

# THE URGENCY OF INDONESIA'S DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN RESPONDING TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONFLICT

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## ABSTRACTION

Geopolitical conflict in the South China Sea is a complex and complicated issue, involving several countries that are divided into claimant states and non-claimant states. Claimant states refer to countries such as China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei Darusalam that claim territory in the South China Sea, while Indonesia is included in the non-claimant state category. This is due to the development of problems that continue from year to year, while the geographical position and the South China Sea route have strategic importance. As the world's maritime axis, Indonesia must maintain a neutral position and play a role in achieving peace in the conflict by utilising opportunities in the international context. This research uses a qualitative method with descriptive analysis, by collecting data through literature sources such as books, journals, and magazines. The focus of this research is to understand the role and benefits of Indonesia's defence diplomacy in handling geopolitical conflicts in the South China Sea, both on a national and international scale. The results show that Indonesia plays an active role in realising world peace through conflict resolution in the South China Sea, by promoting peaceful resolution based on UNCLOS. In this process, Indonesia gained benefits such as the maintenance of maritime sovereignty, increased regional security and stability, strengthened bilateral relations, and became a promoter in providing peaceful solutions in accordance with international law.

**Keywords:** *Defence Diplomacy, South China Sea Conflict, Indonesia's National Securities.*

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) remains a major concern in the ASEAN region due to overlapping claims between countries in the region. The SCS covers an area of about 3 million square kilometres and lies between the southern coasts of China and Taiwan to the north, the coasts of Southeast Asian countries to the west, a group of islands in the Philippines to the east, and Borneo and Indonesia to the south. There are ten countries bordering the LCS: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. At the centre of the dispute are the Paracel and Spratly islands (Debora, 2023).

Geographically, the South China Sea stretches from southwest to northeast. Its southern boundary lies at 3° latitude between South Sumatra and Borneo, known as the Karimata Strait. Meanwhile, its northern boundary is the Taiwan Strait, which stretches from the northern tip of Taiwan to the Fujian coast of



mainland China. The South China Sea lies south of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan, west of the Philippines, the Sabah Sea (Malaysia), Sarawak (Malaysia) and Brunei. To the north is Indonesia, to the northeast is the Malay Peninsula (Malaysia) and Singapore, and to the east is Vietnam. (Kurniawan, 2023).

The presence and benefits gained through the South China Sea region have attracted international attention and become a hot topic of discussion. This region has enormous potential because it contains petroleum and natural gas resources, and has an important role as a world oil distribution route, trade, and international shipping. The South China Sea, as an important maritime region, witnesses the complexity of geopolitical dynamics involving several neighbouring countries (Saragih, 2018). Overlapping territorial claims, competition over resource utilisation, and security tensions characterise conflicts in the region. In this context, the role of Indonesia's defence diplomacy is crucial as it not only affects regional stability, but also contributes to shaping a new paradigm in the resolution of disputes between states (Adzanas et al., 2022; Danuwijaya et al., 2022; Nurinaya et al., 2022; Pamungkas et al., 2022).

Indonesia, as a country located near the ocean and having no direct claim to its territory in the South China Sea, decided to use defence diplomacy as its main tool in dealing with conflicts that threaten security and peace in the region (Pesona, 2021). Defence diplomacy involves a complex and comprehensive set of strategies, with the aim of maintaining stability, encouraging peaceful resolution, and promoting the principles of international law (Prasetyo & Berantas, 2018). Through this approach, Indonesia hopes to achieve sustainable security and stability in the South China Sea without directly engaging in conflict.

Therefore, in the context of defence diplomacy, including military diplomacy, these are constitutionally regulated through various laws and regulations. For example, there is Law No.37/1999 on Foreign Relations that regulates diplomatic relations with other countries. In addition, there is also Law No. 24/2000 on International Agreements that regulates the process of ratifying international agreements by the state. Then, there is also Law No. 3 of 2002 concerning State Defence which regulates state defence in general. Finally, there is Law No. 34 of 2004 on the TNI which regulates the organisation and duties of the TNI in maintaining national security and defence. In addition, Law 17/2007 also provides support for defence diplomacy. The law states that defence development involves various aspects, such as the defence system, TNI professionalism, defence technology development to support the availability of the main weaponry system (alutsista), reserve components and defence supporters. All these efforts are directed at continuously improving defence capabilities that exceed the minimum defence force required. With this legislation, defence diplomacy and military diplomacy can be conducted in a structured manner and in accordance with applicable regulations. This is important to maintain the security and defence of the country and establish good relations with other countries in the context of defence. Thus, defence diplomacy can run effectively and efficiently in achieving its goals (Andriyan et



al., 2023a, 2023b; Khairunisa, 2019, 2022; Khairunisa & Muafi, 2022; Rajab et al., 2022, 2023).

