

Cooperation & Security Dilemma in the South China Sea: Conflict Management & the Increasing of China's Power

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explain about security dilemma and offense-defense balance in the South China Sea. The rising of China's power in the South China Sea that facilitate security dilemma makes cooperation between claimant countries becoming more difficult. Regarding this matter, it's important to explain why cooperation in the area is difficult in the midst of many literatures that advocated cooperation as the tools for conflict management in the South China Sea. This article refers to the concepts of security dilemma and offense-defense balance by Robert Jervis. By employing qualitative research method of literature review, this article illustrates the distribution of power in the region. Through data exploration, this article finds that China's offensive power in the South China Sea is massive and triggers security dilemma. Thus, this article argues that security dilemma caused by China's offensive power in South China Sea is the main the reason that inhibiting cooperation between claimant states.

Keywords: *Security Dilemma, South China Sea, Military Capability, Offense-defense Balance, Cooperation.*

Artikel ini membicarakan dilema keamanan serta keseimbangan offense-defense di Laut Tiongkok Selatan. Peningkatan kekuatan Tiongkok di Laut Tiongkok Selatan yang memperlancar proses dilema keamanan membuat kerjasama antar negara menjadi sulit. Dengan kata lain, penting untuk menjelaskan mengapa kerjasama sulit dilakukan ditengah banyaknya literatur yang mengadvokasikan hal tersebut sebagai upaya pengelolaan tensi di Laut Tiongkok Selatan. Dalam membentuk penjelasan yang ideal, artikel ini akan merujuk pada konsep dilema keamanan serta keseimbangan offense-defense oleh Robert Jervis. Data-data dalam arikel ini akan dieksplorasi menggunakan metode kajian literatur untuk menggambarkan distribusi kekuatan di kawasan. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa kekuatan ofensif Tiongkok di Laut Tiongkok Selatan memang cukup besar untuk menimbulkan kekhawatiran serta meningkatkan dilema keamanan. Dengan demikian, artikel ini memiliki argumen bahwa dilema keamanan akibat kekuatan militer ofensif Tiongkok di Laut Tiongkok Selatan adalah alasan utama yang menghambat kerjasama antar negara klaim.

Kata-kata kunci: *Dilema Keamanan, Laut Tiongkok Selatan, Kapabilitas Militer, Keseimbangan Offense-Defense, Kerjasama.*

Cooperation has been a popular topic of discussion in International Relations. This study is often associated with the Liberalism Paradigm. On the other hand, Realism Paradigm is usually associated with the study of conflict and war between countries. The distinction between these two paradigms leads to the debates between experts. The classical Liberalist like Immanuel Kant sees that the state can cooperate and form a harmonious society (Russett 2013, 95). States are seen to always have incentives to cooperate (Russett 2013, 96). In other words, for Liberals, harmony of interests could occur and encourage cooperation (Vioti & Kauppi 2012, 134).

On the other side, Realists view that cooperation is difficult because of the anarchical system of international politics, even though there are common interests between states. (Grieco 1988, 485). Realism also considers that cooperation is difficult because the fear of being cheated and the notion of *relative gain* (Grieco 1988, 487). In short, even it could be established, the anarchical system makes cooperation limited and hard to sustaine (Mearsheimer 1994, 12). Moreover, in the anarchy system, there is a condition of security dilemma when the action to secure states' national interest could produce suspicion and insecurity for others (Jervis 1978, 169-172). These suspicions and fears of being exploited are the things that inhibit cooperation. Thus, this article shows that cooperation in the South China Sea is difficult and even if it could be established, it is difficult to maintain because of the inter-state security dilemma. In conjunction with this, this article provides a new perspective on the pre-conditions for inter-state cooperation that are frequently cited as the most sensible way to manage conflict.

