

Indonesia and ASEAN in Facing US-China Rivalry in the South China Sea to Create Regional Security Stability

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Abstract

The South China Sea is a sea that has always attracted the attention of many countries in the world, in this sea there are two major countries in the world competition. The US and China are doing all they can to safeguard their respective national interests in these waters. The US and China are competing and tend to use a lot of military force. This rivalry will slowly threaten the stability of regional security. Indonesia, which has always been trusted by many countries to play an important role in efforts to keep the South China Sea safe from all forms of war, Indonesia, which is also an ASEAN member country, continues to emphasize that ASEAN will not be involved in one of the countries competing in the South China Sea. ASEAN together with Indonesia reminded the US and China to comply with existing international legal rules. This research is a qualitative research with data collection through in-depth interviews. The results of this study show that Indonesia and ASEAN play an important role in maintaining regional security stability. ASEAN cooperates with non-ASEAN countries such as America and China in the political, security, economic, social and cultural fields.

Keywords: Indonesia, ASEAN, Rivalry, US, China, South China Sea, Regional, Security.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the State of the Republic of Indonesia states that Indonesia is a country that adheres to free and active politics. The meaning of free is to be impartial to one of the major countries in the world and to be active here is to actively maintain world order. The development of the current strategic environment makes the major countries in the world compete with each other to strengthen the capabilities of the state, either by strengthening their military or by spreading new hegemony in the world.

The South China Sea, in this region, always raises attention for many countries. This sea also never stands still, there are always movements from the big countries in the world. This sea is contested by many countries because in this sea it holds great natural resource potential and also this sea as an international shipping route.

Currently in the South China Sea there are rivalries between the two major countries, the United States and China. These two countries compete and provoke each other. The actions carried out by these two countries will pose the threat of open war which will disrupt regional security and stability, particularly in the Southeast Asia region. Quoting Teuku Rezasyah, an International Relations Expert at Padjadjaran University, said that the situation in the South China Sea has become

very worrying and disturbs the maintenance of international peace and security, China is expanding its military activities in the disputed South China Sea region. On the other hand, the United States also presents their warships in these waters [1].

Former Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Navy, Prof. Dr. Marsetio said in the Indonesian Media Opinion that a war zone would be created in the South China Sea due to the presence of two blue water navy forces, the US and China, this shows an escalation of escalation between the two countries and opens up the potential for open war between the two major countries [2].

This US-China rivalry does not only occur in the waters, but also occurs in the air space of the South China Sea. In 2010 China implemented the Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in conjunction with ADIZ in the East China Sea which led to protests from Japan.

In his research, Damayanti said that this US-China rivalry had a big impact on ASEAN as a whole, being noted as a country that cooperates at the bilateral and multilateral level with ASEAN. The reciprocal and provocative actions carried out by the two countries have a real effect on the stability of the countries. ASEAN members especially in economic matters [3].

Southeast Asia which is located between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean is currently facing significant challenges, one of the security challenges being faced is the South China Sea conflict [4]. In order to face the challenges of conflict in the South China Sea involving large countries such as the United States and China as well as ASEAN countries, integrated cooperation is needed involving ASEAN member countries and ASEAN partners who are members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

According to the Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia on August 13, 2020, said that Indonesia and ASEAN would not be trapped in the US-China rivalry in the South China Sea, security stability in the Southeast Asian region must always be maintained [5].

Security stability in the Southeast Asian region must be maintained, considering that this region is an important point that currently exerts great influence in the world political constellation. Major countries try to influence the development of the Southeast Asian region.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted research on Indonesia and ASEAN in Facing US-China Rivalry in the South China Sea. This research is considered important for researchers because Indonesia and ASEAN play an important role in the US-China rivalry in the South China Sea which ultimately maintains regional security stability.

B. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The data collection techniques in this study were through in-depth interviews and literature study. Qualitative research is methods for exploring and understanding the meaning that some individuals or groups of people perceive as derived from social

or humanitarian problems. This qualitative research process involves important efforts, such as asking questions and procedures, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data [6]. The focus of this research is Indonesia and ASEAN. Researchers have conducted research interviews with academics, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Regional Security

Regional security is a regional condition related to the feeling of fear that is perceived by the countries in the region. This means that regional security is the perception of all countries in its region, where each country has different perceptions, strengths, capabilities and national interests [7].

The area referred to in the study of international relations contains a broad context. Regions are not only understood as units based on distance or geography, but also contain other elements that contribute to the formation of the identity of the unit as part of the area. Shaun Breslin in his book entitled "Regions and Regionalism in World Politics" said that the elements that make up the identity of a group of countries into a region are not only geographic elements, but also include culture, economy, linguistics, and political relations. This has led to interpretations such as an area formed from two regions, or countries that do not have the same culture but are grouped into a region [8].