Indonesia's defence continues to be improved in order to have a respected deterrent effect in the arena of diplomacy. This aims to support Indonesia's bargaining position in international relations. In addition, Minister of Defence Regulation No 17/2018 was also issued to regulate the implementation mechanism of defence diplomacy. In this context, the author is interested in discussing the benefits of defence diplomacy in the geopolitics of the South China Sea region. The purpose of this discussion is to find out the role and benefits obtained by Indonesia in defence diplomacy both at the national and international levels. Why does Indonesia respond to the South China Sea conflict using defence diplomacy?

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was conducted using a qualitative research method of description analysis. The data sources used in this research are literature, such as books, journals, articles, documents, magazines, and so on (Luthfiah, 2020). To gain clarity on the issues to be discussed, this research requires systematic preparation of all information obtained or collected. The information is then processed and organised, and analysed descriptively. The qualitative research method of description analysis is the approach used in this research. In this method, researchers collect data from various literature sources, such as books, journals, articles, documents, magazines, and the like. The data obtained is then processed and analysed descriptively. The purpose of this descriptive analysis is to gain clarity about the issues to be discussed in this study. To achieve these objectives, this research requires systematic preparation in collecting, processing and organising the information obtained. By conducting descriptive analysis, it is hoped that this research can provide a deeper understanding of the issues being discussed. Thus, this research can make a meaningful contribution to the development of knowledge in the relevant sector.

## **THEORETICAL METHODS**

The theory applied is Defence Diplomacy, Defence diplomacy is an integral component of the overall diplomacy conducted by governments. However, what distinguishes it is the use of a country's defence resources and capabilities. In this context, defence diplomacy aims to increase mutual trust between countries. In defence diplomacy, countries seek to build a strong and mutually beneficial relationship in terms of defence. This is done through various forms of cooperation, such as intelligence information exchange, joint military training, and defence technology development. Through defence diplomacy, countries can strengthen their national security and build cooperative networks that can enhance regional stability (Rafikasari, 2021)..

Defence diplomacy also plays an important role in building mutual trust between countries. By sharing information and experiences in defence, countries can understand each other's needs and concerns. This can reduce tensions and enhance co-operation in the face of common threats. Thus, defence diplomacy

has a strategic role in maintaining international peace and security.

In the context of defence diplomacy, there is a close link between military cooperation activities and related infrastructure in peacetime. This military cooperation involves a wider range of issues, including the role of the military and non-traditional roles such as security guarding, security enforcement, promotion of good-governance, disaster response, health, and protection of human rights. Defence diplomacy aims to improve relations between countries through formal and informal channels, and has now become an important tool in a country's security and foreign policy (Setyorini, 2022). In practice, defence diplomacy involves various efforts to achieve this goal. One example is through military cooperation between countries in maintaining regional security and stability. In addition, defence diplomacy also involves efforts in promoting good-governance and protecting human rights, which are important aspects in maintaining world peace and security. In this era of globalisation, defence diplomacy is becoming increasingly relevant and complex. Countries are not only focusing on their own national interests, but must also consider global and regional interests. Therefore, defence diplomacy is an important instrument in maintaining world stability and security, as well as improving relations between countries.

Defence diplomacy has a very important role in shaping and implementing security policies in various countries. Defence diplomacy is a special instrument in foreign policy that has a fixed place in the system of cooperation between states and international organisations. There are several forms of defence diplomacy implementation that can be carried out by countries in the context of conflict prevention and resolution. One form is military cooperation between countries to improve regional security and stability. Countries can exchange intelligence information, joint military training, and joint military exercises to improve their defence capabilities. In addition, countries can also cooperate in the development and production of weapons to improve their defence capabilities.

