
Reorientation of Indonesian Defense Diplomacy for Security Stability in the South China Sea

Tri Leginosuko ^{1 A}; Rodon Pedrason ^{2 A}; Sutrimo Sumarlan ^{3 A};
Sudiby ^{4 A}; Mhd Halkis * ^{5 A}

¹ Doctorate in Human Resource Management, e-mail: trilegionosuko@yahoo.co.id

² Doctor of Political Science, e-mail: rodonpedrason65@gmail.com

³ Doctor of Public Policy, e-mail: Sutrimos@yahoo.com

⁴ Doctor of Science in Strategic Management, e-mail: larasatidiahindriani@gmail.com

⁵ *Corresponding author: Have served at the Indonesian Air Force Base Ranai, Natuna, e-mail: muhammadhalkis@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-0122-4594

^A The Republic of Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

Received: November 22, 2021 | **Revised:** December 2, 2021 | **Accepted:** December 30, 2021

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5764901

Abstract

The rise of China's economy and the emergence of the AUKUS Defense Pact was responded to by ASEAN countries with various policies. Indonesia is not included in the claim state. However, Indonesia has strengthened its military power in the region since the increasing security threat in the South China Sea. This study aims to see the reorientation of Indonesia's defense diplomacy in the last decade. The issue of management and defense in border areas is closely related to the fundamental conception of the state as a sovereign, populated, and territorial entity and the interpretation or perception of the threats it faces. The defense of territorial boundaries should be understood as a permanent function, as long as the state exists. Threats that will continue to change and undergo adjustment are threat assessments that affect the number of resources and forces needed. The problem is how these resources and power are managed. Assuming the problem, whether the problem is internal or external, and whether the treatment is defensive or offensive. The study concludes that the reorientation of Indonesia's defense diplomacy has changed from a peaceful settlement with a legal approach to strengthening local economies and military units in border areas in the South China Sea.

Key words: Defense Diplomacy, Regional Security, ASEAN, AUKUS, Natuna.

Introduction

China claims the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Natuna Islands as its traditional fishing catchment area by making a nine-dash line (Majumdar, 2021). On the one hand, both Indonesia and China have ratified UNCLOS, but China's nine-dash line is not adapted to UNCLOS. On the other hand, the Indonesian government does not recognize China's claim because Indonesia only recognizes traditional fishing rights in accordance with UNCLOS law. However, the attitude and behavior of China, especially Chinese fishermen and the Chinese Coast Guard who continue to enter Indonesia's EEZ in the Natuna Islands,

requires a more severe response because if left unchecked, Indonesia will be judged to accept China's claims so that it can be considered as customary international law (Surya Wiranto, Hikmanto Juwana, 2015).

Indonesia's policy as a non-claims country has become a topic of discussion for many parties. It will be a different matter if you look at the South China Sea issue as a security issue from a military perspective. The formation of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia (AUKUS) Defense Pact shows that the South China Sea issue is no longer purely legal. The actor's intelligence in managing the conflict

will determine the results that each party wants to achieve. Mass media news and even documents issued by each party do not necessarily reflect reality, even though academics are trying to find conclusions to formulate a country's strategy and goals (Razeto & Jenne, 2021). Indeed, one of the efforts to respond to the dynamics of national defense in facing the threat of state border disputes is to use a coercive way, where strengthening military bases is an alternative option. Strengthening military bases is expected to provide a positive perception in building defense forces both for the national interest of the Republic of Indonesia, Confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the ASEAN region and globally (Indonesia, 2015).

This paper describes Indonesia's national interest in building a military base on the Natuna island to deal with the conflicts in the South China Sea due to the Chinese government's claims to the Natuna waters, which are included in the nine-dash line map. The strong response from the Indonesian government, ranging from

changing its name to the North Natuna Sea, taking action against Chinese-flagged fishing vessels that carry out illegal fishing in Natuna waters, to the policy of building a military base on Natuna Island and military training on Natuna Island, which aims to defend Indonesia's national interests.