Conflict Management in The South China Sea

In the South China Sea context, some cooperation has been used as a tool for conflict management. Some of these collaborations are largely unimplemented practically. However, cooperation is still somewhat difficult because of disagreements between China that want bilateral cooperation while other claimant countries want the cooperation or settlement in multilateral form (Collins 2000, 168). There are some anxieties from other claimants that if cooperation with China is done bilaterally, China will get more benefits (Weatherbee 2009, 148).

This does not mean there is no progress at all in the negotiations. In 1990, Indonesia successfully invited China to attend the annual meeting of "*Workshop on Managing Potential Conflict in the South China Sea*" that aimed at finding cooperation grounds (Weatherbee 2009, 144-145). However, China is not willing to discuss territorial jurisdiction issues in the event (Weatherbee 2009, 144-145). Furthermore, in 1997 China joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). In this forum, China agreed to follow UNCLOS rules and not to use force in the dispute (Caceres 2014, 9). This continues with the approval of China in the *Declaration On The Conduct of the Parties In The South China Sea* (DOC). Point 5 of DOC advocates the signatory countries should refrain from actions that would escalate disputes or conflicts (ASEAN 2002). Unfortunately, cooperation in the form of forums and declarations has not been implemented practically and non-binding so China still has the tendency to continue its assertiveness and expand its power without holding back as agreed in the DOC. This is reflected by the tension in the waters since China issued a map of the *Nine Dash Line* that illustrates the limits of its claims in 2009. The following tension related to the actions

by the claimants itself, for example, the cutting of Vietnamese oil exploration cables by China (International Crisis Group 2012, 6). Such behaviors are clearly incompatible with the DOC and at the same time this example showed that such declaration does not seem really effective.

In addition to cooperation in the form of forums and declarations, there are also practical cooperations undertaken by the claimant countries. One example is the joint oil exploration between China and the Philippines in 2004 (Scott 2012, 1032). Vietnam also participated in the exploration later (Weatherbee 2009, 147). This is widely regarded as good progress in cooperation in the South China Sea. However, this cooperation is abandoned. One of the reasons is the fact that the cooperation in question poses a disadvantage to the Philippines because of the exploration right of a territory which has never been claimed by Vietnam and China been given to both countries (Weatherbee 2009, 147). Finally, until 2008 when this agreement expired, the cooperation has never been extended until the present time.

Due to the failure of joint exploration and lack of effective forums as well as declarations such as the DOC, there are still many literatures argue that cooperation might be the most sensible option for conflict management. The arguments of these experts seem to be close with the ideas of Liberalism that promote cooperation. Zhao (2012, 57-76), who discusses the Philippine-Chinese relationship in the South China Sea, considered that the expansion of economic ties and common interests could become the cornerstone of conflict management. Furthermore, Hyer (1995, 34-54) argues that China is a pragmatic actor that has shown signs of wanting to cooperate in the South China Sea. Bateman (2011, 25-33) has even argued that a cooperative conflict management regime is required to manage the conflict tension in the area.

Beside these arguments, there are several experts who focus on cooperation in the field of *Joint Development* of energy resources. Scott (2012, 1019-42) argues that conflict management through exploration and energy exploitation could override sovereignty issues in the South China Sea. Simon (2012, 995-1018), in his article on conflict and diplomacy in the South China Sea, also claims that cooperation in the management of maritime resources could reduce the tension of the conflict. Buszynski and Sazlam (2012, 143-71) more specifically state that energy cooperation can improve the prospects for security in the South China Sea. Snyder (1996, 142-158) also argues that Joint Development in utilizing resources can facilitate conflict resolution. More optimistically, Gao (1994, 345-59) argues that Joint Development either bilaterally or multilaterally could produce peace in the South China Sea. Related to this, Weatherbee (2009, 142-8) believes that cooperation will be more beneficial for China in many aspects.

