

REVIEW/RESEARCH ARTICLE/SHORT COMMUNICATION

United States Foreign Policy New Era in Dealing with China In The South China Sea

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Abstract

The United States has changed leadership at the end of 2020, from the time of President Donald Trump to President Joe Biden. These two heads of state have different characters due to the policy model of each party that won the United States Presidential election. President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden are basically not friendly to China, they the US does not want to be defeated by China, especially regarding the situation and conditions in the South China Sea. Foreign policy in the Donald Trump era for the South China Sea was more likely to be frontal and more open, while in President Joe Biden it was firm but with a soft delivery and with sharp meaning straight to the point. Basically the policies of these two leaders are the same for the South China Sea, the US does not want the South China Sea to be owned by a country. This attitude will continue to provoke China to retaliate for the actions taken by the US, if the two countries are allowed to retaliate against each other, it is feared that an open war in the South China Sea will be created. This research is a qualitative research with a descriptive approach, collecting data by means of in-depth interviews and literature study. The formulation of the problem in this study is how Indonesia responds to US foreign policy for the South China Sea? The conclusion of this study is the recommendation of Indonesia's attitude in facing the competition between these two countries in the South China Sea.

Keywords: Foreign Policy; United States; China; South China Sea

Introduction

The introduction should contain (sequentially) the general background and research question or hypothesis. If there is literature review, it can be included in this chapter. The study objective should be written at the end of the introduction.

The United States get into a new era with the election of President Joe Biden who succeeded President Donald Trump. The new President Joe Biden designed his cabinet with elected people who have different backgrounds, of course President Joe Biden put his elected people in positions according to their respective abilities.

The United States and China in the previous Presidents had bilateral relations that could be said to have ups and downs, especially during the time of President Donald Trump, it can be said that the relations between the two countries did not run smoothly. There are various reasons why these two countries do not get along with each other.

President Donald Trump when he was elected first put forward the principle of America First. This principle causes a lot of friction, especially with China. President Donald Trump's tough character and then provocative with his opponent makes many leaders in the world dislike him. President Donald Trump always puts the United States first, as a result, many rules are violated and with his style that likes to anger many people.

In the era of President Donald Trump, multilateral diplomacy did not work, Donald Trump preferred bilateral diplomacy between countries. This policy is seen as detrimental, especially in the case of the South China Sea.

Currently the United States was build a new policy, transforming from controversial policies in the past to a firm and non-hyperbolic policy where at this time the narratives built by President Joe Biden are not narratives that are provocative and scare the country. another, a more humanist narrative but has a deep meaning.

There are various reasons in the era of President Donald Trump don't want the US diplomacy model to use the multilateral diplomacy model, one of which is that the US wants to focus more on establishing relations between countries, does not want many countries to be involved and also at a time when the region does not get serious attention from it, especially the Southeast Asia region.

At present President Joe Biden has changed his foreign policy one by one, including now President Joe Biden has returned to paying attention to the region. If you look at this policy, there will be many advantages of this policy.

South China Sea was seen with the ship USS Theodore Roosevelt carrying out operations overboard navigation on January 23, 2021, then there was also the Ticonderoga-class missile cruiser, USS Bunker Hill, and the Arleigh Burke-class missile destroyer, USS Russel. and USS John Finn (C Directorate BAIS TNI, 2021)

China responded to the deployment of ships by the United States with the deployment of People Liberation Army aircraft by carrying out reconditioning at ADIZ Taiwan, then there were 1 Y-8 anti-submarine warfare aircraft, 8 Xian H-6K Bombers and 4 J-16 Flights Jet aircraft. (C Directorate BAIS TNI, 2021)

The role of the United States in the South China Sea dispute has begun to be seen when the secretary of state in the era of President Barack Obama Hillary Clinton supported the congressional approval of the "Law of the Sea Convention" which would support other countries to challenge China's claims in the disputed area. In July 2012, the United States Senate passed resolution 524, one of which stated the United States' full support for the "202 Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea" which shows the United States' commitment to helping Southeast Asian countries to fight China in the China Sea conflict (Bidara, et.al, 2018)

The current situation in the South China Sea don't show anything changes, each country shows its hegemony and provokes each other. This situation will be very worrying for the stability and security of the region.

Literature Review

Freedom of Navigation.

Freedom of Navigation is a concept related to the national relations of a country (Bahri, 2016). Freedom of Navigation is the right, freedom to access the sea area to interact with other countries for their national interests, freedom itself can be understood in two forms, namely social freedom and existential freedom (Bahri, 2016).

The purpose of America's Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea is carried out by means of military operations both at sea and in the air, the United States' interest in Freedom of Navigation in the South China Sea is to enforce international law on the sea (UNCLOS) in the South China Sea area as well as to support the creation of regional security and stability and ultimately maintain international trade on this path (Bahri, 2016).

Foreign Policy

One way to understand the concept of foreign policy is to separate it into two components: politics and foreign affairs. Politics is a set of decisions that guide action, or a set of actions aimed at achieving predetermined goals. The policy itself is rooted in the concept of "choice; choose actions or make decisions to achieve a goal. Meanwhile, the idea of sovereignty and the concept of "territory" will help efforts to understand the concept of foreign countries. Sovereignty means control over the territory (in) owned by a country. So foreign policy means a set of guidelines for choosing actions aimed outside the territory of a country (Perwita & Yanyan M. Yani, 2017).

Foreign policy is a strategy or action plan made by state decision makers in dealing with other countries or other international political units, and controlled to achieve specific national goals as outlined in the terminology of national interests (Plano & Roy Olton, 1999).

K.J. Holsti said that foreign policy is a way for a state to interact with other desired countries, where the state wants to cooperate with other countries in diplomatic matters, issuing doctrines, making alliances, declaring goals, both long-term and short-term (Holsti, 1988).

Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The author collects data by interview and literature study. The subject of this research is the United States and the object of this research is foreign policy. The author has conducted interviews with several informants such as from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs as well as with academics and international relations experts.

Results

President Donald Trump Foreign Policy

The facts of President Donald Trump's foreign policy can be traced back to his inauguration speech as President of the United States on January 20, 2017. At that time, President Trump had already shown signs that he would withdraw from the dynamics of international politics. One part of his speech indicated that "From this moment on, it's going to be America First". This is actually not surprising if it is traced from the content of President Trump's campaign which has shown symptoms in that direction. This is also evidenced by the consistency of its foreign policy direction which leads to an "inward looking foreign policy" (Siswanto, et.al, 2018).

In mid-February 2017 during a hearing between the United States Department of State and the Senate on the issue of the South China Sea which is a serious discussion between the two countries, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated that the possibility of the South China Sea would become a stage for a crisis between the two largest economies in the world. the world (Siswanto, et.al, 2018).

President Joe Biden Foreign Policy

On January 20, 2021, United States President Joe Biden was sworn in as the new president. In the current era of President Joe Biden, the United States is predicted to return to the old foreign policy direction, namely the policy of multilateralism which emphasizes the direction of diplomacy (Lisbet, 2021). This policy is considered important by the world because during the leadership of President Donald Trump, the United States was felt

to experience a setback due to the United States' foreign policy which emphasized unilateralism so that the United States lost its credibility as a major actor in world politics (Lisbet, 2021).

Under President Biden, the attitude of the United States towards China will not change. China is still considered a challenger that cannot be ignored. The South China Sea has become the object of a battle of mutual claims between the two countries, China considers almost the entire South China Sea to be their territory with an area of 1200 miles or nine dash line on the grounds that since the ancient Chinese dynasty China has occupied the sea, but America considers that not true. , because China's claim does not have a strong legal basis (Dnews.co.id, 2021).

United States Secretary of State Anthony Blincken emphasized that the United States supports countries in the Southeast Asian region regarding the South China Sea conflict involving many countries in Southeast Asia (CNNIndonesia, 2021). This attitude proves that President Joe Biden prioritizes the region and also uses a multilateralism approach in resolving the South China Sea conflict.

In addition to multilateral diplomacy policies on the South China Sea issue, during the time of President Joe Biden, there was also a policy of reviving the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). This QUAD had been in hiatus for several years, during the time of President Joe Biden it would be revived. QUAD is an alliance of several countries consisting of India, the United States, Japan, South Korea and Australia. This QUAD was formed in order to maintain the balance of power and prevent the emergence of dominant forces in the region (Wardoyo, 2021).

China's Aggressiveness in the South China Sea

Until now, China views the South China Sea area as China's territorial waters so that China feels entitled to do anything in the area that is under international dispute. Whereas in the past China carried out more diplomatic maneuvers in maintaining its position in the region, recently China has begun to show its strength in an effort to defend its claim to the region (Cipto, 2018).

The Chinese Navy's recent display of force in the South China Sea appears to be an attempt by China to convince the United States that it has a navy ready to confront the United States in the region. In January 2021 the Chinese military held a combat exercise in the South China Sea, this step was China's response to the United States sending the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt to patrol the South China Sea, this United States action as a sign that their policies in the South China Sea will not never changed despite changing leadership (Kompas, 2021).

The Chinese government has rejected the 2016 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the lawsuit filed by the Philippines. The International Court of Justice in The Hague has firmly stated that China's claim to the nine dash line has no legal basis. China also uses the concept of gray zone operation, forming and sending hundreds of civilian fishing vessels as maritime militias with escorts from the Chinese Coast Guard to disputed waters. China's ambition to control the mineral-rich South China Sea was also strengthened by issuing the Coast Guard Act in early 2021 which authorizes the Chinese coast guard to take important steps, including the use of weapons, if China's sovereignty claims are violated by foreign powers. The Chinese Guard has the same authority as its navy in protecting China's sovereignty (Kompas.com, 2021)

Discussion

The South China Sea itself is an area that has long been a source of dispute. The South China Sea has strategic value for countries that intersect with this region. In addition to being estimated to have high economic value, the area is also projected to have various potentials ranging from the economic potential of living and non-

living natural resources, to military development, as well as politics and security in the area (Dwiguna & Syaroni, 2019)

Based on the explanation above, President Joe Biden currently prioritizes multilateral diplomacy in dealing with China in the South China Sea in this case is an approach to ASEAN, as evidenced by the statement of support from the United States to Southeast Asian countries. This step is considered beneficial for Southeast Asia, where during the administration of President Donald Trump, ASEAN received less attention from the United States, the attention meant here was that ASEAN was less involved in the US diplomatic process.

In the era of President Joe Biden, it was stated explicitly that China was the biggest threat to the United States, even though in previous presidents China was also indirectly considered an enemy by the United States of America. The rivalry between the United States and China in the South China Sea will escalate with the involvement of QUAD in the region, even though during the current Covid-19 pandemic, the South China Sea will continue to be an arena for demonstrating the military power of the United States and China.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation and discussion above, the author can draw conclusions in this paper as follows:

- a. The attitude of the United States' foreign policy during the presidency of any person remains, namely, that it still considers China as the main enemy of the United States.
- b. The Freedom of Navigation policy will continue to be implemented because it is in the national interest of the United States of America;
- c. QUAD is an alliance to challenge China's hegemony in the region, the purpose of this alliance is to ensure the creation of regional stability;
- d. The South China Sea will always be a serious concern for the United States government.
- e. Indonesia must be able to take advantage of the opportunities that exist with the United States' new foreign policy at this time.

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