

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

This chapter will provide a conclusion from the previous chapters. It will conclude the analysis of strategic rationale behind China's decision to reject the Hague tribunal ruling in the South China Sea case through the rational actor model of foreign policy decision-making theory.

The South China Sea is an area located in the western Pacific Ocean and surrounded by states such as China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and Indonesia. The area has been a contested waters by the surrounding countries due to its rich natural resources and strategic location for shipping lanes and military bases. Each countries claims a portion of the area and they are overlapping each other, with China as the biggest claimant and marks the territory with the "nine-dash line".

In 2013, the Philippines disputed a case over 'maritime entitlements' and the lawfulness of the Chinese activities in the South China Sea to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). The arbitration proposed by the Philippines is taking a basis on the 1982 UNCLOS. Both the Philippines and China have ratified and are the parties tied to the Convention. During the course of the arbitration, the proceedings are always met by the non-acceptance and non-participation from the China side. However, it did not stop the Tribunal to issue its final award on July 12, 2016, which was in favor of the Philippines. In response, China issued a statement that they reject the decision of the tribunal's ruling over the disputed South China Sea.

China's assertiveness in dealing with the arbitral tribunal ruling over the South China Sea case could be understood by looking at the dynamics of the contemporary China's foreign policy. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China is now moving away from its longstanding foreign policy strategy of 'Keeping a Low Profile' and progressing into 'Striving for Achievement'. With its new direction, China is becoming more confident and proactive in utilizing its growing power to put forward and protect its national interest. Furthermore, the contemporary China is now facing new challenges

in managing its foreign policy. Beijing feels the pressure to be more assertive to protect China's national interests, especially in its maritime territorial disputes with neighbouring countries, due to the sensitivities of national sovereignty, intensified competition over maritime resources and rising domestic public expectations sparked by China's expanding national strength.

To understand the dispute between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea, it is important to look at the history of claims in South China Sea by the two states. In the South China Sea, China claims territorial sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly Islands and maritime rights over related waters. To this day, the scope of China's claims to maritime rights or jurisdiction remains ambiguous due to several reasons. Meanwhile, the Philippine claims to sovereignty over the features known as Scarborough Shoal which becomes her main disputed area with China.

In this research, the writer is using rational actor model of foreign policy decision-making theory and the concept of national interests to analyze the strategic rationale behind China's decision to reject the Hague arbitral tribunal ruling in the South China Sea case. After analyzing the costs and benefits, it is found out that rejection is the most benefiting decision for China in the case of the Hague tribunal ruling over the South China Sea, and the reasons are 1) China can consolidate the China's Communist Party leadership by striving for more assertive policy in South China Sea to defend what has historically been the part of China's territory, 2) China can show that its military force is reliable to protect its territorial claim, and 3) China can maintain the ongoing claims on the disputed area in terms of economic and strategic potentials.