Furthermore, there are experts who considered the cooperation in other fields as good conflict management methods. As Townsend-Gault (1998, 171-90) puts it, that informal initiatives could be an alternative to addressing the state of the impasse in the dispute. Odgaard (2001, 292-306) also believes that limited cooperation and consultation could build a good relation with China. Regarding cooperation in non-traditional issues, Kao, Pearre, and Firestone (2012, 283-95) argue that maritime cooperation on non-traditional issues could be an alternative for conflict resolution. In line with that argument, Wang (2001, 531-51) also argues that cooperation on non-traditional issues, particularly in the field of fisheries could be an instrument of conflict resolution in the South China Sea.

If it is outlined from the arguments of the experts, cooperation is advocated as the most rational way to manage conflict in the South China Sea. However, in their recommendations, it has not been taken into account the factors that may hamper cooperation. Thus, it should be considered “what is the main factor that cause the difficulties or inhibit the cooperation in the South China Sea?” before we talk about the prospect of cooperation between countries. In this article, the security dilemma is one of the main reasons that inhibit the cooperation. This is because the security dilemma increases mutual suspicion and distrust between countries. Related to this, there are actually some experts that already mentioned the occurrence of security dilemma in the South China Sea.

Emmers (2010, 118-31) illustrates that a security dilemma does occur in the South China Sea. In addition, Collins (2000, 133-72) also explains the security dilemmas that occur between claimant states. However, their exposure has not been specifically mentioning the role of China's offensive capability in the South China Sea in regard to the security dilemma. In addition, their explanation does not pay attention to the relevance of security dilemma and cooperation. Thus, this article argues that cooperation may be possible but difficult to establish and maintain. Jervis (1978, 171) argues that cooperation can only be established when the state believes that other countries do intend to cooperate. This is clearly related to the security dilemma that makes the state unable to ensure the intentions of other countries. Thus, this article refers to Robert Jervis's writing of “*Cooperation Under Security Dilemma*” that links the security dilemma and possible cooperation. Considering these matters, the next part of this article will present an explanation about the perspective that will be used and then explains the security dilemma in the South China Sea in relations to the chance of cooperation in that area.

Analytical Framework

Before discussing security dilemma in the South China Sea, the article firstly explains the perspective that will be used. This article uses the concepts of security dilemma and offense-defense balance to examine the cooperation between claimant states in the South China Sea. In general, the main reason than induce the security dilemma is the fear of being exploited by other states (Jervis 1978, 172). A security dilemma occurs when the state effort to create security for itself reduces the security of another country (Jervis 1978, 169). In other words, efforts to secure the sovereignty of a country can threaten other countries. Because of this, states increase its power as a respon to the increasing power of others so that the states could not be easily exploited by others.

In this regard, Robert Jervis explains that the security dilemma relates to a chance of cooperation between states. Related to the fear of being exploited by other states, Jervis stated that there are several things that could increase the desire of the state to cooperate in under the condition of security dilemma. Firstly, there are anythings that increase incentives for cooperation or the existence of factors that reduce the cost that state has to pay when it is exploited by other countries. Secondly, there are anythings that reduce incentives to exploit other states or something that increases the cost of mutual noncooperation. Thirdly, there is something that increases the expectations of each state that its others are willing to cooperate (Jervis 1978, 171). In other words, in this third point, the state must be able to ascertain and measure the intentions of

other states before choosing a policy to cooperate or not. This seems very difficult to do since the state will never be able to understand the intention of others certainly (Mearsheimer 2003, 31).

If we look back to the conception of security dilemma, the increasing power of one state will not automatically perceive as aggressive intention that reduce the security of other states explicitly. To Jervis this depends on whether the offensive or defensive nature of the capabilities can be distinguished as well as the potential of a state power that is more inclined towards the offensive or defensive (Jervis 1982, 362). Thus, there are at least two variables that affect the security dilemma. First, whether the offensive-defensive nature of weapons and the policies of one state could be distinguished or not. Second, whether these offensive or defensive elements are more advantageous or superior to one another that could be measured by the strength of the state owned or enhanced.

