his traditional ally SSSR and supported Chiang Kai Shek’s nationalists and the government of China in Taiwan. By supporting long lasting animosity and conflicts, with its most powerful navy and fleet, without which there isn’t any real domination in the Pacific, USA have taken over control over the entire region, from Australia to Alaska, which especially comes to the fore upon ending of the Cold war and the dissolution of the SSSR. Strategic contract, signed in 1960 between USA and their biggest Pacific ally – Japan (which is, since the World War II, under the American „nuclear umbrella“) which states that any attack on Japan will be treated as an attack on American national interests, provided Japan with security for decades and enabled unimpeded economic prosperity in comparison to their neighbors, but it also took it under the wing of America and disabled it from leading an independent foreign policy. On the other hand, through the community of countries ASEAN (Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar-Burma and Brunei – see the map in the picture no. 1) which is under American „patronage“, immeasurable influence of America and its presence through economic surplus, big market trade and investments of American and other companies,² from selling weapons and military equipment, to setting up American military bases in almost most countries mentioned, was enabled.

China has had similar conflicts, such as the current one with Japan, even earlier with Vietnam, South Korea and the Philippines, against which it has also lost the dispute³ before the International Court of Arbitration in the Hague regarding the islands in the South Chinese sea, which it considers as its own territory, on which they are building military infrastructure, which is China’s one basis for getting into conflict with Taiwan, which, like the Philippines, South Korea and Japan, has direct protection and support of America, whose activities and measures refer

2 The example of power of ASEAN countries, but also their „following“ American investment policies in the world is the current example of Malaysia, which has surpassed China by investments in Africa. More precisely, right behind the „leaders“ – America and France, Malaysia is in the third place when speaking about its total investments, which amount to 106 billions dollars for the period from 2001 to 2011. China is in the fourth place, and India in the fifth. Source: Tanjug, http://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/svet.php?yyyy=2013&mm=03&dd=26&nav_id=698907, 18.3.2013.

3 ”Filipinci slave: Osporena prava Kine na 90% Južnokinskog mora”, *Nedeljnik magazine*, <http://www.nedeljnik.rs/nedeljnik/portalanews/filipinci-slave-osporena-prava-kine-na-90-odstoteritorije-juznog-kineskog-mora/>, 15.7.2016.

to limiting the Chinese impact in the region. America is making strategic allied contract with previously mentioned Taiwan and South Korea, and provides them with vast military and economic power, so that those countries, side by side with Singapore and Malaysia, have become „economic tigers“ of the South-Eastern Asia, and today, thanks to support of „the Big brother“, they do not fear to resist even the influence of mighty China.⁴

Two and a half decades after the biggest military and economic domination of the USA and the peak of world promotion of neoliberal concept from the beginning of 1990s, when it seemed that we have come to the point of „the end of history“ and „the last man“⁵, big changes occurred. Neoliberal globalization concept turned out to be unsuccessful, and it is breaking apart in almost all economies of the world, with the process of bringing back stronger roles of states, and with that, even the importance of a nation and all traditional values which characterize national societies. On the other hand, neither economy nor military role of the USA, which is still the biggest economic and military power in the world, is that dominant anymore. Twenty years ago, 60% of total world sale of weapons was held by America, while that percentage today is halved – 30%. Military budget of China is, with India's, viewed in the term of percentage, greatly increasing in comparison to all other countries of the world, and it has been marking a double-digit growth for the last ten years. Economy strength of China and powerful growth of this already second biggest economy of the world, is leading by big steps towards the world economy throne, realistically speaking, in the following few years.

Russia, empowered with decades of continued surplus reached by sell of fuels, not only did it become economically powerful, and by that more resistant to foreign influences (we have seen its resistance and adaptability on the example of current sanctions), but it also plans to, up until the year of 2020, invest more than 500 billion of euros in its military power and undertake a complete modernization with completely new military systems, of which many are more superior than American ones.

4 ASEANs economic power, as a community of 10 states with total surface area of 4,35 million km² and 605 million of habitants, is best represented by strong economic indicators of constant growth. The examples are 2,4 trillion of dollars of trade with the world and yearly surplus of 104 billion of dollars, with attracting direct foreign investments amounting to 114 billion of dollars (according to data for the year of 2011, ASEANSTATS , Selected basic indicators). <http://www.asean.org/images/2013/resources/statistics/selected%Key%20Indicators/SummaryTable.pdf> 13.5.2013

5 It meant key attitudes expressed in the book of Frances Fukuyama: *The end of history, the last man* (Fukujama Francis, *Kraj istorije - poslednji čovek*, CID, Podgorica, 2002).

