

Indonesian National Interest in South China Sea Conflict Settlement

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ABSTRACT

The issue of the South China Sea conflict as part of the political constellation of the Asia Pacific region has been going on for decades, but until now it has not been resolved even though various settlement efforts have been made by the disputing parties. Although Indonesia is not part of a country that claims territory in the South China Sea (non-claimante state), Indonesia has an interest in efforts to resolve the South China Sea conflict. The purpose of the study is to analyze Indonesia's national interest in efforts to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea. This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques using literature study. The results of the study indicate that Indonesia's national interests in efforts to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea are: Securing national territorial integrity, Securing Economic Resources and protecting the safety of citizens.

Keywords – National Interest; South China Sea; Conflict Settlement

INTRODUCTION

The development of the strategic environment at the global and regional levels is increasingly dynamic and complex, giving rise to various threats and opportunities for Indonesia's national interests. At the global level, world geopolitics is still faced with power competition from big countries. The trade war between the United States and China as a form of economic competition has a negative impact on the global economy (1). The trade war had caused the world economy to decline (2). Likewise, global political and security developments such as the war between Russia and Ukraine further worsen global security stability and affect Indonesia's national interests. Meanwhile, at the regional level, in the Asian region there are threats that can trigger regional instability, namely the South China Sea conflict.

According to Nainggolan et al. (2013) there are three main reasons why countries are involved in the South China Sea conflict. First, the South China Sea has a very large potential of natural resources, including oil and gas content, biodiversity and fisheries as

well as other marine resources. Second, the South China Sea is an area of waters that is a crossing route for international ship shipping activities, especially cross-sea trade routes that connect European, American and Asian trade routes. Third, the rapid economic growth in Asia. The Asian Development Bank in a 2011 report entitled *Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century*, calculated that by 2050 half of the world's economy will be in the Asian region. This rapid economic increase will be driven by China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand (4). This has begun to be seen now, where when the world economy was decline due to the impact of the trade war between China and the US, several ASEAN member countries actually experienced an economic increase. The US has begun to divert investment to ASEAN, as well as China, which is increasing its cooperation with ASEAN through its Belt Road Initiative / BRI (2).

Many efforts to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea have been carried out to resolve the dispute by ASEAN, starting from the ASEAN Summit, Special Forums that bring together disputing countries in it, to claims to the International Court of Justice by the disputing countries. However, until now these efforts have not found common ground and results that are agreed upon by all parties to the dispute. In fact, the situation escalated after the formation of a trilateral security pact by Australia, United Kingdom and the United States (AUKUS) on September 15, 2015 as part of a minilateral-driven synergy aimed at strengthening the "longstanding and sustainable bilateral relationship" owned by these three countries (5). China considers AUKUS to be seriously undermining regional peace and stability, and jeopardizing efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This phenomenon can trigger a bigger armed conflict.

Although Indonesia is not a country that is involved in the conflict over territorial claims in the South China Sea (Claimant State), but as a country that is part of ASEAN and has a direct border with the South China Sea, Indonesia participates in efforts to resolve conflicts that occur in the South China Sea. This effort is done by Indonesia in order to protect Indonesia's national interests. Based on the description above, the authors are interested in conducting research with the aim of analyzing Indonesia's national interests in efforts to resolve the South China Sea conflict.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Related to the approach used in this study, Kenneth D. Bailey (2007) defines descriptive research is a research that aims to provide an overview of a phenomenon in detail (to describe what happened). The data collection technique used is form a literature study. According to Creswell (7), a literature study is research conducted by examining qualitative documents such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, reports, and other documents relevant to the research. Based on the foregoing, the data collection in the research. This is done by reviewing and / or exploring several journals, books, and documents (either in the form of print or electronic) as well as other sources of data and/or information considered

relevant to the research or study. The data analysis technique used in this study consists of three steps, namely data collection, data presentation, and concluding/verification (8).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the South China Sea Conflict

The South China Sea has an area of 648,000 square miles or about 2.5 percent of the world's oceans as a whole. The South China Seabed consists of about 1 million sq km of continental shelf that is 200 meters deep and about 2 million sq km of seabed area deeper than 200 meters. The South China Sea is located in the Pacific Ocean which stretches along the Malacca Strait to the Taiwan Strait. The exact number of islands, coral reefs and coral reefs scattered in the South China Sea cannot be precisely identified because they are not always above sea level. The South China Sea area generally consists of several groups of islands, namely: the Pratas Islands Cluster, the Paracel Islands Cluster and the Sparty Islands Cluster and the Macclesfield Bank Coral Cluster. However, most of the islands in the South China Sea cannot be used as human habitation (9).