If defensive capabilities are more advantageous and the states power are roughly equal, security dilemma will not inhibit states to cooperate (Jervis 1978, 187). Conversely, if offensive capabilities are far more advantageous, security dilemma will intensify and the chance of cooperation will also diminish (Maersheimer 1994, 23). This is coupled with the difficulty of determining the defensive or offensive nature of the posture and weaponry of a country (Maerheimer 1994, 23). Because defensive and offensive postures are indistinguishable or inclined to be similar, countries tend to seek weapons possessed by states that increase its power first (Jervis 1978, 211). In this light, the situation will be very unstable and cooperation between states will be very difficult (Jervis 1978, 211).

In brief, the *offense-defense balance* implies that the security dilemma will become intense when the state is unsure about its opposing state's intentions and its opponent's capabilities are more inclined towards aggressive nature. In other words, under such conditions, the state will expect that other countries tend to be aggressive. This expectation can be indicated by the response of countries that feel threatened by increasing its power to prepare to face the country that is expected to have aggressive capability. This is why the state tends to increase its power as a response rather than cooperate because the fear of being exploited by what they perceived as an aggressive state.

Furthermore, Jervis and other offense-defense balance analysts outline ways that can be used to differentiate weapons capabilities that will lead to offensive or defensive advantages. Most of them believe that mobility is a central characteristic of weapons that bring an offensive advantage in their use (Levy 1984, 203).¹ High mobility weapons such as long-range combat vehicles obviously increase the offensive capability to turn their backs on the weakest points of enemy's defenses (Glaser & Kaufmann 1998, 62). Air-based weapons are also proven to bring offensive advantages due to their mobility, explosive power, and their shock elements (Levy 1984, 226).² Thus, weapons that tend not to have mobility to reach deep into the enemy's territory are weapons that bring about defensive advantages (Jervis 1978, 202-4). This is because non-moving weapons are more suitable for defending the territory than used to destroy and retrieve enemy's territory (Jervis 1978, 187).

1 This is also mentioned by Jervis in "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," pp. 203.

2 Jervis also admitted that weapon offensive nature depend on its shock elements in "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," pp. 205.

In this case, the offensive or defensive nature of maritime based weapons are generally difficult to distinguish, but maritime vessels that can only travel short distances could be seen as a defensive weapon in order to protect coastal lines (Jervis 1978, 204). Maritime armaments can be aggressive or defensive depending on capability and how it is used (Levy 1984, 226). This means that the maritime capability of a country is difficult to distinguish whether its existence increases states offensive or defensive advantage. In other words, the duality of nature in its use makes the posture of maritime weaponry difficult to classify.

Thus, this framework of analysis will be an instrument in examining conditions in the South China Sea. This framework will show us that the existing security dilemma hampers cooperation that might be formed by the disputing countries. With reference to this framework, the next section illustrates China's indistinguishable power posture and its superior offensive capability. Furthermore, the response of other disputed countries will be presented to illustrate the occurrence of security dilemmas that could complicate cooperation. The security dilemma will make other disputing countries expect that Chinese intentions tend to be aggressive so that they tend to increase their respective strengths rather than cooperating with China.

The Increasing of Chinese Maritime Power

From the analytical framework in the previous section, it is implied that it is important to know what kind of military power the Chinese have, especially its maritime power in the South China Sea. In general, Chinese military power continues to increase constantly in line with its increasing military budget. Table 1.1. shows this increase and its comparison with some other countries within the region.

Figure 1: China's and Regional Countries' Military Budgets

Countries	2014	2015	2016
China	US\$ 131 Billion	US\$ 142 Billion	US\$ 145 Billion
Japan	US\$ 46,1 Billion	US\$ 41,1 Billion	US\$ 47,3 Billion
South Korea	US\$ 33,9 Billion	US\$ 33,2 Billion	US\$ 33,8 Billion
Taiwan	US\$ 10 Billion	US\$ 10 Billion	US\$ 9,82 Billion
Indonesia	US\$ 7,26 Billion	US\$ 7,88 Billion	US\$ 8,17 Billion
Malaysia	US\$ 4,92 Billion	US\$ 4,55 Billion	US\$ 4,22 Billion
Vietnam	US\$ 4,3 Billion	US\$ 3,83 Billion	US\$ 4,01 Billion
Phillipine	US\$ 1,97 Billion	US\$ 2,20 Billion	US\$ 2,54 Billion

