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### **Analysis of Indonesian Navy's Naval Diplomacy in Response to the Dynamics of the South China Sea Disputes During the 2015-2020 Period**

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#### **Abstract**

The South China Sea dispute has become a growing concern for Southeast Asia's regional security, including Indonesia. The disputes have been a cause for the militarization of the region, that in turn could cause a disturbance to regional stability. Regional stability interference could threaten Indonesia's national interests, particularly in the economic and defense spheres. As the actor responsible for Indonesia's maritime security, the Indonesian navy has a vital role in Indonesia's attempt to deal with the South China Sea disputes. One of the ways the Indonesian navy deals with the situation in the South China Sea is through naval diplomacy. Furthermore about the geopolitical conditions of the South China Sea, it could be said that the issue is sensitive. The South China Sea dispute involves several Southeast Asia states and China. China itself is a superpower state that seeks to control the South China Sea. Another prominent actor in the dispute is the United States, which seeks stability and security in the South China Sea. Considering that naval diplomacy is one of Indonesia's most important foreign policy instruments in dealing with the South China Sea dispute, research needs to be done on the subject. Using J. J. Widen's framework for naval diplomacy analysis and qualitative methods, this research finds that Indonesia's naval diplomacy during the 2015-2020 period has been a successful instrument in reaching the state's interests.

#### **Keywords**

South China Sea, Indonesian Navy, Maritime Diplomacy, Geopolitics

## **Introduction**

The increasingly complex dynamics of international security politics and the emergence of states' tendencies to avoid violence have made diplomatic approaches a norm in carrying out international relations. The emergence of a tendency to use diplomatic approaches in carrying out international relations also occurs in defence and security with the increasing practice of defence diplomacy. Defence diplomacy itself is a method or instrument to achieve a country's strategic interests in defence and security without using violence with military force. The nature of defence diplomacy is able to achieve strategic interests in defence and security without using violence making defence diplomacy an important instrument in the country's geopolitical strategy. Some examples of this include defence diplomacy used by Western countries to assist the transition of post-Soviet regimes from communist regimes to democratic regimes. Another example is how China uses defence diplomacy to gain new allies in Africa (Winger, 2014).

Apart from being able to achieve the strategic interests of a country in the field of defence and security without the use of violence, defence diplomacy is also an instrument that is widely used because it can provide a space for dialogue for the main actors in defence, namely the military apparatus. With the creation of this dialogue space, there is an opportunity for military officers from various countries to become familiar with each other, both at the organizational level and at the personal level. The existence of this familiar feeling is an important capital in achieving a country's strategic interests in the defence sector, including in maintaining peace (Charillon et al., 2020). In the Southeast Asian region, defence diplomacy is becoming an increasingly popular practice used as an instrument in dealing with regional geopolitical dynamics. The phenomenon of the rise of China and the occurrence of disputes or overlapping claims over several areas of the South China Sea (SCS). The dispute over the SCS itself also involves Indonesia. This creates a challenge for Indonesia, namely the need for an approach that can maintain territorial integrity without triggering conflict in the midst of militarization in SCS waters (Laksmana, 2012).

Defence diplomacy itself can be understood as an umbrella term for several other diplomacy concepts which involve the defence apparatus. One of the concepts under this umbrella is naval diplomacy. Naval diplomacy can be defined as the utilization of the navy as an instrument to achieve the foreign interests of a country in a diplomatic manner. The navy is traditionally used as an apparatus that carries out the function of fighting for a country in the marine dimension, which means that the navy is traditionally used to achieve the interests of a country through violence. In its development, the navy underwent a function development so that it could then be used without involving violence. The development of this function is the use of the navy for diplomatic purposes. However, at first naval diplomacy was used coercively in the sense that it was carried out utilizing a show of force or by showing its strength and threatening nature against other countries (Cable,

2016).

In its development, naval diplomacy can involve methods that are cooperative or co-opted. The co-optation method in this case means that naval diplomacy is used by convincing other countries that the actions taken or directed by the countries conducting diplomacy are the best actions. In other words, the method tends to be persuasive rather than coercive (Le Miere, 2014). The presence of co-opted methods as well as the existence of coercive methods makes naval diplomacy a flexible diplomatic instrument in the sense that naval diplomacy can be used for various conditions and achieve various objectives. This flexibility makes naval diplomacy the right instrument to use in dealing with SCS dispute issues whose conditions are quite sensitive (Gindarsih, 2015).

Furthermore, regarding the dynamics of the Southeast Asian region, the occurrence of SCS disputes makes the political constellation in the region tends to heat up. SCS is the geopolitical axis of the Asia Pacific region and is an issue that is not only important for the Asia Pacific and Southeast Asia regions but is also an issue of global importance. The dispute raises the potential for conflict between Southeast Asian countries and other countries in Asia. The crux of the problem in the SCS dispute is the overlapping claims of border areas or territorial zones (Hayton, 2014). Until the end of 2021, the SCS dispute has created polarization between the countries involved in the dispute. The overlapping claims and jurisdictions in the South China Sea, among others, involve seven countries, namely China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia. The pattern of interaction between the disputing countries, generally against China and by China against other countries, tends to lead to a conflictual situation because of the interests of each country towards the South China Sea. The International Hydrographic Bureau itself states that the South China Sea is waters extending from the southwest to the northeast which is bordered by three southern latitudes between Sumatra and Kalimantan and in the north by the Taiwan Strait to the coast of Fukien in China. SCS has an area of 4,000,000 km<sup>2</sup> and within its territory, there are 170 small islands, reefs, and banks. One of the island groups in these waters, namely the Spratly and Paracel islands, has abundant oil and gas reserves (Dutton, 2011). The large potential of SCS resources is one of the reasons why SCS waters are an important object for countries involved in disputes.

