

# Indonesian Defense Diplomacy in Responding to China's National Interests in the South China Sea

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## Abstrak

Adanya kepentingan ekonomi yang mendominasi kepentingan claimant-states dan non claimant-states menjadikan konflik Laut China Selatan sulit mendapat penyelesaian yang memuaskan semua pihak. China, dalam melindungi keamanan ekonominya yang sebagian besar bergantung pada Kawasan Laut China Selatan terus menunjukkan agresivitas dan ketegasan dalam mewujudkan kepentingan nasionalnya di Kawasan ini, sehingga menambah tensi konflik Laut China Selatan terus meningkat. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis diplomasi pertahanan Indonesia dalam merespon kepentingan nasional China di Laut China Selatan. Melalui diplomasi pertahanan, hal-hal yang menghambat tercapainya kepentingan nasional kedua negara diharapkan dapat dihindari atau ditiadakan sama sekali. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif terhadap data primer hasil wawancara dengan para pakar strategi pertahanan, pelaku diplomasi pertahanan, dan akademisi serta data sekunder pendukung lainnya. Hasil penelitian ini menemukan bahwa kepentingan nasional China di Laut China Selatan ialah dalam rangka melindungi kepentingan ekonomi dan modernisasi militer China. Adapun, kepentingan nasional Indonesia di Laut China Selatan terkait dengan status perairan Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif (ZEE) yang ada di Kawasan Laut China Selatan. Sehingga diplomasi pertahanan Indonesia perlu dilakukan melalui win-win cooperation untuk mendukung kepentingan nasional Indonesia dalam merespon kepentingan nasional China di Laut China Selatan, agar tetap terjaga keutuhan NKRI sebagai salah satu kepentingan nasional Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Laut China Selatan, kepentingan nasional, diplomasi pertahanan.

## Abstract

Economic interests dominating the interests of both claimant and non-claimant-states make the South China Sea conflict challenging to obtain a satisfactory solution for all parties. In protecting its financial security, mainly dependent on the South China Sea, China continues to exhibit aggressiveness and firmness in realizing its national interests in this area, thereby raising the conflict tension. This study analyzed Indonesia's defense diplomacy to counter China's national interests in the South China Sea. Defense diplomacy is expected to eliminate any obstacles hindering the achievement of the two countries' national interests. This study utilized a descriptive qualitative method with primary data obtained through interviews with defense strategists, defense diplomacy actors, academics, and other supporting secondary data. This study discovered that China's national interests in the South China Sea center on securing its economic interests and military modernization. Meanwhile, Indonesia's national interests in the South China Sea concern the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters. Maintaining the integrity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia is one of its national interests. Thus, Indonesia's defense diplomacy should be conducted through win-win cooperation to promote its national interests in responding to China's national interests in the South China Sea.

**Keywords:** South China Sea, national interests, defense diplomacy.

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## INTRODUCTION

China can modernize its military power and boost its military capacity thanks to its rapid economic growth. However, it raises speculation and mixed responses among countries in the region due to its active and massive military posture. Accordingly, several countries have taken steps to modernize their military forces. The

main reason for modernizing is to anticipate the possibility of armed conflict due to miscalculation (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015). The national interests of China and the United States in the South China Sea have led to the armed conflict predicted to last for a long time.

The South China Sea carries about a third of global shipping. Its waters are vital to China, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, all of which depend on the Strait of Malacca, connecting the South China Sea and, by extension, the Pacific Ocean with the Indian Ocean. China's high economic growth, with more than 60% of its trade value by sea, makes its security closely related to the South China Sea (CSIS, 2021). This security dependence implies that the South China Sea is highly connected to China's national interests.

On the other hand, the United States has implemented a strategic policy called the "U.S. rebalancing strategy". The strategy contains diplomatic, economic, and military elements, but the military element attracts the most attention. The development of China's military power and the U.S. rebalancing strategy will change the strategic environment in the next few years (CSIS, 2021). The existence of the two countries is not expected to affect security conditions but to enhance economic growth, improve welfare, and maintain stability and peace in the region (Kemhan RI, 2015).

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that about 80% of global trade by volume and 70% by value is transported by sea. Of that volume, 60% of maritime trade passes through Asia, with the South China Sea carrying about a third of global shipping. It signifies the great importance of its waters to China, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, which rely heavily on the Malacca Strait, linking the South China Sea and, subsequently, the Pacific Ocean with the Indian Ocean as the world's second-largest economy. China conducts more than 60% of its trade value through water, making the South China Sea crucial to its economic security. The South China Sea has garnered significant attention as a vital trade artery for many of the world's largest economies. The high concentration of commercial goods flowing through the relatively narrow Strait of Malacca has raised concerns about its vulnerability as a strategic chokepoint. Writings often claim that \$5.3 trillion worth of goods transit through the South China Sea each year, with \$1.2 trillion accounting for trade with the United States. This \$5.3 trillion has been in regular use since late 2010, despite

significant changes in world trade over the past five years (CSIS, 2021).

