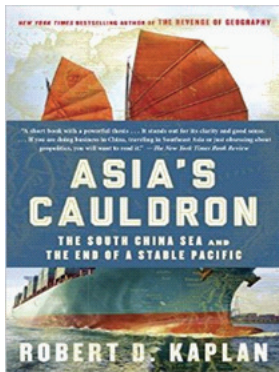


BOOK REVIEW

Asia's Cauldron – the South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific

Reviewer : Boy Al Idrus
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Author : Robert D. Kaplan
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Globalization push the pressures of development towards countries in this modern time. Economic and political activities are merged into division of interest that interlinked between a lot of countries. To no one surprise, the manifestation of this issue may lead into a translation of authority especially when it directly contributes to country's empowerment. We witnessed the fight in World War I and II, the competition through industrial revolution, the insecurities in cold war era and many more, in which most of these activities exposed the will of country to establish their better projection as a country. This is where South China Sea become one the dispute strangling around the previous narratives. In his new book, Robert D. Kaplan tries to digest the hot conflicts in South China Sea through "Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and The End of A Stable Pacific. Kaplan is no stranger to geographical-conflict book proven by his other amazing works through *The Revenge of Geography* and *The Coming Anarchy*.

South China Sea is nothing but a promising future for all the linked countries. Its location draws the centrality of transportation connecting

global trades from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and China to potential market below the axis of southern areas. In addition to its centrality, South China Sea has proven oil reserves on seven billion barrels, and an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. China, Taiwan, numbers of ASEAN countries including Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and might be potentially others to come, understand how significant the role and the contents of South China Sea to their political and economic power. Through the different chapters, Kaplan provides an analysis of each country with their different interest and need.

Kaplan initially explains the nature of history that emerged in creating possession of each country to the ownership of South China Sea. This explanation ranges from the analysis of Western acquisition, European past conflicts and any other relations coming from those past tragedies that contribute to the present situation of East Asian Countries and China. China, however, as the uprising economic power that might also be dependant to East Asian Countries, is not showing slower moves to their expansion of military and political power. China learn how their past hegemony was destroyed by their inability of military and political power in global stage therefore they maintain that avenue to overcome their threats in South China Sea.

East Asian Countries, on the contrary, are not that well equipped with military and political power. Most of the East Asian Countries are struggling to find the balance of their economic development and political stability. However, the raising conflicts do push the East Asian Countries to invest more on military segmentation proven by increasing numbers of military equipment by a lot of East Asian Countries. East Asian Countries realize that those investment on military is still not enough to compete against China, therefore one of the exit mechanism East Asian Countries depending upon is United States of America's power to balance the dominance of China. The next question this book tries to answer would later be how strong and capable is United States to balance the power of China. This book tries to bridge the beginning of where South China Sea initially started and also showing where that conflict may lead into to realm of stability of Pacific countries.

Kaplan is a good story teller, this book is compiled with his unique point of views in regards to history, direct interviews with the impor-

tant figures of those related to South China Sea conflicts and powerful emerging facts, yet he truly is able to manifest these contents with intriguing and interesting narrative. With only 200+ pages to read, this book is a must read for those who want to understand the conflict in South China Sea in a much simpler ways.