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### AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONFLICT: INDONESIA'S PERSPECTIVES, CONTEXTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### ABSTRACT

The South China Sea have been discussing seriously. Historically, the conflict had started from the contested area between France and Japan, until the outcome Second World War-power vacuum. None of the international documents provides clarity of sovereignty in the South China Sea. China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam are those countries who have an overlapping territorial claim that are currently emerging are more due to economic, geostrategic, and domestic politics. As a non-claimant state, Indonesia has a role to facilitate and solving the conflict, because Indonesia's water, the North Natuna Sea, also has an area that is an incision on territorial claims. The alignment of ZEEI and the Nine-Dash Line has economic implications and regional defense setting. This article uses the qualitative analysis method to explore three purposes. First is to explore the historical, philosophy and legal-approach in discussing the background of the conflict. Second is to analyze the attitudes and perspectives of Indonesia's strategic position in the South China Sea. Third is to propose some possible recommendations that Indonesia needed to resolve SCS conflicts with the roles and actions required for international and regional purposes. Indonesia, as a non-claimant state, has a role of diplomacy as a mediator, honest broker, and confidence builder in the handling of the South China Sea conflict.

#### INTRODUCTION

This article purpose is to analyze the historical, philosophy and legal-approach in discussing the background of the SCS conflict. Second, this article aims to analyze

the attitudes and perspectives of Indonesia's strategic position in the South China Sea. Additionally, this article will also propose some possible recommendations that Indonesia needed to resolve SCS conflicts with the roles and actions required for international and regional purposes.

The South China Sea conflict is the one of the most serious discussions and most entangling about maritime claims in the region. Last year, the Philippine Government backed up Vietnam in the sunk of Vietnamese fishing vessel shot by a Chinese vessel at Reed Bank. International has also called deep concern over it and called on China to stay intensive on "stop exploiting the distraction or vulnerability of other states to expand its unlawful claims in the South China Sea. Nine-Dash Line had rejected as it was only based on the traditional fishing ground, and the arbitral tribunal 2016 did not admit when UNCLOS entered into force after ratified. The area is also hotly disputed because of its worthy natural resources, the place of transiting important shipping lanes and fishing grounds. Apart from the economic reasons to compete, historical, political and legal standings also drive the claimants.

There have been many perspectives and contexts came among the claimants or non-claimants' countries, such as Indonesia and US. Some agreements and talks have been conducted in order to ease and resolve the conflict peacefully. In this article, the author attempts to find out the perspectives and contexts from Indonesia's side. In the end, some recommendations are proposed to help increasing the role of Indonesia in the area of diplomacy in the region.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE CONFLICT**

The sea is vital for human life—the sea functions as a transportation, information, and trade route. The function of such a vast sea makes the sea as an element that has the same significant function in building international cooperation as well as being a source of international disputes. Three-quarters of the world's population lives in coastal areas. Likewise, 80% of big cities and almost all centers of international trade and military power centers are on the coast (Till, 2009: 226-231). The sea is a source of natural resources that are useful for humans, such as oil, gas, fish, minerals, and others. Oil is one of the strategic resources in a country's economy and industry. An increase in the industry has driven economic growth in general. The industrial sector uses the most energy from all forms of resources, both petroleum, natural gas, and coal that is used as a producer of electricity to drive industrial equipment.

The South China Sea is a broad area of serious discussion lately. Historically, before the formation of the nation-state in the Southeast Asian region, SCS clashes have occurred protracted. The local kingdom at that time seemed to have mapped out and seen the great potential in SCS. The political impetus gradually arose from the entity to take control of the SCS region, which at that time has already displayed the crowd of merchant ships. China's increasing need for oil and other energy sources has pushed the country to control the silk route, the South China Sea (SCS).

