

Egocentrism and Dispute: Fire in Hust of South and East China Sea

Adi Kristina Wulandari¹, I Ketut Surajaya²

¹Chinese Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

²Professor of Japanese Studies School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia

Abstract

There is an ongoing conflict of interests among countries in the South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS) regions. The interests of superpower countries in maintaining their supremacy and their interests, has given a rise to egocentrism and realism in a zigzag international relations. The unseparated realist historical approach that are dynamic and metamorphosed throughout the time was the theoretical framework and method used in this study. There were findings on the ups and downs of international relations among countries in the SCS and ECS regions, filled with conflicts-negotiations-resolutions-agreements-violations-rolling zigzag and metamorphosing. Conflicts-thus-were used to live side by side with the motive of controlling, utilizing the wealth of marine resources, substantive energy sources, and access to shipping traffic and trade.

Keywords: Senkaku, Spratly, Exclusive Economic Zone, South China Sea, ASEAN

1. Introduction

Part One of this paper has stipulated and reviewed various disputes and conflicts involving regional countries and intervention of superpower countries. The focus of the discussion shall be limited, where Russia, as a superpower country, shall not be discussed in this paper. Various efforts and approaches have been made, but difficult to be realized because of lack of compliance from the conflicting countries as consequences of egocentrism of countries that is difficult to suppress. In Part Two of this study, various conflicts, diplomatic tug-of-war and different implementations, interpretations of the Exclusive Economic Zone, ASEAN's role in reducing conflicts and proposals for legal resolution, code of conduct, dialogue, peace and mutual benefit have been discussed, however, there have been no real results. This is the politics of realism that has been done and the reality on the ground.

After the Cold War, the political constellation in East and Southeast Asian countries showed increasing dynamic, conflict, security, and peace. In other words, security in the South China Sea (SCS) has not been realized seriously because of efforts and claims of national interests that are based on national egocentrism. Major countries that have interests in the SCS and the East China Sea (ECS) are reluctant to release their interests in the area which is one of the alternative sources of life for present and future of the nations in the region. Moreover, the complexity and conflicts that occurred in the region are the reason, triggering industrial war and as political tool for mobilization by elites in the governments of the disputing countries. Whatever the pretext and/or theoretical approach used, as long as this egocentrism cannot be suppressed, disputes, conflicts, and even the possibility of a major war cannot be avoided.

2. Dynamics of China-United States Relations

The relationship between China and the United States has been marked by significant diplomatic and military interactions, particularly following the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. This event played a crucial role in cooling Sino-American relations, highlighting the ideological divide between the U.S., which advocates democracy, and China, which emphasizes state sovereignty and political stability. These tensions set the stage for subsequent developments in their bilateral relations, particularly in the mid-1990s when President Bill Clinton's administration sought to strengthen ties by establishing security cooperation with China. This period also coincided with China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) moving into its Eastern territorial waters, signaling a shift in regional power dynamics.

A key moment in this period was the signing of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA)¹ on October 29, 1997, by U.S. President Bill Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin. This agreement aimed to promote mutual understanding and prevent misunderstandings in maritime and air activities, focusing on adherence to international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.² This was the first military agreement between the two superpowers after the Tiananmen incident, representing an effort to build mutual trust and prevent major conflicts. However, the MMCA's effectiveness was undermined by the realities of geopolitical competition, exemplified by the 2001 collision between a Chinese F-8 aircraft and a U.S. Navy rescue plane in the South China Sea (SCS),³ which killed a Chinese pilot. This incident highlighted the difficulties in translating diplomatic agreements into practical cooperation and underscored the ongoing competition for control of maritime resources, shipping routes, and energy supplies.

This was the first military agreement between China and the United States, as an attempt to build mutual trust between two countries, after the Tiananmen Incident. In my opinion, this two Superpowers agreement was an effort to "share the cake" while avoiding major conflicts that could involve regional countries. The 2001 collision, along with other incidents in the following years, illustrates how national egocentrism and self-serving motives drive both countries' actions. In the last twenty years, the relations between the two countries have revolved ups and downs around conflict, resolution, negotiation of agreements, while violations continued. It is as if the conflict lived side by side with motive of utilizing marine wealth and access to shipping and trade traffic, in addition to control substantive energy sources in the bowels of the sea.

Based on the reality in the field, rhetorical diplomacy and official documents often fail to reflect true diplomatic practices, as they are shaped by state self-interest and the implicit support of its people. This self-interest cannot fully control the mindset of the elites, who share an egocentric perspective that rejects justice and democratic equality in favor of their own agendas. This historical transformation challenges the assumption that written agreements accurately represent the intentions of the parties involved. Instead, these documents often conceal deeper power struggles and nationalistic motives, which are more clearly

¹ Lieutenant Commander George S. Capen, U.S. Navy, The Military Maritime Consultative Agreement August 1999 Proceedings Volume 125/8/1,158.

² Agreement Between The Department of Defense of The United States of America and The Ministry of National Defense of The People's Republic of China on Establishing A Consultation Mechanism to Strengthen Military Maritime Safety, signed in Beijing, Januari 19, 1998.