*Source: The Military Balance (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016, 231-96;
2017, 269-340)*

From figure 1, it can be seen that the military budget between China and some countries in the region is greatly different. China looks like to have a prominent edge in terms of military budget. The huge military budget and military expenditures have been converted by China into a modern combat power, even beyond the nearby foreign

countries. Such a large budget is being channeled to China's strategic weapon industry which is now competing and juxtaposed with the US and Russia (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016, 12).

One of the focuss on this increasing strength is improvement of China's maritime capabilities. This is reinforced by a statement in its national Defense White Paper of 2015 that the modernization of power is essential to protect China's sovereignty, interests, and maritime rights. China also has several targets projected up to 2020, related to the increased modernization of military elements in maintaining its territorial claims, including in the South China Sea (USA DoD 2015, 21). Based on these matters, the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has enlarged its capabilities in sea warfare, maritime air defense and military power projection (Office of Naval Intelligence 2009, 1).

More specifically in the field of defense equipment and maritime weapons, PLAN currently has the most large number of ships in Asia with over 300 warships and patrol boats (USA DoD 2015, 8). In addition to warships, China also has *Liaoning*, an aircraft carrier to strengthen the navy in protecting maritime sovereignty (Defense White Paper of China 2013). In 2013, the ship sailed for the first time in the South China Sea and had some experimental exercises (Cordesman & Colley 2015, 236). In addition to Liaoning, China has also completed and launched one of its new aircraft carriers (The Guardian 2017). The maritime armament is coupled with the modernization of C4SR (Command, Control, Computers, Intelligence Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) technological architecture to obtain better data to improve Chinese combat capabilities (Office of Naval Intelligence 2015, 13). The application of such technology can certainly facilitate coordination and combat efficiency in military operations. This power is also supported by military headquarters facilities such as the construction of nuclear submarine headquarters near Hainan Island that can accommodate 20 submarines, aircraft carriers and weapons for power projections in order to improve the presence and capability of China in the South China Sea (Emmers 2010, 122).

The existence of a large and modern maritime force coupled with the increasingly assertive Chinese claim in the South China Sea clearly complicates other disputed countries to understand the Chinese intention certainly. As already mentioned in previous sections, mobile weapons are a central characteristic of weapons that bring an offensive advantage in their use (Levy 1984, 225). Armaments that have the capability of projecting power are often seen as offensive threats by other countries (Christensen 1999, 50). Ownership of maritime armaments such as warships, especially carriers that can carry long-range combat aircraft, clearly increased the capacity of China's power projection. This is also coupled with maritime armaments which from the beginning are difficult to distinguish offensive or defensive (Levy 1984, 226). In short, China's great and superior maritime power and its vast projection of power show offensive advantage and make Chinese intentions difficult to pinpoint or determined precisely.

Not only does China increase the capabilities of its maritime weapons, the development and reclamation of islands in the South China Sea also create uncertainty of Chinese intentions. The development of islands in the waters is recognized by China as an attempt to secure sovereignty, maritime interests, and optimize the function of the islands so that China able to conduct Search and Rescue, disaster prevention, scientific research, environmental protection, navigation security, and fishery products (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015). These developments are

considered normal by China because the islands are recognized or claimed by China as part of its territory. The development and reclamation of the islands in the South China Sea, especially the Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands could provide naval facilities, missile launch sites, and surveillance posts in the disputed areas for Chinese military power (Cordesman & Colley 2015, 492). There is even speculation that the runways and radar on the artificial islands will be used to form the ADIZ (Air-Defense Identification Zone) in these waters (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016, 211). The existence of these facilities clearly increases the projection of strength and can perform offensive action more easily at any time needed.