The South China Sea and the seabed beneath it contain a wealth of natural resources, living and non-living. The South China Sea is also a strategic shipping area on which most of the world's economic connectivity depends. China unilaterally, and contrary to international law, has made a claim based on the nine-dash line (9DL), which cuts Indonesia's EEZ in the Natuna waters. Following the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Indonesia possesses three Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes (ALKI) and four strategic choke points for global interests. ALKI I crosses the South China Sea, the Natuna Sea, the Karimata Strait, the Java Sea, the Sunda Strait, and the Indonesian Ocean. ALKI II passes the Sulawesi Sea, the Makassar Strait, the Flores Sea, and the Lombok Strait to the Indonesian Ocean. Meanwhile, ALKI III is divided into several routes and axes. ALKI III A crosses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku, Seram, Banda, Ombai, and Sawu Seas to the Indonesian Ocean; ALKI III B traverses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku, Seram, Banda, Leti, and Timor Seas; ALKI III C crosses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku, Seram, Banda, and Arafura Seas; ALKI III D crosses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku Sea, the Seram Sea, the Banda Sea, the Ombai Strait and the Sewu Sea to the Indonesian Ocean; and ALKI III E crosses the Sulawesi Sea, the Maluku Sea, the Seram Sea, the Banda Sea, the Ombai Strait, and the Sawu Sea. Meanwhile, the four choke points encompass the Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar Straits (Kemhan RI, 2015).

The strategic value of the South China Sea creates conflict between China and both claimant and non-claimant states, such as the United States, which has interests in the South China Sea by issuing a rebalancing strategy policy. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea "continue to be a source of tension and potential conflict between China and other countries in the region" (Kembara, 2018). Geostrategically, Indonesia is obliged to secure the Malacca Strait. It is the busiest trade traffic area globally, connecting West and East Asia. This geostrategy places Indonesia in the conflict between

American and Chinese power in the South China Sea, responds to China's national interests in the China Sea, and maintains Indonesia's national interests. Concerning the background of the South China Sea conflict, there is a need for a defense approach, not only in offensive but also in the defense elements in building cooperation. This defense diplomacy sheds fresh light on the South China Sea dispute. Moreover, China employs more defense diplomacy in military campaigns, prompting Indonesia to do so.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The national interests of a country will serve as a reference in formulating and determining a national security strategy. National interests are vital for analyzing the international behavior of a country. The reasons for a country to interact, cooperate, or conflict can be seen through national interests. Regarding cooperative behavior, national interests can help explain the purpose of cooperation between countries.

Indonesia's national interests aim to maintain the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and ensure the smooth running of national development. National interests comprise three main principles. To begin with, the way of life of the people, nation, and state of Indonesia is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition, holding national development that is sustainable, environmentally sound, and nationally resilient based on the insight of the archipelago. Finally, comprehensively utilize national facilities, potentials, and strengths (Kemhan RI, 2015).

Conceptually, national interests can describe the foreign policy behavior of a country. For example, Japan assisted Indonesia based on its national interests, ensuring the smooth supply of basic industrial materials. Likewise, the Indonesian Government assisted Nelson Mandela at the United Nations and the East Timor issue (Sitepu, 2011; Ye, 2019). National interests are fundamental in international politics and are regarded as the basis of a country's foreign policy (Ye, 2019).

In Morgenthau's thought, national interests have similarities with the United States Constitution, such as the general welfare and human rights and the right to legal protection. This concept contains a minimum meaning attached to the concept itself. However, the implication is beyond the minimum meaning. The political tradition and cultural context in which a country makes decisions about its foreign policy shape the concept of things logically commensurate with their content. The minimum meaning inherent in the concept of national interests is survival. Hence, Morgenthau asserted that the minimum ability of nations is to protect their physical, political, and cultural identities from interference from other countries. Specifically, countries must maintain their territorial integrity (physical identity), political identity, and political-economic regimes such as competitive democracy, communism, capitalism, socialism, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism. Cultural identity is always related to ethnicity, religion, language, norms, and history (Ye, 2019).

Concerning the interests of an alliance, Morgenthau further mentioned that national interests dominate regional interests. In Morgenthau's view, alliances should be supported by the mutual security of the participating states and not based on ideological and moral principles (Sitepu, 2011; Ye, 2019). The elaboration of national interests implies that they are considered essential and serve as a reference in making policy in defense, security, military, and economic welfare as a goal or 'mission' to be achieved by a country.

