

The Role of Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy in Realizing the Optimal Code of Conduct in Order to Reduce the Widespread Conflict in the South China Sea Region

Widiyanto^{1*}, Syaiful Anwar², Agung Risdhianto³

The Republic of Indonesia Defense University

Corresponding Author: Widiyanto widi93@yahoo.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: South China Sea Conflict, Defense Diplomacy, South China Sea Code of Conduct, South China Sea

Received : 07, December

Revised : 10, January

Accepted: 17, February

©2024Widiyanto,Anwar,Risdhianto:

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

In dealing with conflict in a region consisting of several countries, defense diplomacy is an important aspect in strengthening the region in facing threats from other countries, especially if the threat comes from a superpower, as happened in the South China Sea after China used claims. nine dash line which gives rise to the potential for conflict between countries, so for Indonesia, the role of Indonesian defense diplomacy is needed in realizing an optimal code of conduct in order to reduce the spread of conflict in the South China Sea, so referring to this background, this research aims to analyze how cooperation is implemented bilateral or multilateral defense with external forces to increase stability and balance of power in the region and the implementation of Indonesia's current defense diplomacy strategy to respond to conflicts in the South China Sea region. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis methods supported by interviews, literature studies, and observation as a method for tracking data and facts, where based on research results it is known that the proposal of several concepts to support the diplomacy strategy played by Indonesia is enough to have a significant domino effect on the Indo-Pacific region by focusing on the value of ASEAN centrality. Indonesia implements their national defense policy strategy by means of diplomacy and international cooperation which continues to be developed, implementing bilateral or multilateral defense cooperation with external powers to increase stability and balance of power in the region, one of which is implemented through the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), After going through several diplomatic processes and also negotiations on organizational dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Various diplomatic efforts that have been made by Indonesia and ASEAN countries in dealing with the dynamics of the SCS conflict issue, ideally will be able to create a conducive atmosphere in the region. In general, this defense diplomacy effort has succeeded in producing "*The declaration of conduct*" and "*The code of conduct*" as a means to overcome problems and issues in the SCS. This effort is not only carried out in internal forums of Asean countries, but also carried out with America and China which are known to have enormous interests in the region.

On the other hand, *the Declaration of Conduct* as a form of joint declaration of countries that have interests and problems in the SCS, can be considered as a form of confidence-building steps among several countries in Southeast Asia to build mutual trust between countries in facing the dynamics in the SCS. DOC then produced a code of ethics as a code of ethics in reducing tension and solutions in dealing with dynamics in the SCS.

However, the "Declaration of Conduct" and "Code of Conduct" resulting from various defense diplomacy, turned out to be only "tentative" in reducing potential in the SCS region. This is clearly not in accordance with the initial goal of achieving short-term and long-term solutions to problems in the SCS, In this case defense diplomacy carried out by Indonesia also tends to be cautious, so it is not focused on efforts to resolve potential conflicts in the region even China is increasingly aggressive over their ten *dash line* claims in the SCS.

Furthermore, in some cases, such as when Indonesia had to deal with several problems such as illegal fishing carried out by China, Indonesia was then faced with a "security dilemma" because the Chinese Coast Guard provoked the situation by guarding Chinese fishing vessels when they enter Indonesia's EEZ. Although Indonesia did not hesitate to deal with such provocations, without strong defense diplomacy, the presence of Indonesian military forces in the South China Sea would not be *an effective deterrent effect* for China or other countries that seek to violate the *code of conduct* in the South China Sea region.

The Code of Conduct in the South China Sea region itself is currently still one of the problems, especially with the involvement of the US, ASEAN countries that are members of the *Five Power Defence Arrangements* (FPDA) which have affiliations with the UK, will certainly have a different attitude from neutral ASEAN countries such as Indonesia. Paying attention to this, the aspect of defense diplomacy is one of the important things in building conduciveness in the South China Sea region.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Defense diplomacy is one of the important means for a country in maintaining its existence in a region, especially related to a conflict or potential conflict that arises, including Indonesia. During the administration of President Joko Widodo, Indonesia has begun to carry out its vision and mission in advancing Indonesia's maritime sector by becoming part of the world's maritime axis. To realize this vision and mission, Indonesia has actively strived to carry out comprehensive security and development in various border areas

as one of the entry routes for foreign fishermen who come to Indonesia (Pedrason, 2021).

