

# Opportunities for Indonesia–China Cooperation in the South China Sea Conflict

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**ABSTRACT:** The South China Sea has complicated disputes, including territorial disputes and maritime boundary disputes, which until now have not been resolved. The purpose of this study is to discuss opportunities for cooperation between Indonesia and China in the South China Sea conflict. This study uses the method of library research. The result showed that the dynamics of conflict in the South China Sea have many opportunities that can be managed into beneficial cooperation for Indonesia. China and Indonesia have agreed on a development strategy and broad prospects for cooperation.

**KEYWORDS** –*Opportunities, Cooperation, South China Sea, Conflict*

## I.INTRODUCTION

South China Sea area is the focus of the international world and has become a hot and strategic discussion. It has enormous potential because it contains oil and natural gas and its role is very important as a world oil distribution channel, trade, and international shipping. The South China Sea has complicated disputes, including territorial disputes and maritime boundary disputes, which until now have not been resolved. Disputes over ownership of territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea actually refer to the sea and land areas in the two groups of Paracel and Spratly islands.

There are 3 (three) things that are the main reasons why countries involved in the South China Sea conflicts, such as China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, and Malaysia, have mutual interest in fighting over the territorial sea and land areas of the two Paracel and Spratly islands in the South China Sea. First, the sea area and a group of islands in the South China Sea contain enormous natural resources, including oil and gas as well as other marine resources. Second, the territorial waters of the South China Sea are territorial waters that serve as crossing routes for international ship shipping activities, especially cross-sea trade routes connecting European, American and Asian trade routes. Third, the fairly rapid economic growth in Asia has made countries such as China and countries in the South China Sea, including the United States, eager to gain control and influence over the South China Sea which considered very strategic and bring enormous economic benefits to a country[1].

One of the problems faced in the South China Sea case is seeing the other party as described by Johan Galtung as an evil or an enemy that must be eliminated. This dualism view plays a role in being evil or good so that conflict gains legitimacy to exist [2]. The South China Sea has important and strategic significance for Indonesia. Indonesia does not have any claims in the South China Sea. However, Beijing's claim to territory legally recognized as being within Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around the waters of the Natuna Islands is a source of tension in bilateral relations between Jakarta and Beijing.

Ramadhani's research showed that Indonesia has committed to become a non-claimant state which emphasizes the importance of establishing cooperation to maintain the security of a maritime-oriented area. Cooperation can be a tool to stabilize regional security by increasing interdependence between countries, strengthening regional unity, and reducing global power projections [3].

Indonesia offered, with respect to dispute settlement, that "the parties agreed, as appropriate, to resort to the High Council of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) at the consent of the Parties concerned..." and that "the parties agreed that any unresolved incident may be referred to an appropriate international disputes mechanism, at the consent of the concerned parties [4].

The purpose of this study is to discuss opportunities for cooperation between Indonesia and China in the South China Sea conflict. The results of this study can be used as a reference and comparison for students who will or are doing the same research.

## II.LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1 Transformational Approach

Studies on the conflict in the South China Sea have discussed using a Political-Security approach such as Shicun Wu and Keyuan Zou with an emphasis on cooperation mechanisms [5]. Wu Shicun in his other book offers the concept Joint Development (JD) to solve problems in the South China Sea [6]. With the JD concept, Wu saw an opportunity to share strategic interests in these waters.

The resolution of the South China Sea conflict can adopt the concept of conflict transformation that focuses on relations between parties. According to Lederach, the transformation approach begins with two proactive foundations: (1) a positive orientation about conflict, (2) a desire to engage in conflict as an effort to produce change or constructive growth. Both of these foundations refer to the essence of transformation as an ability to understand and analyze that conflict has a constructive potential for change. This is very different from the approach that believes that conflict will usually result in a long-term cycle of hurt and destructive things.

The conflict transformation approach does not analyze conflict as something isolated, but seeks and understands the parts of the conflict that are connected to broader patterns of relationships and interactions between people. Then, the conflict transformation approach views conflict as a valuable opportunity to grow and increase understanding about oneself and others. Through this approach, conflict can be understood as a driver of change that maintains dynamic social relationships and structures in response to human needs [7].