The conflict in the South China Sea is inseparable from two underlying reasons, namely: First, the South China Sea contains a very large source of natural wealth. The South China Sea has potential sources of mineral wealth such as cobalt, copper, tin, phosphate, nodules, manganese, gas, and oil (10). It is estimated that there are 11 billion barrels of untapped oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves in the waters of the South China Sea (11). The South China Sea is also one of the richest fishing areas in the world, the area holds at least 3,365 species of marine fish, 55 per cent of global marine fishing vessels operate in the South China Sea, and some 12 per cent of global fishing catches take place here. Moreover, for fringe states, fish is an extremely important source of nutrition, and fisheries employ at least 3.7 million people (12).

The second reason is that the South China Sea is a water area that is a crossing point for international shipping activities. The location of the South China Sea is very close to the Sea Lane of Communication (SLOC) which is the link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. More than half of the merchant ships from all over the world that pass through the Straits of Malacca, Sunda Strait and Lombok Strait continue their journey through the South China Sea. This area is always passed by various types of ships carrying energy sources, including oil, coal and natural gas, including 70 percent of Japan's energy needs and 65 percent of China's energy needs (13). In a regional scope, the South China Sea is a shipping lane for commercial ships and oil tankers connecting Korea, Japan, China and Russia to Southeast Asian countries. On the other hand, these waters also become shipping lanes for trade between Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. The South China Sea area is surrounded by several coastal countries, namely Taiwan, China, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam. In the north it is bordered by China and Taiwan, in the west by Vietnam, in the south by Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, and in the east by the Philippines (14).

The countries involved in claiming the territory (Claimant State) in the South China Sea are: First, the claim of Brunei Darussalam in the South China Sea. This claim is limited to the Exclusive Economic Zone area calculated from the southernmost reef in the Spratly Islands, however Brunei Darussalam makes no official claim to the Spratly Islands and does not claim the Paracel Islands. Second, China claims almost all of the South China Sea area with claims to the entire Spratly Islands and places its military forces in these islands. In 1974, China seized the Paracel islands from Vietnam and has maintained control over the islands to this day. China's claims in the South China Sea are based on the Exclusive Economic Zone, the principle of the continental shelf and historical records of the Han (110 CE) and Ming (1403 – 1433 CE) dynasties. China also claims the Pratas Islands. Third, Malaysia's claims in the South China Sea are limited to claims to determine the Exclusive Economic Zone and continental shelf boundaries and only claim 3 islands in the Spratlys. Efforts made by Malaysia to strengthen its claim on one of the islands it claims are by building tourism there and adding land to increase the height of the other islands. However, Malaysia makes no claim to the Paracel islands (15).

Fourth, the Philippines claims a significant portion of the South China Sea, by controlling 8 islands in the Spratly Islands. However, the Philippines does not claim the Paracel islands. The Philippines' claim is based on the Exclusive Economic Zone and continental shelf boundaries as well as a Philippine exploratory expedition in 1956. Fifth, Taiwan claims almost all of the South China Sea, claiming all of the islands in the Spratlys and Paracels on the same basis as claims made by China. Taiwan also claims the Pratas Islands. Sixth, Vietnam claims almost all of the South China Sea based on the Exclusive Economic Zone and its continental shelf boundaries. Vietnam claims the Spratly Islands and inhabits 20 islands in the archipelago. Although China had seized the Paracels from Vietnam in 1974, Vietnam still claims the Paracel islands. Vietnam also claims the Gulf of Thailand based on its Exclusive Economic Zone and continental shelf boundaries (16).