Those who criticize Indonesia for not claiming the border issue with China, Indonesia only sees a jurisdictional issue, not a sovereignty issue. Indonesia seems to want to mediate in this dispute (Jenne, 2017). However, Indonesia is secretly strengthening its military structure and weaponry and increasing the activities of fishing communities on the border with China. Indonesian people are generally satisfied with how the government is protecting interests in the Natuna sea (Meyer et al., 2019). Some view Indonesia as maintaining good relations with emerging China (Jefferson Ng, 2020). Indonesia should join China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) program, which is in line with Indonesia's development plan to improve infrastructure (Damuri et al., 2019).

Material and methods

The South China Sea issue is most relevant from the perspective of Maritime Security as part of developing international relations and direct contact with defense diplomacy. Maritime security is interesting for research because there are new challenges and strong support to overcome them even though there is no academic agreement on maritime security boundaries. However, in the absence of such an agreement, each party makes their understanding. For example, China can look at the problem of traditional fishers; countries claim to see UNCLOS violations. A framework for identifying commonalities and disagreements on maritime security requires international consensus.

Maritime security does not have a definite meaning, and it can only be understood in terms of its relationship matrix with other concepts; The first is related to marine safety, fishing, economy, trade traffic, security, and defense. Second, the securitization framework makes it

possible to study how maritime threats are created and the different political claims needed to uncover political and ideological interests. Third, the theory of security practice allows studying what actors do and when they claim to improve maritime security. Analysis of the political process to determine threats in policymaking on security and defense issues is part of a security study. Difficulties in formulating security, in general, are due to different actors in understanding maritime security issues, political interests, and their respective paradigms of thought. However, it will open up the horizons of defense science about why one actor differs from another; differences in place, time, and actor (Bueger, 2015).

According to Barry Buzan (1991), the issue of security is freedom from threats. Efforts to feel free from these threats depend on the capabilities of the state and society. Sometimes the state is more dominant; on the other hand,

the community is more involved. Both the state and society aim to defend their interests, identity, and integrity in the face of changing forces that are considered enemies. The state prepares a system to deal with any escalating changes from safe to war when facing threats. Security issues are also related to the problems of our daily life. Uncertainty is a security issue (Buzan, 1991). Thus, there are at least three questions regarding security issues; sovereignty, law enforcement, state administration, can be described as follows:

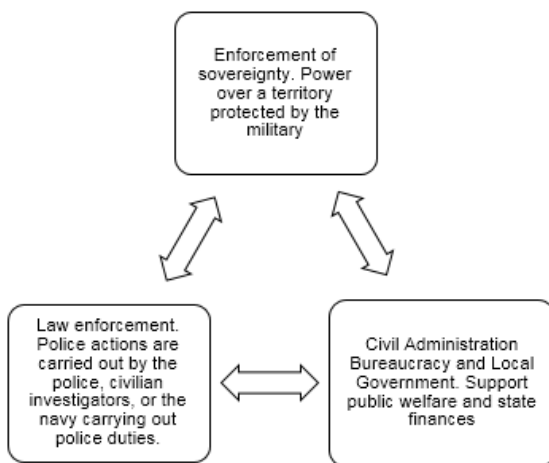


Figure – Maritime security concept (modification from Buzan)

This research uses a constructive thematic historical design approach. In the study of diplomacy, the constructivism approach is an essential aspect of historically developing international relations. According to Alexander Wendt (1999), two fundamental principles of Constructivism shared ideas determine human thoughts, and human sensitivity determines their existence to have ample space; they do not want to depend on what has been ordained by nature (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001).

Results and discussion

The reorientation of Indonesian Defense Diplomacy provides a balance in resolving maritime security issues in the South China Sea:

Enforcement of sovereignty

To enforce Indonesian sovereignty, strengthen the military position by increasing the concentration of military forces, both the Navy, Air Force, and Army. The implications of

Even though the research subject here is the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, this research seeks to understand China's thinking through the dominant mass media in China. Thus, it is hoped to understand the South China Sea issue from China's point of view. It is not enough to stop there but to understand how Chinese diplomats deal with obstacles with other countries. To answer the question, the researcher used Paul Sharp, et al (Zhang, 2021).