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/12924-China-Maritime-Matters-Misc-Agreement-1.19.1998.pdf>

³ Perlez, Jane. When America and China Collided: Why the Countries Are Dangerously Unprepared for a Repeat of the 2001 Crisis. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/when-america-and-china-collided>. July 5, 2024.

expressed through military and economic actions. This raises important questions about the limitations of diplomacy in a world dominated by state sovereignty, economic competition, and nationalism.

To deepen the analysis, it is crucial to consider how historical events have shaped current global politics. Technological advancements, particularly in military capabilities and cybersecurity, and shifting regional power dynamics have added new layers of complexity to China-U.S. relations. China's growing influence in the South China Sea and its evolving strategies further heighten these tensions. Moreover, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and ASEAN could play a more prominent role in either mitigating or exacerbating these tensions, although their effectiveness is often constrained by the competing interests of major powers.

3. Substantive Energy Sources

After several years of disputes regarding gas fields in the ECS, Japan and China signed a Joint Energy Accord on June 18, 2008.⁴ The signing of the Energy Development Agreement includes the potential gas wealth of Chunxiao/Shirakaba. This agreement was preceded by an agreement by the Chinese Foreign Minister, Director of the Asian Affairs Department Hu Zhengyue, who shook hands with Kenichiro Sasae, former head of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau a year earlier.

The two countries agreed for a joint manage four gas fields, stop development in disputed waters, and collaborated in conducting joint surveys and investments. Meanwhile, the agreement was expected to be a major step related to maritime cooperation in the management of resources which was a priority for both countries. China immediately began developing the Tianwaitian/Kashi field unilaterally in 2009. This activity was protested by Japan. A year later, Japan took China to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea when China began production the Chunxiao/Shirakaba field. Although the achievement of the agreement has not been carried out smoothly, it was useful for the further development of marine resources.⁵

In December 2000, Vietnam and China signed two agreements in an attempt to resolve a long-standing territorial dispute over natural resources in the Gulf of Tonkin. The agreements delimited territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and outlined Fishing Regulations.⁶ In May 2003, Vietnam's Foreign Minister issued a "sovereignty declaration" against China's ban on fishing in the South China Sea and claimed that Vietnam had undisputed "sovereignty" rights over the Paracel and Spratly Islands.⁷ In May 2011, a Vietnamese ship had its cable cut by a Chinese patrol boat while conducting a survey in the South China Sea. A month later, on June 9, 2011, Vietnam's Foreign Minister stated that a Chinese fishing boat, escorted by two Chinese patrol boats, had cut a cable used for a seismic survey operated by the energy company Petro Vietnam.⁸ The root of this complexity was the egocentric interpretation of the agreement that has been made and agreed upon by the parties, history seems to metamorphose to give birth to various agreements that were immediately violated. This was the personification of the State's egocentrism.

⁴ Japan-China Joint Press Statement Cooperation between Japan and China in the East China Sea
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000091726.pdf> downloaded on June 21, 2024.

⁵ *Ibid.*, complete text of the agreement was downloaded on June 21, 2024.

⁶ China and Vietnam: a timeline of conflict CNN, June 28, 2011
<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/06/27/china.vietnam.timeline/index.html>
downloaded on June 20, 2024.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

4. ASEAN Proposal

ASEAN countries proposed peaceful conflict resolution in the South China Sea. On November 4th, 2002, leaders from Southeast Asian countries held the ASEAN+3 Meeting, which resulted in a Press Statement by the Chair of the 8th ASEAN Summit. The 6th ASEAN+3 Summit and the ASEAN CHINA Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on November 4, 2002.⁹ Furthermore, the ten ASEAN countries reached an agreement in Phnom Penh in form of a Declaration known as the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.¹⁰ The agreement on November 11, 2022 in Phnom Penh, the Kingdom of Cambodia agreed that the South China Sea is a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation (Recognizing the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation). The substance of this declaration was related to the code of conduct which proposes to reduce the tension of the conflict in the South China Sea and forms guidelines for resolving the conflict. The agreement was finally reached through quite tough negotiations. China was the first signatory and accepted the agreement on the issue, although the declaration did not meet the expected standards. The Philippines suspects that China accepted the agreement so that China could fulfill its ambition by reducing the conflict in the SCS that could involve the United States in the dispute.¹¹ The Philippines' suspicion is positive so that major countries, especially China and the United States, are not involved in major conflicts that could ignite war in the SCS and ECS regions. Of course, such efforts are also in line with Indonesia's free and active foreign policy. Early in 2013, Vietnamese fishing vessels sailed in the Spratly Islands. Previously, Malaysia and Vietnam had submitted a joint submission to the UN Commission to extend the Continental Limits (UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf) beyond the standard 200 nautical miles from their coastlines. This issue has revived friction regarding maritime sovereignty in the SCS. China saw this action as against its territorial claims and was a violation of China's sovereignty in the SCS. Vietnam's claim was part of

