

Dynamics of the South China Sea Dispute: Indonesia's Position in Multilateral Diplomacy and the Enforcement of UNCLOS 1982

*Andin Wisnu Sudiby, Richard

Universitas Borobudur, Indonesia

*Email: andin.wisnu.05@gmail.com, richard@borobudur.ac.id

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Abstract

The South China Sea constitutes a strategically significant global region due to its vital role in international trade, natural resource potential, and regional geopolitical stability; however, it also remains a complex maritime dispute area arising from overlapping claims by several states, particularly China's unilateral nine-dash line claim, which is inconsistent with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982. Although Indonesia is not a direct claimant state, it possesses substantial strategic interests in safeguarding sovereignty, maritime security, and legal certainty under international law, especially with regard to its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the North Natuna Sea. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of the South China Sea dispute from an international law perspective by focusing on Indonesia's position in multilateral diplomacy and the enforcement of UNCLOS 1982. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical method, this research is based on doctrinal legal analysis of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials, including UNCLOS 1982, the 2016 arbitral award in Philippines v. China, official ASEAN documents, and contemporary scholarly literature. The findings indicate that while UNCLOS 1982 provides a clear and binding legal framework for maritime dispute settlement, its implementation faces significant challenges due to political considerations and geopolitical power dynamics. Indonesia consistently emphasizes the primacy of international law, strengthens multilateral diplomacy through ASEAN, and actively promotes the establishment of a legally binding Code of Conduct, thereby affirming its role as a normative actor contributing to regional stability and the enforcement of the international law of the sea.

Keywords: South China Sea; International Law; Dispute Resolution.

Abstrak

Laut Cina Selatan merupakan kawasan global yang signifikan secara strategis karena peran vitalnya dalam perdagangan internasional, potensi sumber daya alam, dan stabilitas geopolitik regional; namun, itu juga tetap menjadi area sengketa maritim yang kompleks yang timbul dari klaim yang tumpang tindih oleh beberapa negara, khususnya klaim sembilan garis putus-putus sepihak Tiongkok, yang tidak konsisten dengan ketentuan Konvensi Hukum Laut Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa (UNCLOS) 1982. Meskipun Indonesia bukan negara penggugat langsung, Indonesia memiliki kepentingan strategis yang substansial dalam menjaga kedaulatan, keamanan maritim, dan kepastian hukum berdasarkan hukum internasional, terutama yang berkaitan dengan Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif (ZEE) di Laut Natuna Utara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika sengketa Laut Cina Selatan dari perspektif hukum internasional dengan berfokus pada posisi Indonesia dalam diplomasi multilateral dan penegakan UNCLOS 1982. Menggunakan metode deskriptif-analitis kualitatif, penelitian ini didasarkan pada analisis hukum doktrin dari materi hukum primer, sekunder, dan tersier, termasuk UNCLOS 1982, putusan arbitrase 2016 di Filipina v. Tiongkok, dokumen resmi ASEAN, dan literatur ilmiah kontemporer. Temuan ini



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menunjukkan bahwa meskipun UNCLOS 1982 memberikan kerangka hukum yang jelas dan mengikat untuk penyelesaian sengketa maritim, implementasinya menghadapi tantangan yang signifikan karena pertimbangan politik dan dinamika kekuatan geopolitik. Indonesia secara konsisten menekankan keutamaan hukum internasional, memperkuat diplomasi multilateral melalui ASEAN, dan secara aktif mempromosikan pembentukan Kode Etik yang mengikat secara hukum, sehingga menegaskan perannya sebagai aktor normatif yang berkontribusi pada stabilitas regional dan penegakan hukum internasional laut.

Kata Kunci: Laut Cina Selatan; Hukum Internasional; Penyelesaian Sengketa.