### 1.2 Free and Active Politics

The principle of being free and active is the source of Indonesia's foreign policy. Laws of the Republic Indonesia Number 37 Year 1999 about Foreign Relations, Article 3 stated that the meant by "free and active" is a foreign policy which in essence is not a neutral policy, but a foreign policy that is free to determine attitudes and policies towards international problems and does not bind itself a priori to one world power and actively contributes, either in the form of thoughts and active participation in resolving conflicts, disputes and other world problems, for the realization of world order based on freedom, eternal peace and social justice.

Freedom means that the Indonesian people have the right to determine their attitude in dealing with existing problems without taking sides with the power blocs or military alliances in the world. Active means Indonesia always strives for "independence, lasting peace and social justice" in the world [8].

Free and Active Politics is an idea that was coined by Mohammad Hatta in his speech entitled "*Mendayung Di Antara Dua Karang*" on September 2, 1948. The purpose of Indonesia's free and active foreign policy is that Indonesia is free to determine its own attitude towards international conflicts. The background for the formation of Indonesia's free and active foreign policy dates back to the end of World War II. After the war, two major camps were formed that competed against each other in the Cold War, namely the West Block and the East Block. The Western Bloc is led by the United States and is liberal-capitalist, while the Eastern Bloc is led by the Soviet Union, which adheres to communist and socialist views. These two blocs fought each other by spreading their respective ideologies to influence other countries during the Cold War. Looking at the international political conditions at that time, Indonesia tried not to be dragged into it. Vice President

Mohammad Hatta in his speech, “*Mendayung Di Antara Dua Karang*”, offered the concept of a free and active foreign policy in Indonesia. On September 2, 1948, Mohammad Hatta delivered a speech in front of the Central Indonesian National Committee, that Indonesia should be able to determine its own attitude in dealing with international political conflicts at that time. Indonesian politics is free and active, meaning that Indonesia can freely determine its own attitudes and policies in dealing with international problems and does not bind itself to any power.

The objectives of Indonesia's free and active politics are:

1. Protect the sovereignty of the country and maintain the independence of the nation
2. Maintaining Indonesia's neutrality in the international arena by remaining active in creating world peace
3. Improving brotherhood among nations themselves as an image of the spirit of Pancasila.

During the Guided Democracy period, Indonesia's free and active foreign policy was stated in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, the first paragraph of article 11 and article 13 paragraphs 1. After that, during the New Order era, free and active politics was regulated in MPRS Decree No. XII/MPRS/1966. In this decision, there are two important points that continue to be emphasized. The first is a free and active policy against imperialism and colonialism in any form, and the second is serving the national interest. After reformation, free and active politics was more focused on development efforts, namely by establishing cooperative relations in the economic field with the international community. These rules continued to be applied until finally the operational basis of Indonesia's free and active politics was regulated in MPR Decree No. IV/MPR/1999. In the regulation free and active politics is more emphasized on factors that can cause a national economic crisis [9].

### **III.METHOD**

This study uses the method of library research by utilizing library resources to obtain research data. Judging from its development, literature study is used for three main reasons. First, the problems in the research being studied can only be answered through library research. Second, literature study is needed as one of the stages to understand more deeply the new phenomena that are developing in the field or in the community. Third, the use of literature studies will be more significant to answer questions from the research conducted. Literature studies have four main characteristics, namely the author will deal directly with text or numerical data and not with direct knowledge from the field or eyewitnesses in the form of events or other objects; library data that is 'ready to use' so that the author does not need to go anywhere except dealing directly with the source materials that are already available; library data are generally secondary sources where the authors obtain material from the second hand and not the original data from the first hand in the field; and the last characteristic is that the condition of the library data is not limited by space and time [10].

### **IV.RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

China actively cooperates with these countries to be actively involved in regional economic cooperation both bilaterally, trilaterally and multilaterally by creating confidence building measures [2]. According to Rustandi [11], disputes in the South China Sea provide an opportunity for ASEAN countries to improve their policies in order to reach a settlement. Indonesia is one of the ASEAN members that have the opportunity to improve related policies. Therefore, the development of the South China Sea conflict should be used as an opportunity for Indonesia to review existing policies and instruments to correct the shortcomings of the dispute resolution mechanism.

