

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Relations between Japan and the Philippines has begun since Muromachi period of Japanese history, during this period Japanese merchants and traders had settled in Luzon. Especially in the suburb of Manila, Dilao, which was a *Nihonmachi*¹³ of 3,000 Japanese around the year 1600. After the World War II, United States grant The Philippines independence and The Philippines also take part as the signatory in the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan. The diplomatic relations between Japan and The Philippines re-established in 1956, when a war reparations agreement was concluded. Japanese companies and individual investors had begun to return to the Philippines by the end of the 1950s.

Relationship with China is the most important theme in Japan's foreign policy at the outset of the 21st century. For both countries, the relationship is one that interweaves "cooperation and coexistence" with "competition and friction." (Task Force on Foreign Relations for the Prime Minister, 2002). Japan argues that China's military buildup could pose a serious threat to Japan and other countries of the region and demands for transparency regards China's burgeoning military budget to lower the existing tension. The tension between China and Japan or also

¹³*Nihonmachi* is a term used to referring historical Japanese communities in Southeast and East Asia. The term has also been applied to several modern-day communities, though most of these are called simply "Japantown", in imitation of the common term "Chinatown".

known as Sino-Japanese rivalries currently has the greatest potential to trigger a major regional conflict (Castro, 2013)

President Aquino and PM Abe signed a joint declaration on “A Strengthened Strategic Partnership for Advancing the Shared Principles and Partnership and Goals for Peace, Security, and Growth in the Region and Beyond”, and agreed to enhance the strategic partnership between their countries on shared principles and goals. The areas of cooperation in the security realm includes the sharing of information on security environment and challenges; information exchange and policy coordination on respective security policies; collaboration on maritime matters; and humanitarian assistance; and most importantly, the terms regarding defense equipment and technology. The Philippines and Japan are currently exploring a strategic partnership to complement their respective bilateral alliances with the U.S. (Rodulfo-Veril, 2012).

Japan’s foreign policy towards Philippines to strengthen the strategic cooperation certainly based on several factor related towards its national interest, some of the main factors related to Japan towards the policy was to ensure Japan’s military security, and also its economic well-being. “Military Security” since Japan needs to contain the assertive actions made by China in both East and South China Sea region. While in East China Sea Japan could directly encounter China, in South China Sea, Japan needs to gain support and maintain strategic cooperation with claimants’ country in the South China Sea disputes. Considering the long story of relations and cooperation between Japan and The Philippines,

and since The Philippines were also a claimants country which also has strong stance against China in the disputes, Japan needs to maintain, and increase its supports toward Philippines through several cooperation policy, which increase the capabilities of Philippines to be able to match China's assertive actions in the South China Sea. Through multilateral and bilateral agreement, Japan tries to ensure its military security, from the merging threat from China in the near East China Sea, and also South China Sea.

The other factor is the "Economic Well-being"; South China Sea serve as the main route of Japan's energy imports from the Middle East and other country, which needs to pass South China Sea in order to reach Japan in the Eastern part of Asia. The abundant natural resource and potential hydrocarbon deposits in the area of South China Sea also become one of the consideration why Japan needs to involve in securing the South China Sea Region. Many of Japan's off-shore and on-shore oil production assets were located in the claimed area of China's 9-dashed line, thus China's assertiveness in South China Sea poses a significant threat towards Japan's economy. By supporting the countries that currently participating in the disputes with China, especially Philippines, Japan were actually securing its economy in indirect way, and also maintaining the already established economic cooperation between Japan and the Southeast Asia Countries.

Japan also chose to strengthen its cooperation with Philippines as its allies, and also engaging in a multilateral forum of countries in Southeast Asia, as an effort to balance and make alliance to contain the assertive actions of China in the

South China Sea and East China Sea. Since the growing military might of China proven to be a threat for Japan and several countries in South China Sea, Japan need to engage in a multilateral forum and also strengthen its bilateral cooperation with its allies in the region, especially with its long standing ally in the region, The Philippines