A part from military cooperation, defence diplomacy can also be conducted through dialogue and negotiation between countries. Countries can conduct high-level meetings or bilateral meetings to discuss security and defence issues. Through dialogue and negotiation, countries can seek mutually beneficial solutions and avoid conflicts that could threaten regional and global security. In this era of globalisation, defence diplomacy can also be conducted through cooperation with international organisations. Countries can work with organisations such as the United Nations (UN) or NATO to address security threats that are transnational in nature. Through this cooperation, countries can support each other in conflict management and strengthen the international security system. In conclusion, defence diplomacy plays an important role in shaping and implementing security policies in many countries. Forms of defence diplomacy implementation :

- a. Bilateral and multilateral relationships between senior military and civilian defence officials.
- b. Deployment of Defence Attaches to other countries.

- c. Bilateral defence cooperation agreements.
- d. Training for foreign military personnel and civilian defence personnel.
- e. Assisting capacity building and advising on democratic control of the Armed Forces, defence management and military engineering (Sudarsono et al., 2018).
- f. Liaison and exchanges between military personnel and units, warship visits.
- g. Placement of military or civilian personnel in ministries of defence and Armed Forces of friendly countries.
- h. Dispatch of training teams.
- i. Assistance with military equipment and other assistance.
- j. Bilateral and multilateral military exercises for the purpose of joint training.

In conducting defence diplomacy, there are several principles that must be adhered to. The first principle is that defence diplomacy should be within the corridor that lies between defence policy and government foreign policy. This principle indicates that defence diplomacy is part of the diplomacy system led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in achieving the mission set by defence policy. In this context, defence diplomacy has an important role in supporting the country's defence policy (Prasetyo & Berantas, 2018).

Defence diplomacy aims to strengthen cooperation and relations with other countries in the field of defence. By carrying out defence diplomacy, the state can obtain support and cooperation from other countries in terms of defence, such as information exchange, military training, and defence technology development. In addition, defence diplomacy also serves to maintain regional stability and security. In carrying out defence diplomacy, the state must pay attention to regional interests and security. By establishing cooperation and dialogue with neighbouring countries, the state can create a stable and secure environment in the region. This is important to maintain peace and prevent conflicts that could disrupt regional stability.

In the context of bilateral cooperation, applications on the ground can vary. One example is the making of agreements in the field of defence (Defence Cooperation Agreement). The making of this agreement is carried out based on the provisions stipulated in the regulations for making international agreements. In addition, the signing of this agreement also requires approval (full power) issued by the government through the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Prasetyo & Berantas, 2018). In addition, in sending peacekeepers on United Nations missions, there are political considerations issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These considerations are important in determining the decision to send the troops. Finally, the decision to send peacekeeping troops is taken by decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia.



In the regional context, defence forums are an integral part of foreign policy forums. For example, the ADMM (ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting) is one of the important components of the APSC (ASEAN Political Security Community). The second principle is that in conducting defence diplomacy, it is important to implement a foreign policy that has a primary role as an instrument of peace. (Sulistyani et al.2021) explained this in their research.

In practice, diplomacy is implemented through cooperative activities. This activity is carried out by institutions of the Ministry of Defence and the Indonesian Armed Forces both individually and in the form of operational units with individuals or operational units from other countries. Cooperation activities can be carried out in bilateral and multilateral forms (Prayoga et al., 2021). In bilateral activities, cooperation is carried out between the Ministry of Defence or the TNI with a friendly country. While in multilateral activities, cooperation is carried out between the Ministry of Defence or the TNI with several other countries. The choice of forum for this activity is very important in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of Cooperation Activities.

In addition, defence diplomacy is also implemented through the implementation of peace missions. This peace mission is carried out by officials or officers from the Ministry of Defence or the Indonesian National Army (TNI), either individually or in groups or contingents, in carrying out peace mission tasks at the global level or in conflict mediation (Setyorini, 2022). In the implementation of peace missions, the officials or officers involved are tasked with building harmonious relations between the countries involved in the conflict. They act as mediators who try to reach a peaceful agreement between the disputing parties. In addition, they are also tasked with maintaining security and stability in conflict areas, as well as providing humanitarian assistance to affected communities. Through these activities, defence diplomacy plays an important role in maintaining world peace and resolving conflicts that occur in various parts of the world.