Currently, the conflict in the South China Sea is heating up in line with the establishment of AUKUS, an alliance of three countries consisting of Australia, Britain and the United States on September 15, 2021 (17). This is because China considers that the establishment of AUKUS will seriously damage regional peace and stability, and jeopardize efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. So that the US and UK steps to export nuclear technology to Australia will damage the bilateral relations owned by Australia and China (18). Many parties claim that the tension between AUKUS and China has the potential to become an arm race with the potential to continue to grow, which could lead to the second edition of the cold war, especially because of the possession of nuclear weapons by both parties. Indonesia needs to respond to this as a warning signal to the prospects for security in the Indo-Pacific region, because the presence of China and the US as the two "big players" in the Indo-Pacific region will create satellite countries called proxies (19).

Efforts to Settle the South China Sea Conflict

Many efforts have been made to resolve disputes in the South China Sea for the sake of resolving these disputes by ASEAN. The efforts that have been carried out are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Efforts to Settle the South China Sea Dispute

No	Effort Made	Substance	Results
1.	ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea 1992	This declaration is a form of ASEAN solidarity, with a constructive approach to conflict resolution	Unable to resolve the dispute
2.	ASEAN Summit	Welcoming the signing of the DOC and looking forward to establishing a COC	Unable to resolve the dispute
3.	ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)	Encouraging mutual trust, through transparency and preventing possible tensions and conflicts in the Asia Pacific region	Unable to resolve the dispute
4.	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting	44th AMM held in Bali 19 July 2011, The importance of South China Sea peace and stability. Peaceful settlement of disputes according to international law	Unable to resolve the dispute
5.	Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, 2002	Political documents that do not have binding legal force where the parties involved in the dispute violate the existing agreement there are no sanctions that can be applied to the violators	Unable to resolve the dispute
6.	Philippines' lawsuit against China to the International Court of Justice	China's claim to the territorial waters is not in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, so it should be declared invalid	Unable to resolve the dispute
7.	Code of Conduct in the South China Sea	COC is an implementation of the DOC, COC is prepared as a document that regulates the behavior of countries in the South China Sea region	Formulation Stage

Source : (20)

Based on the table, it can be seen that various efforts have been made, especially by ASEAN. However, there has been no agreement on a resolution so that the conflict is still ongoing. Indonesia, as a country located in the ASEAN region and has a direct border with the South China Sea, also participates in trying to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea, even though Indonesia itself is not a conflicted country. In the South China Sea Conflict, Indonesia is not a claimant state and Indonesia carries out policies externally and

internally in order to create a peaceful regional situation and each of them can exercise self-restraint (21). The efforts that have been made by Indonesia in resolving conflicts in the South China Sea include: Indonesia pays great attention to the development of efforts to resolve regional disputes. Indonesia has paid attention by starting from holding a workshop to discuss efforts to manage potential conflicts in the South China Sea, Workshop on Managing Conflict on The South China Sea, since 1990. This workshop on Managing Conflict on the South China Sea was held even before ASEAN expressed concern about disputes in the South China Sea. Then, Indonesia's other concern was Indonesia's courage to issue a Zero Draft Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (Zero Draft COC) which was then officially accepted as the basic draft of the COC. Talks to establish a COC have started since the Workshop on Managing Conflict on The South China Sea was held. But Indonesia did not state it directly. Hasjim Djalal conveyed it implicitly in the opening speech of the Workshop on Managing Conflict on the South China Sea in 1990. Until finally the COC discussion was back at the 29th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in 1996 (22).

Indonesia's National Interest in Efforts to Settle the South China Sea Conflict

National interests can be define as economic development, security, and status. Here economic development refers to the economic and social well-being of the people. Security stands for the physical survival of the state, including the preservation of territory and sovereignty, the protection of the people's lives. Analysis of security will mainly focus on the traditional military and strategic dimension. Status is state's reputation and ranking in the larger states' community (23). The national interest is a sign of objective existence, which is based on the specific geographical location of the state, economic, political and cultural development, as well as some other particular features of human nature (24). Thus, the "national interest" is manifested in practice as a result of the solid foundation of the state's international policy and the sense of responsibility by the state leaders. The national interest is radically different from the social interest, the concept of "national interest" refers to the foreign policy of the state. The concept of social interest is used to enhance and protect humanism against internal conflicts. The foreign policy of a government is reflected in the actions of its leader, who has a certain degree of freedom in setting goals.