⁹Press Statement by The Chairman of The 8th ASEAN Summit, The 6th ASEAN+3 Summit and The ASEAN-China Summit Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 4 November 2002, 1. The ASEAN leaders today held the 8th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh followed by the 6th ASEAN + 3 Summit with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and a separate ASEAN-China Summit. It was the first time that Cambodia had the honor and pleasure of hosting and chairing these summits. 2. The ASEAN Summit focused on issues of grave concern to all ASEAN members including political and economic developments, particularly recent uncertainties following terrorist attacks and the ongoing debate on Iraq. In the face of these developments, we reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening solidarity and accelerating the implementation of our Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI). 3. At the ASEAN + 3 and ASEAN-China Summits, we strengthened our partnership with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea in line with our strategy to reinforce ASEAN's competitiveness through mutually-beneficial trade and investment. <https://www.asean.or.id/13188.htm>, downloaded on July 8, 2024.

¹⁰Joint Statement on the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in The South China Sea, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 11 November 2022 We, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the People's Republic of China (hereinafter: the Parties), gathered on the occasions of the 25th ASEAN-China Summit and the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, on 11 November 2022. RECOGNISING the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation.

<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FINAL-Joint-Statement-on-the-20th-Anniversary-of-DOC-1.pdf>, downloaded on June 23, 2024.

¹¹ Harry Hannah Grand Strategy Red Cell #4, February 24, 2023 The United States should avoid narrow bilateral competition with Beijing and better leverage its partners

<https://www.stimson.org/2023/red-cell-a-multilateral-approach-to-counter-china-would-avert-a-slugfest/> downloaded on June 26, 2024.

Vietnam's campaign to bring the SCS issue to the international forum, which began with a conference in Hanoi in November 2009.¹²

The United States was very concerned about the disputes in the SCS and ECS. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton even attended the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Hanoi on July 22, 2010. Hillary's presence in Hanoi meant that America wanted to facilitate its access to Asian waters as usual on the one hand, and on the other hand, it was also a dig at China which had claimed the Spratlys. Mutual claims in the SCS and ECS areas have triggered increased US involvement in the region. For Vietnam, it has a strategic meaning that wants the SCS and ECS issues to be resolved at the international level and welcomed by the United States. On September 7th, 2010, a Chinese fishing vessel collided with a Japanese coast guard vessel near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The Chinese crew were arrested, and Beijing protested the action. China responded by arresting four Japanese businessmen who had passed through Chinese military facilities without permission. China also rejected a meeting between Wen Jiabao and Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan at the UN General Assembly. After two weeks of tension, the two countries agreed to release each other's citizens. The cooled relationship finally thawed when the Japanese and Chinese prime ministers met by chance in Brussels at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in October 2010.¹³

The security of the SCS and ECS is vital for the transportation of Chinese and American energy tankers. China is the world's largest energy consumer. This was conveyed by the International Energy Agency that China has surpassed America and is the world's largest consumer, consuming 2.3 billion tons of total energy in 2009, about four percent more than the United States. China is also the second largest consumer and importer of oil, making the SCS and ECS the main traffic for giant tankers. In 2022, China consumed 26.4 percent of global primary energy and positioned itself as the world's number one primary energy consumer. The United States followed, which was twice as much as consumers India and Russia, which ranked third and fourth in world energy consumption.¹⁴

5. Scarborough Shoal Incident

On April 8th, 2012, a Philippine surveillance aircraft caught a group of Chinese fishermen anchored in the Scarborough Shoal group. China, the Philippines, and Taiwan claim the group of coral islands as their territory. However, the Philippines de facto controls the group of coral islands, as evidenced by the many Chinese fishermen who are often expelled from the islands by the Philippine Navy. On April 10th, armed Chinese fishing boats confronted the Philippine Navy which was preparing to capture Chinese ships, resulting in friction between the two parties. Diplomatic resolutions did not produce results, as did the

¹² Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines: Submissions to the Commission: Joint submission by Malaysia and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. On 6 May 2009, Malaysia and Socialist Republic of Vietnam submitted jointly to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, in accordance with Article 76, paragraph 8, of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, information on the limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured in respect of the southern part of the South China Sea. It was noted that the Convention entered into force for Malaysia on 13 Nov 1996, and Vietnam on 16 Nov 1996. https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_mysvnm_33_2009.htm, downloaded on June 27, 2024.

¹³ The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process was designed in 1996 to bring Asia and Europe closer. This important collection brings together the discussions from the 8th ASEM Summit held in October 2010 in Brussels. <http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/34580>. Downloaded on June 27, 2024.

¹⁴ Distribution of primary energy consumption worldwide in 2022, by country <https://www.statista.com/statistics/263455/primary-energy-consumption-of-selected-countries/>, Downloaded on July 6, 2024.

Philippines' request to ASEAN countries as a third party to resolve the conflict, which was rejected by China. China refused to resolve the issue internationally, and finally the issue was resolved bilaterally, and China withdrew its two warships from the waters.¹⁵ The amount of energy transported through the SCS and ECS, as mentioned above, is only an indication of how important and strategic the SCS and ECS are to world traffic and the economy.