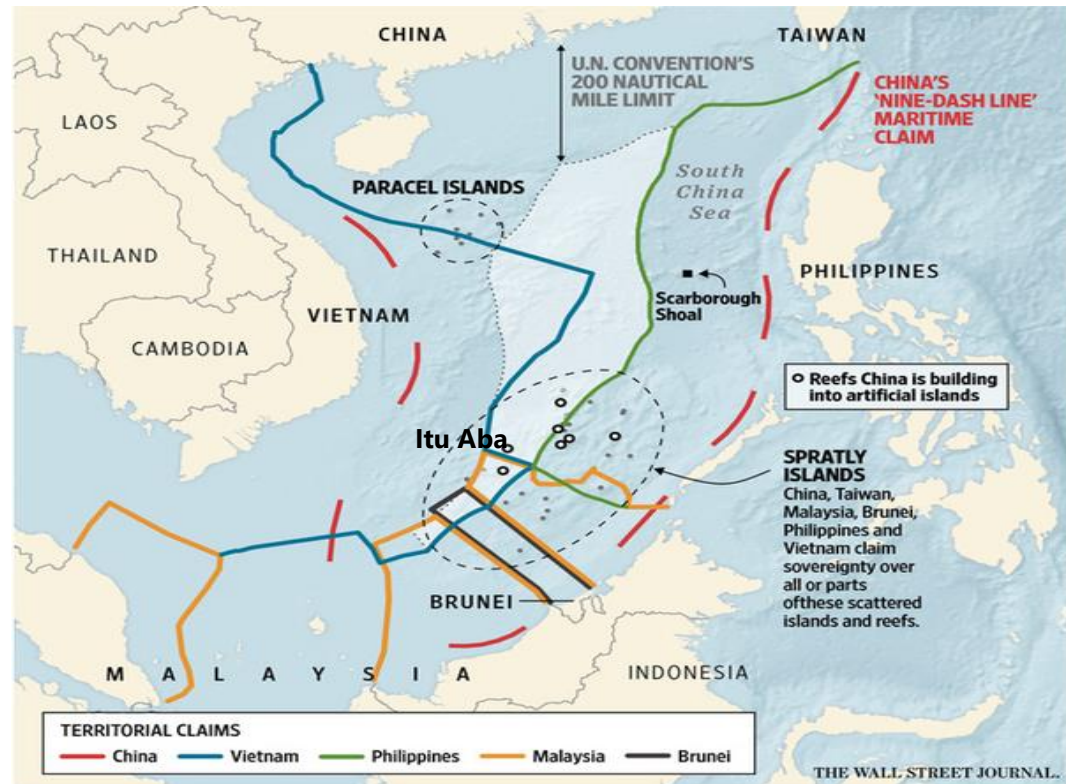
The Han Dynasty, for example, was one of the pivots of trade that saw this potential, especially the shipping lanes of goods and services. The intensity of the Han Dynasty also seems to trigger local actors around the SCS to be actively involved in the struggle for resources and potential SCS. For example, the Kingdom of Funan, the Kingdom of Angkor, the Kingdom of Srivijaya, the Kingdom of Ayutthaya, the Kingdom of Champa, and the Sultanate of Melaka (Tonnesson, 2001).

In their journey, these local actors took turns controlling SCS to take maximum advantage of the high trade flow through the region. In the 8th century until the 12th century, these kingdoms altogether influenced the SCS and other surrounding areas. However, from the 12th to the 15th centuries, Chinese fleets commanded by Admiral Cheng Ho dominated the SCS. Admiral Cheng Ho, who is a Muslim, in the end, helped enliven the symbols of Islam in the archipelago and beyond. The situation began to change when Western merchants began to arrive, such as those from Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Britain, France, supported by increasingly dominant military capabilities in the SCS that were previously controlled by Arab merchants. In the 17th century, the Netherlands was the most prevalent in the SCS region. Entering the 18th and 19th centuries, the dominance of European colonizers seemed to be increasingly declining. Nevertheless, Britain and France still survived in the SCS until, finally, some of their colonies gained independence (Tonnesson, 2001).

In the Post Second World War, there was a power vacuum so that none of the international documents provided clarity of sovereignty in the South China Sea. Some of the claims that are currently emerging are more due to economic, geostrategic, and domestic politics. China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam are the countries that claim this area. This claim was raised again and became more influential in late 2008 when China declared sovereignty over the entire SCS region, both the waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This claim will undoubtedly close the opportunity for other countries that are also in dispute to get the top of the strategic area. China's claims make it difficult to resolve tensions in the region, especially since China is not willing to be involved in regional negotiations. SCS territorial conflict is very complex due to the many parties who submit claims, including outsiders engaged in disputes, such as the United States (U.S.), who are directly or indirectly in the SCS conflict circle. The U.S. argues that its involvement aims to carry out one of its roles as a superpower country that is responsible for maintaining world security.

When China shows assertiveness in the disputed region, the U.S. is the country that reacts most quickly. In 1999, the U.S. immediately placed two aircraft carriers in the SCS region when China showed strong claims. At that time, tensions between Beijing and Taiwan were heating up, which led to an increase in the show a force of two countries' capability. China's claims received a negative response. The issue that is widely circulating about China's claims and attitudes is the country's desire to control the entire SCS (Smith, 1994: 274-294). China is considered as a greedy

party and wants to fight over the SCS national territory to get full access to energy, namely oil and gas in the region (Dobson and Fravel, 1997). In its foreign policy, China openly stated that energy and raw materials are essential sources to be able to run the economy (Zweig and Bi, 2005: 25-38).



**Source:** The Wall Street Journal Online (edited)

The above map shows some intersections and overlapping areas between six countries in the South China Sea. These lines are the lines drawn by each country with their respective country policies. China had issued a map of 9-dash lines for historical ownership in 1947. Taiwan occupied Itu Aba Island in 1956. Then, Vietnam established ZEE to SCS in 1977, The Philippines issued a Presidential Decree on Spratly in 1978, Malaysia determined the Continental Shelf up to SCS in 1979 and Brunei Darussalam established ZEE to SCS in 1988 (Qi, 2019).

Another opinion says that the desire to take back national territory is part of the commitment of Chinese leaders. This opinion departs from the assumption that controlling the SCS area means that it will strengthen bargaining positions that can be used at certain times, for example, in negotiation processes (Hyer, 2006: 34-54). Chinese claims are also as an attempt to gain access to fishing, such as in the Hainan region (Zha, 2001: 575-58). The SCS conflict has involved several international diplomacy processes. Negotiation efforts and alternative cooperation have also become a proposal as a settlement process. Until the middle of 2016, there are no signs that the conflict in the region will end; even the condition is getting hotter.

In June 2011, Vietnam accused China of cutting off its oil and gas exploration routes. According to Vietnam, this is the second time China has done the same thing (Wines, 2011). As a result of the feud, each party's actions invited other parties' responses. Vietnam bought Russian submarines, responded by increasing its military training activities. China also stated that the number of troops stationed in the SCS region would continue to increase until 2020. Not only with Vietnam, tensions between China and the Philippines have also increased. Since 1992, military cooperation between the Philippines and the U.S. has been getting better, especially for counterterrorism and maritime security purposes. In its security policy agenda, the U.S. also mentioned that one of the objectives of the country's policy is to increase alliance with the Philippines. The main reason is for stability (Lunn, 2016). Tensions in the SCS are increasing following the increase in U.S. and Philippine cooperation, especially intensive military exercises between the two countries. This cooperation is an effort to provide security for oil exploration in SCS. This joint exercise provoked concerns and the Chinese reaction, which eventually caused tensions in the SCS to get worse (Alexander and Mogato, 2012).

The vast potential of natural resources has undoubtedly triggered competition among countries in the SCS to dominate the area. Most claimant states in the SCS have claims on various measures. A series of islands totaling more than 30,000 islands, including coral clusters, is not only rich in natural resource potential, but the strategic position of SCS is also the target of many countries to use it as a defense system. As a result, the escalation of the conflict appears to be a severe threat in SCS. Specifically, several countries officially claim SCS. For example, the Paracel Islands claimed by three countries, namely China, Taiwan, and Vietnam. At the same time, the Spratly Islands became a struggle between China, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei Darussalam. Adjacent to the Spratly Islands, there is a cluster of corals that is a dispute between the Philippines, China, and Taiwan, known as Scarborough Shoal. The primary source of SCS conflict is related to the "nine-dash line" region, which is the most triggering regional tension, including involving the United States (U.S.) except Singapore (Lunn, 2016).

The existence of these various claims can undoubtedly have an impact on the escalation of the conflict on a larger scale. Even a lot of tension arises from the activity of mutual claims at SCS. In this context, the position of the U.S. is exciting. Aside from being a serious competitor to China on the SCS, the U.S. turned out to be very interested in the region. The U.S. has two main interests, namely access to shipping and political stability and SCS security. For the U.S., it is crucial to be able to use SCS shipping access freely. Besides, maintaining the stability of SCS also means maintaining the stability of Southeast Asia, which is very important for the U.S. (Fravel, 2012). In the view of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the U.S. has "national interests" in the SCS and expects all countries, including China, to respect international law. The U.S. itself refused to ratify international sea law or the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Yujuico, 2015).

Above analysis shows that SCS conflicts are very complex and multifaceted. The potential of natural resources, especially oil and gas and its strategic position as an international trade channel, appear to be the primary triggers of the SCS conflict. China's firm stance on the SCS certainly worries all parties, along with the increase in both economic and military activities in the region. Of course, these actions immediately triggered tensions from some countries and could even threaten the stability of the security of Southeast Asia and its surroundings.

### **INDONESIA'S ATTITUDES AND EFFORTS REGARDING CHINA'S CLAIMS**

Historical claims made by China have made problems in the SCS like a fire in the husk. This problem eventually also affected countries who were not claimant states and other countries that had strategic interests in the South China Sea region. For example, indirectly, Indonesia also has a concern to solve these problems with China. Indonesia saw the map issued by China, namely the nine-dash line, which has an intersection with territorial Indonesia, and this becomes a problem between Indonesia and China. On the international level, the nine-dash-line that sees SCS as a fishing ground is rejected because in the UNCLOS 1982, which states that countries establish territorial sea (12 miles), continental shelf (200 miles), and EEZ (200 miles) from the outermost line. Then, The Inter-Nation Arbitration Tribunal 201, the nine-dash-line does not comply with international law, and historical rights do not apply when UNCLOS has started to enter into force after ratification.

To understand the SCS conflict, Indonesia must also understand the core of the problem and its main problems. Besides potential, the most fundamental thing in the SCS is the issue of state sovereignty. Otherwise, China's claim has no legal basis. Indonesia's continuing objection to Chinese claims has become persistent objection. China does not have a territorial claim with Indonesia but has a maritime claim with ZEEI. The occurrence of what is referred to as overlapping border area lines claimed involved in the islands in the SCS is the essence of the issue. One of our difficulties is that we cannot distinguish between sovereignty, sovereign rights, and what is the freedom of high seas. Many say that EEZ is our territory, and it is our sovereignty that we must master, maintain, and fully occupy. However, the law of the sea convention speaks differently. When we speak of sovereignty, we have three elements, namely the power to prescribe the law, the power to enforce the law, and the power to adjudicate the law. When Indonesia is unable to speak this language, we are not talking about sovereignty.

Four points of Indonesia's attitude regarding China's claims in the South China Sea : (1) there have been violations by Chinese ships in the Indonesian EEZ region; (2) Indonesia's EEZ territory has been determined by international law, namely through UNCLOS 1982; (3) China is one of the (part) members of UNCLOS 1982; therefore, it is an obligation for China to respect the implementation of 1982 UNCLOS; and (4) Indonesia will never recognize the 9-dash line, a one-sided claim

made by China that has no legal basis recognized by international law, especially UNCLOS 1982.

China continuously make claims and practices to occupy and administer significant activities. The Chinese Government, at the official level below the Minister, conveyed that they did not have territorial problems. This statement comforts the Indonesia administration, especially the Foreign Minister of Indonesia. Notwithstanding, Indonesia has held two protests to the United Nations in 2010 and 2020. About the cross line problem in the EEZ region, which was determined by the two countries. China should have corrected the lines that became sliced with Indonesian territory. Chinese ambiguous attitude, for reasons for historical reasons. The second reason is that the weather at a specific time in the northern part of SCS experienced winter, so the fishermen could not catch fish, so they shifted south until they entered the EEZ region in contact with Indonesian national territory. That is where the incident happened; Indonesian institutions captured Chinese fishing vessels. China always says if there are disputes, then just leave it until brought to the official forum. This intention is a political strategy carried out by China.

The Government of Indonesia has implemented several efforts as defense strategy. As a non-claimant state, Indonesia's position can increase lobbying for China, so that the problems of the two countries can be adequately resolved. From the geopolitical point of view, the position of the SCS is very strategic in the movement of forces of the two navies and which connects between continents. In principle, it is very strategic; whoever determines the geostrategic in SCS then determines the domain around SCS and the world. In terms of territorial sovereignty and domestic politics, this determination will acknowledge the sovereignty of the legitimacy of the ruling regimes in their respective countries.

Furthermore, Indonesia is the founder of ASEAN. The Indonesia's existence in this regional area must be strengthened. Indonesia can be a mediator, honest broker, or confidence builder capable of bringing claim countries to the negotiating table. Indonesia prioritizes lobbying and the role of the diplomat approach compared to other approaches. This approach was successfully carried out during the SBY administration; at that time, Marty Natalegawa, as the Foreign Minister, brought problems at the negotiating table that resulted in several commitments, including the Code of Conducts from all the countries involved. The point is that the SCS problem will be solved peacefully.

Indonesia's claim uses on UNCLOS 1982 articles 55, 56, and 57. The claim also had a settlement with Malaysia and Vietnam on the Continental Shelf in 2004. Then, in 2016, a dispute between the Philippines and China, all maritime features on the SCS not entitled to determine EEO because all of them do not meet the requirements as islands. So that in SCS, these countries only have claimed as long as 12 nm as territorial. Traditional Fishing Right does not exist in the definition of territorial claims, so this Chinese recognition is unilateral. However, not all ASEAN countries are in favor of Indonesia, because some countries are "friends"

of China. Therefore, there is no compromise and further discussion between Indonesia and China because there are no borders.

### **INDONESIA'S PERSPECTIVE AND CONTEXT: A DISPUTE IN THE NORTHERN WATERS OF NATUNA**

There are several perspectives of the Indonesia government in viewing the SCS as a very strategic area. **First**, in terms of politics, there is a paradox of the struggle for power and influence. This area becomes battles between state classes, ranging from large, medium to state countries. The struggle for more significant influence is seen in the efforts to structure between state actors who challenge each other. Each country will look for who is the most superior in the struggle between these classes. Then, on the other hand, an apparent power relation will appear. In this area, regionalism, community, and alliance will be formed, with the same strategic interests and goals.

**Second** in terms of security, it relates to the political interests of regional countries. The arms race, the struggle for influence, and regional security is the main agenda of each country, which is not infrequently a contribution to the debate in international relations. Such a situation will lead to a process of a power struggle to become a "leader" in this region. An imbalance in the size of the defense spending budget is also a consideration of how they will find friends or strategic alliances, for example, informing a defense community. Countries that have firm policies supported by strong military forces will become leaders who control regional security.

**Third** trade traffic and reserves of natural resources are the primary commodities in the South China Sea. Access, exploration, and exploitation of natural resources in this SCS are the primary motives in providing regional countries or outside countries to determine wise steps, especially in the economic and business fields. Fourth, the perspective on this region can also be reviewed in terms of socio-cultural factors. Values, norms, languages, customs, and habits are also often considered by the leaders of countries in the region.

Some contexts are necessary to provide the understanding and input of decision-makers and policies in treating this situation. At this time, **at the global level**, there is a battle between large countries that give influence and power to one another, for example, the U.S. - China in the Pacific and the South China Sea. The increasing importance of this region makes anyone playing in this region a battle of forces at the global level. The U.S. itself is changing its policy direction towards the Indo Pacific, as is China, which is increasingly showing strength in the South China Sea. China might be able to lead as the U.S. has done in all corners of the world, even though we know the U.S. is also experiencing a decline. China's Peaceful Rise, which later became an OBOR and the Belt and Road Initiative. More and more big state actors are beginning to show the same interests and policies towards the South China Sea. For example, India, which also changed its policy from the Look East Policy to the East Policy Act, which shows the embodiment and implementation of



the policy towards the Indian Ocean towards the South China Sea. This region will become a bipolar and multi-polar power relation, struggle, and competition in a longtime strategy.

**At the regional level** the security, especially in the area of the regional economy, is greatly affected by the failure of the Doha Round Development Agenda, which has affected shifting agreements towards bilateral or regional trade agreements. The problem is, increasing the number of trade agreements gives other complexities for the Asia Pacific, such as trade diversion and the noodle bowl effect. This increase is what then led to the emergence of a new era of more significant free trade regional agreements and related to the region with the main distribution of world trade, called Megar Regional Trade Agreements (MRTAs). The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), led by the United States and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with China as the leading mechanism, became the most ambitious MRTAs in the Asia Pacific. Two issues in the two agreements are, as a way to realize the integration of the Asia Pacific region and the differences in economic interests between the big countries.

The emergence of the two MRTAs shows the existence of economic dynamics in the Asia Pacific region. Two issues that embody the dynamics are, **first**, TPP and RCEP are the way to realize the Asia Pacific integration because of the significant economic potential that reached 67 percent of global GDP in 2015. **Second**, there are differences in economic interests between initiator countries such as the United States in the TPP and China at RCEP presents another challenge for the process of economic integration in the Asia Pacific region. The emergence of China in the competition for economic hegemony through various reform policies of SOEs (State-owned enterprises) and its agricultural sector, increase productivity and open a previously closed market towards competition now competing with the United States. This condition then led the United States to emphasize the politics of pivot to the Asia Pacific with TPP as one of the strategies in maintaining its economic hegemony.

Various integration efforts will meet the fact of rivalry between the US TPP with the background of the Unilateral Hegemony and China's RCEP with the Cooperative Hegemony. In this case, Indonesia prioritizes the RCEP agreement over TPP on economic and non-economic grounds. It said that China won the RCEP over US TPP. Even though the economic power still lost to the U.S., China began to win in the economic victory in the region and became the economic leader in the region.

The situation of the South China Sea will always influence the regional environment, which shows the prediction of to continue to heat up, along with the actions of the Chinese military campaign in the region. This condition causes Indonesia's national sovereignty to be potentially threatened, especially in the territorial waters of the North Natuna Sea. Likewise, the reactions of other countries that contributed significantly to the intelligence analysis process and national-level

policymakers. Although Indonesia is not a claimant country, the involvement of other countries, such as the U.S., is quite draining when these countries play in front of the front home yard of Indonesia. As a concrete example that the U.S. recently, expressly rejects all Chinese claims and considers the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) a threat to India and Southeast Asian countries. In response to this threat, the country led by Donald Trump will reduce the number of its troops in Europe. Later, the forces will operate in other areas that have the potential to be targeted by Chinese administration. This condition makes Indonesia and the countries in Southeast Asia carry the ASEAN Outlook on Indo Pacific, the aim is to encourage cooperation, not competition. The ASEAN Outlook on Indo Pacific is an affirmation of ASEAN's position in maintaining peace, security, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, which includes the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

**In the national context** the threat of communism has also become a prominent discourse. China continues to be active in both militaries, economic, and industrial hegemony, using the principle of soft diplomacy. The uprising of the communist party in 1965 became a trauma for some Indonesian citizens. The notion that the development of China in the South China Sea towards the south with the understanding of communism when viewed from the side of Indonesia's national sovereignty.

Indonesian policy to develop the local context in dealing with potential threats from the South China Sea shows the progress. For example, the construction of the outer islands, which are the sea borders, namely Natuna Island. The establishment of the Integrated Military Unit in Natuna was not in line with the development of the welfare and security of the local community. The development of Natuna Island is still very minimal; both the welfare of the Natuna people and the development of infrastructure are still not looking more comprehensive. The employment of the Indonesian Armed Forces and Police is part of efforts to accelerate development on Natuna Island.

### **INDONESIA'S STANCE IN DEFENCE STRATEGY AND POLITICAL SETTING**

The condition on land also can happen at sea. When it happens on land, it might be straightforward to prove, investigate, and proceed. However, if it happens at sea, it will be involved and tend to be complicated. This occurrence is because the target object is a foreign entity. The scene will be challenging to reconstruct—for example, illegal fishing, robbery arm, human trafficking, and many more.

The issue of foreign fishing vessels in Indonesia is still high, including China showing a figure that is still relatively high after the international decision. Then Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia are still relatively high, with Vietnam also accompanied by clashes of law enforcement vessels at sea. Thailand, Singapore, PNG, Timor Leste, and India are still very low, which is dominated by fishing

vessels. All of the incidents that occurred were IUU fishing boat activities, which developed into an issue between countries.

In the SCS, viral events have arisen in many analyzes and debates. Most crime scenes have not yet been happened in maritime boundaries. When there are unclear boundaries, the potential for increasing the intensity of incidents becomes a problem between countries.

In EEZ, the right of a state to do exploration and exploitation. There, the state's right to enforce the law; in this case, the subjects of activities are fishing vessels, coast guards, and warships. Conflicts between law enforcement officers and fishers, for example, doubts whether orders are delivered, different languages, and law enforcement officials with other state law enforcement agencies. The second is usually followed by dangerous maneuvers, ship bumps, provocative actions, and others. To cope with these situations, a diplomatic note is the only strong statement. Many countries widely accept UNCLOS because of the language used in general. Thus, the interpretation and understanding of each country can be different and sometimes cause debate and dispute over the definition. Fishing cases contain the immediate release, provisional measures, and use of force. Therefore, law enforcement at sea is not very easy. The provision of fines is not appropriate, then ships carrying the flag of their country can take the challenge to a higher level (UNCLOS).

In the case of the North Natuna Sea, Indonesian EEZ is in contact with Chinese 9-dash-lines by 83,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which is claimed by China as a traditional fishing ground since the Tang Dynasty (618 CE) and recorded in the history of the Song Dynasty (960 CE) and the Han dynasty (25 CE). Chinese fishing vessels often operate at North Natuna Sea, arrests by Indonesian security parties based on illegal fishing triggered the arrival of Chinese coast guards asking for release.

Therefore, in the eye of the defense strategy, five attempts have been conducted by the Indonesian Government. **First**, the domestic approach implemented the strengthening of military bases close to the conflict area. Although the construction of a joint and integrated military base in Natuna has been continuing, currently, those effort has not had a daunting effect on China. **Second**, the TNI conducted military exercises around SCS, but this approach is an alternative approach or the latter approach. The Indonesia Armed Forces had conducted several military exercises in North Natuna Sea, namely the Navy for 12 days training in June 2016 and The Air Force's War Training in October 2016. Furthermore, the Indonesia government need to take some law enforcement and defense measures to withdraw Chinese Vessels, such as banishing the vessels out from Indonesia's EEZ, increasing the intensity of patrols in the Natuna Sea, posturing a continuous presence of the Navy and Coast Guard, escorting by the authorities for Indonesia fishermen' and realizing a rapid development in Natuna island.

**Third**, the name change to North Natuna Sea was a brilliant step taken by Indonesia. **Fourth**, A flashpoint-based defense in the Minimum Essential Force

(MEF) for the Indonesia Armed Forces (IAF) by allocating personnel to areas that have the potential to conflict, including around the South China Sea. So that Indonesia's position is recognized by the countries of Southeast Asia. The existence of Indonesia must return to its role in ASEAN by increasing the IAF budget to accelerate the achievement of the MEF so that Indonesia has a calculated defense force in the region, especially SCS. **Finally**, the Government mobilized and escorts Indonesian fishers operating in the South China Sea. These four efforts can provide an image to China that Indonesia will utilize existing resources to defend Indonesia's EEZ territory.

Indonesia also needs to prepare a political strategy in dealing with the situation in the South China Sea. First is External institutional balancing through the use of ASEAN institutions to bring together disputing parties in the SCS conflict. Second is domestic institutional balancing by increasing the ability of security and domestic institutions to create a deterrent effect. Third is the reframing as a fishery issue, namely by seeing disputes in the EEZ as a bilateral IUU fishing case, not as an issue of sovereignty.

Indonesia has played a role in the Multilateral Mechanism to hold a Workshop in Managing Political Conflict in the South China Sea (1990) and submitted a "Donut Proposal," and in the ASEAN mechanism produced a Declaration in the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC) and played an important role in negotiations for the preparation of the Code of Conduct (CoC)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This article proposes some recommendations to the Indonesian Government. First is to clarify and strengthen coast guarding mechanisms in the waters of the South China Sea in particular. Indonesia can have a maximum force mechanism by giving a mandate to the TNI or using a minimum force mechanism by giving a mandate to the coast guard and special waters such as the Marine Security Agency (Bakamla) or increasing cooperation between the two parties in the implementation of maritime security. Increasing the defense budget to 130 trillion rupiahs has not been able to prepare and reach the MEF of the TNI both in quantity and quality. Increasing the defense and security budget of the sea will also not be able to catch up with the development of the situation and the development of a very dynamic regional power. Indonesia does not want the Sipadan and Ligitan islands to recur. Moreover, Indonesia does not want to lose an inch of the country back to foreign ownership.

Second is to reinforce the sanctions in Indonesia's EEZ region to countries that claim conflict zones. This recommendation is necessary because the Indonesian Government's attitude tends to be passive as inappropriate. Recognizing Indonesia's bargaining position in the economy as a large market and having good relations with China in the economic and investment sectors, it should be able to impose sanctions on violations in the EEZ region of Indonesia as can be done without worrying about losing economic relations. Conflicts must be brought to the negotiating table, both through first-track and second-track diplomacy.

Third is to carry out preventive diplomacy in handling IUU Fishing in the North Natuna Sea. Preventive diplomacy efforts to prevent the practice of IUU Fishing, including through bilateral negotiations to recognize UNCLOS law or multilateral forums such as ADMM mutually. This effort to help mobilize Indonesian fishers does not directly cover fisheries resources, both in quantity and quality, intending to improve the welfare of fishers.

Fourth is to increase the leadership in ASEAN in the regional Code of Conduct negotiations. Indonesia must once again hold the leadership seat and form confidence-building measures to create mutual trust so that negotiations on the Code of Conduct can be completed correctly and on time.

Fifth is to increase the security cooperation with Pacific countries. Increased cooperation with Pacific countries, especially in the field of security, can produce a balancing effect on Chinese behavior in the region. The concept of the Indo Pacific community can increase the solidarity of countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific in dealing with China's aggressive behavior in SCS.

Sixth is to use Indonesia membership in the UN Security Council for the period 2019-2020 to bring the issue of stability in the Asia Pacific region to international attention. The stability of this region is crucial because it is a strategic area for world trade and distribution channels. If necessary, Indonesia proposes to redesign UNCLOS, including inviting China to participate in the formulation of articles in UNCLOS.

## CONCLUSION

Indonesia has no dispute with China and other claimant states on the issue of the South China Sea. The dispute in the Northern Natuna Waters occurs because of economic reasons, geostrategy and political background. Indonesia's attitude towards China in the SCS is highly dependent on the choice of Indonesian perspective and Indonesian interests. Maintaining sovereignty, Indonesia needs to consider the strength of the Indonesian military and in the mean of diplomacy and the roles of a mediator, honest broker, and confidence builder in the handling of the South China Sea conflict. As a country that is not directly involved (non-claimant state) in SCS, Indonesia needs to maintain sovereignty, regional stability, and national development. One of them is Indonesia to pay more attention to the outermost, leading, and lagging regions.

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