



Naval Diplomacy to Enhance Indonesia's Maritime Security

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Abstract

This study examines Indonesia's role and contributions to the Maritime Task Force (MTF) of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), addressing the research question: How does Indonesia's participation in the UNIFIL MTF contribute to its diplomatic standing and international peacekeeping efforts? While the role of naval diplomacy in international politics has been widely studied, limited research focuses on non-aligned nations, such as Indonesia, in multinational peacekeeping operations. This study aims to address this gap by analyzing Indonesia's maritime diplomacy strategies and their implementation within UNIFIL's peacekeeping mandate. Using a qualitative approach and the Miles and Huberman model, the research delves into Indonesia's historical involvement in the MTF, its operational challenges, and its cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Challenges include coordinating with diverse international actors and achieving peacekeeping objectives in a conflict-prone region. The findings underscore the significance of maritime diplomacy as a critical tool for Indonesia's foreign policy, demonstrating how its naval forces enhance regional stability and contribute to international security. Indonesia's proactive role in the MTF highlights its commitment to global peace and security, strengthening its standing as a responsible international actor. In conclusion, Indonesia's maritime diplomacy not only projects power but also fosters collaborative relationships that advance global peacekeeping efforts and position the nation as a key contributor to international stability.

INTRODUCTION

The Montevideo Convention of 1933 asserts that one of the key constitutive elements of a state is its capacity to engage in international relations. This capacity is essential for a country to assert its sovereignty and to navigate the complex web of global interactions. For any nation, the ability to engage on the world stage is reflected through its diplomatic strategies and foreign policies, particularly in bilateral, regional, and multilateral arenas. These diplomatic strategies are not static; they are dynamic and rooted in a country's national interests, pursued through diplomatic efforts that encompass political, economic, and military dimensions. In this context, diplomacy can be understood as the strategic application of power to achieve national interests abroad. This definition aligns with Morgenthau's perspective in Morgenthau (1949), where he emphasizes the critical role of military strength in supporting political power, expanding territorial influence, and maintaining the balance of power in international relations.

The significance of military force, especially naval power, has evolved considerably over time. Historically, military strength served not only as a defensive instrument but also as a diplomatic tool to exert influence. Prominent maritime strategists like Alfred Thayer Mahan, in his influential work *A.T. Mahan* (1890) and Corbett (1911), in some (Corbett, 1911), have articulated the critical role of naval forces in projecting a nation's influence globally. Mahan's theories emphasize that command of the sea, the ability to dominate maritime areas and deny their use to adversaries, enables a nation to project power, protect its interests, and achieve strategic objectives. In contrast, Corbett highlights the concept of control of the sea, which focuses on utilizing maritime dominance to support broader strategic goals, including commerce and joint operations. Together, these perspectives underscore the importance of maintaining a capable and robust navy as a fundamental component of national security and international engagement.

In the context of modern diplomacy, the concept of Gunboat Diplomacy, popularized by O'Connor (1971), further elucidates the role of naval forces in international relations. Cable defines Gunboat Diplomacy as the use of naval power to achieve political objectives without direct military confrontation. This form of diplomacy underscores the utility of naval forces in asserting national interests and shaping international outcomes through visible military presence, signaling resolve, and enhancing credibility in negotiations. The diplomatic use of naval power is now well-established, particularly in operations involving multinational peacekeeping forces, as seen in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Maritime Task Force (MTF), where navies operate collaboratively to maintain international peace and security.

While there is a wealth of literature on the theoretical foundations of naval diplomacy and the role of naval forces in international politics, studies focusing specifically on the participation of non-aligned nations like Indonesia in multinational peacekeeping operations are still limited. Recent research by Jatmiko (2022) and (Ahmadi et al., 2019) has examined the role of smaller navies in UN peacekeeping operations, but little has been articulated about Indonesia's specific involvement in UNIFIL. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the role of Indonesia's MTF Task Force in UNIFIL and its impact on

Indonesia's diplomatic standing on the international stage. The relevance of this research lies not only in its focus on Indonesia's contributions to peacekeeping but also in its implications for the evolving role of naval diplomacy among non-aligned countries in the 21st century, particularly how such nations leverage maritime contributions to strengthen their global standing and foster international security cooperation.

This research seeks to understand how the involvement of the Indonesian Navy in UNIFIL supports Indonesia's foreign policy objectives, specifically in terms of enhancing diplomatic prestige and bargaining power. In an increasingly complex global landscape where traditional security threats are evolving, the Indonesian Navy's participation in peacekeeping missions serves multiple strategic objectives. Indonesia's participation in UNIFIL demonstrates its adherence to international norms and principles, as evidenced by its consistent contributions to peacekeeping operations under the UN framework. This aligns with Indonesia's broader vision of becoming a Global Maritime Fulcrum, which prioritizes international maritime cooperation as a strategy to enhance its diplomatic standing and promote security in international waters (As'ad & Nafilah, 2022). Furthermore, Indonesia's involvement has strengthened bilateral and multilateral relationships, particularly through its cooperation with nations like Lebanon, as highlighted by its contributions to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) (United Nations, 2022).