6. Senkaku Nationalization Controversy

The dispute between Japan and China on the ownership of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands has been discussed at length by the author and has been repeated a little in part One of this article, a more comprehensive discussion can be found in the book *Contemporary Japan 2, Shinzo Abe: Political, Economic, Defense Issues*.¹⁶

On September 2nd, 2012, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshioka Noda signed a contract worth USD 26 million to buy the three largest islands of the 5 Senkaku Islands from wealthy landowner Kunioki Kurihara.¹⁷ This caused great anger among the Chinese people and on September 17th, 2012, anti-Japanese movements exploded in major Chinese cities shortly after the Japanese government bought the three largest islands in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.¹⁸ China saw the purchase of the three islands as an affirmation of Japan's claim. The situation became more complicated because Hong Kong activists planted Chinese and Taiwanese flags on the Islands shortly after the nationalization. The flag installation was carried out to coincide with the date of Japan's surrender 67 years ago, to the Allies on August 14, 1945, as reported by the *Yomiuri Shinbun*.¹⁹

This indicates that the historical sentiment of Japan's past colonization is still embedded in the collective memory of the Chinese people. This was actually a historical metamorphosis that originates from the collective memory of the people of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, which were once Japanese colonies. 2012 was marked by a change in national leadership in East Asia. On December 26, a nationalist politician from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Shinzo Abe, was elected Prime Minister of Japan for the second time. In his official speech before the parliamentary session (Diet), Abe emphasized the importance of strengthening "*kizuna*" (friendly relations that have been formed, meaning with the United States.). Abe emphasized that he would strengthen the alliance with the United States, for Japan's defense. Abe emphasized that "the Japan Coast Guard and members of the Self-Defense Forces are defending Japan's seas and skies off the coast of the Senkaku Islands." Abe also said that a "National Security Council" would be formed.²⁰ This institution is a metamorphosis of part of the military organization of the Japanese Empire during the Pacific War.²¹

¹⁵ Michael Green, Kathleen Hicks, et.al., *South China Sea Counter-Coercion Series: Scarborough Shoal Standoff*, June 9, 2017. <https://anti.csis.org/counter-co-scarborough-standoff>, downloaded on July 6, 2024.

¹⁶ I Ketut Surajaya. *Jepang Kontemporer 2, Shinzo Abe: Isu Politik, Ekonomi, Pertahanan*. Depok: Penerbit Yayasan Galung, 2019, p. 141-161.

¹⁷ Reuters/Chris Meyers August 19, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/disputed-islands-idJPRTR36WMX/>

¹⁸ Alan Taylor "Anti-Japan Protests in China" *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2012/09/anti-japan-protests-in-china/100370/>, downloaded on June 28, 2024.

¹⁹ <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/chinas-maritime-disputes>, downloaded 26 Juni 2024

²⁰ https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201212/26kaiken_e.html, downloaded on June 26, 2024.

²¹ I Ketut Surajaya, "Wacana dan Realita, Negara Normal dan Remiliterisasi Jepang" in *Shinzo Abe: Isu Politik, Ekonomi, Pertahanan*, Depok, op.cit. h.1-23.

In China, there was also a transition of leadership. During the administration of President Hu Jintao (2007-2012) and previous five years, China has shown great development in economic, military, and defense. The election of Xi Jinping as President, who was inaugurated on November 15, 2012, indicated that Chinese nationalism was increasingly prominent. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, China's military strategy continued from land-based power to maritime-based power, namely defense in the SCS and ECS²². This showed that China still wanted its military supremacy in the ECS and SCS.

7. Vietnam Maritime Law

Two months after the Scarborough Shoal Incident, Vietnam enacted a Maritime Law and asserted its jurisdiction over the disputed Spratly and Paracel Islands. Vietnam ordered any foreign ships passing through the area to notify Vietnam. China responded strongly, announcing that it would establish the Sansha City to administer the Paracel Islands, the Spratlys and the Macclesfield Coast. Relations between Hanoi and Beijing, which had been volatile between May and June 2011, were further aggravated by the cable-cutting incident. Chinese surveillance ships cut the cable of a gas and oil survey vessel operated by the state-owned Petro Vietnam, as mentioned earlier, but tensions eased after the top Party Secretary visited Beijing in October and reached a bilateral agreement, seeking peaceful means to resolve maritime issues. It is worth noting that Hanoi is also modernizing its defense and military, stepping up its defense budget by 70% to around US\$2.6 billion in 2011.²³ This military modernization, in a geostrategic perspective, also indicated that Hanoi will continue to defend its rights in the SCT and SCS, when armed conflict is possible.

8. The 45th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM)

On July 20, 2012, in its history, ASEAN for the first time in 45 years did not convey specific conclusions in the Joint Communique regarding crucial issues in the SCS. The joint statement of the Foreign Ministers, more repeated and emphasized the agreements that had been in the process for a long time.²⁴ In the annual meeting in Cambodia, there was a deadlock from ten members regarding China's claims in the SCS. Member countries did not agree whether to include territorial issues in the joint statement. This diplomatic uncertainty seemed to be the impact of the confrontation between the Philippines and China regarding the

²² <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/chinas-maritime-disputes>, downloaded on June 26, 2024.