China is one of Indonesia's strategic partners in the region. It is the obligation of both parties to continue to improve mutually respectful relationships and build mutually beneficial cooperation. However, it is not impossible if China continues to undermine Indonesia to stop oil drilling activities because it adheres to their nine-dash line agenda. If this tension continues, whether like it or not, Indonesia must take diplomacy strategy with China in order to find a win-win solution related to oil and natural gas drilling activities in the North Natuna.

According to military observer from the Institute for Security and Strategic Studies (ISESS), Khairul Fahmi, Indonesia should be able to take the opportunity in the form of a peacemaker role in the South China Sea dispute which is in line with free and active politics, opportunities to be involved in the conflict resolution process, opportunities in mediation or being involved conflict resolution. Marapi Advisory & Consulting Researcher for Security and Defense Sector, BeniSukadis, Indonesia is not involved in the South China Sea conflict due to a number of technical factors. First, RI has a free and active foreign policy principle. Second, Indonesia currently relies a lot on China in terms of investment [12].

The South China Sea conflict has basically had an impact on Indonesia's military cooperation with China. The results of Rusnandar's research [13] showed that the impact of the South China Sea conflict on Indonesia's military cooperation with China is to increase various cooperation of Indonesia-China. This will have an impact on strengthening Indonesia's military capabilities due to China's various offers various military cooperation. China's military cooperation with Indonesia is important for China to keep Indonesia neutral in the South China Sea conflict and to anticipate the increasing influence of the United States in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, the interesting thing when the Court of Arbitration decided that it actually encouraged China to cooperate more with Indonesia in terms of the military. As two of the largest developing countries in Asia, China and Indonesia have agreed on a development strategy and broad prospects for cooperation. In addition, the research findings show that the conflict in the South China Sea can have an impact on Indonesia's military cooperation with China.

Indonesia tends to position itself in a distance or neutral position in the South China Sea conflict. For Indonesia, it is better to prioritize a diplomatic approach. Indonesia has an interest in security stability, for that the policy it has chosen is a policy of preventive diplomacy. This was marked by Indonesia's initiative to organize a Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea in 1992, which was attended by the parties to the dispute. The purpose of the workshop is to divert potential conflicts by building an attitude of mutual trust (confidence building) between the disputing parties. From the beginning the South China Sea workshop was not intended to discuss and resolve disputes, but to reduce the level of potential conflicts towards identifying and exploiting opportunities for cooperation [14]. By the conflict transformation approach, the urgency of the Contempt of Court (CoC) for China and ASEAN countries is increasingly important and relevant, because the dynamics of conflict in the South China Sea have many opportunities that can be managed into beneficial cooperation for the parties, as well as other countries not involved in the South China Sea conflict, including Indonesia.

Noting the complexity of the dispute in the South China Sea, from the perspective of international conflict resolution, it can be stated that the opportunity for a political settlement of sovereignty claims will be difficult to achieve. Therefore, the most possible thing is to carry out functional cooperation such as navigation safety, search and rescue, cooperation in research and development of science, preservation of the marine environment and so on which are of common interest. Such thinking is basically the approach used by Indonesia by facilitating exploratory meetings or workshops on the objectives of conflict management in the South China Sea. Indonesia initiated the Management of Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea. This activity is an effort to establish and maintain cooperation to find a peaceful solution that is not in accordance with its strategic policies. The fundamental result of this activity is the planned activity of the ASEAN Declaration in the South China Sea [15].

## V.CONCLUSION

Indonesia will make its own decisions regarding foreign relations and is not controlled by the political interests of other countries. Almost all reports and documents that discuss the issue of the South China Sea tend to only focus on discussing and analyzing conflicts between states parties, both those relating to historical claims, political sovereignty, as well as territorial boundaries or state jurisdictions. As a result, this issue seems to have reached a dead end. In fact, Indonesia has made many efforts to facilitate forums for meetings and discussions as a preventive diplomacy so that there will be no open conflict in the region, if it is not possible to end the conflict in the region.

By the conflict transformation approach, the urgency of the Contempt of Court (CoC) for China and ASEAN countries is increasingly important and relevant, because the dynamics of conflict in the South China Sea have many opportunities that can be managed into beneficial cooperation for the parties, as well as other countries not involved in the South China Sea conflict, including Indonesia. If the right to use all matters regarding the strategic value of the South China Sea is used for cooperation, then the opportunity to make this region stable is very wide open.

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