SCS disputes are estimated to have great potential to escalate into conflicts if allowed to continue and are not handled carefully. Even though Indonesia is an actor involved in the dispute, Indonesia also has the potential to become an actor who can make a positive contribution in maintaining a peaceful regional order and contribute to the peaceful resolution of SCS dispute issues (Rezasyah, 2022). In this case, the efforts made by Indonesia are through preventive naval diplomacy. This is among others carried out by means of confidence-building measures (CBM) or efforts to create mutual trust between the actors involved in the dispute. In this regard, it is necessary to understand Indonesia's foreign policy in dealing with SCS disputes, one of which is an understanding of the naval diplomacy actions carried

out by Indonesia. The Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) itself is an important actor in this policy and has great potential to contribute positively to the resolution of SCS disputes as well as tensions in relations between the countries involved in the conflict.

This article discusses how Indonesia carries out defence diplomacy in dealing with SCS disputes from 2015 to 2020. In the process, this article will answer how the Indonesian Navy carries out naval diplomacy related to the escalation of relationship tensions due to the SCS dispute. In analyzing the naval diplomacy efforts carried out by the Indonesian Navy in dealing with the dynamics of the SCS dispute, this article uses the analytical framework of naval diplomacy initiated by J. J. Widen (2011). To obtain answers to research problems, this article will discuss Indonesia's diplomatic policies in the South China Sea and Indonesia's defence policies, the Indonesian Navy's diplomacy in dealing with the dynamics of SCS disputes during the period 2015 to 2020, and the Indonesian Navy's diplomatic capacity in the perspective of the analytical framework initiated by the Indonesian Navy. Widen (2011).

### **Method**

This research was conducted using an explanatory approach, which is an approach that aims to explain how one variable affects other variables. The explanatory approach is useful in providing an explanation of the causal relationship between research variables or providing an explanation of how one thing causes another thing to happen. The causal relationship itself is carried out by paying attention to trends in the existing data concerning the phenomenon under study. The trend is then used to formulate hypotheses regarding the relationship between one variable and another. Knowledge of the causal relationship then provides an explanation of the causes of something happening or why a phenomenon exists. This understanding is especially important in research on unexplored or understudied phenomena (Flick, 2006).

This research is also designed as research that uses a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is an approach that is commonly used in the study of International Relations. Qualitative approaches can be used in interpretive studies and seek to reveal the social meaning to empirical and explanatory studies that seek to use causal relationships between one variable and other variables. The qualitative approach itself is an approach in research that focuses on data and data analysis that is non-numeric. A qualitative approach is useful in understanding how a phenomenon is conceptualized by focusing on the meaning and process of forming a social condition or phenomenon (Lamont, 2015).

A qualitative approach is an approach that relies on inductive logic. Inductive logic is the process of proving an argument by drawing conclusions from specific ideas into general or general ideas. The use of inductive logic in qualitative methods is becoming common because qualitative approaches tend to be used to make theoretical propositions based on empirical observations (Bryman, 2008).

The function of the qualitative approach in the research carried out is in line with the ideas presented by Manzilati (2017) which explains that the reality of the problems analyzed is subjective. This subjectivity is due to the closeness of the researcher to the object of research, the implementation of research that is full of values, and the use of developed and informal language.

The data used in this article is secondary data which is data obtained from other sources that have taken data directly. The data in this article comes from scientific literature, news in the mass media, press releases, official documents, and official reports.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Naval Diplomacy**

Basically, a navy has three main functions, namely military functions, law enforcement functions, and diplomacy functions. The function of diplomacy is related to the use of the navy to support a country's foreign policy without the use of force or outside the military function. In carrying out its diplomatic function, the navy is tasked with carrying out and supporting international negotiations in its capacity. This capacity itself involves the use of the main tool of the defence system (defence equipment) at sea. In other words, naval diplomacy is a way for a country to achieve its interests with the navy by carrying out tasks outside of military duties that involve acts of violence against other countries (Booth, 1973).

Naval diplomacy itself can be done by various methods. These methods can be as simple for example a visit by a navy to another navy or limited to flying the flag on a ship in waters that are considered to have a certain strategic value (Davidson, 2008). Another collaborative way, among others, is a joint exercise. This, in addition to building mutual trust, can also increase the capacity of the navies involved and increase interoperability or the ability to carry out joint operations (Le Miere. 2014). These forms of diplomacy are possible because of the advantages of the navy compared to other defence apparatuses, namely being able to carry out international shipping in a sustainable manner and being able to project power in these voyages. This makes the navy a fairly efficient instrument of diplomacy because it is flexible and has a relatively wide reach.

James Cable (1994) explains that naval diplomacy has four characteristics. The first characteristic is that naval diplomacy has a specific purpose; second, naval diplomacy is carried out intentionally to encourage changes in the attitudes of other countries; third, naval diplomacy is expressive in the sense that it is carried out to demonstrate the capabilities and objectives of a country's navy and that country's navy; Lastly, naval diplomacy uses limited force.

Although naval diplomacy involves the use of military force, in its implementation, naval diplomacy can also be used for de-escalating conflicts or tensions in relations between countries. The ability of the navy to be able to be deployed in conflict hotspots or, in this case, points prone to escalation can be used

for peaceful purposes or de-escalation. The presence of a navy in a disputed area can signal that the area is under surveillance and that conflict should be avoided. In addition, the supervision carried out can also facilitate the collection of information that can be used by policymakers to make decisions (Booth 2014; Parkhouse 1997).

In addition to providing signals and surveillance, the use of naval diplomacy for de-escalation purposes is also related to CBM. CBM is one of the best ways to reconcile conflicting countries or de-escalate tensions in relations. This is because the implementation of CBM can provide understanding to each other on their intentions, behaviours, and capabilities. Understanding these things can reduce mutual suspicion which can increase relationship tension and ultimately lead to conflict (Cottey & Foster, 2004).