The security dilemma elucidates the situation to analyze the international system through a neorealist perspective. This situation affects the dynamics of interaction between countries. Therefore, countries will boost their security to reduce the security of others, and uncertainty characterizes an anarchic system (Jervis, 1978; Yoder & Haynes, 2021). As Shiping Tang (2009) mentioned, a security dilemma poses eight indicators: (1) Anarchy is the root cause of the international political security dilemma; (2) The state's lack of awareness of the existence and goals of other countries is reflected in an anarchy system; (3) An unintentional security dilemma:

initially, the state only wants to achieve security without threatening other countries; (4) Uncertainty and fear trigger the state to improve the capability to defend and to attack; (5) The dynamics of the security dilemma lead to an arms race; (6) The dynamics of the security dilemma tend to make calculations in increasing security; (7) The result is unnecessary and unavoidable war; (8) A security dilemma comprises material (capability) and psychological factors.

The traditionalists view the state as the leading political actor, with the military as the instrument in power distribution. However, the distribution of power in a multipolar system includes the economy, and this transformation encourages interdependence and increases cooperative activities between countries (Nye, 2004). A country's concern about boosting the security of other countries leads to competition. It is answered through the perspective of Mearsheimer, suggesting three aspects of life in the international system. The first aspect is the fear or insecurity that every great power has, affecting the fierce competition for the embodiment of security that can cause conflict between countries. The context of fear can be reflected in security competition, where a country feeling threatened will improve its security (Mearsheimer, 2019). The second aspect, the self-help strategy, encourages the enemy to increase self-defense in facing expansion, strengthening deterrence. Last, military upgrades and alliances can change the enemy's understanding of the state's motives and warn that the state is more dangerous than ever (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2021).

An anarchy system with uncertainty over security drives a country to create its defense system to compensate for the hegemonic power of other countries. It is due to the fact that states are incentivized to maintain their power-maximizing behavior by the anarchic international system. The absence of authority causes an increase in power to guarantee the state's security in the anarchic system (Mearsheimer, 2019). Morgenthau (Sitepu, 2011; Ye, 2019) assumed that the international system is not harmonious and is destined to always lead to war. It is believed that conflicts and threats of war exist at certain levels. Nevertheless, they

can be eliminated by gradually adapting them to conflicting interests through diplomatic actions. Is there any assurance from collective security measures or global guarantees? In this case, Morgenthau opposed the efforts of a state based on abstract and universal principles in addition to national interests. If all countries in the world must guarantee their security (the theory of mutual security guarantees), conflicts cannot be allocated, and every dispute will quickly escalate. The consequences will be dangerous, especially in this era of nuclear weapons. Hence, in this context, Morgenthau felt skeptical of leaders who justify policies based on collective security guarantees and not on national interests. Morgenthau opposed any intervention by the United States anywhere in the world based on these joint guarantees or under the pretext of defending democracy. Moreover, Morgenthau criticized what the Soviet Union did under the principles of communism and socialist solidarity within the framework of expanding its influence (Sitepu, 2011; Ye, 2019).

Xi Jinping has proposed building a new type of international relations that promotes "win-win" cooperation. This concept is reflected in the political, economic, security, cultural, and all other aspects of China's cooperation with countries worldwide. The win-win cooperation is a breakthrough from the established and specific theories of international relations, and this development will significantly impact international relations (Yang, 2015; Tao, Thamrin, & Waluyo, 2019). Building a new international relationship promoting "win-win" cooperation means replacing confrontation in cooperation, a zero-sum game, with a "win-win" outcome. In other words, it helps each other in times of need and takes on rights and responsibilities in a community with a common destiny for all humanity (Poh & Li, 2017).

This new concept of international relations advocates for the establishment of partnerships that treat each other equally and with mutual understanding, suggests adherence to multilateralism and not unilateralism, proposes a new concept to pursue win-win, discards the old thinking "I win, you lose", settles disputes through dialogue and negotiating differences, creates a new path

of state-to-state diplomacy “dialogue without confrontation, partnership without alliance”, abandons all forms of Cold War thought, establishes a new, common, comprehensive, cooperative, sustainable, and secure concept, and addresses traditional and non-traditional security threats together. To produce the expected cooperation, win-win in international cooperation must be committed to four strategies (Poh & Li, 2017): (a) upholding respect and equality, (b) pursuing mutual benefits through joint development, (c) committing to helping one another through adversity and adversity, and (d) increasing exchange and mutual learning in an open and inclusive spirit.