However, the Indonesian Navy faces significant challenges in its peacekeeping endeavors. One key issue is interoperability, which refers to the ability of different forces to operate cohesively. This challenge is evident in multinational operations like UNIFIL, where varying operational doctrines and communication standards hinder effective coordination (As'ad & Nafilah, 2022). Additionally, limited defense capabilities present another obstacle; the naval portion of Indonesia's defense budget remains inadequate to fully modernize its fleet or meet operational demands. This constraint has been emphasized in national defense analyses, highlighting the urgent need for increased investment in naval modernization to enhance peacekeeping effectiveness. Hastuti et al. (2023) are critical factors that can hinder operational effectiveness. Interoperability, which refers to the ability of different forces to operate together effectively, is particularly important in multinational operations where forces from various countries must coordinate their actions. The complexity of joint operations requires not only compatible equipment but also shared procedures and mutual understanding among participating nations. Additionally, command and control issues can arise from differences in military structures and operational doctrines, necessitating thorough planning and communication to achieve successful outcomes.

Previous studies have highlighted the growing importance of naval diplomacy in peacekeeping operations (Miere, 2014; O'Connor, 1971), but they have largely focused on Western nations or larger naval powers. Few studies have examined how emerging naval powers like Indonesia contribute to international peacekeeping missions. This research builds on these foundational studies while also drawing from earlier works on military diplomacy by Sandrina & Prastyono (2024) and (Price, 1971) to explore how the Indonesian Navy's participation in UNIFIL strengthens Indonesia's geopolitical influence.

Understanding the intricacies of Indonesia's involvement in peacekeeping operations not only enriches the existing literature but also provides practical insights into the country's strategic positioning within the broader international community. Recent literature sheds light on various aspects of naval diplomacy and peacekeeping. For example, Akib (2021) discusses how smaller navies can enhance global maritime security through cooperative strategies that emphasize collaboration and information sharing. Furthermore, Sherwood (2023) explores the role of naval forces in supporting humanitarian missions, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and adaptability in maritime operations. Miere (2014) analyzes the evolution of peacekeeping missions in the context of maritime security, highlighting the growing relevance of naval diplomacy in contemporary conflicts. Finally, Rossiter et al. (2024) examine the implications of joint naval operations for international relations, offering insights into how such collaborations can strengthen diplomatic ties and enhance collective security efforts.

This study is grounded in Morgenthau's Realist Theory of international relations, which posits that states act in their national interest through the use of power, including military power (Morgenthau, 1949). By examining the interplay between military strength and diplomatic engagement, the study aims to elucidate how Indonesia leverages its naval capabilities to support its foreign policy objectives through its participation in multinational peacekeeping operations. Additionally, Mahan's Theory of Sea Power will inform the analysis, asserting that naval strength is a key determinant of a nation's global influence and ability to shape international outcomes.

The research is expected to provide valuable insights and lessons learned for the Indonesian Navy and its future role in multinational diplomacy. By assessing the challenges and opportunities presented by Indonesia's involvement in UNIFIL, this study will contribute to the ongoing debate on whether Indonesia's naval participation in such operations should be expanded, maintained, or re-evaluated to better align with its foreign policy goals. Ultimately, the findings will enhance our understanding of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy and its implications for regional stability and global security.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the Miles and Huberman analysis model. Data is collected through an extensive review of secondary sources, including official documents, mission reports, and academic literature. Key sources include reports from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), publications by the Indonesian Ministry of Defense, and peer-reviewed studies on Indonesia's participation in peacekeeping operations. These sources provide a comprehensive description of Indonesia's contribution to the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force (MTF) (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

History and Involvement of Indonesia in MTF UNIFIL

Indonesia began its involvement in the Maritime Task Force (MTF) of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 2009 by sending the warship KRI Diponegoro-365. This involvement is part of Indonesia's commitment to promoting peace and stability in Lebanon and strengthening its role in international forums (United Nations, 2009). Since then, the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) has deployed several contingents to UNIFIL, demonstrating Indonesia's dedication and consistency in supporting UN peacekeeping missions.

KRI Diponegoro-365, a Sigma-class warship, is one of the most modern vessels in the Indonesian Navy's fleet. It is equipped with advanced weaponry systems and is capable of carrying out a variety of missions, including maritime operations, surveillance, and humanitarian assistance (Tenri & Sulistiyandari, 2024). The deployment of KRI Diponegoro-365 to UNIFIL MTF marked a significant step for the Indonesian Navy in peacekeeping operations in maritime areas (Putra, 2024).