National interest has a fairly close relationship with the actualization of the power or power possessed by a country to achieve its goals (25). National interest is not just a theory or abstract concept because it plays an important role in the real process of implementing foreign policy (26). According to V.V.Mejuev (24), the convenience of the policy of national interest implies: reflecting the public opinion on the role of political and economic elites in the country, responding to the cultural traditions of the country, which gives an idea of its place in world history in political, religious and other forms, improving the military strategic position of the state, seeking for enhancing its socio-economic position.

Indonesia carries out a free-active foreign policy based on the ideology of Pancasila and the constitutional basis of the 1945 Constitution which is the highest legal basis for the

Indonesian state. Pancasila as the basis of Indonesian ideology that reflects the values contained in Pancasila as a guideline for Indonesia in fighting for its national interests in international relations. Meanwhile, Indonesia's national interest in general has been stated in the 1945 Constitution. In the constitution, Indonesia's national interests are as follows: protecting the entire Indonesian nation and all of its blood spilled; promote the general welfare; the intellectual life of the nation; and participate in carrying out world order based on independence, eternal peace and social justice. In detail, Indonesia's national interest is stated in Presidential Regulation Number 8 of 2021 concerning the general policy of state defense for 2020-2024. There it is explained that Indonesia's national interests include: Securing the integrity of the national territory; Securing Economic Resources; protecting the safety of citizens.

Indonesia, which is registered as a co-signator of the 1982 UNCLOS, has an important role in resolving the South China Sea conflict. Responding to the case of the South China Sea dispute, which allows Indonesia itself to be involved in a dispute in the South China Sea area because China's nine dash line claims to the South China Sea are included in the Indonesian territorial sea, more precisely in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Indonesia, can potentially make Indonesia a countries involved in the dispute. Even though in the South China Sea conflict, Indonesia is not a non-claimant state, but Indonesia is also involved by carrying out external and internal policies in order to create a peaceful regional situation and each of them can exercise self-restraint (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015). Indonesia's involvement in this conflict is based on the national interest to participate in the maintenance of world peace and awareness of the benefits of resolving the conflict (28). This is in accordance with the constitutional mandate, that one of the ideals of the Indonesian nation as stated in the 1945 Constitution is to contribute to world peace.

Indonesia's national interest in resolving the South China Sea conflict includes several aspects, namely: first, securing the integrity of the national territory. Indonesia has an interest in participating in efforts to resolve the South China Sea conflict because the geographical location of Indonesia's territory is directly adjacent to the South China Sea, namely the North Natuna Sea and also borders the disputing countries so that the impact can threaten the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Second, securing economic resources, the South China Sea Conflict affects the country's economy because the region is one of the international economic routes, where Indonesia's exports and imports pass through this route. In addition, Indonesia needs to secure the North Natuna Sea which is directly adjacent to the South China Sea, where the North Natuna Sea has natural resources in the form of oil and gas, as well as abundant fisheries resources. Third, protect the safety of citizens, by participating in efforts to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea, the possibility of war between disputing countries can be avoided, so that the safety of Indonesian citizens can be created by the state.

The implication of the findings of this study is that the results of this study can be a reference for the government to continue to seek the resolution of the South China Sea

conflict, considering that Indonesia's national interests must be guaranteed by the government by resolving the South China Sea conflict. Moreover, in 2023 Indonesia will become the chairman of ASEAN(29), this will be the right moment for Indonesia to lead efforts to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea to ensure Indonesia's national interests.

The limitation of this research is that this research only discusses findings related to Indonesia's national interest in efforts to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea, but does not propose concrete steps that must be taken by the Indonesian government to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea in order to ensure Indonesia's national interests. It is hoped that future researchers can explore this matter.

CONCLUSION

The conflict in the South China Sea is a territorial claim dispute between China and several ASEAN countries, including: Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, and Vietnam. Various efforts have been made to resolve the South China Sea conflict, ranging from holding the ASEAN Summit, Special Forums that bring together disputing countries therein, to a lawsuit to the International Court of Justice by the disputing country, but these efforts have not succeeded until now. At the moment, Indonesia as an ASEAN member has an interest in participating in efforts to resolve conflicts in the South China Sea. Although Indonesia is not a claimant state, Indonesia has an interest in participating in efforts to resolve conflicts in the area. As for Indonesia's national interests in efforts to resolve the South China Sea conflict, namely: Securing the integrity of the national territory; Securing Economic Resources; Protecting the safety of citizens.

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