²³ <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/chinas-maritime-dispute>, downloaded on June 25, 2024.

²⁴ Statement of the ASEAN Foreign Minister (Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July 20, 2012).

“ASEAN’s Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea ASEAN Foreign Ministers reiterate and reaffirm the commitment of ASEAN Member States to: 1.the full implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2002); 2.the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2011); 3.the early conclusion of a Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea; 4.the full respect of the universally recognized principles of International Law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); 5.the continued exercise of self-restraint and non-use of force by all parties; and 6.the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with universally recognized principles of International Law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).The ASEAN Foreign Ministers resolve to intensify ASEAN consultations in the advancement of the above principles, consistent with the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (1976) and the ASEAN Charter (2008). <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-political-security-community/the-45th-amm-and-related-meetings/> accessed on June 25, 2024.

incident in the Scarborough Islands group three months earlier. In the annual conference in 2012 there was no mention of the Scarborough issue and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) issue.²⁵

It can be understood that what was conveyed in the conclusion of the results of the meeting of foreign ministers were moderate normative efforts related to cooperation, resolving disputes in the SCS and ECS, in an effort to ensure peace in the region.²⁶ ASEAN in every meeting and annual meeting always submits peaceful, moderate proposals, especially Indonesia always submits peaceful proposals, obeys international law, mutually beneficial and obeys the code of ethics in the use of the SCS and ECS. However, Indonesia's sovereignty in Natuna must not be violated by any country.

9. The sterile multi-polar approach

The various commitments in the 45th ASEAN MINISTER MEETING (AMM), July 12th, 2012, seemed to be just statements on paper, because various events leading to conflict in the SCS and ECS continued to occur and this is a reality as believed by adherents of the realist diplomacy approach. Various efforts and approaches to resolve the conflict and complexity in the SCS and ECS seemed sterile, because of the egocentrism at the level of the disputing countries.

US President Barack Obama, who held talks with Philippine President Benigno Aquino in Manila, seemed to back up the Philippines, but behind that there were special American interests in the SCS and ECS. Barack Obama, who visited Asian countries before setting foot in the Philippines, seemed to be an “ambassador of peace” during his last visit to Asian countries. In Manila, Obama and Aquino signed a new ten-year military pact.²⁷ In a press release on April 28th, 2014, it was stated that this cooperation program aims to support and facilitate the rotation of the American military in East Asia, joint exercises, open access to other islands including access to warships through the Philippines as a counterweight to the power of the United States in the Asia-Pacific.²⁸ It is no wonder that the United States can openly be interpreted as an effort to contain China in the LSC and ECS.

²⁵ Ernest Z. Bower, “China Reveals Its Hand on ASEAN in Phnom Penh,” the Center for Strategic and International Studies. July 20, 2012.

<https://eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/china-reveals-its-hand-on-asean-in-phnom-penh/> downloaded on June 25, 2024.

²⁶ Chairman’s Statement of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC) +1 Sessions, July 11, 2012.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) + 1 Sessions with 10 ASEAN Dialogue Partners, namely Australia, Canada, China, the European Union (EU), India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America were held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in statement number 79 on ASEAN relation with USA, it was stated: The Meeting recognized the growing significance of maritime issues and cooperation in the region and underscored the importance to regional peace and stability, of ensuring maritime safety, freedom of navigation, respect for international law, and unimpeded lawful commerce in the South China Sea. The Meeting expressed support for the full and effective implementation of the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, as well as the early conclusion of a Code of Conduct, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting agreed an effective Code of Conduct should create a rules- based framework for managing disputes and regulating the conduct of parties in the South China Sea

https://www.asean.org/wpcontent/uploads/images/archive/documents/1_ASEAN%20Chairmans%20Statement_PMC1%20Sessions_Final.pdf, downloaded on June 23, 2024.

²⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/27/philippines-us-military-presence-china-dispute>, downloaded on June 25, 2024.

²⁸ Rosemarie Francisco and Manuel Mogato Obama arrives in Manila as Philippines, U.S. sign security pact Reuter April 28, 2014:25 PM GMT+7Updated 10 years ago.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/business/autos-transportation/obama-hails-security-pact-with-philippines-says-no-threat-to-china-idUSL3N0NK259/> accessed on June 20, 2024, and June 25, 2024.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo met for the first time at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation APEC Summit in Beijing on November 10, 2014. The previous day, China and Japan had agreed to approve the design of the Four Agreements (For-Point Agreement) in an effort to improve diplomatic and defense relations. The agreement also aims to handle crisis management to avoid escalation of territorial conflict over disputes in the ECS. Both countries agreed that they would follow the principles of the four political documents they had established together. They also agreed to continue to build a mutually beneficial strategic relationship between China and Japan.²⁹ The essence is (a) mutually beneficial cooperation, (b) resolving political turmoil bilaterally (c) agreeing to resolve the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute and the mechanism for handling crises if they occur, (d) Both parties agree to build mutual trust and resolve issues through dialogue.