Even though Indonesia is the subject of this research, the researcher sees Indonesia as only a reaction to China's policies. The existence of China is based on history, which states that their traditional fishing areas in the South China Sea overlap with Indonesia's EEZ. Indonesia's claim to the EEZ in the North Natuna Waters is based on the 1982 UNCLOS provisions, which should also be used as the basis by China as the country that has ratified it.

To collect data from the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the researcher interviewed the Director-General of Law and International Treaties, Damos Dumoli Agusman. The Indonesian Ministry of Defense interviewed the Head of Sub-Directorate for America & Pacific Defense Strategy, Samsul Bahri, and Indonesian Defense Attache Bayu Hendra Permana in Beijing. To see the Indonesian people's responses, the researcher interviewed a member of Commission I DPR RI Dave Laksono. Development of military strength, researchers conducted direct interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) between Defense Diplomacy Study Program Students and Lecturers with the Indonesian National Army Unit on Natuna Island and the Command related to the unit on the island Natuna.

increasing strength with increased weapons and personnel capabilities consist of:

1. The Indonesian National Army TNI AD. TNI AD on Natuna Island consists of; Kodim 0318/Natuna, Battalion Special Raider 136/Tuah Sakti, and Infantry Battalion 1/Gardapati. The Army Units under the Military Resort Command 033/Wira Pratama in Tanjung Pinang and the Bukit Barisan Military Command I in Medan are

tasked with increasing capacity, strength, and power titles and carrying out regional development in preparing land defense areas. The strengthening of the TNI AD is prioritized to build a unique land defense in the Natuna Islands area, the development of the area attached to the Natuna community.

2. The Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) in the Natuna Islands. It has marine companies in the western part of Natuna Island, and Organic Headquarters in the eastern part of Natuna Island. The Indonesian Navy base is on standby for three frigates or warships and one Sea Raider type ship. The Ranai Naval Base, under the guidance of the Fleet Command I (abbreviated as Koarmada I), is one of the Navy's Main Commands and oversees the western part of Indonesia's sea area. Then the Indonesian Navy strengthened the Command Headquarters of the Marine Combat Group I, Koarmada I, as the Command for Combat Operations Implementing Combat Operations in western Indonesia and the Integrated Marine Security Post. The Indonesian Navy also built a Submarine Support Station in the Lampa Strait, Natuna, Riau Islands.

3. The Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI AU) at the Raden Sajad Ranai Air Base on Natuna Island. It has the main task of preparing and implementing the guidance and operation of all units in its ranks, fostering aerospace potential providing operational support for other parties. Units. Since 2015 the status of this base has been raised from a Type C Air Base to a Type B Air Base, led by a Commander with the rank of Colonel. This base began to expand the base for fighter aircraft and added four squadrons; 52, 475, 476, and 477 Paskhas Air Squadrons. Then they would build an Air Force Detachment on Subi Island to defend the Japanese Air Base that was abandoned before World War II.

Strengthening military bases is in line with efforts to build transnational trust. Based on the previous explanation, it can be assumed that the construction of military bases in defense diplomacy to build defense capabilities. (defense diplomacy for defense capabilities). So, in this case, it is necessary to describe the factual

conditions that occur both in the military and non-military spectrum to formulate the strengthening of military bases in the Riau Islands.

According to the Head of the Defense Strategy Information Center (Kapus Infostrahan), Brigadier General Ignatius Joko Purwanto, accompanied by the Head of the Strategic Analysis Division (Head of Astra) Col. Adm Waskita Adi, discovered the fact that the actual threat in Riau Islands created urgency in strengthening military bases in the Riau Islands region. This is in line with the real threat in the form of sovereignty, which is divided into several factors, such as the presence of foreign ships exploiting ships in the waters of the South China Sea with explosives, which can disrupt aquatic ecosystems, as well as illegal trade that does not go through formal mechanisms such as processing customs permits which can harm state revenue.