The existence of these weapons and facilities is supported by China's maritime strategy framework of *Offshore Defense* with the assumption that in order to protect China's interest, maritime capabilities in the territorial waters must be increased (Cordesman & Colley 2015, 6). This requires the PLAN to increase its readiness to face any conflict in the first island chain. The following map illustrates the first archipelagic chain (Figure 2).

Figure 2: First & Second Island Chain in China Offshore Defence



Source: CSIS Report (Cordesman & Colley 2015, 228)

In figure 2 above, the dotted red line is the first chain of islands while the blue line is the second chain of islands. *Offshore Defense* is usually associated with operations in the first archipelagic chain, especially the South China Sea which is the “near seas” of China (Office of Naval Intelligence 2015, 7). In other words, this strategy is a framework for increasing strength in responding the disputes in the South China Sea that jeopardize the sovereignty and integrity of its national territory. Security of sovereignty and interests in the first archipelagic chain can clearly overlap with other countries territorial claim such as the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam. The existence of these first archipelagic chains seems to be aimed at protecting Chinese sovereignty, but from the point of view of other countries, it may be that this strategical framework aimed to taking over their sovereignty. This seems to be in line with the central assumption of security dilemma that improvement of the security of a country can lead to the sense of insecurity for other countries.

Thus, the size of China's maritime power coupled with headquarters facilities, large military budget, and a supportive strategy framework make the offensive side of Chinese strength seem more significant than the defensive function. The greater the projection of China's maritime power could means the greater mobility that ease

China's capability to infiltrate other claimant sovereignty claims. This is coupled with maritime weapons which its offensive or defensive nature is difficult to determine. On the one hand, Chinese weaponry may be intended to protect its sovereignty. However, with good weapon projection and mobility, China's defensive goals can easily turn into offensive at any time. This is coupled with the state of overlapping claims of sovereignty so that the protection of Chinese sovereignty, even defensively, can be seen as an offensive action to suppress the claims of other countries.

From *offense-defense balance* point of view, such conditions in the South China Sea can cause intense security dilemmas and inhibit cooperation. The advantages and superiority of China's strength in the offensive side and the enormous amount of maritime power that is difficult to identify its offensive or defensive nature is what drives the security dilemma. In other words, an increase in China's maritime power projections contributes to the increasing of security dilemma in the region (Emmers 2010, 130). However, to see whether a security dilemma really takes place, we should also examine the response of other claimant countries in the light of China's rising power and assertiveness. Thus, the next section will show the response of some claimant countries other than China in regard to the improvement of China's maritime power in the South China Sea. The response will be illustrated by focusing on the increasing the strength of these countries to show the occurring security dilemma.

Regional Respond to The Increasing China's Power

In accordance with the general scheme in the security dilemma concept, there are responses from countries that feel threatened by China's maritime power in the South China Sea. As described in the previous section, China's strength is relatively superior to other countries around the waters. There is anxiety from other claimant states that this significant power advantage will be used by China to resolve disputes with military rather than diplomatic or cooperative means (Emmers 2010, 130). Anxiety due to the magnitude and size of power plus the implied offensive advantage and the vagueness of the offensive or defensive posture of China's maritime posture make other disputed states feel the need to increase and strengthen its own military capabilities. Such conditions in the South China Sea encourage these countries to either increase capabilities independently or strengthen defense cooperation with the United States (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2017, 239). This strengthening response is also seen in the increasing tendency of the budget and military spending by countries around the South China Sea (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2017, 246). The increasing budget could be review again in figure 1.