Subsequently by using the South China Sea Conflict approach, The South China Sea region has enormous potential marine wealth, especially in terms of fisheries and offshore mining. Through research conducted by China, it was found that there are very abundant oil reserves, which are more than 213 billion barrels. This is 10 times the amount of oil reserves owned by the United States. In addition, the Energy Information Administration (EIA), which is an agency owned by the United States, also informed that the largest reserves in the South China Sea region are natural gas, with the same amount as oil reserves owned by Qatar, which is

around cubic feet (Saragih, 2018).. The potential of marine wealth in the South China Sea certainly provides optimism for China in terms of energy resources. These abundant oil and natural gas reserves can be a significant source of income for the country. However, it should be noted that the South China Sea region is also a source of dispute between China and its neighbours, such as the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia. The conflict over territorial claims and natural resources in the South China Sea is still a complex issue and needs to be resolved wisely so as not to cause greater tension in the region.

The South China Sea region is an area rich in natural resources and has important trade and shipping routes for the world. It also borders many countries, making it prone to conflict and maritime crime. Indonesia, as one of the countries bordering the South China Sea, has territorial waters in Natuna. Given the great potential in the South China Sea, including in Natuna, threats to security and problems in these waters are inevitable. These threats can be in the form of maritime security threats (Luh Gde Citra Sundari Laksmi et al., 2022). Indonesia is very vulnerable to being targeted by transnational crimes or exploited by certain parties such as pirates and armed robbers at sea, smuggling of narcotics, weapons, ammunition and other illegal goods, timber theft, fish theft, environmental pollution and industrial waste disposal. All of these security threats arise based on existing maritime potential. Therefore, Indonesia needs to enhance security in the South China Sea region and take necessary measures to protect national interests and maintain stability in the region. There are several geopolitical issues related to Indonesia in the South China Sea region. Some of the problems faced include (Djuyandi et al., 2021):

a. Conflict on the sovereignty line

Disputes or conflicts in the South China Sea can be classified into two categories, namely countries that claim the area (claimant states) and countries that do not claim the area (non-claimant states). The claimant states are China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei Darusalam. On the other hand, Indonesia is included in the non-claimant state category (Prayoga et al., 2021).

It is important to understand the dynamics of disputes in the South China Sea. Claimant states have overlapping territorial claims, which are often a source of tension and conflict in the region. Meanwhile, non-claimant states such as Indonesia play an important role in maintaining stability and security in the South China Sea by acting as mediators and upholding the principles of international law. Although Indonesia has no

territorial claims in the South China Sea, the country remains actively involved in dispute resolution efforts and strives for peace in the region.

China has claimed the Paracel and Spratly islands in the South China Sea since the time of the early dynasties and has issued a map known as the "Nine-Dashed Line". Other countries such as the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam have also claimed parts of the South China Sea as part of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) based on the geographical approach recognised by the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. The dispute over the Paracel islands is between China and Taiwan, while the dispute over the Spratly islands involves ASEAN member states Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines with China. Although Indonesia is considered a non-claimant state in the South China Sea, it is encouraged by the UN to play a role in maintaining regional peace in the region (Tandy et al., 2019).

b. Pirate Harassment

In 2010, pirates robbed a Japanese chemical tanker in the South China Sea on Sunday amid an upsurge in serious attacks in the sea region<sup>2</sup>. The attack led to protests from Japan and other countries who condemned the act as a human rights violation (RH, 2010)

c. Illegal Fishing

Illegal fishing is a fishing activity conducted illegally, without reporting, and irregularly (IUU-fishing) that has a negative impact on the marine environment and fishing communities. Illegal fishing can cause damage to the marine ecosystem, reduce the quality of fish caught, trigger social conflicts, and violate human rights. One of the most important marine areas in the world is the South China Sea, which covers approximately 3.5 million square kilometres and is rich in natural resources such as oil, gas, natural gas and fish. However, the South China Sea is also a source of conflict and tension between countries that have interests in the region, such as China, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia. Indonesia has sovereignty over most of the South China Sea based on the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In addition, Indonesia also has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covering 200 nautical miles from its coastline. An EEZ is an area of sea controlled by a coastal state for the benefit of its coastal economy. However, Indonesia still faces challenges in maintaining its sovereignty and security in the South China Sea. One such challenge is illegal fishing activities by other countries that do not respect Indonesia's maritime boundaries or do not report their fishing activities. An example of illegal



fishing in the South China Sea is when China established the 9 dash line in 2009 to claim most of the South China Sea as part of its territory. However, this line contradicts UNCLOS and has no support from scientific or legal evidence. In addition, this boundary line also led to protests from other countries such as Vietnam who felt their rights in the South China Sea were violated by China (Wirawan, 2016).