CBM in naval diplomacy itself can be done in various ways. These methods include the following activities: 1) Interaction or meetings between inter-state naval officials and/or personnel; 2) Making a cooperation agreement between navies; 3) Providing training from one navy to another; 4) assignment of naval officers to the navies of other countries; 5) Consultations and discussions between navies; 6) Implementation of joint naval exercises bilaterally and multilaterally; 7) Providing grants or carrying out the sale and purchase of defence equipment that involves two or more navies. In principle, these activities increase the relationship between a country's navy and other countries' navies and can build trust in one another (Cottey & Foster, 2004).

Operationalization of naval diplomacy in various conflicts with the aim of escalation has occurred throughout modern history. In the year 1997-2006, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and several non-NATO countries which are allied countries conducted the SEA BREEZE exercise in the Black Sea intending to de-escalate tensions between Russia and countries on the Black Sea coast. In 2006 the presence of the navies of Indonesia, Germany, Brazil, Greece, Bangladesh, and Turkey in Lebanese waters succeeded in breaking Israel's blockade of Lebanon without resorting to violence. The Japanese Navy regularly visits the navies of Southeast Asian countries to show commitment to cooperation with Southeast Asian countries in the defence sector to de-escalate the SCS dispute. Indonesia hosted the Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo (MNEK) and invited China and the United States intending to de-escalate tensions between the two superpowers, particularly related to issues in the Asia-Pacific region (Sanders 2007; Sirmareza 2017; Patalano 2017; Inkiriwang 2021).

### **Naval Diplomacy Analysis**

Naval diplomacy is one of the most common methods of diplomacy and the use of the navy by various countries. Analysis of naval diplomacy can be used with various theoretical approaches, one of which is the analytical framework initiated by J. J. Widen. The advantage of the analytical framework offered by J. J. Widen is that the approach not only analyzes military and strategic aspects but also

considers political aspects in analyzing naval diplomacy. This approach also fills the analytical gaps in other analytical frameworks of naval diplomacy, namely that naval diplomacy is generally used as a pronoun for gunboat diplomacy in other analytical frameworks. Next, other naval diplomacy analysis frameworks are generally operational doctrines and are not suitable for analytical purposes in the academic realm. Lastly, naval diplomacy is also often blamed on the presence of the navy alone, which is not always the same as naval diplomacy. Furthermore, it is explained that naval diplomacy has various interrelated dimensions and affects the effectiveness of the implementation of naval diplomacy (Widen, 2011).

Within the structure of the analysis of naval diplomacy outlined by Widen, there are four dimensions, namely political aim or political objectives, naval means or characteristics and functions of naval power, diplomatic method or diplomatic methods, and geopolitical context or geopolitical context. Political goals can be interpreted as the results to be achieved by a country by carrying out naval diplomacy. Understanding the political goals of naval diplomacy actors is an important part of understanding naval diplomacy. Naval diplomacy is carried out to influence the perception and behaviour of other countries in order to achieve the national interest of the country conducting the naval diplomacy. The characteristics and functions of naval forces are related to the defence equipment and personnel owned by a navy. In carrying out naval diplomacy, it is necessary to match the characteristics and functions of the naval power concerning the ability to project the naval power which ultimately serves to influence other countries (Widen, 2011).

The next dimension in naval diplomacy is the diplomacy method used. According to Widen (2011), there are five methods of naval diplomacy which include: 1) Performing a permanent degree of power with the aim of terrifying or coercing other countries; 2) Special placement of naval vessels in crisis conditions or low-intensity contestations; 3) Providing naval assistance in the form of selling or providing defence equipment, consulting, training, or operational assistance; 4) operational calls or visits to other navies to meet operational needs; 5) special visits or ceremonial visits.

The last dimension is the geopolitical context in the implementation of naval diplomacy. In carrying out naval diplomacy, certain actions can have different significance depending on the geopolitical context. For example, a naval visit in peacetime can have a different significance from a naval visit made in times of crisis. Another example is that joint exercises between the navies of one country and other countries in peaceful waters can have a different impact than joint exercises conducted near waters that are disputed areas. Depending on the geopolitical conditions, the actions of naval diplomacy can be perceived differently. Understanding the geopolitical context behind naval diplomacy can provide a better understanding of the impact of naval diplomacy (Widen, 2011).

### **Indonesian Defence Diplomacy**

Just like other countries in general, Indonesia also carries out defence

diplomacy in the context of realizing its national interests, including interests in the field of defence and security. Defence diplomacy which is generally used by Indonesia is non-violent or does not use violence. In its implementation, defence diplomacy carried out by Indonesia can involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the Indonesian National Armed Force (TNI), including the Indonesian Navy. Some examples of defence diplomacy carried out by Indonesia include sending peacekeepers, conducting joint exercises with the armed forces of other countries, to bilateral and multilateral meetings with defence officials of other countries (Sudarsono et al., 2018).

Defence diplomacy carried out by Indonesia can contribute to the realization and maintenance of Indonesia's national interests in the field of defence and security, namely the existence of peace in the Southeast Asia region and some parts of the Indo-Pacific around Indonesia. The achievement of these things was made possible by the efforts of CBM and the creation of a balanced deterrence carried out by Indonesia. In practice, carrying out the degree of strength becomes an important part of defence diplomacy, especially through joint exercises. The degree of strength through the implementation of joint exercises demonstrates the capabilities of the Indonesian military as well as builds mutual trust with other countries. The approach used to conduct CBM while at the same time creating deterrence makes the Indonesian approach balanced. With this approach, efforts to achieve peace and stability in the Southeast Asian region become more effective (Chang & Jenne 2020; Prasetyo & Berantas 2014).

To increase the effectiveness of defence diplomacy efforts, Indonesia does not only conduct defence diplomacy against its neighbouring countries but also against superpower countries, one of which is the United States. The United States is one of Indonesia's most important partners in the field of defence and security, especially in the context of the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asian regions. The partnership with the United States is important considering that one of the biggest threats to the interests of the Indonesian state currently comes from China due to the SCS dispute. China itself is an important partner for Indonesia in the economic field. This means that Indonesia is in an awkward position regarding its relations with China. On the one hand, Indonesia needs an economic partnership with China, but on the other hand, China has the potential to threaten Indonesia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Therefore, to balance the threat from China, Indonesia partners with the United States (Caple, 2020).

