

Abstract

This thesis examines the attitudes of the Philippines and Vietnam towards China's geopolitical activities in the South China Sea between 2013 and 2023. The thesis aims to analyse the attitudes of the Philippines and Vietnam with an emphasis on the official policy discourse of both countries. Through critical discursive and content analysis, the evolution of their attitudes and responses to Chinese activities in the region is examined. Drawing on the theoretical framework of geopolitics, specifically classical and critical geopolitics, the thesis places contemporary territorial disputes in historical context and explains the geo-economic and geostrategic significance of the South China Sea. The thesis results show that the attitudes of both the Philippines and Vietnam have evolved over the period 2013-2023. Both countries were highly critical of Chinese activities in the first half of the period under review and gradually shifted to a more conciliatory stance and sought dialogue with China. However, both countries continued to assert their claims and sovereignty over the disputed areas. The analysis also showed that the official political discourse of both countries reflected their efforts to maintain a balance between protecting their interests and maintaining good relations with China.

Keywords: South China Sea, China, Philippines, Vietnam, geopolitics