In this regard, Indonesia also actively communicates the importance of security and defense in the South China Sea region with various countries that have disputes in this sea area (Hanifahturahmi, 2020). The Indonesian government affirmed to the international community that Indonesia has no dispute claims in the SCS and does not have overlapping jurisdiction with China. However, the SCS dispute began to "pull" Indonesia into its vortex because China was considered to "touch" Indonesia's national interests, especially in the North Natuna Sea region (Perwita, 2017).

Related to these national interests, Indonesia pays great attention to geopolitics and geostrategy in the SCS in order to make the right strategy in dealing with escalation in disputed areas. Several things have been done by Indonesia to apply a diplomatic approach in responding to the SCS dispute. For example, several diplomatic strategies have been carried out at that time namely; sending a protest note to the Chinese government, President Joko Widodo's first visit to Natuna and holding a limited cabinet meeting on board, launching a new version of the map of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) with the naming of the North Natuna Sea, carrying out efforts to increase economic activity in the Natuna region and also submitting a diplomatic note to the United Nations. Along with these efforts, Indonesia also demonstrated military force in North Natuna waters (Mahroza, 2022).

Related to the concept of defense diplomacy as explained by Cottey and Fortser (2004), Defense Diplomacy generally refers to diplomacy to build trust in the democratic development of the armed forces in the form of defense and military cooperation, provide assistance to democratic armed forces, and contribute as a foreign policy tool to meet national interests, prevention efforts and conflict resolution efforts (Cottey and Fortser, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods used by researchers using qualitative research Qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, and action, holistically, and by means of description in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods. Qualitative research is a research method used to examine the condition of natural objects (Moleong, 2012).

Qualitative approach is research used to examine the natural condition of objects, (as opposed to experiments where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are triangulated (combined), data analysis is inductive and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2015).

From the background of research, the author assumes that this research is more appropriate if using qualitative research as a method in conducting research, this is because qualitative research is research on research that is descriptive and tends to use analysis. Process and meaning (subject perspective) are more highlighted in qualitative research (Miles, 1992) the theoretical basis is

used as a guide so that the focus of research is in accordance with facts in the field. In addition, this theoretical foundation is also useful for providing a general overview of the research background and as material for discussion of research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Bilateral or Multilateral Defense Cooperation with External Powers to Enhance Stability and Balance of Power in the Region

Regional dynamics related to security and defense have consequences regarding the behavior of countries, especially those in Southeast Asia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has indeed provided a basis for the behavior of countries in it, one another and with external forces that emphasize cooperation and build mutual trust (Confidence Building Measurement), especially in the field of defense and security. This condition cannot be separated from the historical relations of conflicts owned by countries within the region itself, especially major countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. Indonesia has a long history as a major country in the region and is a counterweight to the security dynamics of the region.

Implementation of bilateral or multilateral defense cooperation with external powers to improve stability and balance of power in the region, one of which is implemented through the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). After going through several diplomatic processes and also negotiations on organizational dynamics, Indonesia's Indo-Pacific concept was approved by ASEAN. ASEAN adopted the concept so that it was named ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). AOIP was agreed on June 22, 2019 at the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok. With the AOIP agreement, it shows that Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in liberating a view is working. This is fairly important for Indonesia, because it has a central role to maintain stability, peace, and regional integrity.

As the initiator of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), Indonesia sees the importance of the Indo-Pacific approach to ASEAN from a defense perspective, especially on defense cooperation with ASEAN dialogue partners. The Deputy Secretary of Defense said that "The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) from a Defense Perspective, serves as a guideline for ASEAN in the field of defense cooperation. In addition, AOIP also aims to bridge the interests of countries in the Indo-Pacific region in maintaining security, peace, and prosperity with ASEAN's central and strategic role (Tunggul, 2021).

The ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) is an idea of the Indonesian government that is seen based on the potential in its regional region. Former Indonesian Foreign Minister, Marty Natalewaga, was the person who initiated AOIP for the first time in 2013 this concept which was then developed again in 2017. In 2018, at the ASEAN-India Summit, Mr. Joko Widodo delivered directly about the idea of AOIP in general. In the presentation of the concept proposed by Indonesia, the central organization in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions is ASEAN (Saragih, 2018). The ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) is technically Indonesia's defense diplomacy, especially on maritime defense.

