

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the discussions of background, research questions, research purposes, theoretical framework, hypothesis, research methodology, research range and system of writing.

#### A. BACKGROUND

China is a country with the largest population in the world. With its large population, it requires large of electrical energy in running the country's economy. Energy is something that must be fulfilled in human life in modern times. Until today the production of energy is dominantly derived from petroleum thus making its availability begins to decline over time. Because the nature cannot be renewed again, so now many people are turning to the other alternative energy that can be renewable.

China is the first state in Mekong regions which has the ability to take another potency for its self. It is known that China has the biggest population in the world not only in the late of 20<sup>th</sup> century but also nowadays. China needs alot of energy power for supplying its millions of populations activities. Since by using the nuclear energy is too risky for its populations, the hydro power energy becomes the best solution to overcome the energy crisis. Using clean

which supported China's government projects to satisfy the national energy. China is very lucky because it has the biggest water volume in Asia in which it can develop projects involving hydro energy in the southern region (Yunnan Province). This project is not only supported by the government but also people and big corporations in China that is China Huaneng Group. China Huaneng Group is the second largest corporation for energy in China. This corporation helps the government to build a dam in the South of China. The citizens also support their government by moving from the project area to the new safe area in the North. When the Manwan Dam was finished, the power produced is very admirable that is 1,750 MV. The project is not only helping China's government for supplying energy but also helping citizen, especially in South province for saving water in dry season for agriculture and daily needs in China.

China is one of the countries that is very aggressive in exploiting energy resources, especially hydropower. According to the World Dams Committee's Criteria, China has 22,000 dams or 45% of the world in total. In China, there are three major rivers that are potential for hydropower, such as the Yellow, the Yangtze and the Mekong River. China has managed to build the three gorgeous largest dams in the world. By exploiting the potential of

at kinds of these rivers, it is very helpful to meet the needs of Chinese

Since Manwan Dam is really successful, China Huaneng Group sees more potencies from Mekong River that encourage them to build 8 more dams. China Huaneng Group tried to seek hegemony in Mekong River, but the problem comes from states in lower Mekong River. Mekong River does not only belong to one state but it belongs to others countries such as Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Those countries are the states under Mekong River which need that river too. They need Mekong River for their society in economic, agriculture and transportation aspects. Mekong is ways of life, if the projects of China Huaneng Group continue, it will make extremely impacts for Lower Mekong. Several problems that will be happened are in the aspects of immigrations of fish, organics mineral, agriculture, dry season problem, rainy season problem and another environmental issue.

The immigrations of fish is very important for fishers. Fish have to immigrate for regeneration but dams make them cannot breed well. If the fish can't breed well, it will make the population of fish begin to extinct in Mekong River and many fishers in five countries lose their jobs in fishing. The big problem is not in how many people will lose their job, but how many people will find difficulty in obtaining food energy. Food welfare is a key point that should be the first priority than anything. It also affects the agriculture sector since Mekong River gives the water supply for rice fields

and plantations. Water is the most important part for agriculture. Mekong

River is not only supplying the water, but also bringing organic minerals for crop fertility. Without water and organic minerals from Mekong River, it will decrease the farm income. These things influence the Gross Domestic Product of the states.

Although it's good for China, it does not mean that it's good for lower Mekong as well actually, the dams save a lot of water for the needs of the state, but the problem is when in dry season the water do not distribute well like in other seasons. It also gave impact to the lower Mekong River which got less water because of it. The condition will be vice versa when rainy season is coming. The water will be too much and the dams's door have to be opened to avoid the water excess. It means that there will be the flood which can destroy everything behind the dam. Positive for China's economy does not mean positive for lower Mekong River economy too. This river is crossing national boundaries, which it means that the river not only belongs to China but also the other five countries.

Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam are countries that are very active in the plantation sector and agriculture. Especially for Thailand as the country with good food growth rate, obviously would needs water to irrigate its rice fields and plantation areas.

"The Mekong Delta of Vietnam is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world. The Mekong River fans out over an area of about 40,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and over the course of many millennia

has produced a region of fertile alluvial soils and constant flows of energy”<sup>1</sup>.

Thailand and Vietnam are the two biggest rice producers in the world (UNFAO, 2011). Both of them are ASEAN members in lower Mekong. Without the water supply the plant will not grow well, so that water becomes the vital thing on the food sector. The insufficient water will threaten the agricultural sector, its growth is the proof that the national food is also helped by the presence of the Mekong River. Not only meet the needs of protein and food, the Mekong also has a function as a means of transportation action from one region to another by using boat. The Mekong River has many positive effects for the daily needs of the people who live in the upstream to downstream of the river without considering the states. Mekong River is considered as the way of life for them. Along with population growth that has continued to improve since the end of World War II, the world needs are also increasing. Humans need a lot of things for daily life. In this case the Mekong certainly takes a very important role in the life of people in that region. From upstream to downstream of the river is wide enough variety of food and economic needs of the community.