d. Illegal Drugs

Drug smuggling is the misuse or transfer of drugs prohibited by international laws or regulations for illegal purposes, such as personal abuse, trafficking, or production<sup>1</sup>. Illicit drugs can be narcotics, psychotropic substances, stimulants, or other addictive substances<sup>1</sup>. Drug smuggling can cause damage to public health, the spread of infectious diseases, criminality, social conflict, and human rights violations. However, Indonesia still faces challenges in maintaining its sovereignty and territorial security in the South China Sea. One such challenge is drug smuggling by other countries that do not respect Indonesia's maritime boundaries or do not report their abusive activities (INDONESIA, 2020).

e. Tense Military Activity In The South China Sea

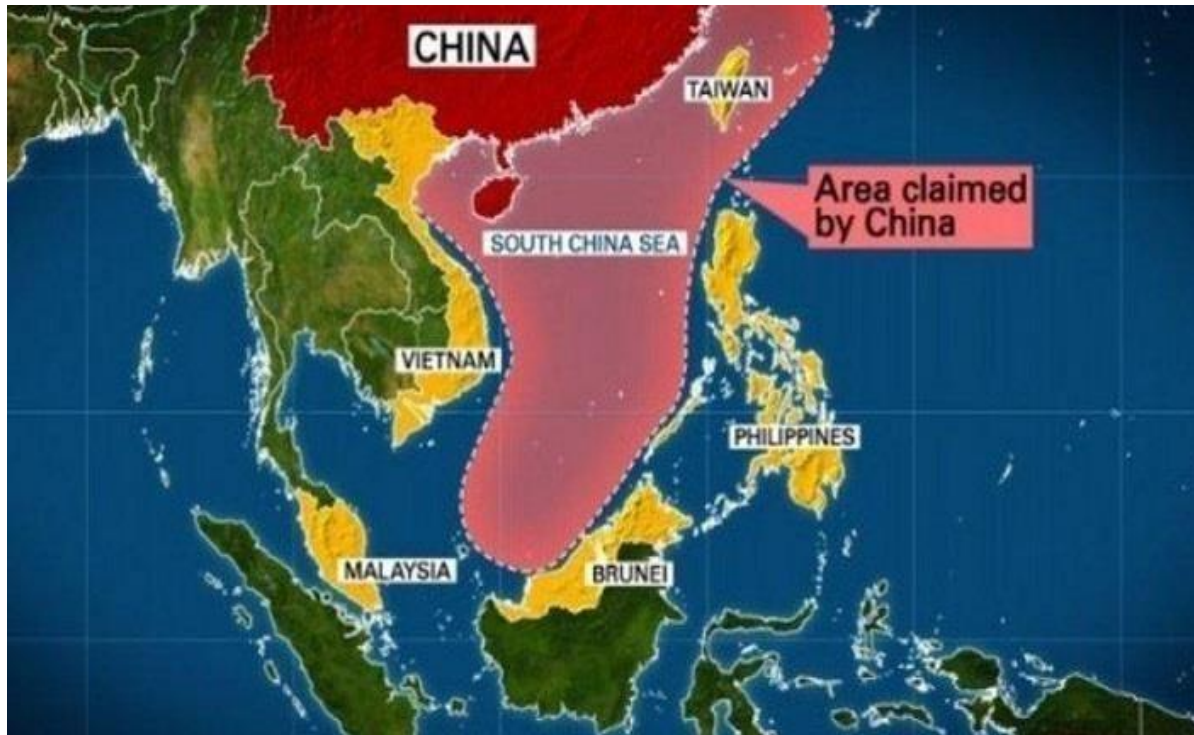
This was characterised by the United States Defence Forces (Nuclear Submarine) crashing into an unidentifiable foreign object, many active military members were injured as a result of the incident (INDONESIA, BBC NEWS INDONESIA, 2021).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **THE URGENCY OF INDONESIA'S DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN RESPONDING TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONFLICT**

Disputes that occur in the South China Sea or South China Sea are considered a very complicated and difficult issue to resolve in the context of international relations. For countries in the East Asian region, such as Japan, the waters in the South China Sea region have high strategic value as more than 80% of their oil imports are distributed through this waterway. In addition, the waters in the South China Sea are also an important part of the import-export route between Japan and South Korea, as well as countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and parts of Asia. On the other hand, the United States also has a great interest in maintaining stability and peace in these waters (Debora, 2023). The South China Sea is a conflict-prone water area for three main reasons. Firstly, the South China Sea contains a wealth of economically valuable natural resources, particularly in the petroleum and other energy sectors. Second, the area is an important international shipping route, as it is located on the same route as the Malacca Strait, which is one of the busiest trade routes from Europe to Asia and the Americas to Asia. Lastly, declining economic growth in the United States and, conversely, increasing economic growth in China, is driving other countries to seek control and influence in the strategically positioned and dynamic South China Sea region (Alika et al., 2020).