### **Indonesian Navy Diplomacy**

The implementation of naval diplomacy through the utilization of the Navy is an essential part of Indonesia's defence and security policy. The importance of the role of the Navy in defence diplomacy is influenced by the fact that most of Indonesia's territory is water. The sea has also become an increasingly significant object and is the focus of policy by the Indonesian government. This is indicated, among other things, by the increasing number of policies that make the sea a



central object and the increasing number of discourses on marine affairs. Several foreign policies that exemplify the importance of the oceans for Indonesia include the Indo-Pacific Cooperation Concept, the Indo-Pacific Treaty, and the World Maritime Axis. In achieving these interests, the Navy becomes an important actor because the realization of maritime policies requires optimal maritime defence and security. Naval diplomacy can increase the capabilities of the Navy, become a CBM effort, as well as facilitate the implementation of transnational operations, especially in dealing with transnational issues (Scott, 2019).

Just like the pattern of Indonesian defence diplomacy in general, Indonesia also conducts naval diplomacy against superpower countries such as the United States and even China. Indonesia also conducts naval diplomacy against its neighbours in Southeast Asia and other major powers who are important stakeholders in the region around Indonesia such as Australia and Japan (Mundaya et al., 2018).

Naval diplomacy carried out by Indonesia also involves increasing the capability of the Indonesian Navy. This is done, among other things, by procuring defence equipment from partner countries such as Korea. To improve personnel capabilities, the Indonesian Navy conducts naval diplomacy by sending Indonesian Navy personnel to study abroad, holding student exchanges for Indonesian Navy personnel with overseas naval educational institutions, and conducting joint exercises with navies of other countries at home and abroad. overseas. In addition to increasing capacity, these activities are also networking opportunities for Indonesian Navy personnel with naval personnel from other countries. This is also a form of TNI AL CBM (Diannita et al., 2019).

One of the naval diplomacy efforts carried out by the Indonesian Navy that has high significance is MNEK. As previously explained, MNEK is a multilateral naval exercise. Furthermore, the training materials at MNEK are quite varied and involve training in military operations other than war, such as disaster relief or disaster relief, medical evacuation, to training in military operations. The exercise, which is held every two years, can also contribute to maintaining regional stability because it is a form of CBM not only for Indonesia but also for other countries participating in the exercise. Several superpower countries such as China, the United States, and Russia have been recorded as regular participants in MNEK events from year to year (Inkiriwang, 2021).

Naval diplomacy carried out by the Indonesian Navy is also an important part of the governance of Indonesia's maritime borders. Indonesia's maritime border itself is a fairly long and permeable border or relatively easy to pass. This is a challenge for the Indonesian Navy to manage Indonesia's maritime borders. Therefore, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of maritime border management, the Indonesian Navy conducts TNI-AL diplomacy through various means. This is done, among other things, by carrying out joint patrols on border seas with neighbouring countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Australia. In addition to facilitating border security from traditional threats arising from other countries, the naval diplomacy carried out by the Indonesian Navy in the context of border management also makes it easier for the Navy to deal with

non-traditional threats such as transnational crime, terrorism, and piracy at sea (Gumay et al. al. 2018; Vandini et al. 2018; Samy and Kusumadewi 2021).

In the method of naval diplomacy in the form of meetings of naval officials, the Indonesian Navy is often involved in international forums by Indonesia. One of them is a meeting held in the ASEAN forum, namely the ASEAN Defense Minister Meeting (ADMM). The activity is a meeting of the defence ministers of each ASEAN country. However, Indonesian delegations often involve Indonesian Navy officials. On these occasions, Indonesian Navy officials are tasked with socializing and framing maritime security issues to build a common perception among ASEAN leaders regarding threats to security at sea and the need for cooperation to deal with these threats (Lubis, 2018).

### **Indonesian Navy Diplomacy in South China Sea Dispute**

#### **Geopolitics Context on South China Sea Dispute**

Previously, it was explained that the main purpose of conducting naval diplomacy by Indonesia was to achieve Indonesia's national interests. In this case, some of Indonesia's main national interests are maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Indonesian state in the South China Sea. So far, there have been overlapping claims on the South China Sea between Indonesia and China. To respond to this, China often carries out activities through the grey zone strategy implemented in the South China Sea. The grey zone strategy itself can be understood as an effort to convey a 'message' to Indonesia regarding China's intentions towards the South China Sea but in an ambiguous way. This can be said to be ambiguous because the potential defence threat posed by China does not seem like a threat. For example, by sending fishing boats or observation boats manned by militia or military personnel. Another way is to enter areas under Indonesian jurisdiction or by other manoeuvres that seem threatening. These actions often cannot be considered as actions that indicate an explicit threat but are also not friendly (Anugerah, 2021).

China's action was carried out based on China's claim to the South China Sea as territorial waters under its sovereignty. This claim is supported by the argument that traditionally SCS are water that since the Ming Dynasty era and traditionally Chinese fishermen have been fishing in SCS waters. Furthermore, China assumes that the correct boundaries of the SCS territorial waters are those based on a nine dash line map or nine dotted lines. The claims made by China threaten Indonesia's territorial integrity in the waters in the South China Sea. In addition, claims made by China are also used as the basis for violating Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In several cases, Chinese law enforcement officers even made arrests on Indonesian fishermen who went to sea in SCS waters that were inside Indonesia's EEZ. In several other cases, Chinese fishermen carried out fishing activities in the Indonesian EEZ without authorization from the Indonesian government to do so (Muhaimin, 2018).