AOIP is a forum or platform that accommodates inclusive cooperation and becomes a defense strategy.

The concept of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) initiated by Indonesia is a common thread in seeing how security cooperation can be carried out. The implementation of defense diplomacy includes defense strategies in the field of cooperation, military and non-military defense strategies and maritime defense strategies (Usman, 2022). Defense diplomacy for confidence building measures (CBMs), Defense diplomacy for defense capabilities, Defense diplomacy for defense industry are characteristic components in the realization of defense diplomacy (Syawfi, 2009). Indonesia as one of the countries considered in the Indo-Pacific region tips on conducting diplomatic affairs with emphasis on the concept of "an Indo-Pacific Framework for Mutually Beneficial Cooperation".

This method of emphasis on this concept is one of the ways that Indonesia makes their defense diplomacy. The idea was made with the aim of building a regional system with mutual trust between countries in the region (Confidence Building) and growing (habit of Dialogue). As explained in the concept above, in realizing defense diplomacy there are several components in it. Thus, one of the establishment of an Indo-Pacific Framework for Mutually Beneficial Cooperation" is included in Defense diplomacy for confidence building measures (CBMs).

This is done to minimize tensions that will occur between regional countries and reduce distrust with the development of transparency regarding the military development of each country, so that each other's countries can reduce security dilemmas, In realizing defense diplomacy there are several components in it, then one of the establishment of the Indo-Pacific Framework for Mutually Beneficial Cooperation, is carried out to minimize tensions that will occurs between regional countries and fosters distrust with the development of transparency regarding the military development of each country (Sobarini, 2021).

As the initiator of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), Indonesia sees the importance of the Indo-Pacific approach to ASEAN from a defense perspective, especially on defense cooperation with ASEAN dialogue partners, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) from a Defense Perspective, serves as a guideline for ASEAN in the field of defense cooperation.

The concept of Indonesia's Indo-Pacific security and defense forum is conceptually formed through ASEAN agreements. ASEAN adopted the concept so that it was named ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), with the agreement of AOIP this shows that Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in liberating a view is expected to succeed in creating conducive security conditions in the Southeast Asian region.

The Implementation of Indonesia's Current Defense Diplomacy Strategy Is Applied to Respond to Conflicts in the South China Sea Region

Indonesia's involvement in conflict management in the South China Sea is something based on the national interest to participate in the maintenance of world peace. When viewed from the principle of benefits, achieving a conflict resolution to the South China Sea issue is not only economically beneficial, but also political and security. The amount of economic potential is clearly seen in shipping lanes, natural content in the form of oil, gas and minerals and fish wealth. Therefore, conflict resolution has very significant benefits not only for the people of the South China Sea, but also for Indonesia and the international community.

There are at least two things that Indonesia considers in this benefit principle. First, Indonesia must always be aware of the security situation in the South China Sea which is often disputed by several countries in the country. Second, Indonesia, which is part of the international community, feels the need and immediately determines the best way for solving the South China Sea problem, because, in this way, Indonesia can show its participation in maintaining world peace starting with creating peace at home and in the region.

Moving on from the principle of benefits above, then, the next step that must be put forward and it is time to do is a deepening of what is the source of the South China Sea conflict. Since, in reality, there is no single cause of conflict, it is necessary to search for the dominant cause of conflict. If we want to be traced or mapped (conflict mapping), in fact, the sources of conflict in the South China Sea are very diverse, starting from economic value then developing into historical demands between China, Taiwan and Vietnam in the Spratly islands dispute, followed by modern demands; For example, sovereignty on which all parties' claims are based.

With the various impacts of the above dispute dynamics, Indonesia then took the initiative to assist efforts to resolve South China Sea disputes. In addition to encouraging national interests in the framework of the country's defense system, Indonesia's serious efforts are also driven by moral motivation as a natural leader of ASEAN, considering that Indonesia also has a good record in solving various cases in the region. In addition, this effort can be said to be the only multilateral effort undertaken when the countries in dispute, especially China, are only willing to use a bilateral approach.