The four documents refer to the China-Japan Joint Statement inked in 1972, the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1978, the China-Japan Joint Declaration of 1998, and the Joint Statement on advancing strategic and mutually-beneficial relations in a comprehensive way that was signed in 2008.³⁰

10. A Decade of Twists and Turns

Indonesia Chaired ASEAN on January 29th, 2023, for the seventh time since 1976. China again officially announced its latest territorial map, including the previous nine-dash line boundary and added to ten dashes covering the Taiwan Islands and most of the Spratly Islands. This new map was rejected by ASEAN countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam. India, Japan and Taiwan also expressed their objections.³¹

As the Chair of ASEAN in 2023, Indonesia took the initiative for the Code of Conduct (CoC) in the SCS to be established immediately. The draft was adopted during a meeting between ASEAN Foreign Ministers and Director of the Committee for Foreign Affairs of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Wang Yi, in Jakarta on July 13, 2023. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi emphasized that the CoC must be agreed upon immediately in an effort to respect the International Law of the Sea including UNCLOS which was established in 1982.³²

On August 18, 2023, US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol attended a press conference at Camp David, in a summit aimed at reaffirming mutually beneficial cooperation. The three leaders blamed China for its aggression in the SCS and reminded them of their commitment to the 2016 The Hague decision opposing China's Nine-dash line. This meeting took place two months after Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met to uphold the UNCLOS decision and other International Laws in the SCS. This indicates that India is also uncomfortable with China's maritime expansion.³³ As is known, in the decision reached unanimously on July 12, 2016, the Supreme Court The Arbitration Court based on the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention -

²⁹ China, Japan reach four-point agreement on ties: Xinhua Published: 2014-11-7 21:10:47 <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/890611.shtml>, downloaded on June 28, 2024.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ <https://apnews.com/article/china-map-territorial-dispute-south-sea-702c45165d7f9cade796700fffa5691e>, downloaded on June 25, 2024.

³² <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/4956/berita/asean-china-agree-on-guidelines-to-accelerate-negotiations-for-the-code-of-conduct-in-the-south-china-sea> Home \ Indonesian Way \ ASEAN-China Agree on Guidelines to Accelerate Negotiations for the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, downloaded on June 25, 2024.

³³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-south-korea-japan-agree-crisis-consultations-camp-david-summit-2023-08-18/>, downloaded on June 27, 2024.

of which the PRC is a member - rejected the PRC's maritime claims as having no basis in international law. The Court firmly sided with the Philippines, which filed the arbitration case, in almost all claims.³⁴ On April 11th, a summit between the United States, Japan and the Philippines was held at the White House. President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. agreed to reaffirm maritime cooperation. The trilateral meeting was held after a joint naval patrol exercise in the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In a joint statement, this joint exercise was held to anticipate Chinese movements in the SCS, and the increasing intensity of Chinese patrols in the SCT near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands which are disputed between Japan and China.

On February 4th, 2023, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. welcomed the arrival of the US Navy at the San Miguel Naval Base, Zambales, Philippines. Four US military bases in the northern Philippines will involve twice the number of US military personnel already deployed in the SCS. China has firmly rejected the US military presence in the SCS, but the Philippines has challenged it because the Chinese Navy has repeatedly used laser beams to scare away Philippine fishermen.³⁵

In January 2023, President Marcos Jr. paid a state visit to China, an attempt by Marcos to approach China on the one hand and maintain his defense alliance with the United States on the other. During the visit, President Marcos Jr. signed 14 bilateral agreements in various fields, including infrastructure projects through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) memorandum of understanding (MoU) and the establishment of a communication mechanism on maritime issues between the two countries.³⁶

On April 28th, 2024, the Chinese Coast Guard intercepted Japanese lawmakers on an inspection mission in the SCS. Former Japanese Defense Minister Tomomi Inada was among the group.³⁷ China accused Japan of making provocations that could escalate tensions.

The tension, tug-of-war, violations, geopolitical and geo-economic egocentrism in the SCS and ECS in the last ten years after the decision of the Hague Arbitration Court on 12 July 2016, has not reduced the conflict, but instead has fueled the tension for the last ten years.

11. Indonesia's Sovereignty Disturbed

China also claims the Natuna waters based on the nine-dash line as China's version of traditional fishing grounds. In fact, the Djuanda Declaration 67 years ago (December 13th, 1957) has emphasized that the seas included in the territory of the Republic of Indonesia are not seas included in the free zone, but belong to the Republic of Indonesia. The Djuanda Declaration on December 13th, 1957. "That all waters around, between, and connecting the islands included in the land of the Republic of Indonesia, regardless of their width or extent, are a natural part of the land territory of the Republic of Indonesia and thus are part of the inland waters or national waters under the sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia."³⁸

³⁴ <https://dunia.tempo.co/read/787096/tribunal-nyatakan-cina-tak-punya-hak-di-laut-cina-selatan>, downloaded on June 26, 2024.