More specifically on the strengthening of military and arms, Malaysia as one of the claimant states in the South China Sea is quite active in improving its capabilities in line with the development of Chinese power. Although sometimes Malaysia seem really careful in responding Chinese power, Malaysia continues to strengthen its national powers such as Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN), Royal Malaysia Air Force (RMAF) and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) to secure its claims in the South China Sea (Parameswaran 2015, 8). Malaysia also builds military posts on the Spratly Islands, using warships and submarines to monitor the disputes, escort

foreign ships, and conduct military exercises to establish its presents and prepare the operational readiness in the face of possible conflicts (Parameswaran 2015, 8). In addition, Malaysia also purchased four A400M transport aircraft to mobilize troops from the Malaysian peninsula to its perceived vulnerable territory, Sabah and Sarawak (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016, 213).

Besides Malaysia, Philippines also responding China's power with increased strength. The strength of the Philippines in the field of defense equipment does look less significant because of the budget constraints (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2017, 324). However, that does not mean Philippines not increase its power. Philippines continues to work with external actors such as United States to improve military capabilities through training and funding. One of these forms of cooperation is reflected by the signing of the *Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement* between US and Philippines in 2014 (Panda 2014). This Agreement shall be valid for at least 10 years from the date of its ratification (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2017, 239). In terms of cooperation in the form of financial aid, in 2013, US contributed about 40 million US dollars for the development of Philippines sea power (Glaser 2014, 57).

Cooperations in the field of military training are also carried out. For example, in May 2016 the United States navy conducted an air exercise with the Philippine Air Force in response to the possibility of new island development by China at Scarborough Shoal (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2017, 239). Related to the increased capability through military cooperation, the rise of President Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 is often seen as one of the lax points of cooperation with the United States. However, in fact, cooperation and practice are still running. In the same year when US and Philippine relations were deteriorated, the two countries continued to conduct joint amphibious exercises in the northern Luzon Islands (Batchelor, 2016). Thus, it is clear that these forms of could be seen as increasing the military capability of the Philippines in the face of China's strength despites of the budget constraints to prepare weapons systems.

Somewhat different from the Philippines, Vietnam looks more vigorous to increase the capability of its strength and weaponry. In this regard, enhancing the capabilities of maritime and air forces to secure claims in the South China Sea is considered vital by Vietnam (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2014, 202). This increase in power seems to be aimed to deterring China in the disputed area. Although in general the strength of Vietnam is still far below China and not capable to face China alone, Vietnam is still making improvements of armaments. This is reflected from the purchasement of weapons by Vietnam. In terms of combat power, in 2013, Vietnam purchased 12 units of the *Su-30MK2* fighter from Russia (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2014, 202). Furthermore, in terms of maritime power, in 2009, Vietnam bought Kilo Class submarines from Russia (Parameswaran 2016). In 2015, Vietnam operating four of the six of those submarines (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016, 212). In 2017, Vietnam finally succeeded in operating all units of the Russian-made submarine (Gady 2017). Furthermore, those submarines will be equipped with supersonic cruise missiles *3M-14E Club* (Gady 2015a). These submarines are expected to be useful for Vietnam to face the strength of China in the future (Gady 2015b).

On the other hand, Vietnam also maintains relations with countries like the United States to increase its power. This is reflected from the aid that Vietnam received in the form of funds from the US to improve its maritime capabilities (Glaser 2014, 57).

Although this aid is not too significant in number, it shows that Vietnam increasing its power either independently or from the help from other countries. All the above examples clearly illustrated Vietnam's efforts to increase its strength in response to the growing strength of China in the disputed area.

Thus, seeing the response of countries around the South China Sea through increased strength, it is clear that security dilemma does occur in the area. China's efforts to protect its sovereignty by increasing the strength make other countries worry and also respond with increased strength. The greater the increasing power and the acquisitions of weapons conducted either by China or other claimants will intensify the security dilemma (Emmers 2010, 130).

However, in accordance with Jervis's argument, efforts to increase the power of one state, the power of China, will not automatically create a security dilemma. The security dilemma occurring in the region happened and intensified because China's large powers that could support the assertiveness of its claims. The magnitude of this power, particularly its maritime power, tends to have more offensive advantage and is indistinguishable from its offensive or defensive nature, as described in the previous section. Because of this condition, other countries feel the need to prepare themselves for the Chinese forces that are expected or suspected to do such an offensive action at any time in order to affirm its territorial claim. In simple logic, the assertiveness of Chinese claims does not necessarily need to be responded by increasing power by other states if China does not have a threatening capability that can support its claims.