Win-win is the ultimate goal for establishing a new type of international relations, a fundamental feature that distinguishes it from traditional models of international relations. Under the new model of international relations, states consider the interests of other countries (national interests) in pursuing their interests, examine the development of other countries in pursuing their development, and ultimately achieve joint development and shared prosperity (Tao, Thamrin & Waluyo, 2019).

The British Ministry of Defence stated that defense diplomacy is a concept it applies. Defense diplomacy aims to realize defense cooperation to reduce armed conflicts between countries, eliminate hostilities, and build and maintain world stability. Britain’s defense diplomacy mission is for arms control, non-proliferation, confidence-building measure (CBM), and security-building measure (SBM) (Drab, 2018). Defense diplomacy is a concept involving the armed forces and related infrastructure, such as the Ministry of Defence, in peacetime, as a foreign and defense policy tool. It is cooperative, which differs from the agency’s primary function: force and threats. Defense diplomacy is intended to build cooperative relations with other countries and support them in rebuilding their armed forces (Cottey & Foster, 2004; Snow & Cull, 2020).

The essence of defense diplomacy is to maintain world peace and security (preventing a war), not to win the war. It is concerned with preparing forces to deal with various activities carried out by the Ministry of Defense,

intending to dispel hostilities, build and maintain trust, assist in developing democracy, build and develop armed forces with high accountability, and contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. (Supriyatno, 2014). It is an instrument to realize national interests in the defense sector, aiming to improve the professionalism of soldiers through education, training, and defense industry cooperation. These prove the capacity-building function of defense diplomacy. The capacity building is intended to enhance national resilience from threats (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015).

Defense diplomacy has its roots in pre-1990s history and notions (though in different contexts), but the term reappears in international relations and the military lexicon during the 1990s as defense forces re-examined their role in the post-Cold War environment. Examples of countries embracing defense diplomacy include the United States, France, member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), China, India, Singapore, Indonesia, and New Zealand. The idea of establishing cooperative security relations between the United States, Canada, and Western European nations was considered particularly appealing for European countries to build relationships based on trust and mutual trust with former enemies of the communist bloc and support wider European integration (Blank 2003). In particular, its use marks a shift from a narrow Cold War focus on forming alliances against a common enemy to a broader focus on improving relations with existing or potential adversaries; promoting civil-military relations and security sector reform; helping defense forces to change after conflict or political change; supporting regional peacekeeping initiatives; and fostering regional relations for conflict prevention (Cottey & Foster, 2004; Snow & Cull, 2020).

Defense diplomacy also functions as an instrument of defense cooperation and conflict prevention between countries, which have different ways and levels of operation, including (Cottey, Andrew, and Foster, Anthony, 2004): (1) The military can work as the main political actor, functioning as a symbol of increasing cooperation, mutual trust, and commitment to overcome or manage differences; (2) Defense diplomacy can serve

**Table 1.** Types of Power

| Type of Power | Mechanism | Illustration  |
|---------------|-----------|---|
| Hard          | Coercion  | Country B fulfills Country A's requests because Country A would harm Country B if it does not comply  |
| Economic      | Incentive | Country B fulfills Country A's requests because Country A will reward Country B if it does not comply |
| Soft          | Co-Option | Country B fulfills Country A's requests because Country B is convinced that it is the best            |

*Note.* Adapted from *Soft Power - The Means to Success in World Politics* (Nye, 2004)

as an effort to build a perception of common interests; (3) Military cooperation can change the view of military partner states; (4) Military cooperation can be concrete defense cooperation in state cooperation; (5) Defense assistance can be useful as support to encourage cooperation with other parties.

Cottey and Forster demonstrated that defense diplomacy makes a long-term contribution to a stable and cooperative international order. Tan and Singh observed that the provision of military equipment expands influence in receiving countries (Lech, 2018). Cottey and Forster defined defense diplomacy as “the use of armed forces and related infrastructure in peacetime (especially by the Ministry of Defense) as a foreign and security policy tool” (Kusumadewi, 2021). Martin Edmonds echoed this approach, defining modern defense diplomacy as “the use of armed forces in operations other than war, building on their trained and disciplined experience to achieve national and overseas goals”. Moreover, Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster emphasized specific activities such as aiding the military in their respective work, stating that defense diplomacy exists due to the use of the military as a foreign policy asset in military operations other than war. Thus, activities such as warship diplomacy, peacekeeping, foreign aid disasters, and the construction of military bases overseas would all be classified as defense diplomacy (Drab, 2018).

