

The U.S. Smart Power in Southeast Asia: More Hard or Soft Power?

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Abstract

This study was conducted to identify strategic approaches employed by the United States, under the Obama Administration, to re-engage Southeast Asia. A documentary analysis was used as the main research method and data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The findings reveal that the U.S. foreign policy, under the leadership of President Obama, contains both the continued initiatives from the Bush administration as well as the new elements. Even though, the United States has claimed to pursue a new and softer strategy to reengage the Southeast Asian states, its roles tend to be confined in security realm, which was predominantly dominated by the use of hard power. It is evident that the cornerstone of the U.S. foreign policy remains unchanged. Moreover, there is still a considerably wide gap between hard power and soft power resources allocated to the region.