³⁵ Ignatius Edhi Karitas dan Muhammad Farid Forum Sinologi Indonesia, October 16, 2023. <https://forumsinologi.id/kunjungan-duterte-dengan-xi-jin-ping/>, downloaded on June 26, 2024.

³⁶ Bea Cupin, "Bilateral agreements signed during Marcos' state visit to China," Rappler, January 5, 2023. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/list-bilateral-agreements-signed-marcos-jr-china-state-visit-january-2023/>, downloaded on June 26, 2024.

³⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-confronts-japanese-politicians-disputed-e-china-sea-area-2024-04-28/>. Downloaded on June 26, 2024.

³⁸ Negara Hadir di Natuna, Tegaskan Wilayah Milik NKRI, BNPP <http://ppid.bnpp.go.id/news/newsdetail/1358/Negara-Hadir-di-Natuna--Tegaskan-Wilayah-Milik-NKRI>, downloaded on June 28, 2024.

In the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea III (United Nations Convention On The Law of The Sea/UNCLOS 1982) the Djuanda Declaration related to the principles of the unitary state was recognized.³⁹

President Joko Widodo during his visit to Natuna on January 8, 2020, reiterated that "...the Indonesian people should not doubt that Natuna belongs to the Republic of Indonesia from the past until now...the sovereign rights of our country, Indonesia, over the wealth of our marine natural resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone are in accordance with applicable laws."⁴⁰ Sekatung Island and Laut Island, which are the Outermost Small Islands in Natuna Regency, Riau Islands Province, are continental boundaries that form the boundaries of the country's territory and the boundaries of Indonesia's EEZ. For Indonesia, whose sea territory is often violated by foreign countries, this is a warning that foreign countries want the marine wealth in Natuna waters.

Indonesia has another way to overcome violations of Indonesia's marine wealth, especially illegal fishing. The action of the Indonesian Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Susi Pudjiastuti, was to blow up and sink fishing vessels from other countries in the waters of Datuk, West Kalimantan. A total of 26 illegal fishing vessels from other countries have been sunk in West Kalimantan, following the sinking of 13 illegal fishing vessels on May 4, 2019. Minister Susi said that sinking vessels is one way out of the problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (UU fishing), which has depleted Indonesia's fishery resources. "This is a very beautiful way out for our nation, frightening for other nations. Resolving this way must become a pattern," said Susi.⁴¹

12. Conclusion

It can be concluded that since the emergence of territorial conflicts in the East China Sea and South China Sea, there has been a conflict of interests between countries in the ECS and SCS regions. Conflicts and disputes give rise to a multidimensional aspects of politics, economics, trade, natural resources, territoriality, exclusive economic zones on sea borders and of course nationalism. This multidimensional conflict is what distinguishes it from conflicts in the past.

ASEAN countries that tend to be more moderate in resolving disputes in the SCS and ECS also have different interests among members so that ASEAN does not actually have a unanimous agreement on the SCS dispute, in particular, there have been many fishing violations by Chinese and Vietnamese sailors in Natuna waters which are Indonesian sea territory.

The interests of the superpowers in an effort to maintain the supremacy of interests have given rise to egocentrism and realism in international relations that are in a zigzag process. The zigzag egocentric realist approach that underlies this article cannot be separated from the laws of history that are dynamic and metamorphosed throughout their time.

As if the conflict functions to live side by side with the motive of utilizing marine wealth and access to shipping and trade traffic, in addition to controlling substantive energy sources in the bowels of the sea. The resolution of this conflict and dispute should be multidimensional. At least three ways, I want to offer,

³⁹Yuda B Tangkilisan, "The Declaration Of Djuanda 1957," Conference Proceedings, *Enhancing Quality of Life Through Human Well Being and Environmental Sustainability in Social Science*, Bogor City, Indonesia, 12-14 September 2017, p.93 <https://unida.ac.id/bicss2017/assets/images/uploads/conference-proceedings-BICSS.pdf>, downloaded on June 26, 2024.

⁴⁰ BNPP, *Ibid*.

⁴¹ Susi Pudjiastuti kembali tenggelamkan kapal asing pencuri ikan.

<https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/majalah-48166630>, downloaded on June 26, 2024.

namely (a) resolving conflicts without resolving them by continuing to maintain the conflict, if the egocentrism of countries cannot be reduced, in this case the utilization of marine resources, shipping, free sea trade, and the law of the jungle will repeat itself, (b) Conflicts and disputes can be ended when the countries in the region that are in conflict and external interference from the countries in the region are stopped by complying with all legal products and agreements between, between and across countries based on security and peace referring, among others, to the Code of Conduct that has been agreed upon (c) If a and b cannot be implemented, then it is only a matter of time, a major war cannot be avoided and humans will destroy themselves because they are shackled by their own egocentrism.