According to sources, if drawn from geopolitical issues, the threat of foreign ships exploiting the territorial waters in Indonesia's EEZ, including the waters around Natuna Islands and planes going back and forth from other state actors, raises concerns about the nation's sovereignty. In addition, the rampant illegal trade in the area is often exploited by irresponsible individuals for personal gain. Therefore, according to records found based on the explanation of the Ministry of Defense, military bases owned in Indonesia must be used as an instrument in cooperating with other countries, at least in the ASEAN region contestation. Cooperation formed through forums such as ADMM and ADSOM can encourage further intensification by exchanging strategic information to encourage integrated alliances to deal with external threats outside the ASEAN region.

4. The Joint Command Region I. The part of the Joint Command of the Indonesian National Armed Forces is based on the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 66 of 2019 concerning the Organizational Structure of the Indonesian National Armed Forces, which functions as an initial follow-up. This Joint Unit is the central operations

command of the TNI Headquarters to integrate the existing TNI AD, TNI AL and TNI AU units led by a three-star attack commander.

According to Asops Kaskogabwilhan I, represented by Paban III/Lat, Marine Colonel (F) Taman Sembiring, Kogabwilhan followed the instructions of the TNI Commander, so all actions must follow the standard procedures of the TNI Commander. The Komando Gabungan Wilayah Pertahanan (Kogabwilhan=Join Force) to prevent threats conveyed at the beginning of the discussion in its joint operation and led by the Commander of the Commander Kogabwilhan who deploys existing bases. Threats that occur in the waters of the South China Sea (resources use the term 'North Natuna Sea' for reasons of nationalism) are carried out in coordination with internal parties, such as Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla RI) and Air and Water Police (Polairud). The lack of coordination from external parties is believed to be a dilemmatic disappointment, where Indonesia is 'trapped' in the ASEAN regional contestation, where the form of defense cooperation has not yet reached the stage of joint training, let alone forming between countries. Operational task forces and form mutual defense alliances.

Enforcement of the law of the sea

Indonesia's defense diplomacy has been carried out since the United Nations Conference I (1958) and the United Nations Conference II (1960) until it succeeded in encouraging the birth of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Indonesia ratified by Act No. 17 of 1985 on Ratification of Convention United Nations on the Law of the Sea 1982 (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia Year 1985 Number 76). Then regarding fisheries, Indonesia has Law number 31 of 2004 as amended by Law number 45 of 2009 concerning Fisheries.

Since the Jokowi administration, efforts to enforce the law of the sea have begun by appointing Susi Pudjiastuti as Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP). The first time the Jokowi administration faced maritime issues was the issue of illegal fishing. Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Susi Pudijastuti uses the

Fisheries Law to catch and sink vessels that engage in IUU fishing. This illegal activity causes state losses in addition to legal problems. The second period of Jokowi's administration, Minister Susi Pudjiastuti, changed and the problem of maritime territorial violations was handled by the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) by deploying marine patrol boats and Navy Units in the context of police duties and maritime diplomacy.

The Defense Diplomacy Indonesia through the construction of military bases in Natuna and Riau Islands to support law enforcement at sea. Security threats, both actual and potential, are urgent. Transparent law enforcement, synergistic central and regional policies, building military and non-military forces, and promoting the general welfare in Riau Islands are crucial in building defense forces in the region, especially in the Riau Islands as the spearhead of the South China Sea issue.

Potential Management and Governance of Local Government

Indonesia realizes that the management of potential fishers in the South China Sea area is still lacking. According to the Commander of the Ranai Naval Base, the tradition of fishers in catching fish is still traditional; fishers use small boats, straight fishing gear and are less organized. Then fishers do not yet have the managerial ability to catch large amounts of fish. Potentials in the Riau Islands region that are in direct contact with the South China Sea include stone and metal mining business; additional product transportation business; mining product processing industry; trading business of rock mining products; construction services for field preparation work for mining land and mining potential research services.