In 1995, Mekong River Commission was established from four states under lower Mekong River which is aimed to solve problems. Mekong River Commission (MRC) has four member countries, namely: Laos, Thailand,

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<sup>1</sup> Mart a. Stewart and Peter a. Cooclanis (2011) advances in global change research: volume 45.

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Cambodia and Vietnam. The vision of MRC is having a world class standard, financially secure, achieving the vision of International River Basin Organization serving the Mekong countries to achieve the Basin Vision. The mission is to promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefits and the people's prosperity. Mekong River commission is a governmental organization that issued a policy based on the mutual agreement. Mekong River Commission supports the sustainable management and development of water and related resources. MRC has a goal to make equitable social welfare, be better in economy and energy sector. But over time China is getting more aggressive by building dams for its own interest. Although MRC is an organization that resolves the problem but China does not want to join it. China would prefer to negotiate bilaterally to resolve the problem on this issue. This is certainly very detrimental to the underlying states. Mekong River is not only the problem in the surrounding communities but also become political issues between countries for Southeast Asia and China.

China is under the pressure of many actors including society, mass media and NGO (environmental issue). This situation is also becoming hot topic in South-East Asia aside from the South China Sea issue. Mekong River has complicated problem like South China Sea issue. Both the South China Sea and Mekong River issues have the similarity such as there are 6 countries

involved and China is the big power from the ASEAN member

countries. This situation makes the Mekong River issue look like “Second South China Sea” issue. In one part, China-ASEAN relation is getting better but in another part, China has problems with several ASEAN members. Both of them are needed each other in economy sector, so China does not want to lose the trust of ASEAN as their partner. South China Sea problems are not finished yet but it has to face the Mekong River issue. It makes China has to solve this problem carefully without any hard power.

## B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Those explanations have referred to the basic question related to this study: “How is the strategy of China towards MRC Countries on Mekong River issues?”

## C. RESEARCH PURPOSES

1. To describe the process of conflict resolutions in Mekong River as the new potential power in Asia (China) and South East Asia.
2. To understand more about China’s rules of intervention to several ASEAN members.

3. To analyze the concept of International Relations directly to International

#### D. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand the phenomenon of China's strategy in controlling lower Mekong countries, the writer has to use some theories or concept which are relevant to the issues. In this case, the writer will use asymmetry negotiation as the tactic and strategy, and power relations to capture the phenomenon of China's strategy.

##### a. Strategy and Tactic

Asymmetry negotiation is the strategy and tactic in diplomatic actions. In Conventional View

“Strategy is the highest level of an initiative and defines the overall direction for the organization to achieve a goal. Tactics are (lower) details in an initiative and define all the decisions/actions to deploy resources to implement the strategy”<sup>2</sup>.

In theory of constraints however, the view of the strategy is a simple the answer to the question: “What for?” what is the objective of a proposed change to achieve a higher goal. Tactic is simply the answer to the question of “How to?” the specific decisions or actions are needed to achieve the objective of this change.

##### b. Asymmetric Negotiation

Basically, asymmetry negotiation is the opposite of symmetry negotiation. If symmetry negotiation consists of actors who have equal or similar in power, asymmetry is a relation which is based on unequal

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Allen (2 June 2012) in TOCICO Conference



power. In other world asymmetry negotiation has characteristic as its different power distribution between one to another.

In symmetry negotiation actor A has the capability in power equally to actor B. So, in this case both of them may have influenced each other. It is different from asymmetry negotiation which actor A has the stronger capability in power than actor B. Actor A has the ability to change or control actor B, but actor B cannot change or even interfere actor A. This thing is a clear explanation because actor A is bigger than actor B in power. In other words actor B is very depending on actor A, but vice versa that actor A is not depending on actor B.

Asymmetry negotiation could be described as the influence of bigger force to the small one, the large to the small, the strong to weak even the rich to the poor. Asymmetry relation is the imbalance to between one to another in talking about some deals. So, something is that always happening in this case is actor A against actor B in their own interest.

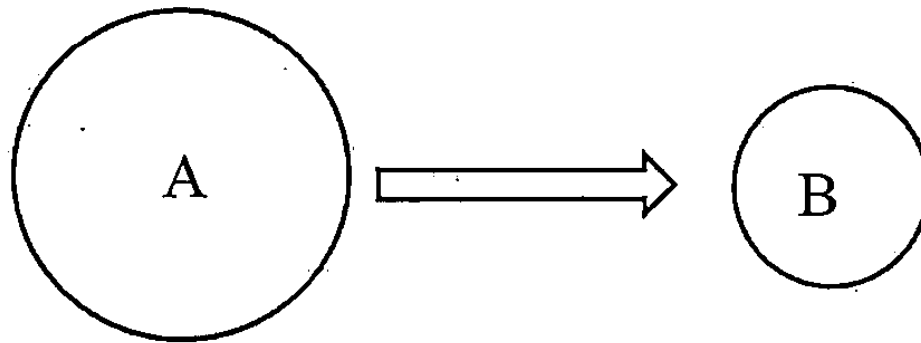
The perspective of symmetry or asymmetry can be found in different forms and in all four stages<sup>3</sup>:

1. The structural relationship between the negotiators on both sides evaluated in terms of strong or weak, rich or poor, as perceived by the negotiating parties.
2. The process of negotiation itself that shows the behavior of the negotiators in their dealings with each other by making use of different negotiation instruments.
3. Third party intervention.
4. The outcome of the negotiation process.