Joseph Nye Jr., defines a region or region as a country that is related to each other because of the geographical relationship and the degree of interdependence that makes it mutually beneficial [9]. On the other hand, Michael Leifer said that regionalism is considered to arise because of mutual benefits when working together or because of external threats [10].

2. International Organization

Article 2, paragraph 1, Vienna Convention on Treaty Law 1969, an international organization is an intergovernmental organization. The definition given by this convention is narrow, in that it confines itself only to relations between governments. Meanwhile, Sumaryo Suryokusumo said that international organization is a process; international organizations also concern representative aspects of the level of the process that has been reached at a particular time. International organizations are also needed in the framework of working together to adjust and find compromises to determine welfare and solve common problems and reduce disputes that arise [11].

According to international law expert Boer Mauna, the international organization is an association of independent and sovereign countries which aims to achieve common interests through the organs of the association itself [12].

3. ASEAN

ASEAN or in English, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was founded on August 8, 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand by signing the ASEAN Declaration by the founders of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

In their relations with one another, the ASEAN member states have adopted the following fundamental principles, as contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) of 1976:1) Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations; 2) The right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; 3) Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; 4) Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner; 5) Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and 6) Effective cooperation among themselves.

4. The US-China Rivalry

The rivalry between the United States and China has started from ancient times, not only recently. This rivalry begins with the ideological differences of the two countries, the United States claims them to be a Democratic country, while China has a Communist ideology. In addition, the economic systems of the two different countries also contributed to this rivalry, the US with a liberal-capitalist economy while China, which used to adhere to socialism, has now become a capitalist.

The rivalry between the two countries occurs in various fields. The concerns many countries is the rivalry in the trade war and in the South China Sea. The rivalry in these two fields has an impact on other countries. In the case of rivalries in the South China Sea during the Covid-19 pandemic, these two countries still show their respective strengths.

The United States, with the principle of Freedom of Navigation, wants the South China Sea to be free from ownership of any country, while China claims that the South China Sea is their territorial waters. China builds artificial islands in the South China Sea as a form of effective occupation which confirms that the South China Sea belongs to them.

At the beginning of President Joe Biden's administration in early 2021 the aircraft carrier fleet of USS Theodore Roosevelt sailed in the South China Sea to hold military exercises and also apply the principle of Freedom of Navigation. After the launch of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, the Chinese government held joint military exercises in the South China Sea.

The rivalry between these two countries, if allowed to continue, will threaten the stability of regional security. Based on the results of interviews with experts and also from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is found that the common opinion is that the mutual provocation of the two countries will indirectly make the Southeast

Asian region unsafe, because the position of the South China Sea is close to Southeast Asia.

According to the results of an indepdth interview with the Director of the United States I, the Directorate General of America and Europe, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that quoting from the statement of the US Foreign Minister, Anthony Blincken, that China had become a threat to the United States and the United States in any way did not want to compete with China at this time.

5. Indonesia and ASEAN

Indonesia is still considered as a true leader in ASEAN, whichever country that takes a turn as ASEAN chairman will always communicate with Indonesia first. In addition, according to information obtained during interviews, the United States, if it was to establish a cooperation with ASEAN, would definitely consult with Indonesia.

The Indonesian Foreign Minister has emphasized that ASEAN will never get involved in the current US-China rivalry in the South China Sea. ASEAN continues to prioritize stability and security in the Southeast Asian region, even though it appears that there are several ASEAN countries that side with one country, but if it has brought ASEAN organizations all member countries will become one voice in support of decisions taken by ASEAN.

In the case of the US-China rivalry in the South China Sea, ASEAN plays an important role in suppressing these two countries. On several occasions the US has collaborated with ASEAN, with the ASEAN + scheme. ASEAN continues to involve major powers in political and economic dialogue. In an effort to increase the security and prosperity of Southeast Asia as a whole. The three major powers currently playing an important role are the United States, China and Japan.

D. CONCLUSION

In this study, the authors can provide the following conclusions; Indonesia is a true leader in the Southeast Asian region, Southeast Asia must always maintain its stability and security because this region has very promising natural resource potential, besides that Southeast Asian countries are the target market for trade in the United States and China.

In relation to the US-China rivalry in the South China Sea, the role that ASEAN can play is to build cooperation, be it political, economic, social and cultural cooperation. This cooperation is carried out in the context of reducing the open conflict between the US and China as well as so that the Southeast Asian region continues to maintain its stability and security.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The author is a single author, his contribution in this paper is very dominant because the author does research, analyzes and makes this paper.

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