India, with its great potential of 1,25 billion of habitants and gross national product of 1,89 billion of dollars (data for year 2013) and 4,8 billion worth, and currently biggest yearly import of weapons in the world⁶ (it is, above all, Russian strategic weapon), counts as unavoidable factor of the entire region.

Full domination of the USA in Pacific is clearly violated and it is evident that serious conflicts are yet to come, above all on the USA – China relation, whereby the incidents regarding Senkaku/Dijaou islands were just a test of readiness of China and test for determining the boundaries that it is ready to come to.⁷ It was evident from the reactions that China was ready to go all the way, including even the military option, which should be expected in the case of opening any conflict for protecting Chinese sovereignty, from Taiwan to the border in the sea aquatorium with South Korea, to the contentious islands with Vietnam, the Philippines, that is, with Japan. Confirmation of determination and intents, as well as China's opportunities to fulfill this in reality, as seen from the world geopolitical and military analysts' points of view, lays exactly in the change of Chinese military doctrine, which has grown from protection of external borders from aggressors and prevention of floods and other events internally, to being a military doctrine which protects economic interests of China world-wide, mostly in the Asian-Pacific region.



Picture no. 1 Member-states of ASEAN

6 *Ko je najmoćniji na svetu?*, „Lists of lists“ published by *Foreign policy*, <http://www.rts.rs/page/magazine/story/511/zanimljivosti/ko+je+najmocniji+na+svetu%3f.html> , 31.5.2013.

7 Chinese ambassador in Washington, Cui Tiankai, regarding the case of Senaki-Dijaou island, has warned America to watch out for Japan, where nationalist tensions are growing stronger again, calling the dispute for this island „clear Japanese provocation“, adding that current Japanese authority, with prime minister Abe in charge, by visiting graveyards and glorifying its imperial politicians that were killed during the World War II, is sending a „very dangerous message“ to the world. “Kina- Amerikanci, čuvajte se Japana”, *Vesti online*, <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Svet/310215/Kina-Amerikanci-cuvajte-se-od-Japana> , 20. 5. 2013.

In order to implement the new doctrine, China started making possible fleet which represents a basis of its military investments. Apart from development of inter-continental rocket „Dongfeng 41“, most modern destroyers with multifunctional projectile carriers are being made as a support for future plane carriers which will carry most modern fighter planes of the last, fifth generation, which is China also considerably developing. As a support of naval fleet, for protecting Chinese interests in the seas and oceans, new cyber, cybernetic and space programs were developed, electromagnetic weapons was perfected and the new generation of UAVs with both intelligence and prime purpose.⁸ Apart from already mentioned super-modern weapons, China has also developed classical projectiles with 1500 km range for intercepting and destroying enemy ships in the case of direct confrontation, as well as for protection of some Chinese territories in the conflicts with regional enemies, from which potential conflicts of two biggest world powers are possible.

On the other hand, American neoliberal and pacifists are lessening concerns, citing soothing examples such as the case of „economic conflict“ regarding Senkaku/ Dijaou island, in which case mutual exchange of fervor between China and Japan have calmed down because of 350 billion of dollars, and returned to their positions held before the conflict. (China is the biggest and unavoidable market for Japan, as well as Japan is, apart from America, Europe and Russia, the biggest market for China). They believe that it is impossible that there will be a conflict between China and America, since these two countries are economically intertwined (hence the name *Chimerica*) that is, there is American dependency of China (the biggest export market), but also China's from America (one of the biggest markets, and also Chinese are the biggest creditors of American debt bonds).



Map no. 2 ASEAN+3 ,organization which would include China, Japan and South Korea into ASEAN

⁸ Fedukinov Denis, "Kina forsira let drakona", *Glas Rusije*, <http://Serbian.ruvr.ru/print/92947532.html> 3.11.2012.