Given the density of only 252 people per square kilometer. In addition, according to the Central Statistics Agency, in 2020, the population in the Riau Islands is estimated at 2,064,564 (2.06 million people), making the ideal number of human resources able to contribute a lot to develop in the Riau archipelago. The characteristics of the Riau Archipelago, which are indeed a maritime community as a maritime industry strategy, are

in line with the geopolitical concept of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which embodies the World Maritime Axis. Given the enormous potential of natural resources, human resources, and other facilities and infrastructure, it is necessary to protect the entire sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, especially in the Riau Archipelago. State defense forces, both military and non-military, are directed to defend the Riau Islands.

According to Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH) Maritime University Law lecturer, Suryadi, an essential instrument in the South China Sea area is building a military base. However, factors such as nationalism, domestic political support, connectivity of regional and central policies to internal disturbances cannot be separated from these threats. Drug trafficking, the existence of cartel mafia, to the environmental crisis that occurred in the Riau Islands region can threaten the stability of the people of the Riau Islands. Furthermore, according to Suryadi, Riau Islands must have special regional autonomy such as Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, DKI Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Papua. This is based on geographical facts that align with PMD's vision; namely, waters, not land, dominate the Riau Islands. In line with the Total People's Defense and Security System (Sishankamrata) concept, where military and non-military elements unite to build a solid defense force.

The escalation of threats in the South China Sea has shifted from the issue of island ownership to an issue of maritime and regional security. Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy supports a more equitable resolution of the South China Sea issue. The reluctance of the claimants, particularly China to turn the case over to a third party, will prolong the resolution of the problem and will even continue. Although United State America and its allies are not included in the claimant countries, the establishment of the AUKUS Defense Pact shows that freedom of navigation will be disrupted if the South China Sea issue is prolonged. China is quite reliable in terms of engineering opinion, as if the issue of island ownership is a bilateral issue, while China itself is not open to the

involvement of third parties. At the same time, China has improved at a macro level since the rise of the Chinese economy since 1989, then gradually issued a "TORB" policy starting in 2013 and culminating in 2017, firmly reclaiming the glory of the "Silk Road". The struggle for trade routes and the use of regional space is a trigger for maritime conflicts in the South China region. ASEAN is divided when choosing to be close to China or the United States; during the 19th Pandemic, the atmosphere worsened, followed by military exercises between the parties. Indonesia responded to the rise of China by conducting economic cooperation. The reorientation of defense diplomacy under the Jokowi administration shows that there were efforts to strengthen Indonesia's interests in the maritime area in the first period by strengthening the function of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, shifting in the second period by the Maritime Security Agency of the Republic of Indonesia and the Indonesian Navy to strengthen maritime sovereignty and security.

Indonesia's defense diplomacy in the South China Sea is to maintain balance by establishing balanced cooperation with various parties. Indonesia has shown a neutral attitude towards both China and the United States by taking advantage of the other side of the problem. When security issues are a concern, Indonesia carries out economic activities and even increases domestic investment.

The design of Indonesia's defense diplomacy pattern in dealing with the escalation of threats in the South China Sea follows Indonesia's free and active policy to always maintain balance in the region by building proportional communication and cooperation between various parties. A review of the South China Sea issue if you look at the natural conditions of the community and micro activities around the South China Sea, especially the Natuna area and the Riau Islands Province, shows that there has been no change in people's attitudes. However, if you look at the macro environment through mass media data in the South China Sea, it can be seen that the elites' attitudes are divided. The defiant attitude and suspicion towards China for

worrying about China's uncertain nine-dash line makes the boundaries of China's desires for the claimed territory also uncertain. However, the elite of the people who support China is

optimistic that China is the future ruler. At least now China is paying more attention to the area to restore the glory of the "Silk Road".