Table 1 TNI AL Response to Chinese Ship Intrusion

No	Year	Ship name	TNI AL Response
1	2018	Xuchang 536; Kun Lun San 998; Luoma Lake 964	Sending KRI I Gusti Ngurah Rai Indonesian Battleship (KRI) 332 to oversee the ships.
2	2019	Zhong Tai 1 KIA China	Sending KRI Usman Harun 359 to repel the ship
3	2019	Zhong Tai 2 KIA China	
4	2019	Zhong Tai 3 KIA China	
5	2019	Zhong Tai 8 KIA China	
6	2019	Zhong Tai 9 KIA China	
7	2019	Zhong Tai 10 KIA China	
8	2019	Zhong Tai 11 KIA China	
10	2019	China Coast Guard Ship 4301	Sending KRI Tjiptadi 381 to repel the ship
11	2019	China Coast Guard Ship	Sending KRI Tjiptadi 381 to repel the ship
12	2020	China Coast Guard Ship 4301	Sending KRI Tjiptadi 381 to repel the ship
13	2020	China Coast Guard Ship 5403	Sending KRI Tjiptadi 381 to repel the ship
14	2020	China Coast Guard Ship 5403	Sending KRI Tjiptadi 381 to repel the ship
15	2020	China Coast Guard Ship 4301	Mengirimkan KRI Sending KRI Tjiptadi 381 to repel the ship
16	2020	China Coast Guard Ship 5403	Sending KRI Tjiptadi to oversee the ship
17	2020	Chinese Ships Marine Surveillance CMS 2169	Sending KRI Tjiptadi to oversee the ship
18	2020	China Marine Surveillance CMS 2169; China Coast Guard CCG 4301	Sending KRI Teuku Umar 385 to oversee the ship
19	2020	China Coast Guard CCG 5403; China Coast Guard CCG 4301; China Coast Guard CCG 5202; China Coast Guard 5305; China Marine Surveillance CMS 45005; China Marine Surveillance CMS 2169	Sending KRI Usman Harun 359 to carry out surveillance
20	2020	China Coast Guard CCG 4031; China Coast Guard CCG 5202; China Marine Surveillance CMS 2169; China Coast Guard CCG 5403	Sending KRI John Lie 358 to carry out surveillance
21	2020	China Coast Guard CCG 5102; CCG 5303; CCG 5403	Sending KRI John Lie 358
22	2020	Frigate Xu Chang 536	Sending KRI John Lie 358
23	2020	Chinese Warship Sanya 547; Yuefang 575	Sending KRI Teuku Umar 385
24	2020	Chinese Warship Luyang III DDG-175; Yuncheng ADR-887 Weishanhu; Yinchuan Jiangka II FFG-571	Sending KRI Lemadang 806
25	2020	Chinese Warship Sanya 574; Yulin 569; Honhot 161	Sending KRI Bung Tomo 357
26	2020	Chinese Warship Lanzhou 170	Sending KRI Sutanto 377
27	2020	Chinese Warship Xuchang 536	Sending KRI Wiranto 379
28	2021	Chinese Warship 536	Sending KRI Usman Harun 359
29	2021	Chinese Warship Guiyang 174	Sending KRI Karel Satsuit Tubun 356
30	2021	China Coast Guard CCG Zhongguo Haijing 5304	Sending KRI Karel Satsuit Tubun 356
31	2021	China Coast Guard CCG 6305; Chinese Warship Ganzhao 620	Sending KRI Wiranto 379
32	2022	China Coast Guard CCG 5302	Sending KRI Imam Bonjol 383
33	2022	China Marine Surveillance CMS Xiang Yang Hong	Sending KRI Clurit 641

The gray zone strategy action taken by China in the SCS dispute area with Indonesia can be described in the table above. China has a tendency to send survey vessels, coast guard vessels, and fishing vessels although in some cases it sends

warships to intrude on Indonesian waters. The reasons used to carry out intrusions are usually not militaristic reasons, but reasons such as patrols, escorts, or just passing through Indonesian waters. Even though they did not carry out military operations in Indonesian waters, in fact the intrusion carried out by the Chinese ships still poses a threat to Indonesia when considering that the SCS waters are waters whose status is a disputed area.

The emergence of threats from China in the South China Sea has the potential to hinder the achievement of Indonesia's national interests. SCS itself is waters that have high strategic value for Indonesia, one of which is because these waters are international trade routes so security stability is important in SCS. SCS is also a water rich in natural resources, both biological and non-biological, namely fish and oil and gas. If Indonesia loses control of its territory in the South China Sea, Indonesia will lose its resources in it as well. From a military aspect, the fall of the South China Sea into the hands of China also threatens Indonesia's sovereignty further because it means foreign warships with non-peaceful destinations can more easily reach the islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan (Nugaraha, 2011).

China's status as a superpower also increases the complexity of the geopolitical situation in the South China Sea. Military and economically, China has greater strength than Indonesia, so Indonesia needs to make careful consideration in responding to China's claims and actions in the South China Sea, or in other words, Indonesia needs to be careful and pragmatic. An overly aggressive approach could result in an escalation of tensions in the region while a less decisive response could result in increased violations by China both in terms of quality and quantity. Another thing that Indonesia needs to consider is the fact that China is not the only superpower present in the South China Sea. The presence of the United States in the SCS issue raises the potential for spillover effects for Indonesia if the two countries are involved in the conflict (Prabowo, 2013).

### **Indonesia's Goal on South China Sea Dispute**

Indonesia's policy towards the South China Sea is primarily aimed at asserting Indonesia's sovereignty over its territory in the South China Sea. Indonesia's sovereignty over its territory in the South China Sea becomes important for Indonesia considering that these waters have significant strategic value for defence as well as for the Indonesian economy. Maintaining SCS waters is also important for Indonesia because constitutionally the state has an obligation to maintain territorial integrity and the people who live in it (Santoso, 2020). However, despite these considerations, Indonesia also still needs to maintain its relations with China. China itself is an important stakeholder in Indonesia's international cooperation scheme, especially in the economic and development fields. Failure to maintain these relations can also harm the Indonesian economy (Suwarno et al., 2021).