Economic interdependence is indisputable, which is stated by the fact that in the case of increase of tensions and occurrence of conflicts, all sides are losing (the example of Senkaku island shows that in only a few days of conflict with Japan, the number of Chinese tourists in Japan has been cut in half, so the flights towards the „Land of the Rising Sun“ were half empty). One of the projects of American strategists is also the attempt of including China in the ASEAN project, together with Japan and South Korea, in order to, on one hand, sooth potential tensions and conflicts in the region between „bitter rivals“, and on the other, by strong economic processes through the new organization (ASEAN+3), which would be controlled by America, it would come to balancing of the Chinese foreign policy (see the map in the picture no. 2)

Still, calculations in geopolitical and long-term strategy come down to different way of simple mathematical adding of range of political trade. Then geography, geomorphology and demography enter the scene, which means: space, resources, people, fuels and natural resources for which and around which the greatest battles are lead. A sort of war, invisible to an ordinary observer, has long been led between two greatest forces in the Pacific, China and America. The weapons are insufficiently weak *yuan* on one side, and insufficiently strong *dollar* on the other. In the currency showdown much more is at stake – in any case, in order to weaken the opponent. Pressure of America on China to reduce the value of yuan with the explanation of greater democracy and openness is only a cover for increasing American trade. Given the fact that China is withstanding such pressures, America resorts to a different scenario – under the excuse of potential bankruptcy and indebtedness of its economy, it is constantly impacting weakening of dollar and in such way are, by buying „the green banknote“ in enormous quantities, making Chinese to in such way also save their yuan and get a chance to make their „Chinese wonder“ still lasting, but also strengthen the American export. New economy and currency solution is still not visible, even though, not so long ago, at that time powerful euro was announced as a reserve world currency, and today is battling for survival (to a great extent due to the failure of stronger EU integrations, overflowing of financial crisis, that is, direct American influence, by which dollar continues surviving).

3. ECONOMY AND/OR CLASSICAL WAR?

Silent, invisible economy war in Pacific is the war between the holders of doctrines of neoliberalism and free market, embodied in the form of America and state capitalism, whose crest is embodied in China. Even though it seems unreal at first glance, the possibility of future military conflict of two nuclear powers which are

considerably preparing for it, and step by step are taking positions from which they will be making moves on the Asian-Pacific chess boards is looming.

All previous, all well as current military activities of America, such as transporting most of naval forces into the Pacific region, or setting up radars and missile shield in the territories of their allies, are being justified before China and the world simply as defending themselves and their partners from nuclear missiles of the enemy North Korea, who is lately sending stronger threats towards America and its allies in the region (there is a visible parallel regarding the settlement of missile defense shield in the Eastern Europe, that is, in Romania and Poland, and constant explanations to Russia that this is done in order to protect Europe from nuclear aspirations of Iran). On the other hand, the change in China's military doctrine, that is, building of powerful sea fleet, with the support of guided missiles and space program that might act on any spot of the planet, is justified only by potential protection of Chinese investments, since China has (as it explain its movements to the worried world), up until now, during its history always lead only defensive, at as such predominantly peaceful politics.

Pacific is not the only place and region of the world where Americans are „pressuring“ China. By using countries of Middle Asia, which are in the focus of world events (Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq), China, that is, its south-eastern border on which it (apart from separatist aspirations in other regions of the country, such as Taiwan and Tibet) is facing strong demands made by the Muslim minority – Uighurs, in order for them to secede the Xinjiang province and create the so-called „Great Turkmenistan“, is put under political and security pressure.

The pressure is parallel applied, apart from China, onto Russia too, given the region that connects them, in a manner that USA is entering the zone of its interests in the South-Eastern Asia, Caspian basin region and in the Caucasus. For now, Russia is successfully defending itself, among other things also through the CSTO military union – organization for agreement on the collective security, which is consisted of countries of Central Asia, minimalizing the impact America has through yonder Turkophone countries and nations that live on the territory of Russian federation. The even stronger factor of deterrence is, especially in the future, *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO) through which Russia and China are, as leading members of this organization, realizing their military, economy and political connectivity and, with the remaining four members of the union (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) are passivizing the impact of Muslim factor on their external and mutual borders.

Counting on newly associated full members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, such as India and Pakistan, we can conclude that in this part of the world has formed a serious military-political and economic bloc lead by China and Russia, as a counter-balance to American aspirations in the Pacific. Having in mind the combined military maneuvers SCO is conducting, it can be concluded that this union could easily transfer a part of its operative impacts to the Pacific, where China and Russia are sharing a mutual border and hold most of their military capacities. Such accumulation of most powerful armament in one place, where two sides and a lot of points are so close to one another, no matter the ascertainment, repeated many times, that China and USA are strategic partners and that their weapons are pointed towards other countries they see as enemies, they are still making the situation in the Pacific highly uncertain and they are showing that, specifically in this economically and military most powerful region of the world, apart from the traditionally unstable Middle East and Central Asia which is rich in fuels, nearer destiny of the human kind will be determined.