Tan and Singh described defense diplomacy as “the collective application of pacific and cooperative initiatives by national defense agencies and military

practitioners for trust-building, trust creation, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution” (Drab, 2018). It also relies on a goal-centered approach and envisions defense diplomacy as building “sustainable cooperative relationships, thereby building trust and facilitating conflict prevention; introducing transparency into defense relations; building and strengthening the perception of common interests; changing partner’s mindset; and introducing cooperation in other fields” (Drab, 2018). Nye (2004) mentioned that power distribution in diplomacy consists of hard, economic, and soft power, as illustrated in the following table.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method developed by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), with primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from interviews with experts in defense strategy, defense diplomacy, and academics mastering the defense strategy and diplomacy concerning the South China Sea dispute and understanding the national interests of the United States and China on regional and global scales. In contrast, secondary data were gathered from reputable journals, the internet, books, and other written sources relevant to the research topic. Data analysis underwent several phases: selecting the data, focusing on the data obtained, and concluding to achieve the research goal. This study was conducted for two months.



## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### CHINA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Xi Jinping (Xiaodi, 2018) stated that China's national interests would stick to the principle of peaceful development by never giving up its legitimate rights and not compromising the main national interests. Xi confirmed that no country should assume that China would engage in trade involving its main national interests or swallow the 'bitter fruit' harming the sovereignty, security, or development interests.

As Pattiradjawane (2021) asserted, the development of national interests carried out by China economically, trade, and militarily in a global scope under Xi Jinping's leadership has caused fear in western countries. Especially with China's actions claiming territory in the South China Sea by building artificial islands into its military network. So far, the world has identified "China as an economy, China as a trade". As a result, it never occurred to the international view that China would carry out development on the military, let alone defense.

As stated by Marsetio (2017), in 2009, China proposed a nine-dash line as a form of claim in the South China Sea area. There is a strategic value that 80% of world trade goes through the Indo-Pacific, 60% of which passes through the South China Sea, demonstrating the highly strategic position of the South China Sea. In addition, China has claimed to be a blue-water navy country equipped with two aircraft carriers supported by military bases in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. China has also claimed to possess the most extensive naval base in Djibouti to balance the United States' power in the Middle East. It illustrates the development of China's interests beyond the mechanism of economic and trade cooperation by pushing the mechanism of military and defense interests, raising concerns that the western world, especially the United States, will lose its hegemony in Asia-Pacific as China will take it.

China's national interests focus on three issues. (1) Defensive national interests, indicating that the country's ability and willingness to maintain its domestic demands, such as political stability and economic development, is growing but is only trying to maintain—not

expand—those interests. (2) Constructive national interests refer to the state's efforts to achieve convincing results by extending its national interests to relate to the interests of other countries. (3) Core interests indicate that the state has begun to adopt a "two-track approach" in its foreign policy. Hence, it has a growing willingness to employ an assertive strategy to counter the containment pressures exerted by existing hegemonies but retain a strategy of reassurance against large or middle powers or other minors.

The state's interests are on the main agenda to increase power, capability, or influence. Following the realist view, the South China Sea conflict is triggered by countries' desire to compete to increase their power, capability, or influence. With high economic growth, China has tried to boost its military capability to secure its economy, most of which is carried out through the waters of the South China Sea. China's claims to several islands in the South China Sea depict its tactics to control the region, both geoeconomically and geostrategically, as part of its defense strategy in growing its presence in the Asia Pacific.

To assert its national interests in the South China Sea, China, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, has exhibited aggressive and decisive behavior toward the conflict in the South China Sea. China has been actively conducting military exercises in the South China Sea to strengthen its claims. In addition, it has regularly sent patrol boats to the area and built military outposts and airstrips on some islands. In December 2013, China sent its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, there. These moves have escalated regional tensions, especially after China's unilateral declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea. Some were worried that China would make a similar declaration on the SCS. The 2014 deployment of the Haiyang Shiyou-981 oil rig at a site within Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) sparked massive anti-China protests in Hanoi. After nearly two months, on July 16, 2014, China National Petroleum Corp finally shut down the rig and moved it closer to Hainan Island in southern China. Moreover, China has carried out extensive land reclamation projects in the South China Sea.

However, Article 121 of the 1982 UNCLOS states that no party can claim submerged features (such as betting), and rocks that cannot support human habitation or economic life must have no EEZ or continental shelf. (Sinaga, 2015). In June 2014, the Hunan Map Publishing House issued a map of China, displaying the ten dotted lines of the South China Sea incorporating Taiwan into mainland China. In addition, in March 2014, China blocked two civilian vessels chartered by the Philippine Navy from delivering logistics to a Philippine Marine Unit stationed at Second Thomas Shoal, a disputed shoal in the Spratly Islands located 200 km from the Kalayaan Islands, Western Philippines, and has been claimed as part of the Philippine continental shelf (Anh, 2014).