## MAP OF SOUTH CHINA SEA



Source: The Global Review

The territorial of the South China Sea have enormous potential in the Asia Pacific region and given the importance of this region, the South China Sea has become a conflict-prone area and has significant implications in the event of armed conflict in these waters. Much news has been circulated about the wealth of natural resources in the South China Sea, as well as the tumultuous actions of countries bordering the sea attempting to claim the area as their own. Historically, Indonesia has played an important role in the resolution of the South China Sea dispute, and the effort has actually started since the late 1980s. Indonesia attempted to use track II diplomacy to bring all parties involved to the negotiating table. At the time, Indonesia worked with Canadian sponsors through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and British Columbia University by organising a workshop called the Workshop on Managing Potential Conflict in the South China Sea (Tandy et al., 2019). In 1990, the first meeting was held involving all countries claiming the Spratly Islands, including China. This was a multilateral meeting held once a year. Over time, the meeting was attended by all ASEAN member states with the aim of contributing technical advice and insights to the negotiation process. Many people mistakenly assume that this meeting is a form of mediation conducted by Indonesia. But in fact, this meeting serves more as a facilitation by Indonesia to increase understanding and trust among the countries claiming the Spratly Islands (Sulistiyani et al., 2021).

In the context of managing the South China Sea dispute, the efforts made resulted in an agreement in the form of the Declaration of the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea in 2002 (Alika et al., 2020). However, the next hope is the achievement of a Code of Conduct between the parties involved

in the dispute. This Code of Conduct is expected to contain a mechanism of penalties and rewards that can be applied in resolving the dispute.

However, in 2011, these achievements were disrupted due to provocative acts of mutual retaliation between China, Vietnam and the Philippines. To address this situation, Indonesia held the ASEAN Senior Official Meeting in Surabaya on 7-11 June 2011. The meeting was attended by high-ranking officials from ASEAN countries and dialogue partner countries. The main focus of the meeting was to discuss the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DOC) guidelines, which called on Vietnam, China, and other countries involved in the dispute to follow the DOC agreed in 2002 and resolve the conflict peacefully (Prayoga et al., 2021).

In the international context, Indonesia showed its active efforts in the 21st meeting of States Parties to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Together with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos and Singapore, Indonesia reached an agreement that the settlement of disputes in the South China Sea should be conducted peacefully and based on UNCLOS (Luh Gde Citra Sundari Laksmi et al., 2022). In addition, President Jokowi also seeks to promote Indonesia's vision as the world's maritime axis. Considering that Indonesia has a large water area and is the country with the largest archipelago in the world, the Indonesian government is trying to make the country a world maritime axis by utilising its potential.

In order to realise Indonesia as a world maritime axis and achieve peace in the South China Sea region, the Indonesian government has made several efforts, as mentioned by (Sulistiyani et al. (2021)). First, biodiversity conservation and rehabilitation are carried out to overcome environmental damage in Natuna waters, which are part of the South China Sea. In addition, the revitalisation of the marine economic sector is also carried out to develop the economic potential of the region. Furthermore, the development and strengthening of maritime connectivity or networks is carried out to strengthen inter-regional relations. The government also enforces sovereignty in the NKRI sea waters as a measure to maintain regional security and stability. In addition, improving the quality and quantity of marine human resources (HR) is also a focus by conducting military cooperation and improving naval defence equipment. Finally, the development of infrastructure, social, cultural, political, economic, and legal security in the Natuna Waters area as part of the South China Sea is also enhanced to achieve these goals.