INTRODUCTION

The South China Sea's strategic importance for both international interests and the neighboring nations. Its role in international trade routes, natural resources, and geopolitical dynamics make it a very important region.¹ Approximately one-third of all international commerce passes through the South China Sea, one of the world's busiest sea trade routes. Additionally, it is anticipated that the area would have a wealth of natural resources, including oil and natural gas deposits, as well as abundant marine biodiversity.² The fisheries industry, which provides a significant supply of food for many Southeast Asian nations, has a lot of potential, especially in the South China Sea.³ However, the South China Sea is rife with tensions and territorial disputes. Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and China, and Taiwan are among the nations whose claims overlap in the conflicts in this area. The majority of these claims pertain to small islands, sea areas, and exclusive economic zones (EEZs). China uses the "nine-dash line" theory to assert its claims over nearly the whole South China Sea, which contradicts the more limited claims of other countries with coastlines.⁴

The ongoing dispute has raised tensions that could endanger regional harmony and stability. Specifically, China's creation of artificial islands and military sites has made territorial claims overlap worse. These actions have exacerbated tensions between the parties involved. The escalation of tensions has the potential to negatively impact international relations and the economic prosperity of the region.⁵ Therefore, a resolution based on international law is essential to de-escalate the conflict. The resolution of this dispute involves not only political and economic aspects but also international legal aspects, like the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling in the Philippines v. China case, which ruled that there was no legal basis for China's claim to the majority of the South China Sea, UNCLOS offers a mechanism for employing international courts to resolve disputes.

¹ Poppy Fitrijanti Soeparan et Methodius Kossay. Pemanfaatan Hukum Internasional dalam Penyelesaian Sengketa Laut Cina Selatan: Analisis dengan Pendekatan Doktrinal, *Hakim: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Sosial* 2, n° 4 (2024) : 873-87.

² Auliah Ambarwati et al. Pesona kekayaan alam: Sumber konflik di kawasan Laut Cina Selatan, *Jurnal Litigasi Amsir* 10, n° 3 (2023) : 240-46.

³ Zainul Djumadin. Kebijakan Pemberantasan Illegal Fishing Di Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif Indonesia Laut Cina Selatan Tahun 2017, *Ilmu dan Budaya* 41, n° 64 (2019). <https://journal.unas.ac.id/ilmu-budaya/article/view/703>.

⁴ Mangisi Simanjuntak. Menolak Klaim Historis China "Nine Dash Line" Dan Kewenangan Penegakan Kedaulatan Serta Penegakan Hukum Di Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif Indonesia, *Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum Dirgantara* 10, n° 2 (2020). <https://journal.universitassuryadarma.ac.id/index.php/jihd/article/view/466>.

⁵ Riyan Bahari Kaunang. Penegakan hukum di wilayah zona ekonomi eksklusif Indonesia (perairan Natuna Utara) sebagai kawasan klaim Laut Cina Selatan, *Lex Administratum* 10, n° 1 (2022). <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/administratum/article/view/38307>.

But even with the international court's decision, there are still significant obstacles to implementation and adherence, particularly considering the political and military actors engaged in the conflict.⁶

Indonesia, a country in Southeast Asia with a key location in the South China Sea, is involved in the conflict's mediation. Despite its lack of direct involvement in regional territorial issues, Indonesia is deeply concerned about the region's security and tranquility. Indonesia actively participates in global diplomacy and advocates for the application of international law to resolve conflicts. Regarding this, Indonesia is committed to protecting the rights of those with rightful South China's claims Sea and upholding the freedom of navigation principle. Indonesia is not only grappling with the challenge of safeguarding its interests but also seeking to ensure the fair and effective application of international law to promote a peaceful and sustainable settlement. As a country with a major interest in maintaining regional stability and adhering to international law, In order to find a settlement for the South China Sea that works for all parties, Indonesia is essential.⁷ Examining the role of international law in resolving conflicts in the South China Sea is therefore quite relevant from an Indonesian point of view. This study intends to delve more into Indonesia's role in fostering international law-based conflict resolution and how Indonesia might help bring about South China Sea tranquility and stability.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen to understand the phenomena that occur The importance of international law in resolving the South China Sea issue, especially from the perspective of Indonesia. This study does not only focus on numerical data, but more on the meaning, dynamics, and context involving relations between countries, international law, and Indonesia's interests. The descriptive method will describe the situation and processes involved in resolving the South China Sea dispute, including an understanding of the application of UNCLOS, dispute resolution mechanisms, and Indonesia's contribution to multilateral diplomacy through ASEAN. The secondary data used in this investigation came from various sources such as international legal documents, diplomatic reports, and related academic literature.

