

# GEOPOLITICS OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ACTORS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

## **Abstract**

This bachelor thesis focuses on territorial disputes in the South China Sea as well as on the geopolitical conditions of such occurrence. The aim of the thesis is to answer the following research questions: Which contested terrains are the primary sources of tension in the area? Which factors can possibly cause a military conflict? And what are the reasons for increasing Chinese claims in the region? The method of systematic review of scholarly literature is used to collect the evidence and answer the research questions. Theoretical framework of the thesis is based on the disputes between classical and critical geopolitics. While the state-led hegemonic politics is usually based on the former approach, the critical geopolitics is especially useful for critical insight made by researcher. As the evidence shows, the most contested terrains in the South China Sea are Spratly and Paracel Islands, because the sovereignty upon them is claimed by most of the countries. Large reserves of energy resources can be found within the island's adjacent waters. These are required by China as well as other countries in the region in order to facilitate an economic growth. Since 2010, China, strengthened by its economic and military progress, has appointed the sea to be its national interest. Stubbornness and bigger assertiveness of China as well as increasing numbers of foreign armed forces in the sea increase the possibility that conflict could arise from a mere miscalculation of some country.

*Key words:* South China Sea, geopolitics, China, Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands