

Indonesian Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia (Deal with Usa – China Rivalry In South China Sea)

Gerald Theodorus L

*Doctoral Student Indonesia Defense University/National Research and Innovation Agency of
Republic of Indonesia
theodorus_recht@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The South China Sea is one of the seas in the world that attracts the attention of many countries. In this sea there are two great powers in the world, namely the United States and China. These two countries compete with each other to instill their hegemony in the region. China is present in the South China Sea because of their unilateral claim in this sea, they feel this South China Sea is theirs, based on their past history. This unilateral claim is rejected by many countries, both in Southeast Asia and by the United States. The United States feels that the South China Sea is a free ocean that cannot be owned by any country, and Indonesia has always asked China to comply with applicable international law. The rivalry between these two countries has now led to the potential for war between them. This research is a qualitative descriptive study, with data collection techniques using interviews, literature studies and discussion forums. The conclusion of this research is that Indonesia has nothing to do with the rivalry between the United States and China in the South China Sea, Indonesia always prioritizes a free and active foreign policy, by not taking sides with one country. Indonesia's defense diplomacy is carried out in order to reduce conflicts that lead to war between the United States and China in the South China Sea.

Keywords— Indonesia Defense Diplomacy, Southeast Asia, Rivalry, United States – China, South China Sea

Introduction

The South China Sea is a sea with promising natural resources, in this sea there are millions of natural potentials that invite many countries to explore the wealth of the South China Sea. The South China Sea is currently a sea that is contested by ASEAN countries. This sea is a problem today because the South China Sea is claimed by many ASEAN countries, the main problem is the existence of unilateral claims by China. China's claim is based on their past history.

This unilateral claim has actually been rejected by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016. The decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration interprets to clarify issues that have been considered ambiguous in the vortex of the South China Sea conflict: “ The Tribunal

concludes that, as between the Phillipines and China, China claims to historic rights, or other sovereign rights or jurisdiction, with respect to the maritime areas of the South China Sea encompassed by the relevant part of the nine dash line are contrary to the Convention and without lawful effect to the extent that they exceed the geographic and substantive limits of China's maritime entitlements under the Convention. The Tribunal concludes that the Convention superseded any historic rights or other sovereign rights or jurisdiction in excess of the limits imposed therein” (The South China Sea Arbitration award paragraph 278).

The Permanent Court of Arbitration has issued its decision in 2016, therefore China is required to comply with the decision, because it has become a source of international law. If a

country obeys international law, the international community will feel order, order, justice and peace. On the other hand, if China remains consistent in refusing to comply with the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and continues to carry out aggression in the South China Sea area, regional instability will occur which could lead to open conflict (Darajati, et.al, 2017).

China's attitude that rejects the results of the Permanent Court of Arbitration is contrary to international law and until now, after the decision was issued, China has been aggressively carrying out developments in the disputed South China Sea area. China's aggressiveness has attracted attention and criticism from many countries, one of which is the United States. President Joe Biden on various occasions has always said that every country in the world must respect international law, through the Secretary of State of the United States it is said that the United States consistently rejects China's maritime claims in the South China Sea, as long as they exceed the maritime zones allowed for claims under the law. international law, as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention (CNBCIndonesia.com, 2021).

In the last five years, the South China Sea has become one of the subjects of disputes involving China and ASEAN countries. China's maneuvers after the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration by deploying troops and installing military bases in the South China Sea region sparked protests from ASEAN countries which were then followed by the United States. The United States itself has on various occasions asked China to stop military provocations so that regional stability is maintained (Dwiguna Adrianus Revi & Muhammad Syaroni, 2019).

The South China Sea itself is an area that has long been a source of dispute. The South China Sea has strategic value for countries that intersect with this region. In addition to being estimated to have high economic value, the area is also projected to have economic potential for living and non-living natural resources, as well as military development, as well as politics and

security in the area (Dwiguna Adrianus Revi & Muhammad Syaroni, 2019).

Teuku Rezasyah, an international relations expert from Padjadjaran University, emphasized that developments in the South China Sea have been in a very worrying situation and have disrupted the maintenance of international peace and security. The most highlighted activity is the expansion of China's military activities in disputed areas, from troop deployments to limited military training. At the same time, the presence of a US aircraft carrier in international waters approaching the disputed area worries China (antaranews.com, Kamis 16 Juli 2020).

The United States-China rivalry in the China Sea must be found a solution, one of the solutions is through diplomacy, especially Defense Diplomacy. In this regard, Indonesia has an important role in dealing with these two countries in the South China Sea. Facing the United States - China in the South China Sea is not in the context of war but to reduce the potential for war between the two countries. So far, Indonesia's diplomacy has been through the ASEAN Defense Ministries Meeting (ADMM) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). In 2018 ADMM was held in Singapore, while one of the issues discussed at this meeting was the South China Sea (Toruan, 2022)

Indonesia has a good track record in bilateral relations with the United States and with China. Indonesia also cannot be forced to side with one of the competing camps in the South China Sea. On the basis of a free and active foreign policy, Indonesia is free to establish diplomatic relations with any country in the world.

Based on the explanation above, the authors are interested in conducting a research entitled "Indonesian Defense Diplomacy in the Southeast Asian Region (Facing United States-China Rivalry in the South China Sea)". The research question in this research is how is Indonesia's position in the midst of the rivalry between the United States - China in the South China Sea and how is Indonesia's defense diplomacy in the face of the rivalry between the United States - China in the South China Sea?

Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative research using a descriptive approach, while the focus of this research is on Indonesian defense diplomacy that Indonesia has carried out, especially defense diplomacy against the United States and China, where these two countries are showing rivalry actions in the South China Sea. Qualitative research is a research method used to reveal problems in the working life of government, private, community, youth, women, sports, arts and culture organizations, so that they can be used as policies to be implemented for the common good (Imam Gunawan, 2016).

Qualitative research is methods to explore and understand the meaning that some individuals or groups of people ascribe to social or humanitarian problems. This qualitative research process involves important efforts, such as asking questions and procedures, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data. (Creswell, 2007).

This study uses data collection techniques by means of interviews, literature studies and discussion forums. The interview informants came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Coordinating Ministry for Politics, Law and Security, academics, and experts.

Result and discussion

Defense Diplomacy

Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster in their book *Reshaping Defense Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation and Assistance* say that defense diplomacy is a transitional phase that became a major phenomenon in Europe after the cold war, when war became something that was considered old fashioned, the use of defense instruments and related infrastructure (in this case the Ministry of Defense) is changing paths as a tool in foreign and security policy (Cottey and Anthony Forster, 2004)

Makmur Supriyatno said Defense Diplomacy is not always aimed at winning the war (to win a war) or war, behind it actually defense diplomacy is essentially because the philosophy of defense diplomacy is to keep the world safe and peaceful and stable (preventing a war) (Supriyatno, 2014: 172).

Through defense diplomacy, it is hoped that it can reduce the potential for conflicts throughout the world. Internationally, countries must cooperate closely, as well as internally the Ministry of Defense of each country must cooperate, all in order to build mutual trust and help to develop the strength of their armed forces that have accountability in a democratic government (Makmur Supriyatno, 2014: 172).

Region

Louis Cantori and Steven Spiegel define a region as two or more countries that interact with each other and have geographic proximity, common ethnicity, language, culture, social and historical links and a sense of identity that is often enhanced by the actions and actions of countries outside the region (Perwita A A Banyu & Yanyan Mochamad Yani, 2005)

Regional (region) as an integral part of this world is also a description of the world in a smaller scope and specific characteristics. In the dictionary of international relations, the meaning of the word region is explained "*This term is used in a number of contexts with a number of meanings in international relations. Sometimes these meanings overlap; sometimes they contradict one another. The primary, common sense usage connotes physical contiguity. Indeed proximity seems to be a necessary, although not sufficient, condition or proximity seems to be an important prerequisite for creating and maintaining a sense of unity*" (Evans and Newnham, 1998).

Rivalry

Brandon Valeriano in his dissertation at Vanderbilt University (2003) formulated the stages of a rivalry between countries, as follows:

- a. *Territorial Issues;*
- b. *Alliance Formation and Participation;*
- c. *Military Buildups;*
- d. *Conflict Linkages;*

e. *Grand Strategic Plans;*

f. *Conflict Spiral.*

There are several components compiled by Diehl and Goertz related to this rivalry. Two of the three existing components tend to describe the conditions of rivalry in general, namely the consistency of space which consists of two aspects. The first aspect is that two competing (dyadic) countries have the opportunity to cause conflict in the future with the same country (Diehl & Goertz, 2000). Both Diehl and Goertz are aware that the rivalry that occurs between the same two countries tends to have a history of repeated competition over a certain period of time. Then the second aspect of the spatial consistency component is the emergence of conflicts between rival countries which can be open or closed. Then the second component is that there is time and duration, because the characteristics of rivalry is that it is temporal or related to time.

United States – China Rivalry at South China Sea

Report on the development of the situation in the South China Sea for the period January – February 2021 (BAIS TNI, 2021)

- **China:** 29th December 2020 – 7th January 2021 *People Liberation Army – Navy Exercises in the South China Sea with the support of the aircraft carrier Shandong and the Type 075 LHD II Amphibious Assault Ship.*
- **United States:** 12th January 2021, US Navy, Royal Australian Air Force, Canadian Air Force, Indian Navy and Japan MSDF conduct anti-submarine warfare at Guam Air Force Base.
- **United States:** 13th January 2021, US Navy MQ 4C drone flew deep into Taiwan's ADIZ.
- **China :** 17th – 24th January 2021 PLA-Navy military exercises with the deployment of 1 Type – 052D Destroyer Ship and 1 Corvette Type – 056A.
- **Amerika Serikat :** 23 Januari 2021, Operasi Kebebasan Bernavigasi (*Freedom of Navigation*) *USS Theodore Roosevelt*, kapal penjelajah rudal kelas Ticonderoga, *USS Bunker Hill*, Kapal Perusak Rudal kelas *Arleigh Burke*, *USS Russell* dan *USS John Finn*.
- **United States:** 23rd January 2021, Operation Freedom of Navigation *USS Theodore Roosevelt*, Ticonderoga-class missile cruisers, *USS Bunker Hill*, *Arleigh Burke*-class Missile Destroyer, *USS Russell* and *USS John Finn*.
- **China:** 24th January 2021, People Liberation Army aircraft conducted recon at ADIZ Taiwan with 1 Y-8 anti submarine warfare aircraft, 8 Xian H-6K bombers, 4 J-16 flight jets.
- **United States:** 31st January, 2021, a United States reconnaissance aircraft entered Taiwan's ADIZ area.
- **China:** 31st January 2021 People Liberation Army aircraft enter Taiwan's ADIZ with the support of 2 J-10s, 4 J-11s and 1 Y-8 reconnaissance.
- **China :** 31st January - 7th February 2021 elements of the People's Liberation Army carry out exercises in the Bohai Strait and the Yellow Sea.
- **Cina :** 31 Januari 2021 pesawat udara *People Liberation Army* melaksanakan recon di ADIZ Taiwan dengan kekuatan 1 pesud KJ-500 AEW dan C (*Airborne Early Warning and Control*), pesud PLA Y-8 ASW, pesud PLA Y-9 JZ (GX-8), PLA Y-8 EW, PLA Y-8 ELINT, PLA Y-8 Recce, J-10, J-16 dan SU-30.
- **China:** 31st January 2021, People Liberation Army aircraft carried out recon at Taiwan's ADIZ with a force of 1 KJ-500 AEW and C (*Airborne Early Warning and Control*), PLA Y-8 ASW, PLA Y-9 JZ (GX- 8), PLA Y-8 EW, PLA Y-8 ELINT, PLA Y-8 Recce, J-10, J-16 and SU-30.
- **United States:** 3rd February 2021, several United States troops carried out recon in the waters of the South China Sea and the Yellow Sea supervising the maneuvers of Chinese ships.
- **United States :** 3rd February, 2021, joint “Guam” Drill. limited area bomber and fighter aircraft collaboration exercises.

Based on the facts of the presence of the United States cs and China military forces in the period

January to d. In February 2021, China and the United States cs were monitored to have increased the presence and activity of their military forces in the South China Sea area. This has increased the escalation of military tensions between the two countries which could trigger an open war conflict between the United States and China in the South China Sea region (BAIS TNI, 2021)

The increasing escalation of tensions and to anticipate an open war with China in the South China Sea, in 2020 the United States has passed the National Defense Authorization Act to finance the United States defense policy of US\$ 740 billion or equivalent to Rp. 10.3 quadrillion and encourage an increase in the United States military presence in the Pacific Ocean. The ratification of the Defense Spending Law was motivated by the rejection of China's claims in the South China Sea and the assumption that China was preparing for World War III in the South China Sea.

Although the presence of the United States and China's military forces in the South China Sea area is currently still war narratives and provoking each other, it does not rule out the possibility of small accidental incidents, such as aircraft, submarine collisions or sudden gunfire. This can trigger an open war in the South China Sea area.

Indonesia Position in the middle of United States – China Rivalry

In essence, Indonesia itself has nothing to do with the rivalry between the United States and China in the South China Sea. The rivalry between the United States and China in the South China Sea is a manifestation of the feud between the United States and China, where they are always at odds on many things. As it is known that the impact that will be felt due to this rivalry is the potential for open war between them in the region. This situation must be prevented in order to create regional security stability.

Open war is just waiting for the trigger to be pressed, but not in the near future because the current financial conditions of each country are still struggling due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The United States is currently in a period of

economic rebound due to Covid-19, a lot of costs will be incurred by these two countries just because of a fight in the South China Sea area.

Indonesia Defense Diplomacy

Indonesia has carried out defense diplomacy several times through visits made by the Minister of Defense to the United States and China. When Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu in 2015 visited several defense industries in China, this series of visits was in order to strengthen Indonesia's defense cooperation relationship with China. Indonesia and China have established defense cooperation since the establishment of the Bilateral Consultation Forum on Defense in 2007, as part of the Strategic Partnership Declaration agreed by the two countries on April 25, 2005, then the two countries agreed to become comprehensive strategic partners in October 2013 (Kemhan.go.id, Kamis 15 Oktober 2015).

Meanwhile, in 2018 the Minister of Defense Ryamizard Ryacudu also carried out defense diplomacy by visiting the United States, on 27 – 29 August 2018 the visit was carried out in order to strengthen bilateral relations between the United States and Indonesia, especially in the defense sector. During this visit, it was agreed to cooperate in terms of increasing the capacity of human resources through joint education and training, then increasing the capacity of the defense industry and modernizing the main weapons system (defense equipment) and defense system (Kompas.com, 30 Agustus 2018).

Indonesia in its defense diplomacy in the region uses ASEAN as its spearhead, especially the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM). ADMM was formed because of a political policy which was a continuation of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting.

ADMM is a meeting of ASEAN Defense Ministers to discuss strengthening defense cooperation in the region in order to increase transparency, openness and mutual trust among ASEAN countries. The ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) is the highest defense consultative and cooperation mechanism in ASEAN. ADMM aims to

promote mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding of defense and security challenges and increased transparency and openness.

Closing

That in carrying out a defense diplomacy, it is necessary to have internal support from the government, that support is in the form of strengthening Indonesia's defense equipment as well as increasing the defense budget, besides that it is also necessary to increase knowledge of human resources related to diplomacy. The point is that "Indonesian Defense Diplomacy is meaningless if there is no strengthening of domestic defense".

Indonesia's current defense diplomacy is more about preventing a war between the United States and China in the South China Sea. Indonesia with all its efforts in a persuasive way in dialogue with the United States and China not to provoke each other and emphasize not to make the Southeast Asia region a war zone for the two countries, as Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi has often said during high-level meetings. world.

Reference

1. Antaranews.com, (2020). "AS, China memanas soal Laut Cina Selatan, Bagaimana sikap Indonesia?". Kamis, 16 Juli 2020. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1614462/as-china-memanas-soal-laut-china-selatan-bagaimana-sikap-indonesia>
2. CNBC Indonesia.com, (2021). "Ikuti Trump, Biden Tolak Xi Jinping di Laut Cina Selatan". <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20210129065615-4-219545/ikuti-trump-biden-tolak-xi-jinping-di-laut-china-selatan>
3. Creswell J.W., (2007) "*Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*". 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage..
4. Darajati Muhammad Rafi, et.al, (2017). "Implikasi Hukum Atas Putusan Permanent Court of Arbitration Terkait Sengketa Laut Cina Selatan Terhadap Negara Di Sekitar Kawasan Tersebut". Jurnal Bina Mulia Hukum. Volume 2, Nomor 1. September 2017.
5. Dwiguna Adrianus Revi & Muhammad Syaroni, (2019). "Rivalitas Amerika Serikat-Tiongkok di Laut Cina Selatan dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Indonesia". Jurnal Kajian Stratejik Ketahanan Nasional, Vol 2, No.2.
6. Evans Graham, Jeffrey Newnham & Richard Newnham (1998). "The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations". University of California : Penguin Books.
7. Gunawan Imam, (2016) "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Teori dan Praktik". Ed. 1, Cet 4. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
8. Kemhan.go.id, 15 Oktober 2015. Menhan Ryamizard Kunjungi Industri Pertahanan Tiongkok. <https://www.kemhan.go.id/itjen/2015/10/15/menhan-ryamizard-kunjungi-industri-pertahanan-tiongkok.html>
9. Kompas.com, 30 Agustus 2018. "Kunjungi AS, Menhan RI Perkuat Kerja sama di Bidang Pertahanan". <https://internasional.kompas.com/read/2018/08/30/19243781/kunjungi-as-menhan-ri-perkuat-kerja-sama-di-bidang-pertahanan?page=all>
10. Perwita Anak Agung Banyu & Yanyan Mochamad Yani, (2005). "Pengantar Ilmu Hubungan Internasional". Bandung : PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
11. The South China Sea Arbitration award paragraph 278
12. Toruan Gerald Theodorus Lumban, (2022). "Diplomasi Pertahanan Indonesia Dalam Menghadapi Rivalitas Amerika Serikat – Cina di Laut Cina Selatan Demi Terciptanya Stabilitas Keamanan Kawasan". Disertasi Doktoral Universitas Pertahanan Republik Indonesia.
13. Valeriano Brandon, (2003). *The Steps to Rivalry: Power Politics and Rivalry Formation. Dissertation Faculty of the Graduate School of Vanderbilt University.* August, Nashville, Tennessee