Reference

1. Brzenski, Z. "Game Plan. How to Conduct the US-Soviet Contest," Boston. *Atlantic Monthly Press*, 1986; Original from, the University of Michigan; Digitized, Sep 17, 2008.
2. https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Game_Plan.html?id=9oV1AAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y, downloaded on June 28, 2024.
3. Chairman's Statement of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC) +1 Sessions Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July 11, 2012.
4. https://www.asean.org/wpcontent/uploads/images/archive/documents/1_ASEAN%20Chairmans%20Statement_PMC1%20Sessions_Final.pdf downloaded on June 28, 2024.
5. China, Japan reach four-point agreement on ties: Xinhua Published: 2014-11-7 21:10:47 <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/890611.shtml>
6. Christian Scholtheist, *Ocean Governance and Conflict in the East and South China Sea: Negotiating Natural Resources, Institutions and Power*, Amsterdam University Press, 2024
7. <https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463728997/ocean-governance-and-conflict-in-the-east-and-south-china-sea>
8. Ernest Z. Bower, *China Reveals Its Hand on ASEAN in Phnom Penh*, the Center for Strategic and International Studies. July 20, 2012
9. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/china-reveals-its-hand-on-asean-in-phnom-penh/> downloaded on June 25, 2024.
10. Hayton, Bill. *The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia*. New Haven London, Yale University Press, 2014, p. 298.
11. Karitas, Ignatius Edhi & Muhammad Farid. *Forum Sinologi Indonesia*, Oktober 16, 2023 <https://forumsinologi.id/kunjungan-duterte-dengan-xi-jin-ping/> downloaded on June 26, 2024.
12. Juwana, Hikmahanto, Sobar Sutisna and Kresno Buntoro. "The Disputes of South China Sea From International Law Perspective," *The Southeast Asia Law Journal*, Volume 1 No.1 July 2015, p.1-10.
13. Kim, J. "The Clash of Power and Nationalism: The Sino Japan Territorial Dispute." *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, 5(1) 31-56., 2018.
14. Kodama, Yoshinori. "Judicialization In and Around the South China Sea," *Indonesian Journal of International Law*: Vol. 21: No. 1, 2023, Article 1. DOI: 10.17304/ijil.vol 21.1.6
15. Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/ijil/vol21/iss1/1>
16. *Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security (MIDAS)*, "An Analysis of The Current Security Situation in The South China Sea (SCS) Based on Maritime Confrontations Between The Philippines and China," March 14, 2024

17. “Negara Hadir di Natuna, Tegaskan Wilayah Milik NKRI, BNPP,” <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-be&q=Negara+Hadir+di+Natuna%2C+Tegaskan+Wilayah+Milik+NKRI%2C+BNPP%2C>
18. Ogunnoiki, Adeleke Olumide. “The East China Sea Disputes: Examining China and Japan’s Territorial Claim,” *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration*, Volume 3, Issue 2, 2020 (pp. 79-92).
19. Perlez, Jane. When America and China Collided: Why the Countries Are Dangerously Unprepared for a Repeat of the 2001 Crisis. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/when-america-and-china-collided>.
20. Surajaya, I Ketut. “Controversy of Historical Approach on Sino- Japanese Dispute over the Diaoyu / Senkaku Islands” *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* Volume 7 Issue 2, February 2018, p. 1341 downloaded on June 20, 2024.
21. _____. *Jepang Kontemporer 2, Shinzo Abe: Isu Politik, Ekonomi, Pertahanan*, Depok, Penerbit Galung, 2019, p. 141-161.
22. _____. “Wacana dan Realita, Negara Normal dan Remiliterisasi Jepang” in *Shinzo Abe: Isu Politik, Ekonomi, Pertahanan*, 2019, p.1-23.
23. Tonnesson, Stein. International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), “The Paracels: The ‘Other’ South China Sea Dispute” (Paper Presented at The South China Sea Panel, *International Studies Association*, Hongkong Convention, 26-28 July 2001).
24. Statement of the ASEAN Foreign Minister (Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July 20, 2012).
25. <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-political-security-community/the-45th-amm-and-related-meetings/> downloaded 25 June. 2024
26. Suzette V. Suarez1A. Von Bogdandy and R. Wolfrum, (eds.), *Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf*, Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law, Volume 14, 2010, p. 131-168. © 2010 Koninklijke Brill N.V. Printed in The Netherland
27. Tangkilisan, Yuda B. “The Declaration Of Djuanda 1957,” *Conference Proceedings*, “Enchancing Quality of Life Through Human Well Being and Environmental Sustainability in Social Science,” Bogor Cuty, Indonesia, 12-14 September 2017, p.93.
28. United Nation Treaty Series number 5321 “*Japan and United States of America Agreement (with agreed minutes and exchange of notes) under article VI of the Treaty of Mutual Co-operation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, regarding facilities and areas and the status of United States armed forces in Japan.*” Signed at Washington, on January 19, 1960,
29. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20373/volume-373-I-5321-English.pdf>, downloaded on June 28, 2024.
30. Wardah, Fatiah. “Menlu: Hak Indonesia Atas ZEE di Laut China Selatan Sesuai Hukum Laut Internasional,” *VOA*, July 18, 2020.
31. <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/menlu-hak-indonesia-atas-zee-di-laut-cina-selatan-sesuai-hukum-laut-internasional/5507862.html>
32. Walt, Stephen. M. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press., 1987.