## INDONESIA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Indonesia's national interests in maintaining the establishment of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia are based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, aiming to ensure the smooth running of national development to realize national goals. The national interests are realized by considering three main principles. To begin with, the way of life of Indonesia's people, nation, and state is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. In addition, efforts to achieve national goals are carried out through national development that is sustainable, environmentally sound and has national defense based on the Archipelago Vision. Lastly, the facilities utilized are all integrated with national potentials and strengths.

Indonesia's national interests are contained in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in the fourth paragraph, which reads as follows (Kemhan RI, 2015).

*'Then from that to form an Indonesian State Government that protects the entire Indonesian nation and the homeland of Indonesia and to promote public welfare, educate the nation's life, and participate in carrying out world order based on independence, eternal peace, and social justice, the Indonesian National Independence was drawn up. That is in the Constitution of the State of*

*Indonesia, formed in an arrangement of the Republic of Indonesia, which is sovereign by the people based on: Belief in One Supreme God, just and civilized humanity, Indonesian Unity, and democracy led by wisdom in Deliberation or Representation. Furthermore, by realizing social justice for all Indonesian people.'*

The establishment of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution is Indonesia's permanent and valid national interest. Permanent national interest refers to maintaining state sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia by not allowing every inch of the homeland to be controlled or scattered by any party.

Concerning the South China Sea, Indonesia's national interests are in the status of the EEZ waters in the territorial waters (Kemhan RI, 2015).

The vast Indonesian Ocean is vulnerable to security disturbances. Following the 1982 UNCLOS, Indonesia possesses three Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes (ALKI) and four strategic choke points for global interests. ALKI I crosses the South China Sea, the Natuna Sea, the Karimata Strait, the Java Sea, the Sunda Strait, and the Indonesian Ocean. ALKI II crosses the Sulawesi Sea, the Makassar Strait, the Flores Sea, and the Lombok Strait to the Indonesian Ocean. Meanwhile, ALKI III is divided into several routes and axes (Kemhan RI, 2015).

1. ALKI III A crosses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku, Seram, Banda, Ombai, and Sawu Seas to the Indonesian Ocean.
2. ALKI III B traverses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku, Seram, Banda, Leti, and Timor Seas.
3. ALKI III C crosses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku, Seram, Banda, and Arafura Seas.
4. ALKI III D traverses the Pacific Ocean, the Maluku, Seram, and Banda Seas, the Ombai Strait, and the Sewu Sea to the Indonesian Ocean.
5. ALKI III E crosses the Sulawesi, Maluku, Seram, and Banda Seas, the Ombai Strait, and the Sawu Sea (Kemhan RI, 2015).



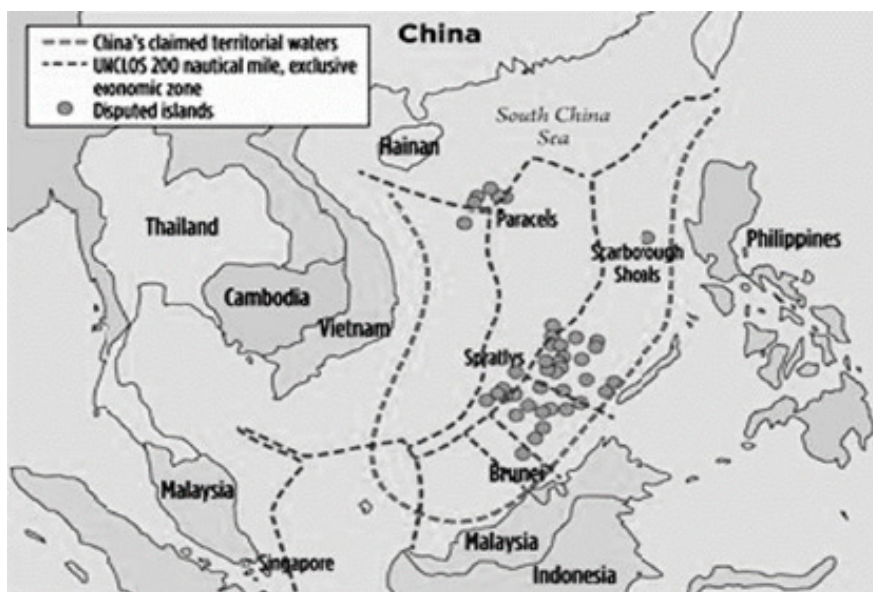


Figure 1. Nine-dash line (Kemhan RI, 2015)

Meanwhile, the four choke points cover the Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar Straits. These maritime areas have strategic value for the country's interests, especially as trade and transportation routes (Kemhan RI, 2015). As Pattiradjawane (2021) asserted, ALKI I, II, and III, which Indonesia owns, are choke points. In the perception of Indonesian defense, the choke point is sovereignty, as International Law recognizes it. Hence, Indonesia is obliged to provide sea navigation and innocent passage.