Then, one form of implementation of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy is currently applied to respond to conflicts in the South China Sea region, the next form of Indonesia's military diplomacy strategy is through Naval Diplomacy or naval diplomacy in the form of Coalition Building which can be done through efforts to make, develop and trade defense equipment with various countries, especially countries in the ASEAN region and also including countries in the world that make claims doubly (thus causing overlap) in the South China Sea region with the Indonesian state.

One of the cooperation in the defense sector in the form of defense industry development has received serious attention from strategic policy makers in Indonesia (Luerdi & Marisa, 2019). When viewed from the last few

years, Indonesia has established a form of collaboration in cooperative relations with various ASEAN countries including the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and Thailand as well as countries outside ASEAN in the development and sale of defense equipment which predominantly consists of various naval equipment.

So if referring to some of these descriptions, it can be interpreted that during President Jokowi's administration, Indonesia tended to use an active defensive-based defense strategy by prioritizing cooperation to deal with disputes in the outermost regions including small islands in Indonesia. The defense policy is known as defense support prosperity by placing the defense

sector and military operations on various small and outer islands in order to maintain state sovereignty and help maintain security for the implementation of various resource utilization activities as an effort to support the economy, as an internal strategy.

While externally strategized, the strategy carried out is to carry out multilateral cooperation with parties who have interests in the South China Sea region, One of the multilateral cooperation in solving the South China Sea problem can be done through multilateral cooperation both within the scope of international organizations and in the form of cooperation between countries that have an interest in this issue. One form of cooperation through international organizations is through ASEAN. ASEAN has a set of rules of the game in relations between countries in the Southeast Asian region which is often referred to as the ASEAN Way which then raises a code of conduct for parties to disputes in the region.

ASEAN Way is the norms attached to institutions by emphasizing the principle of non-intervention that respects the sovereignty of other countries and uses a consultative and consensus approach in the interaction of issue resolution in the region rather than the use of confrontational / violent means, In 2002, ASEAN and China successfully signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in South China Sea which is a declaration of Code of Conduct around the South China Sea region. Another forum is the discussion on the South China Sea carried out several times at the ASEAN Summit. Then this issue was also discussed through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Some of the multilateral cooperation is based on the fact that all ASEAN countries understand that the South China Sea issue is a tough touchstone in regional management, namely on how ASEAN manages conflict situations in the region by following the *Declaration of Conduct, in which* the Code of Conduct is agreed. The South China Sea Code of Conduct (CoC) is part of the management or management of dispute relief in the South China Sea and is not the primary solution to resolve issues in the disputed sea. Indonesia stated that the CoC was needed in the South China Sea which was then proven by Indonesia's courage to issue the *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.

So based on this description, Indonesia's involvement in conflict management in the South China Sea is something based on national interests to

participate in the maintenance of world peace, therefore, conflict resolution has very significant benefits not only for the people of the South China Sea, but also for Indonesia and the international community, which is related to regional security conduciveness in Southeast Asia.

One form of implementation of Indonesia's defense diplomacy strategy is currently applied to respond to conflicts in the South China Sea region, the next form of Indonesia's military diplomacy strategy is through Naval Diplomacy or naval diplomacy in the form of Coalition Building which can be done through efforts to make, develop and trade defense equipment with various countries, especially countries in the ASEAN region and also including countries in the world that make multiple claims (thus causing overlap) in the SCS area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposal of several concepts in supporting Indonesia's diplomatic strategy is enough to have a significant domino effect on the Indo-Pacific region by focusing on the value of ASEAN centrality. Indonesia implements their country's defense policy strategy by means of diplomacy and international cooperation that continues to be developed. This is supported by an active free foreign policy in which regional security management is more directed. Of course, with the complexity of threat problems in defense in the Indo-Pacific region, it is a challenge for Indonesia in implementing their defense diplomacy policy. Scanning analysis of a series of problems in the Indo-Pacific region was then responded by Indonesia by creating a strategic environment with all flashpoints caused while still relying on an active free foreign policy, especially in addressing its bilateral relations with the US and China.

Indonesia's interest in initiating the CoC is carried out as a goal so that the situation in the South China Sea can be controlled and anticipate potential conflicts that will occur. In fact, Indonesia has been ahead of ASEAN in responding to the situation in the South China Sea, so there needs to be other considerations that encourage Indonesia to take the decision which can be seen from the strategic potential of marine products and resources owned in the disputed area. So that based on the explanation in the discussion, it can be interpreted that the analysis of the implementation of the CoC (*Code of Conduct*) concept in its application.