4. CONCLUSION

If Carl von Clausewitz believed that war is only a continuance of politics by other resources, and Heraclitus saw the same war as „the father of all thing“ and impeller of universal development after the state of a crisis, then the attitude of the previously mentioned geo-politician Mackinder that „*the one who owns Hartland (Eurasia), he rules the entire world*“ is also speaking for itself. The Russians have already almost completely lost the eastern part of „Hartland“, to be exact, the Eastern Europe, by not having enough strength and influence after the Cold war in order to keep it in their interest sphere, which was at the same time the biggest loss of the ex SSSR foreign policy. Only now the renewed and far more powerful Russia, with its union with China and with the help of its own resources, investments and wise policy, of which SCO is a part, is coming back to the world scene in the Central Asian region, and slowly in the Eastern Europe, and Russian activities for renewal of former positions in the Pacific region are also current.

In the Pacific region, unlike Central Asia, China is, from all the SCO member states in the region, most threatened by military presence of USA and its allies in the region, but also with concrete and powerful economies of the „Asian tigers“, united into ASEAN organization, with whom they are leading a great battle for market. Due to that, principal mutual support within the SCO is important to Russia and China, as well as the balance acquired in different interests they are having in Central Asia, that is, in the Pacific region. China is well aware of its economic

interdependence from Japan and USA, so it is, apart from raising the total external market trade, working on diversification of procurement of the much needed fuels and reduction of dependence on the Pacific direction through the SCO.

Through BRICs, China is strongly increasing its export into emerging countries, reducing in such way the total structure of its economic range which belongs to the USA and Japan, thereby, which is of greatest significance, still retaining its impressive growth. Americans, since they are aware of that, apart from supporting Chinese enemies in the region and strengthening both their own and their military presence, they are trying to „push in“ China into their own economic unions such as ASEAN, in order to increase its economic dependence from the USA and the coalition of countries which are under their control, by which they would reduce total Chinese influence. Hence the symbolic title of this paper: SCO vs. ASEAN.

We can conclude that China and Russia will be much more decisive in their stand in defense of their interests in the Pacific region even with readiness to use of much more stronger force than it was ever used in Central Asia, especially in defending Syria and Iran, in which the SCO is unobtrusively playing a very important role from the background. It is known that legitimate defense of interests in the military doctrine also includes preventive attacks by which the enemy (for whom we know that his goal is to overpower and defeat its opponent) is being attacked on time, and in such way his further growth and development is being prevented. Given the existing economic situation in the world, growing tensions, and even previously announced climate changes, we conflicts in this region are completely possible, even pretty certain, in the relatively near future. The time before us will be the best judge, and in the case of a conflict, bot allies and unions will be necessary.

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PACIFIK: ŠOS PROTIV ASEANA

Apstrakt

Integracioni i dezintegracioni procesi obeležavaju savremeni svet. Vojni savezi su kroz istoriju odigrali ključnu ulogu za opstanak najmoćnijih država koje su predvodile koalicije tokom dva svetska rata, odnoseći pobedu nad „silama mraka“, i na taj način određujući sudbinu planete na kojoj živimo. Raspadom SSSR-a i padom Berlinskog zida, s jedne strane, i tehnotroničnom revolucijom i „galopirajućom“ globalizacijom, s druge strane, svet se u poslednjih 25 godina značajno promenio. Svetska ekonomska kriza, praćena hegemonijom, imperijalnom politikom i vojnim intervencijama, dovela je danas do velikih socijalnih razlika i izvora nestabilnosti u mnogim delovima sveta, posebno izraženim u vidu terorizma i ekstremizma. To je uslovalo i stvaranje nekih novih saveza na regionalnom i globalnom planu, ovaj put ekonomsko-vojnih i to između velikih sila različitih ne samo religija, već i civilizacija i često suprotstavljenih interesa. Viši interes u vidu borbe za opstanak i zaštite sopstvenih pozicija ali u cilju ostvarivanje sopstvene doktrine razvoja u vojnom ili ekonomskom smislu (ili u oba) stvorio je i saveze poput ŠOS-a, odnosno Šangajske organizacije za saradnju i ASEANA-a, odnosno zajednice država jugoistočne Azije. S obzirom da su osnivači ovih saveza najmoćniji svetski igrači koji imaju potpuno suprotne pozicije koje se prelamaju, baš, u najdinamičnijem kraju sveta – Pacifiku, gde se zemlje koje čine ove saveze i nalaze, možemo zaključiti da će se savremeni međunarodni odnosi u regionu ogledati u njihovom međusobnom nadmetanju i sukobima u nametanju sopstvenih interesa.

Ključne reči : ASEAN, ŠOS, geopolitika, konflikti, savezi