Geostrategically, Indonesia must secure the Malacca Strait for being the busiest trade traffic area globally, connecting West and East Asia. At least 140 to 50,000 ships carry 30% of world trade goods and eleven million barrels of oil from the Middle East to Japan and China daily. Unfortunately, piracy still marks security issues in the Malacca Strait. Although there has been a decline, the potential for piracy remains.

The concept of the security dilemma emphasizes that an anarchy system encourages every country to increase its security, referred to as a self-help effort. However, the action has raised insecurity in other countries, causing them to compete to improve security. It is due to fear arising from the security uncertainty and reinforced by increasing strength to secure oneself from threats. The anarchy system in the South China Sea conflict

demonstrates that China's aggressiveness has prompted the United States to implement a rebalancing strategy to offset the emergence of China's power in the South China Sea. Therefore, Indonesia, possessing a choke point, needs to look at the dynamics of this development. Suppose it is true that there are opportunities for open conflict. In that case, Indonesia should prepare the proper strategy to be directly or indirectly affected as a highly vulnerable country.

## INDONESIA'S DEFENSE DIPLOMACY

Defense diplomacy regarding bilateral and multilateral can be applied to prevent conflict. However, it is inseparable from the government's political and foreign policy objectives. The results are also questionable when deep and entrenched political differences or divisions between the countries involve. More importantly, defense diplomacy is not a panacea for preventing conflict, as its utility is limited to defense-related fields. Likewise, Indonesia's defense diplomacy aims to minimize the impact of misperceptions among countries with interests in the South China Sea (Swastanto et al., 2017). While defense diplomacy has general connotations, its usefulness in conflict prevention should be sharpened. Therefore, clarification of non-coercive defense diplomacy and other

related activities in safeguarding Indonesia's interests in the South China Sea as a response to China's national interests must continue. In other words, Indonesia's defense diplomacy tries to minimize the chance of escalating tensions in the South China Sea by increasing confidence-building measures and transparency regarding intentions and capabilities among interested countries.

A country's concern about increasing the security of other countries creates competition. It is answered through the perspective of Mearsheimer, asserting that there are three aspects of life in the international system. To begin with, the fear or insecurity of great power affects the fierce competition for the embodiment of security, which can cause conflict between countries. The context of fear can be reflected in security competition, where a threatened country will increase its security (Mearsheimer, 2019). The second aspect, the self-help strategy, encourages the enemy to increase self-defense in facing expansion, affecting deterrence getting stronger (Mearsheimer, 2019). Finally, military and alliance enhancements can change the enemy's understanding of the state's motives and warn that the state is more dangerous than ever (Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, & Steve Smith, 2021).

China's aggressiveness toward the nine-dash line claim has prompted the United States to rebalance due to fear or insecurity against all aggressive Chinese actions in the South China Sea out of concern for the rising level of security in the region. The presence of the United States' power in the South China Sea and the Asia Pacific, both in dialogue and cooperation with QUAD or AUKUS, is a deterrence that strengthens military and alliance development that can change the enemy's understanding of the country's motives, and provide a warning that China's presence in the South China Sea has been more dangerous than ever.

An anarchy system with uncertainty over security encourages a country to create its defense system to compensate for the hegemonic power of other countries. The anarchic international system drives countries to continue to perform power-maximizing. The absence of authority triggers the increase in power to guarantee the

state's security in the anarchic system. It follows the belief that an anarchic system, with uncertainty over security, prompts a country to create a defense system to balance the power of other countries. Accordingly, it has encouraged the behavior of the United States and China in the South China Sea, raising the tension in the region. Under the security dilemma concept, every country in the anarchy system urges every other country to beef up its security. Although the increase is being framed as a self-help effort, it will impact the insecurity of other countries. As a result, the natural response is to compete with each other by boosting their security measures. It is due to fear that arises from security uncertainty and is strengthened by increasing strength to secure oneself from threats. In such conditions, to ensure their security and the security of other countries in the region targeted to achieve their national interests, the United States and China have jointly pushed for military power in the South China Sea conflict area. Meanwhile, as a non-claimant state, Indonesia will be affected by China's aggressiveness and the competence of global powers in the South China Sea if an open conflict emerges.