The conditions in the South China Sea that covered by this security dilemma inline with what Jervis saw as the most unstable condition and could inhibit cooperation. The strength of China, especially its maritime power which is indistinguishable from its offensive or defensive nature, makes it difficult for other countries to ascertain whether the Chinese intention is to cooperate in the exploitation of the South China Sea potentials or to affirm its claims unilaterally using offensive forces. This is coupled with China's power which tends to be more advantageous for offensive actions than defensive efforts. Such posture of power presumably makes other countries expect that China is more likely to engage in offensive action at any time rather than cooperate in a comprehensive way.

This is demonstrated by the efforts of countries in the area that tend to focus on increasing their strength to prepare for the Chinese forces that are assumed to be offensive rather than strengthening or building more effective new cooperation. This can be seen also from the unsuccessful cooperation that has been formed, as already described in the beginning of this article, when compared with the increase of the strength of the countries. Cooperation in the region tends to be ineffective and not even extended while the increase of state power in the region tends to increase. This is in accordance with the basic assumption of security dilemma that the main reason for the security dilemma is the fear of a state being exploited by another country (Jervis 1978, 172). In this case, with the China's posture that assumed to be offensive, other nations are worried that China has the intention to affirm its claims and control all resources in the waters while cooperation functioning so in result, countries feel the need to increase the power to prepare for the possibility of being exploited. This also seems to be in line with Jervis's assumption that in order to build a viable cooperation, the state must be able to ensure that indeed the opposing country has the potential intention to cooperate (Jervis 1978, 171).

Thus, in short, the expectations of countries in the South China Sea region see that sovereignty protection efforts by China through the increasement of power tend to be offensive, judging by the posture and composition of Chinese weapons described in earlier in this article. Such interpretation of intentions makes these countries also increase their strength to ward off the assumed Chinese power that might be used to assert their claims, so the security dilemma is clearly ocured. This security dilemma inhibits cooperation in the region. So, before discussing the prospect of cooperation in the region, as some South China Sea reviewers have observed, this security dilemma needs to be addressed first so that cooperation is more easily established and effective. In other words, preconditions of cooperation in the region should include mitigating the intense security dilemma in the region itself.

Conclusion

From the discussion in the previous section which holds to the analytical framework in this article, it can be concluded that the security dilemma did occur in the South China Sea. This security dilemma occurs because of the magnitude of Chinese power which tends to have advantages in offensive terms as well as the posture of China's military strength that can not be distinguished from its offensive or defensive nature. This results in concerns over the possibility that China will use its power to assert its claims or even take over natural resources in the disputed area aggressively. It seems that other claimant countries are assuming that China is more likely to unilaterally confirming its claims by using force rather than collaborating to utilize these waters. This is demonstrated by response of the increasing power of other claimant states around the South China Sea who feel their interests are threatened by Chinese powers. The response likely tends to a continuous increase in strength rather than trying to establish or maintain cooperation with China in these waters. This is in line with Jervis's point of view that the existing security dilemma complicates cooperative efforts. Thus, it is clear that the existence of a security dilemma in the South China Sea region inhibit collaborative efforts regardless of the benefits described by reviewers at the beginning of this article. In other words, before discussing the prospect of cooperation in these waters, attention should be paid to the preconditions of cooperation associated with the reduction of the tension of the security dilemma which is the main obstacle to cooperation. If the intensity of the security dilemma as the main obstacle can be reduced, the things that hinder cooperation will also decrease. Finally, this article also showed that realism perspective, especially from Robert Jervis is still applicable to explain South China Sea disputes related its conflict management in the midst of many articles that advocates cooperation.

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