Conclusions

There is truth in Damos Dumoli Agusman's explanation that the South China Sea issue is China's success in shifting the legal issue of island ownership to the politicization of regional security. It is almost the same as Syamsul Bahri's opinion that the South China Sea issue is not enough from a legal perspective alone, but efforts to control more potential by politicizing security issues need to be anticipated early. The increase in China's military power title and the emergence of the AUKUS defense alliance shows that Indonesia's prediction not to become a claimant country is more appropriate. Not only is Indonesia's desire to continue to host ASEAN countries, but Indonesia is a pioneer that the politicization of South China Sea security has undermined ASEAN's regional power. Indonesia's interest in China's BRI Program is not only to maintain economic interests with China but Indonesia is not part of a hidden alliance of America in the region.

The strengthening of China's military by the United States and Britain shows Australia's policy of abandoning some of its traditional alliances. Perhaps judging from the benefits of a closed country and participating in submarine patrols together with Japan and Canada, it might

be considered lagging. If Australia sees China as a threat that should bypass Indonesia, it also does not appear to be part of the defense agreement. If Indonesia is a threat, neither will nuclear-powered submarines deal with threats from Indonesia. The construction of nuclear-powered submarines will become an unrivaled force in the region of archipelagic countries, including Indonesia. Therefore, Indonesia emphasizes the importance of Australia's commitment to continue to fulfill its obligations which have ratified the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) since 1970.

Thus, the reorientation of Indonesia's defense diplomacy shifted from the SBY administration, which was closer to the United States, to China in the Jokowi era. Indonesia's proximity to China in the Jokowi administration is more motivated by economic needs and infrastructure development. Meanwhile, Indonesia's security issues show independence even in the face of China. Indonesia's caution in dealing with China is the same as a caution against the west, including the AUKUS defense alliance, which uses nuclear as part of Australia's submarines.

References

- Bueger, C. (2015). What is Maritime Security? Murphy 2010, 1–11.
- Buzan, B. (1991). of global security New patterns in the twenty-first century. 67(3), 431–451. DOI: 10.2307/2621945
- Damuri, Y. R., Perkasa, V., Atje, R., & Hirawan, F. (2019). Perceptions and Readiness of Indonesia Towards the Belt and. In Centre for Strategic International Studies.
- Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (2001). T AKING STOCK: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and. Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci., 391–416.
- Indonesia, D. M. of the R. of. (2015). Indonesian defence White Paper 2015. Ministry of defence of the republic of Indonesia.
- Jefferson Ng. (2020). The Natuna Sea Incident: How Indonesia Is Managing Its Bilateral Relationship with China – The Diplomat. The Diplomat. Available from: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/the-natuna-sea-incident-how-indonesia-is-managing-its-bilateral-relationship-with-china/>
- Jenne, N. (2017). Managing Territorial Disputes in Southeast Asia: Is There More than the South China Sea? Journal of Current

- Southeast Asian Affairs, 35–61. DOI: 10.1177/186810341703600302
- Majumdar, M. (2021). Beijing Raising the Ante in the Natunas: The Next Flash Point in the South China Sea? *India Quarterly*, 77(3), 462–478. DOI:10.1177/09749284211027249
- Meyer, P. K., Nurmandi, A., & Agustiyara, A. (2019). Indonesia's swift securitization of the Natuna Islands how Jakarta countered China's claims in the South China Sea. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 27(1), 70–87. DOI: 10.1080/02185377.2019.1590724
- Razeto, S. B., & Jenne, N. (2021). Security and defence policy documents: a new dataset. *Defense & Security Analysis*, 00(3), 1–18. DOI: 10.1080/14751798.2021.1959730
- Surya Wiranto, Hikmanto Juwana, S. S. and K. B. (2015). Disputes-of-south-china-sea-from-international Law Perspective. *The Southeast Asia Law Journal* Vol 1 No.1 2015.
- Zhang, Q. (2021). China's Global Diplomacy: Introduction to the Special Issue. 16, 195–202. DOI: 10.1163/1871191X-bja10071