## **THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF INDONESIA'S DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN DEALING WITH THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONFLICT**

The South China Sea issue is one of the most complex and challenging geopolitical issues in Southeast Asia. As a country with significant maritime sovereignty, Indonesia has a crucial role to play in reducing tensions and promoting peace in the region. Indonesia's defence diplomacy plays a crucial role in resolving conflicts in the South China Sea, which will ultimately benefit both national and international

interests (Kurniawan, 2023).

a. National Interest

In the South China Sea Conflict, Indonesia's defence diplomacy plays an important role in maintaining maritime sovereignty. Indonesia is dedicated to ensuring the security and protection of the waters around the Natuna Islands and other Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). This diplomacy involves various efforts such as diplomacy, security, and rejection of claims that could threaten Indonesia's sovereignty. Indonesia plays an active role in conflict resolution, which in turn has a positive impact on improving security and stability in the Southeast Asian region. Security and stability of the region play a very important role in supporting economic growth, trade and cooperation between countries in the region. Through defence diplomacy, Indonesia seeks to prevent conflict escalation that could disrupt regional security and stability. By taking this active role, Indonesia contributes to maintaining security and stability in the Southeast Asian region, thus creating a conducive environment for economic growth and cooperation between countries, and In the South China Sea Conflict, Indonesia's defence diplomacy can also provide benefits in strengthening bilateral relations with related countries (Saragih, 2018). By acting as a mediator and facilitator of dialogue between the parties involved, Indonesia can build positive relationships with various countries, enhance bilateral diplomacy, and support national interests.

Indonesia's defence diplomacy plays an important role in the geopolitical context of the South China Sea. In the face of competition between countries in the region, Indonesia's defence diplomacy can provide significant benefits for national interests. With strong defence diplomacy, Indonesia can effectively defend its sovereignty and territorial interests in the South China Sea. This diplomacy involves efforts to reach agreements and cooperation with other countries in maintaining stability and security in the region. In addition, the benefits of Indonesia's defence diplomacy are also related to the availability of abundant natural resources in the South China Sea. This diplomacy can encourage countries in the region to maintain the sustainability of the utilisation of these natural resources together, so as to avoid conflict and competition that is detrimental to all parties. Furthermore, Indonesia's defence diplomacy in the geopolitics of the South China Sea can also strengthen Indonesia's image and influence as a country that is graceful, independent, and plays an active role in maintaining regional stability. By carrying out firm diplomacy but still prioritising peaceful dialogue and diplomacy, Indonesia can become a respected and recognised power by countries in the region. Overall, the benefits of Indonesia's defence diplomacy in South China Sea geopolitics include maintaining sovereignty and territorial interests, managing natural resources wisely, maintaining regional stability, and strengthening Indonesia's position at the international level. Defence diplomacy has an important role in maintaining peace and security in a region with complex conflict potential.

b. The International Benefits

Indonesia plays an important role in maintaining stability in the Southeast Asian region. Conflicts in the South China Sea can have far-reaching negative impacts on regional security and stability. Therefore, Indonesia endeavours to mediate the conflict, with the aim of preventing its escalation into open conflict. Stability in the region is essential to maintain the continuity of trade, investment and economic growth, which also has a positive impact globally. Through its active role, Indonesia endeavours to ensure that stability in the Southeast Asian region is well maintained, and In Indonesia's defence diplomacy in the South China Sea, emphasis is placed on the importance of conflict resolution through diplomatic dialogue and based on the principles of international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Indonesia encourages non-violent resolution of disputes, emphasizing the importance of active engagement of all parties involved.

## CONCLUSIONS

Indonesia has an important role in resolving the LCS geopolitical conflict. One of the ways used is through track II diplomacy with the aim of gathering all relevant parties at one table. In 1990, Indonesia held a meeting of Spratly countries attended by all ASEAN countries. This meeting aimed to increase understanding and mutual trust between countries claiming territory in the South China Sea. The result of this meeting was the achievement of an agreement in the form of the Declaration of the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea in 2002. In addition, Indonesia also held the ASEAN Senior Official Meeting in Surabaya on 7-11 June 2011. In this meeting, all countries agreed to abide by the Declaration of the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea and use peaceful channels in resolving conflicts. At a higher level, Indonesia together with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos and Singapore reached a consensus that the settlement of disputes in the South China Sea should be done through peaceful resolution and based on UNCLOS. Indonesia benefits from its role in addressing the LCS geopolitical conflict. These benefits include maintaining maritime sovereignty, enhancing regional security and stability, strengthening bilateral relations, maintaining regional stability, and being a promoter of peaceful solutions in accordance with international law.

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