Considering that Indonesia needs to maintain its sovereignty and territorial

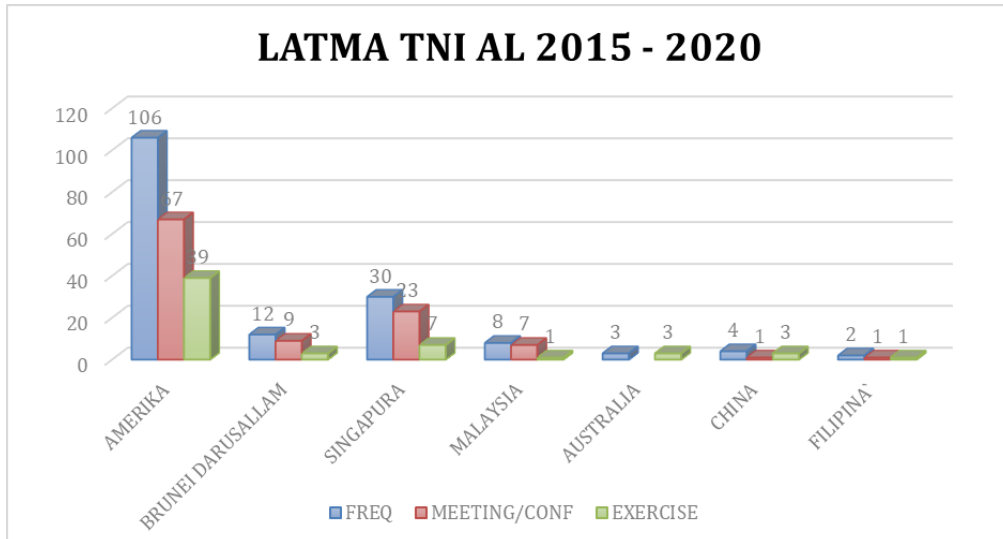
integrity in the South China Sea and needs to establish good relations with China, firm but not provocative action is Indonesia's next policy goal in SCS disputes. With this aim, the diplomatic approach is the best approach that can be taken by Indonesia. This was conveyed by a member of Commission I of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) Dave Akbarshah Fikarno. Dave said that Indonesia was committed not to starting the conflict in any form related to the situation in the South China Sea (DPR RI Commission I, 2020).

The Chief of Naval Staff (KSAL) of the Indonesian Navy, Yudo Margono, also conveyed Indonesia's commitment to defend Indonesia's sovereignty by peaceful means. Yudo stated that the Navy will not back down from defending the South China Sea because sovereignty is not something that can be used as a bargaining chip. This statement was also given by the Chairman of Committee I of the Regional Representatives Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI), Fachrul Razi. According to Fachrul "state sovereignty is above all". Next, Fachrul explained that Indonesia needed to improve the capabilities of the Indonesian Navy, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, in order to have a better defence posture. This is important in creating "deterrence which is one of Indonesia's naval diplomacy efforts" in dealing with the SCS dispute situation (Saputro & Nashrullah, 2021).

### **Indonesian Navy Diplomacy Efforts**

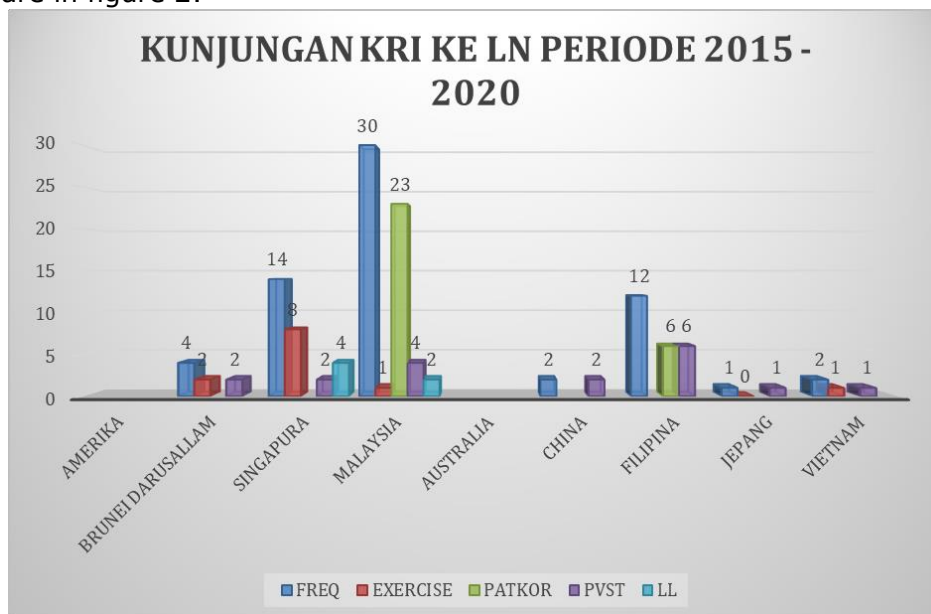
Naval diplomacy carried out by the Indonesian Navy can be grouped into four methods, namely joint exercises (latma), visits of Indonesian warships (KRI) to other countries, acceptance of visits by foreign warships (KPA) to Indonesia, and meetings of Indonesian Navy officials with naval officers of other countries. Naval diplomacy carried out by Indonesia related to SCS disputes is generally carried out against countries in the Southeast Asia region and is also involved with SCS dispute issues. Several other countries are countries that also have interests in Indonesian waters. The countries are the United States, China, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, China, the Philippines, Japan, and Vietnam.

The training carried out by the Indonesian Navy can be in the form of meetings and operational training. The training in the form of meetings aims to increase the understanding of Indonesian Navy personnel on an issue as well as understanding the implementation of operations. The operational training aims to improve operational capabilities as well as interoperability of the Indonesian Navy with other countries' navies. Another goal is to create deterrence and perform CBM. During the 2015-2020 period, the Indonesian Navy conducted 165 joint training sessions with seven countries. More detailed data can be found in figure 1:



Most of the training carried out by the Indonesian Navy was carried out with the United States. This is most likely done because the United States itself has an interest in ensuring freedom of navigation in the Asia-Pacific region. The latma carried out with Southeast Asian countries have a direct connection with the dispute with China.

