

ASEAN AND ROLE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A Case Study of the Conflict between Thailand and Cambodia in the Area Surrounding the Preah Vihear

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Abstract

The purpose of this PhD research project is to conduct a study of the regional and international dimensions of the dispute of the Preah Vihear, as the temple known as Preah Vihear internationally. However, its Thai name is Prasat Phra Vihan [ปราสาทพระวิหาร]. The main focus of the research will be on the role of ASEAN in conflict resolution, using the dispute over the contested area surrounding the Preah Vihear temple as a case in point. Until present, ASEAN has refrained from interfering in the internal affairs of its members and bilateral conflicts among individual member states. However, the strict principle of non-interference has been softened in recent years. In spring 2011, when the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia escalated into an armed confrontation, Indonesia which had the chairmanship of ASEAN at that time played a very constructive mediating role in establishing a demilitarized zone in the Preah Vihear area which led to a calming down of the conflict, at least temporarily. The study will focus on the following key questions: Will a solution be reached only by bilateral negotiations or through the United Nations or can the road to peace be based on the direct involvement of ASEAN to “integrate” the temple, the symbol of contested visions of national integrity and sovereignty, into a wider framework of regional cooperation?

The research follows an interdisciplinary approach utilizing historical and political science methods. It is planned to consult the rich body of written material from Thai, French, Cambodian, and international (i.e., UNESCO/Paris, ASEAN/Jakarta) archives. I will also make use of Thai and Cambodian secondary literature as well as qualitative interviews with political decision-makers and local actors (NGOs, local social networks in Thailand and Cambodia).

Key words:

ASEAN, Conflict, Conflict Resolution, PreahVihear, Regional Cooperation

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