Furthermore, the data is analyzed qualitatively to explore various relevant dimensions, such as the effectiveness of the application of international law, Indonesia's role in promoting law-based resolution, and the challenges faced in implementing international decisions. An interdisciplinary approach is also used, combining aspects of international law, international politics, and relations between countries to provide a more comprehensive analysis. By employing this approach, the study seeks to offer a thorough comprehension of Indonesia's and international law's roles in settling the South China Sea dispute.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

International Legal Framework in Settlement of South China Sea Disputes

The Convention on the Law of the Sea of the United Nations (UNCLOS) was established in 1982 is the primary legal document that governs states' rights and obligations with relation to the use of marine resources and the settlement of maritime conflicts. The laws regulating the delineation of international navigation rights, exclusive

⁶ Marsita Kantjai. Kewenangan Tribunal Internasional Hukum Laut Dalam Penyelesaian Sengketa Kelautan Menurut Konvensi Hukum Laut Pbb Tahun 1982, *Lex Privatum* 7, n° 1 (2019). <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/lexprivatum/article/view/25874>.

⁷ Kantjai.

economic zones (EEZs), and marine areas are outlined in UNCLOS.⁸ Up to the restrictions outlined in the agreement, coastal states' sovereign rights over their maritime territories are acknowledged under UNCLOS Article 2. The rights of coastal governments to investigate and exploit the natural resources within the EEZ, however, are governed by Article 56. Because it creates a legal framework that the contending parties must follow, UNCLOS is significant. UNCLOS Article 121 governs the status of small islands that are claimed in the South China Sea, while Article 88 stipulates that all states have equal rights to engage in activities such as exploration and exploitation in international waters.

One important example of how UNCLOS has been used to resolve The South China Sea problem is the subject of the July 12, 2016, International Court of Arbitration ruling in the Philippines v. China lawsuit. China's nine-dash line claim to almost the entire South China Sea is at issue, involving several disputed islands and maritime areas. The Philippines sued China under UNCLOS, demanding that China's claims that are inconsistent with international law be stopped. According to the Arbitral Tribunal, China's claims are unfounded under UNCLOS, and a number of its claimed territories are not islands with the authority to assert a continental shelf or EEZ. Furthermore, China was found to have violated the Philippines' EEZ rights by the Arbitral Tribunal. Even while the verdict is ostensibly legally binding on all parties, China's refusal to abide by the order—despite the fact that it favored the Philippines illustrates the difficulties in administering international law in the South China Sea.⁹

By giving warring nations a legal platform, the International Court then plays a critical part in using the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or the Court of Arbitration to settle the South China Sea dispute.¹⁰ According to UNCLOS, There are several ways to address disagreements resulting from how this convention is interpreted or applied, including courts and arbitration (Article 287 UNCLOS). The decisions of international courts provide clear legal interpretations of the rights of countries involved in the dispute, and although their implementation often encounters political and diplomatic obstacles, international courts remain an important channel for ensuring a legally based dispute resolution.¹¹

Multilateral diplomacy is another essential tool for addressing the South China Sea conflict. Dialogue between affected countries, both in bilateral arrangements and regional forums such as ASEAN, plays an important role in easing tensions.¹² ASEAN, which consists of ten member states in Southeast Asia, has sought to be a platform that facilitates

⁸ Yulia Wiliawati, Danial Danial, et Fatkhul Muin. Eksistensi UNCLOS 1982 dalam Upaya Penegakan Hukum Laut Internasional di Perairan Negara Pantai, *Sultan Jurisprudence: Jurnal Riset Ilmu Hukum* 2, n° 2 (2022) : 286-98.

⁹ Ninne Zahara Silviani. Interpretasi Perjanjian Internasional Terkait Historical Rights Dalam UNCLOS 1982:(Studi Kasus: Sengketa Laut Cina Selatan antara Republik Rakyat Cina v. Filipina dan Sengketa Kepulauan Chagos antara Mauritius v. Britania Raya), *Jurnal Selat* 6, n° 2 (2019) : 154-71.

¹⁰ Emiel Salim Siregar et al. Dari Negosiasi ke Ajudikasi: Peta Penyelesaian Sengketa dalam Hukum Internasional, *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 4, n° 4 (2024) : 2275-85.

¹¹ Patricia Audrey Ruslijanto et al., *Hukum Penyelesaian Sengketa Internasional* (Universitas Brawijaya Press, 2022). <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ieGuEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Ruslijanto,+P.,+Sukarmi,+D.+Puspitawati,+A.+Kusumaningrum,+U.+Ikaningtyas,+H.+Ula,+dan+A.+Saraswati.+Hukum+Penyelesaian+Sengketa+Internasional.+Malang:+Universitas+Brawijaya+Press,+2022&ots=p71fDA9Fbt&sig=bXmhjpaHlua1sgz2yKuUL9wN6nc>.