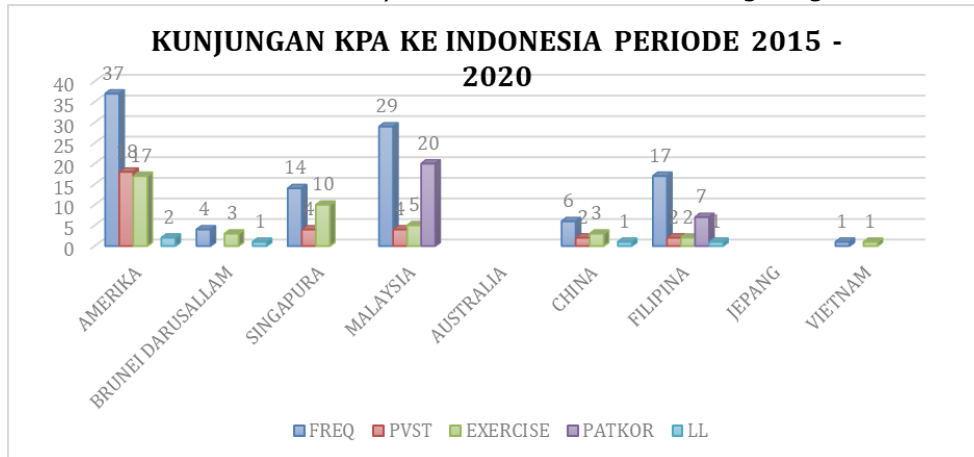
In terms of visits made by KRI abroad in the 2015-2020 period, visits were made to Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, Malaysia, China, the Philippines, Japan, and Vietnam. Based on the data collected, the KRI TNI AL visits abroad are aimed at training, patrolling, coordination, base visits, and LL. Details of KRI's overseas visits are in figure 2:



Most of the visits were made to Malaysia and Singapore. The visit to Malaysia is mostly done for patrolling while the visit to Singapore has a training purpose. Another country with a significant number of visits is the Philippines to visit bases and patrols.

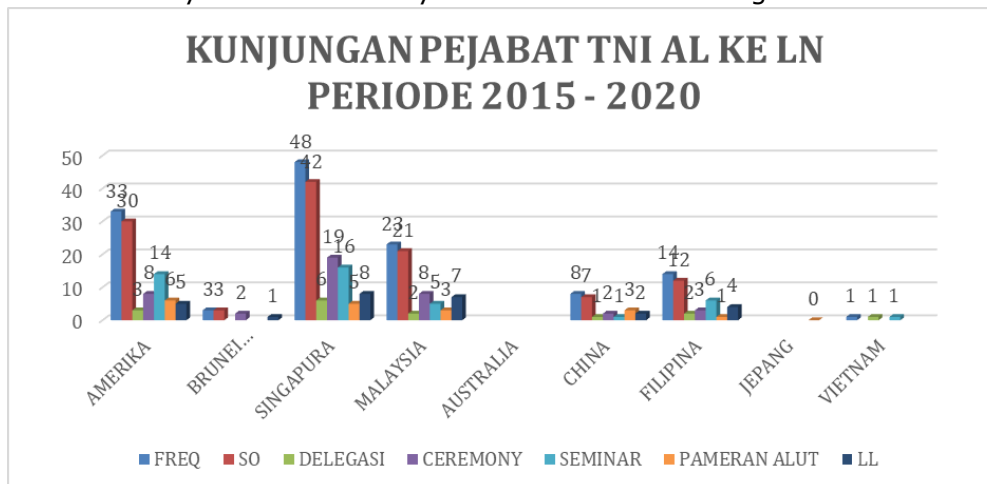
In terms of receiving visits, the objectives of the activities are more or less

the same as visits by the Indonesian Navy to other countries. In more detail, foreign ship visits to the Indonesian navy are shown in the following diagram:



In the 2015-2020 period, most of the visits received by the Indonesian Navy came from the United States and Malaysia. The activities carried out by the United States Navy when visiting Indonesia were mostly base visits and exercises. The activities carried out by the Malaysian Navy when visiting Indonesia were mostly joint patrols with the Indonesian Navy. Other countries that visited Indonesia in significant numbers were the Philippines and Singapore. Singapore generally conducts joint exercises while the Philippines visits to conduct joint patrols with the Indonesian Navy.

Next, visits made by Indonesian Navy officials abroad were carried out with SO activities, sending naval delegations, ceremonial activities, seminars, defence equipment exhibitions, and LL. The countries that became the destination of visits by Indonesian Navy officials with the highest number of visits during the 2015-2020 period were the United States, Singapore, and Malaysia. Other countries include Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, China, and the Philippines. In more detail, the visits made by Indonesian Navy officials are shown in figure 3:



Another form of defence diplomacy carried out by the Indonesian Navy in responding to the SCS dispute is through the title of power in these waters. The degree of strength carried out by the Indonesian Navy lasts throughout the year

by carrying out military operations. The military operations carried out were Operation Siaga Purla and Operation PAM ALKI. Operation Siaga Purla mobilized forces that included five KRIs, namely KRI Diponegoro, KRI Thaha Syaifuddin, KRI Teuku Umar, KRI Silas Papare, and KRI Multatuli. The forces deployed in Operation PAM ALKI include three KRIs, namely KRI Lemadang, KRI Sembilang, and KRI Lepu. The Operation PAM ALKI itself fall under maritime security type of operation rather than defense (Suryawan, Ladjide & Riyadi, 2021), as shown in figure 4:



The capacity of the naval diplomacy carried out by the Indonesian Navy can be measured using the analytical framework initiated by J.J. Widen (2011). The dimensions measured are conformity with Indonesian political objectives, characteristics and functions of the Indonesian Navy's strength, suitability of the methods used, and geopolitical context.