Implementation of bilateral or multilateral defense cooperation with external powers to improve stability and balance of power in the region, one of which is implemented through the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), After going through several diplomatic processes and also negotiations on organizational dynamics, this condition cannot be separated from the historical relations of conflicts owned by countries in the region itself, especially big countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Indonesia has a long history as a major country in the region and is a counterweight to the security dynamics of the region.

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, several suggestions and recommendations can be given, including the following:

- a. Indonesia continues to promote dialogue and strengthen the military as an effort to reduce conflict in the SCS. These two important points are smart power diplomacy activities so that they can stop temporarily or can reduce the escalation of SCS conflicts. The implementation of these two things :
- b. Dialogue and negotiations : Indonesia's active participation in forums such as ADMM and ADMM-Plus, and improvement of CBM in the SCS.
- c. Strengthening the military : purchase and rejuvenation of defense equipment, bilateral and multilateral cooperation with ASEAN member states and externally, joint exercise with major powers or middle powers, personnel exchanges between the two countries.
- d. Indonesia must continue to prioritize ASEAN's commitment to centrality with the consideration that alignment will cause long-term internal conflicts for ASEAN. The Government of Indonesia should refer to the conflict resolution mechanism in the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) which has guidelines for resolving disputes peacefully in accordance with the principles of international law. The Indonesian government should also conduct a regular Workshop on Managing Potential Conflict in the South China Sea program in unifying perspectives between ASEAN countries with the aim of reducing the escalation of the conflict.

FURTHER STUDY

A Comparative Analysis of the Defense Diplomacy Strategies of Indonesia and Other Countries in the South China Sea Region: This research could compare Indonesia's defense diplomacy approach with other countries involved in conflicts in the South China Sea Region, such as China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia. The focus could be on the successes, challenges, and failures of each country in encouraging the implementation of the Code of Conduct and reducing conflict in the region.

REFERENCES

- Cottey, A and Foster, A (2004) *Reshaping Defence Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jemadu, Aleksius (2008). *Politik Global dalam Teori & Praktik*. Jakarta : Penerbit Graha Ilmu.
- Mahroza, Joni, Rajendra, Penny. Wibisono, Makarim (2022) "Indonesia's Vision As Global Maritime Fulcrum: A Geopolitical Strategy To Address Geopolitical Shifts In Indo-Pacific. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*
- Miles, M. (1992). *Analisis Data Kualitatif Buku Sumber Tentang Metode-metode Baru*. Jakarta: UI Press.
- Moleong, L. (2012). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif (edisi revisi)*, Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosda Karya.

- Pedrason, Rodon (2021) Indo-Pasifik dalam perspektif geopolitik dan geostrategi. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia*. Vol 7 No 1.
- Perwita, Anak Agung Banyu (2017) The Implementation Of Socialist Republic Of Vietnam's Defense Policy In Encountering People's Republic Of China's Strategic Position In The South China Sea Dispute, *Jurnal Politica Vol 8 No 1*.
- Saragih, Hendra Maujana (2018). Diplomasi Pertahanan Indonesia Dalam Konflik Laut Cina Selatan. *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Komunikasi universitas Nasional Vol 8 No 1*.
- Sobarini, Eryn. Fildzah, Suri Amalia dan Maharani, Nurmala, (2021). Diplomasi Pertahanan Malaysia di Laut Cina Selatan: Isu dan Tantangan. *Jurnal Diplomasi Pertahanan Vol 7 Nomor 2*.
- Sugiyono, (2015). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D, Bandung: Penerbitg Alfabeta.
- Tunggul, (2021). Strategi Membangun Pertahanan di Wilayah Perbatasan dalam Mengantisipasi Konflik Antar Negara di Perairan Natuna Utara. *Jurnal Strategi dan Kampanye Militer volume 1 nomor 1*.
- Usman, Vivi (2022) Implementasi Smart Maritime Diplomacy Indonesia dalam Penyelesaian Konflik Laut Cina Selatan. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional Universitas Hasanudin*.