¹² Luh Gde Citra Sundari Laksmi, Dewa Gede Sudika Mangku, et Ni Putu Rai Yuliartini. Peran Indonesia dalam penyelesaian sengketa internasional di Laut Cina Selatan, *Jurnal Komunitas Yustisia* 5, n° 2 (2022) : 225-42.

dialogue among nations engaged in the dispute over the South China Sea.¹³ Although ASEAN does not have the same legal authority as UNCLOS or an international court, this mechanism allows member states to engage in collective discussions and build consensus on related issues. For example, Adopted in 2002, Reducing regional tensions is the goal of the South China Sea Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DOC) and encourages countries involved to refrain from actions that could worsen the situation.¹⁴

In addition, ASEAN's role in handling the South China Sea dispute is also important because the organization represents countries located in the region and has a direct interest in maintaining regional stability. Although ASEAN does not have a firm position on individual territorial claims, the organization has sought to ensure that the conflict does not interfere with regional peace and stability in the South China Sea. One of the steps taken is to encourage a peaceful resolution through dialogue, as reflected in the development of the Code of Conduct (COC) which is still under negotiation. The COC is expected to provide a more precise and more detailed framework for countries involved in the dispute, as well as reduce tensions arising from the construction of artificial islands and military activities. Although not yet fully effective, ASEAN's endeavors reveal its dedication to advancing a law-based and peaceful international settlement for resolving South China Sea disputes.¹⁵

Indonesia's Legal and Diplomatic Approach in Addressing the South China Sea Dispute

Regarding its economics, security, and sovereignty, Indonesia has significant interests in the South China Sea. As the largest maritime country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia relies on the stability of this region to maintain the smooth flow of its international trade routes, considering that around 60% of world trade passes through these waters. In addition, the North Natuna Sea, It has abundant natural resources and is adjacent to the South China Sea, especially fisheries and oil and gas reserves. Therefore, Indonesia seeks to defend its rights to the According to Article 56 of UNCLOS 1982, Within their Exclusive Economic Zone, coastal governments possess the sovereign right to investigate and utilize natural resources (EEZ). Although Indonesia is not a party directly involved in the territorial dispute, China's unilateral claim to areas included in Indonesia's EEZ based on the "nine-dash line" concept has caused tension, especially around the Natuna waters. It has encouraged Indonesia to be more active in fighting for its rights according to international law in the South China Sea.¹⁶

Indonesia has frequently emphasized that the foundation for resolving the South China Sea issue must be international law, specifically UNCLOS 1982. According to the Arbitration Court's 2016 decision in the Philippines v. China case, the Indonesian government has continuously insisted that China's "nine-dash line" claim is unlawful. Indonesia further underlined that the norms established by international law must serve as the foundation for all maritime claims, as stated in Articles 279 to 299 of UNCLOS, which regulate the mechanism for resolving disputes through negotiation, mediation, or

¹³ Harwita Sari. Pengaruh Hukum Laut Internasional Terhadap Sengketa Wilayah Maritim Di Laut China Selatan , *Jurnal Studi Interdisipliner Perspektif* 21, n° 2 (2022) : 115-23.

¹⁴ Melda Alani Sitompul. Analisis Peran ASEAN Regional Forum Dalam Penyelesaian Sengketa Laut China Selatan , *Publicio: Jurnal Ilmiah Politik, Kebijakan Dan Sosial* 4 (2022) : 1-10.

¹⁵ Carlyle A Thayer. ASEAN, China and the code of conduct in the South China Sea , *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 33, n° 2 (2013) : 75-84.