Indonesia's political goals, among others, are in the White Paper for Defense of the Republic of Indonesia (BPPI). In the BPPI, things that are considered Indonesia's policy priorities are maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as maintaining regional security stability and peace. Armed conflict can ultimately harm Indonesia in terms of security and economy. With this goal in mind, self-restraint from all parties involved in the conditions in the South China Sea is important for Indonesia (Sumadinata, Achmad & Riyadi, 2022).

Armed conflict in the South China Sea also has the potential to cause the involvement of forces from outside the region. This was avoided by Indonesia and other ASEAN countries because they considered it a threat to sovereignty. The involvement of external forces in conflicts that may occur in the South China Sea has the potential to make Indonesian countries a proxy for these external forces. The external powers considered to be potentially involved are the United States and China. With these considerations, efforts to avoid conflict are a priority for the Navy in carrying out naval diplomacy.

To achieve these goals, the Indonesian Navy conducts naval diplomacy using warships, Indonesian Navy personnel, and Indonesian Navy officials. Considering that the actors in the dispute are China and Indonesia, it is necessary to compare the strengths of the navies of the two countries. Quantitatively, the



Chinese navy has the advantage. The Chinese navy has more personnel and warships than the Indonesian Navy. In terms of quality, the Chinese navy also has a more modern defence equipment system when compared to the Indonesian Navy. Naval strength is important for the analytical framework initiated by Widen because naval power is considered to affect the navy's ability to influence the perceptions and actions of other countries as well as influence the outcome to be in accordance with what the country that carries out naval diplomacy wants. The existence of this power asymmetry, when referring to the analytical framework initiated by Widen, means that Indonesia has a lower probability of successfully conducting defence diplomacy.

Given the characteristics and functions of the Navy's strength, the methods used by the Navy in carrying out defence diplomacy are aimed at both implementing CBM and creating deterrence. The creation of deterrence carried out by the Indonesian Navy is carried out by carrying out strength titles and shows of force as well as by conducting military operations with partner countries, especially the United States. Cooperation with the United States is especially important because the involvement of a superpower country as Indonesia's partner implies that Indonesia has a strong partner to assist in the event of a conflict. This can trigger an escalation of tensions so that Indonesia does not only cooperate with the United States but also with China. Indonesia also cooperates with neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia that are involved in SCS disputes. In other words, Indonesia prioritizes cooperative and preventive methods to prevent tensions from escalating.

Finally, the geopolitical context can be understood by knowing countries that have the potential to become Indonesian allies, countries that have the potential to become opponents, how to maintain alliances, and how to deal with opponents (Flint, 2021). Countries that can become allies are countries that are also in dispute with China and countries with the same interests as Indonesia, namely maintaining regional peace, such as the United States. Meanwhile, China can be perceived as a country that has the potential to become a threat to Indonesia. Considering that geopolitical conditions tend to be sensitive, the ways that can be done to deal with China are pragmatic methods by prioritizing a cooperative and preventive approach.

## **Discussion**

Indonesia and the Indonesian Navy have a clear understanding of the interests to be achieved and ways to achieve these interests. The interests are to maintain sovereignty and territorial integrity while at the same time maintaining regional peace and stability as stated in the BPPI. These interests are the goals that direct Indonesia's defence policy concerning disputes in the South China Sea.

Policy making and the implementation of naval diplomacy have also taken into account the existing geopolitical context (Nashir & Riyadi, 2019). The potential for militarization and escalation of tensions in the region is something Indonesia

has avoided. Taking into account the volatility of the SCS dispute conditions, militarization is something that Indonesian policymakers avoid. Actions that are considered mutually harmful to the interests of the countries involved in the SCS conflict can lead to an open conflict between Indonesia and China (Grossman, 2019). With these considerations in mind, Indonesia's naval diplomacy has been pragmatic and cautious, which shows that Indonesia is sensitive to the geopolitical context behind its naval diplomacy.

In the naval means dimension or the characteristics and functions of the navy, Indonesia does not have optimal strength in dealing with the Chinese navy. The degree of force carried out by Indonesia near the disputed area only relied on 8 warships for the whole year. When referring to the existing data regarding the intrusion carried out by China, there is an asymmetry between the naval power of the two countries. In one engagement, one KRI often has to face more than one Chinese ship. In a combat situation, this could result in the defeat of Indonesia. This also weakens Indonesia's ability to perform deterrence when referring to the analytical framework initiated by Widen.

Finally, the diplomatic method used by Indonesia can be said to be appropriate because it has considered the other three dimensions. Methods that have a cooperative tendency such as the implementation of *latma*, visits and reception of visits, as well as meetings between naval officials. The degree of power carried out by Indonesia, although in a small amount, has been carried out in disputed areas. The degree of power itself is carried out constitutionally when referring to international law so as not to create provocations and worsen the stability of the SCS region.

### **Conclusion**

The security conditions in the South China Sea with the existence of a dispute make open conflict one of the possible scenarios even though Indonesia has avoided it. Prudence and pragmatism are things that need to be done by Indonesia in dealing with SCS conflicts. This is done, among others, by carrying out naval diplomacy. Based on the analytical framework outlined by J. J. Widen, the Indonesian Navy has had clear political goals, carried out diplomacy by considering the geopolitical context, and used methods that were appropriate to the geopolitical context and political objectives. The Indonesian Navy prioritizes cooperative and preventive naval diplomacy methods with the consideration that the geopolitical situation is sensitive and Indonesia's interest is to prevent conflicts. However, according to Widen's analytical framework, the Indonesian Navy does not yet have an optimal naval means to successfully carry out naval diplomacy. Apart from this, in fact, Indonesia has succeeded in achieving its goals with naval diplomacy during the 2015-2020 period. Academically this means that it is necessary to conduct further studies of analytical frameworks for naval diplomacy. As for policymakers, a cooperative and preventive approach must be maintained and readjusted with the development of geopolitical dynamics in the South China Sea.

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