The actor in a negotiation is group or individual as representation. The group here, can be a state, corporations, political party, MNC and even everyone who wants to get what they want. In negotiations, the issues that will be discussed might be varied. It can be economy, security, social and other subject to make deal as a final decision. Diplomacy has a different type, depends on how many representatives involving there. Diplomacy which exists from two representatives can be called as bilateral, while more than three representatives can be mentioned multilateral and unilateral.

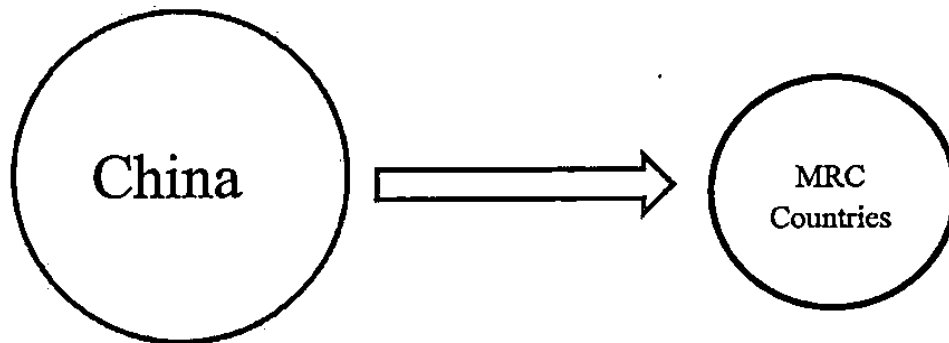
In this undergraduate thesis, the writer analyzed the kind of diplomacy of China towards Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam as an object of dispute. Not only this, but China also has to do its action of

Picture 1.1 Power Relations



If the theory is implemented into the Mekong issue the above model would turn out to be like this.

Picture 1.2 China-MRC Power Relations



It is because China has a greater power compared with MRC countries. The above power indicator is taken from national power.

National power is the potential which is owned by a country that can be

According to Hans J. Morgenthau in his book *Politics Among Nations* says that the elements of national power consists of geography, natural resources, industry capability, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale, quality of diplomacy and the quality of governance. From these characters we can divide it into two characteristics, the first one is tangible and the second is intangible. Tangibles courses are geography, natural resources, industry capability, military readiness and population. While Intangibles are national character, national morale, quality of diplomacy and the quality of governance.

From the above creteria we can see that China has a vast geography, a lot of natural resources, the strongest military power in Asia, and the biggest number of population in the world so that the "Global Fire Power" put China as the third country which has the strongest power in the world after the USA and Russia. On the other hand, members of the MRC are only small countries which are classified as developing countries.

#### E. HYPOTHESIS

The strategy of China's policy towards MRC countries on Mekong River issues is "multilateral and bilateral relation by using asymmetric

## F. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis used a qualitative approach. The data are collected from library research, internet media, news in television, activist documentaries of Mekong River.

## G. RESEARCH RANGE

This undergraduate thesis is focusing on China's strategy in Mekong issue. The actors are China and Lower Mekong countries which are the members of MRC. Although Myanmar belongs to the Lower Mekong countries but Myanmar is outside the MRC countries. So, Myanmar is not being explained in this undergraduate thesis. The writer also limited the time during 1995 to May 2014. So, the writer explained about the process of Mekong River becoming South East Asia hot topic in 1995 and finally the issue was peter out. Although the writer used the time range but other important thing before or during that time would be considered by the writer.

## H. THE SYSTEM OF WRITING

The outline of this research is described as follows:

Chapter I explains about the background, research questions, research

theoretical framework, hypothesis, research methodology, research

Chapter II discusses The People's Republic of China's foreign policy towards Mekong River Commission. It covers the China's foreign policy meaning, Indochina state, China-Indochina relations and China's policy in economy, political security, bilateral relations and multilateral relations.

Chapter III explains Mekong River dispute, Mekong as the potential power in Yunnan province, lower Mekong problems, demonstration and Mekong River Commission.

Chapter IV discusses China's strategy in Mekong River as potential natural resources, promoting potential power and investment to Lower Mekong, China's strategy in bilateral and multilateral

Chapter V is the conclusion from all chapters and also the research