As Agussalim (2021) mentioned, ideally, Indonesia should possess a strong ability to oversee its sovereign territory, especially its territorial waters. Thus, it is time for Indonesia to review its security concept. Indonesia necessitates creative diplomacy, one of which is defense diplomacy, which Indonesia is quite active in implementing even in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, such as with military cooperation exercises that can build trust relations without taking sides between major powers. Through these defense diplomacy activities, Indonesia needs to develop programs demonstrating its independence on the one hand. On the other hand, Indonesia wishes other countries to respect its sovereignty, including the existence of big powers.

To support and safeguard Indonesia's national interests in the South China Sea, its defense diplomacy efforts must be continued to convince China that the nine-dash line contradicts the UNCLOS and is recognized in international law. Defense diplomacy efforts in the face of aggressiveness, new tactics, and norms depicted by China in legalizing its claims in the

South China Sea must continue to be carried out by Indonesia without compromise or negotiation and provide space for China against nine-dash line claims injuring the sovereignty of Indonesia.

As a response to China's interests in the South China Sea, Indonesia's defense diplomacy can also be performed by considering a "win-win cooperation" strategy. To begin with, by upholding respect and equality. In this context, Indonesia, as a non-acting country, has a large diplomatic space to be actively involved in managing potential conflicts in the South China Sea through defense diplomacy activities without bias in mediating the claimant countries. For example, through the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting forum. Additionally, by pursuing mutual benefits through the joint development of China and Indonesia. Indonesia's defense diplomacy is also conducted through the procurement and joint development of weapons systems. China is one of the leading suppliers of Indonesian weapons systems, especially for anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, and several types of maritime radar (SIPRI, 2017). In addition to purchasing weapons, Indonesia and China have also pioneered cooperation in developing uncrewed aircraft and plans to manufacture a precision-guided bomb (PGB) in collaboration with the Aerospace Long-March International Trade (ALIT) and PT. Pindad. Moreover, committing to helping one another through adversity and diversity. The implementation of Indonesian defense diplomacy is not limited to conventional defense issues. The form of implementation is also widespread and various, such as the handling of Covid-19, where Indonesia's Defense Ministry, together with the TNI Headquarters, held a humanitarian assistance operation where Indonesia received medical equipment assistance from China's Defense Ministry and CSR from several Chinese companies investing in Indonesia. With defense diplomacy not being favoritism, it would further increase the trust between the two countries, allowing Indonesia to smoothly play its role as a mediator in the ASEAN and other international forums in which China also participates, actively encouraging peace in the South China Sea. Finally, by enhancing exchange and mutual

learning. As described previously, Indonesia's non-discriminatory defense diplomacy has further increased the trust between the two countries. This mutual trust is realized through several programs, such as visits and personnel exchanges. Indonesia and China have been actively exchanging personnel for education, such as through the TNI Command and Staff School, the National Defense Institute, and Universitas Pertahanan Indonesia.

From the fourth form of elaboration of defense diplomacy with the principle of win-win cooperation, strategy has exhibited the function of defense diplomacy as an instrument of defense cooperation and conflict prevention between countries. It has different ways and levels of its operations (Foster, 2004, pp. 15-16): (1) The military can work as the main political actor, functioning as a symbol of increasing cooperation, mutual trust, and commitment to overcome or manage differences; (2) Defense diplomacy can be applied as an effort to build perceptions of common interests; (3) Military cooperation can change the view of military partner states; (4) Military cooperation can be concrete defense cooperation in state cooperation; and (5) Defense assistance can be useful as support to encourage cooperation with other parties.

## CONCLUSION

China's national interests in the South China Sea are geared at securing its high economic growth, essential to enhance economic growth and support its military modernization, correlated with global trade through the South China Sea. Conversely, Indonesia's national interests in the South China Sea are intended to protect its EEZ and ensure the upholding of the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia under the 1982 UNCLOS. Accordingly, Indonesia's defense diplomacy in responding to China's national interests in the South China Sea has been carried out with the following steps. To begin with, Indonesia needs to be firm in defending its sovereign rights in the EEZ, according to the 1982 UNCLOS, by not recognizing the nine-dash line as China's claim in the South China Sea. In addition, Indonesia does not allow China to negotiate and bargain

over its nine-dash line claims in the South China Sea. Moreover, Indonesia needs to affirm its position as a non-claimant state, never having overlapping claims with Chinese territory. Furthermore, Indonesia must be committed to developing mutually beneficial cooperation with China as long as the cooperation does not injure the principles of sovereignty and sovereign rights, as stated in the UNCLOS. Further research can focus on defense cooperation between Indonesia and China in resolving the South China Sea conflict from the perspective of defense diplomacy.

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