

# South China Sea: U.S. Plans For Asia-Pacific NATO Doomed To Failure

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*The CNAS [Center for a New American Security] study argued that the South China Sea is an “epicenter” in terms of globalization and geopolitics, and it will determine whether the US can preserve its dominant role in the Asia-Pacific region...As to how the US will maintain its control over the Asia-Pacific region through the South China Sea issue, the CNAS study suggested a US-led multilateral security mechanism to counter China’s growing power in the region. A new safety network would be formed with major players around China, such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia.*

Two conferences on the South China Sea issue were recently held in the capital cities of China and the US. The one in Beijing was the fourth round of senior official meetings between China and ASEAN countries on the implementation of the Declaration of Conduct (DOC). Meanwhile, the one in Washington was held by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) for the release of its strategic report titled “Cooperation from Strength: The United States, China and the South China Sea.” A close comparison of the two conferences reveals how future regional disputes could develop.

At the Beijing conference, senior officials from China and ASEAN countries not only exchanged opinions on the problems encountered during the implementation of the DOC, but were actually able to reach agreements on several key issues. This sent a signal that countries directly concerned with regional disputes want peace.

However the signal from Washington was mixed with some hostility. According to US media, some in the US appeared to be dissatisfied over disputes in the South China Sea easing up, hoping the White House could intervene at some point.

The CNAS study argued that the South China Sea is an “epicenter” in terms of globalization and geopolitics, and it will determine whether the US can preserve its dominant role in the Asia-Pacific region. Jonathan W. Greenert, the US Chief of Naval Operations, also stated during the conference that he will take certain elements from the report into military planning and believed the US Navy can still have a predominant influence in the West Pacific.

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These points clearly outline America's eagerness to force its own rule upon the South China Sea. Although accusing China of attempting to dominate the South China Sea, it is fairly obvious that the one who wants to rule the region is the US. One classic example is the recent US sanction on companies in China, Singapore and the UAE for what the US said is selling refined oil to Iran.

However, countries in the South China Sea region hold a different mindset. Their priorities have to do with economic development, which is the frame of the region's future. Although caught in disputes right now, none of them want their interests to become damaged. Thus they decided to talk and cooperate with China, since this will not only help solve the conflicts peacefully but also set up new rules that will help regional prosperity.

While the US is not directly involved in the regional disputes, it still has some interests in the South China Sea. But the US cannot force others to recognize them as the leader. It no longer has the power to play such an important role, nor do countries in the region need Uncle Sam's care. Any strategic attempt to form an alliance against China would be against the will of the countries in the region, and the last thing those countries want to do is pick a side between the US and China.

The two conferences held in Beijing and Washington also reflected the complexity of the South China Sea issue. The US will not easily give up its strategic advantage and will continue to stir the water. But it is certain these attempts will eventually sink the US in the region. Naval forces may be useful, but they will lose power in the long run. Only joint development is the rule in South China Sea. The longer it takes for the US to realize this, the sooner it will be excluded from this region.

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