

Diplomatic Breakthroughs in Contested Seas: Unpacking the Indonesia-Vietnam Eez Agreement in The South China Sea

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Abstract

Existing research on bilateral cooperation predominantly focuses on economic benefits and geopolitical alignments, frequently overlooking the crucial role of shared norms and mutual perceptions in shaping diplomatic interactions, especially within contentious maritime regions. This paper employs the case study of the Indonesia-Vietnam Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Agreement in 2022 to demonstrate that cooperative and swift diplomatic resolutions are achievable even against the contentious backdrop of the South China Sea, which is known for its escalating military expenditures and persistent territorial disputes. By utilizing the tripartite approach developed by Walter Carlsnaess, which examines the interplay of perception, capability, and environment, the study argues that these elements are pivotal in shaping the diplomatic paths of the nations involved in the South China Sea disputes. This framework elucidates how evolving regional norms and shared interests in conflict resolution contributed significantly to the swift conclusion of the Indonesia-Vietnam EEZ Agreement. The findings imply that foreign policy actions are significantly influenced by constructivist dynamics such as shared norms and mutual recognition of sovereignty, which not only facilitate diplomatic resolutions but also contribute to the construction of a regional identity and alter the strategic landscape in complex geopolitical environments like the South China Sea.

Keywords: Diplomatic Breakthroughs, Contested Waters, Foreign Policy, Indonesia-Vietnam EEZ Agreement, South China Sea