¹⁶ Silviani, Interpretasi Perjanjian Internasional Terkait Historical Rights Dalam UNCLOS 1982 .

arbitration.¹⁷ In addition, Indonesia continues to patrol and enforce the law in its waters, especially around the Natuna waters, to assert its sovereignty and ensure that there are no violations of its rights in the EEZ.¹⁸

Due to its strategic location in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is committed to maintaining tranquility and steadiness in the South China Sea area. Indonesia rejects all forms of military escalation and provocation that could worsen the situation, both by countries involved in territorial claims and by major countries such as the United States which have interests in the region. Indonesia's approach prioritizes diplomacy and regional cooperation as the main solution to easing tensions in the Sea of South China.¹⁹ Promoting communication and diplomacy about the South China Sea dispute is vital for Indonesia, one of ASEAN's founding countries. Indonesia emphasizes the importance of a law-based approach and multilateralism in resolving this conflict. In various ASEAN forums, Indonesia continues to encourage speeding up talks on creating the South China Sea Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DOC) 2002 and making the Code of Conduct (COC) a legally enforceable accord. Furthermore, Indonesia also acts as a mediator in various dialogues between ASEAN countries and China, ensuring that negotiations are carried out constructively and comply with the principles of international law.²⁰

Indonesia collaborates both bilaterally and multilaterally with nations that share its In addition to ASEAN, there are interests in the South China Sea. Cooperation on maritime defense and security with nations such as Japan and the United States is one type of partnership that is particularly noteworthy, Australia, and European countries. This partnership aims to increase Indonesia's capacity to guard its maritime territory. In addition, Indonesia actively participates in diplomatic negotiations aimed at easing tensions and achieving peaceful resolution of disputes. Indonesia's neutral stance, coupled with its compliance with international law, positions it as a trusted mediator between the disputing parties.²¹

With a diplomatic approach that prioritizes international law and regional stability, Indonesia wants to play an active role in the South China Sea conflict resolution process without siding with any of the conflicting countries. This function shows Indonesia's dedication to upholding regional maritime law and making sure its interests as a nation are safeguarded in the face of changing geopolitical conditions.

Legal Challenges and Indonesia's Diplomatic Strategy in Strengthening Its Position in the South China Sea

To protect its sovereignty and national interests in the South China Sea, Indonesia must overcome a number of obstacles. One of the primary obstacles is China's unilateral claim, based on the "nine-dash line" theory that lacks legal support in UNCLOS 1982, to waters that border Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding Natuna. Despite Indonesia's lack of active involvement in the territorial dispute, the presence of

¹⁷ Muhammad Wirtsa Firdaus et al. Urgensi Resolusi Konflik Klaim Nine Dash Line Tingkok Di Perairan Natuna Utara, *Jurnal Ius Constituendum* 8, n° 2 (2023) : 277.

¹⁸ Lusy KFR Gerungan. Penegakan Hukum Di Wilayah Perairan Indonesia, *Lex et Societatis* 4, n° 5 (2016). <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/lexetsocietatis/article/view/11947>.

¹⁹ Heti Sarlini et al. Militer dan Politik di Indonesia dalam Konteks Ketegangan Maritim di Laut China Selatan, *Socius: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 1, n° 11 (2024) : 124-30.

²⁰ Peggy Puspa Haffsari et Yandry Kurniawan. Peran Kepemimpinan Indonesia dalam Pengelolaan Sengketa Laut Cina Selatan, *Sospol* 4, n° 1 (2018) : 55-77.

²¹ Ahmad Pradipta Budhihatma Adikara et Adis Imam Munandar. Tantangan Kebijakan Diplomasi Pertahanan Maritim Indonesia Dalam Penyelesaian Konflik Laut Natuna Utara, *Jurnal Studi Diplomasi Dan Keamanan* 13, n° 1 (2021).

Chinese fishing vessels and coast guards in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) often causes tension and requires a strong response from the Indonesian government.²² Another significant challenge lies in the complexity of diplomatic and economic relations with China, given that China is one of Indonesia's largest trading partners. Indonesia must strike a fine balance between upholding its national sovereignty and fostering mutually beneficial economic relations with China. Furthermore, ASEAN faces difficulties in reaching a strong consensus on this conflict, as several member states have close bilateral relations with China. As a result, the multilateral approach that Indonesia hopes for may not always produce the desired results. From a defense perspective, Indonesia's military and maritime patrol capabilities need to be further enhanced to address potential escalations on its maritime borders. While Indonesia continues to patrol and take action against violations in its EEZ, challenges in law enforcement and naval readiness remain a major concern.²³

To address these challenges, To improve its diplomatic standing in the South China Sea dispute, Indonesia has implemented a number of calculated measures. One of the main steps is to strengthen its commitment to international law, especially UNCLOS 1982, by continuing to emphasize that China's "nine-dash line" claim has no legal basis. Indonesia has actively voiced the importance of respecting the decision of the Arbitration Court in the Philippines vs. China (2016) case which rejected China's maritime claims²⁴ In addition, Indonesia has also strengthened its role in ASEAN by continuing to push for the acceleration of the formation of a Code of Conduct (COC) between ASEAN and China, which aims to create binding rules for resolving maritime disputes.

To maintain regional stability, Indonesia acts as a mediator in dialogue between ASEAN countries and China, emphasizing a peaceful diplomacy approach and maritime cooperation based on the rules of international law.²⁵ In addition to multilateral diplomacy, Indonesia is also expanding bilateral cooperation with various countries, such as Japan, the United States, Australia, and European countries, to improve maritime security. This form of cooperation includes joint military exercises, improving the capabilities of Coast Guard troops, and procuring the main defense system equipment (alutsista) to strengthen surveillance in border areas.²⁶

Indonesia has taken firm steps in law enforcement in Natuna waters, including increasing patrols and taking action against foreign vessels that violate its territorial boundaries. In addition, the Indonesian government is developing a maritime diplomacy strategy by strengthening Natuna's position as a maritime economic center to emphasize its existence in the region.²⁷ With a diplomatic steps, international cooperation, and strengthening maritime defense, While continuing to play a significant role in preserving

²² Adikara et Munandar.

²³ Ahmad Naufal Farras. Hubungan Interdependensi Indonesia-China di Tengah Ketegangan Laut Natuna Utara , *Indonesian Perspective* 8, n° 1 (2023) : 96-120.

²⁴ Simanjuntak, Menolak Klaim Historis China "Nine Dash Line" Dan Kewenangan Penegakan Kedaulatan Serta Penegakan Hukum Di Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif Indonesia .

²⁵ Sinta Julina. Peran Indonesia dalam Keketuaan ASEAN 2023: Perspektif Konstruktivisme , *Jurnal Alternatif-Jurnal Ilmu Hubungan Internasional* 14, n° 2 (2023). <https://www.ejournal-jayabaya.id/Alternatif/article/view/104>.

²⁶ Adikara et Munandar, Tantangan Kebijakan Diplomasi Pertahanan Maritim Indonesia Dalam Penyelesaian Konflik Laut Natuna Utara .

²⁷ Kekeh Intan Pratiwi, Nelfa Riana Putri, et Ayu Efridadewi. Analisis Penangkapan Ikan Ilegal oleh Kapal Asing (Vietnam) di Laut Natuna , *Aufklarung: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora* 3, n° 4 (2023) : 9-16.

stability and security in Southeast Asia, Indonesia aims to preserve its sovereignty in the South China Sea.

CONCLUSION

Globally speaking, the South China Sea is strategically important for trade and natural resources, and geopolitics, but it is also a source of tension due to overlapping territorial claims by various countries, especially China with the concept The "nine-dash line" is in violation of UNCLOS 1982. Conflict has escalated as a result of the disagreement, particularly with the establishment of military installations and artificial islands that have weakened regional stability. Despite the Arbitral Tribunal's denial of China's claim in the Philippines v. China case (2016), the challenges in implementing the decision remain large due to political and military factors. Indonesia, although not directly involved in the territorial dispute, has an important role in maintaining regional stability through multilateral diplomacy and enforcement of international law, especially within the ASEAN framework. By upholding the rule of law and freedom of navigation, Indonesia seeks to ensure a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the conflict. Therefore, it is crucial to look at how international law has been applied properly comprehend Indonesia's responsibility in enforcing international law to promote regional peace and stability, we must examine the South China Sea issue from an Indonesian perspective.

UNCLOS 1982 established a legal framework for resolving disputes in the South China Sea, including maritime boundaries, EEZs, and international navigation rights. The Philippines v. China case in 2016 confirmed the illegality of China's "nine-dash line" claim, although implementation challenges remain. ASEAN and diplomatic mechanisms have eased tensions, but consensus has been elusive due to member interests. Indonesia, although not directly involved, seeks regional stability and sovereignty, especially regarding the Natuna waters that have been violated by Chinese vessels. To address this, Indonesia relies on international law, strengthens diplomacy and defense, and encourages the drafting of a COC between ASEAN and China. This approach aims to maintain sovereignty while mediating regional stability and upholding South China Sea international law.

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