Since the initial deployment of KRI Diponegoro-365, TNI AL has continued to send other warships to support the UNIFIL MTF. These ships include KRI Sultan Iskandar Muda-367, KRI Sultan Hasanuddin-366, and KRI Frans Kaisiepo-368. This ongoing contribution not only reflects Indonesia's commitment to peace in Lebanon but also serves as an opportunity to showcase the capability and professionalism of the Indonesian Navy on the international stage (Jatmiko, 2022).

Operational Challenges

Indonesia's involvement in the UNIFIL MTF is not without operational challenges. These challenges include difficult geographical conditions, security threats, and coordination with naval forces from other countries. However, with UN support and close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), Indonesia has successfully carried out its tasks effectively.

Recent studies highlight the complexity of maritime operations and the importance of naval diplomacy in addressing these challenges. According to Putra (2024), effective maritime diplomacy enhances collaborative security efforts, particularly in conflict zones. (Donald et al., 2012) discusses the significance of operational interoperability among multinational naval forces, emphasizing that such collaboration is essential for successful peacekeeping operations. Amri and Zahidi (2023) further examine the role of small and medium-sized navies in enhancing maritime security, indicating that these forces can effectively contribute to global peacekeeping missions despite their limited resources. Additionally, Sarjito (2024) explores the impact of regional partnerships on operational readiness, suggesting that strategic alliances are crucial for overcoming logistical and operational hurdles in maritime operations.

These insights align with Indonesia's experiences and underscore the importance of continued investment in naval capabilities and international cooperation to enhance its maritime security.

1. **Geographical Conditions:** The UNIFIL MTF operates in Lebanese waters, which are geographically diverse. These waters consist of a long coastline with vulnerable areas subject to maritime security threats. This environment requires high

navigation and surveillance capabilities from Indonesian Navy warships. Additionally, extreme weather changes present a separate challenge, particularly during the cold season when high waves and strong winds can hinder maritime operations (United Nations, 2022).

2. **Security Threats:** Security threats in Lebanese territory are complex, especially with ongoing conflicts between various armed groups. One of the main tasks of the UNIFIL MTF is to prevent the smuggling of weapons by sea. Armed groups attempting to smuggle weapons into Lebanon pose a significant challenge for Indonesian Navy warships. Furthermore, threats from terrorist groups also remain a critical factor that must be closely monitored during every maritime operation (Smith, 2022).
3. **Coordination with Other Navies:** The UNIFIL MTF consists of naval forces from various countries, including Brazil, Bangladesh, Germany, Turkey, and Greece. Effective coordination among these countries requires strong communication and a deep understanding of standard operational procedures. Each country has its own rules of engagement and different operational procedures, which necessitates extra effort to align operations. The Indonesian Navy has demonstrated good capability in coordinating with other naval forces, ensuring smooth and effective operations (Ahmadi et al., 2019).

Indonesia's naval diplomacy in the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force (MTF) focuses on three main aspects: maritime interdiction operations, training and capacity-building for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy (LAF-Navy), and the monitoring of Lebanon's maritime areas. These aspects are highlighted in official UNIFIL reports and Indonesian Ministry of Defense publications, which emphasize Indonesia's active role in preventing arms smuggling, enhancing LAF-Navy capabilities, and conducting surveillance to maintain maritime security (United Nation, 2022). This strategy not only helps maintain regional stability but also strengthens Indonesia's position in international forums. (Sandrina & Prastyono, 2024)

1. **Maritime Interdiction Operations:** A primary task of the MTF UNIFIL is to prevent the smuggling of weapons by sea. Maritime interdiction operations involve routine patrols in Lebanese waters, inspections of suspicious vessels, and coordination with the LAF-Navy to handle maritime security threats. Indonesian Navy ships involved in the MTF UNIFIL are equipped with advanced radar systems and well-trained boarding teams to conduct these operations effectively. Recent reports from UNIFIL highlight the increased challenges posed by escalating tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, which have necessitated heightened vigilance and enhanced coordination among participating forces (United Nation Peacekeeping, 2023). Success in preventing weapon smuggling not only helps stabilize Lebanon but also demonstrates Indonesia's commitment to international peace and security (Septiari, 2019). **Training and Capacity-Building for the LAF-Navy:** As part of the MTF UNIFIL, the Indonesian Navy plays a role in training and enhancing the capacity of the LAF-Navy. This training includes basic maritime surveillance techniques, boarding operations, and handling maritime security threats.

Additionally, the Indonesian Navy has assisted in developing standard operational procedures and doctrine for the LAF-Navy. By providing technical training and assistance, the Indonesian Navy helps the LAF-Navy become more self-sufficient in safeguarding Lebanon's maritime security (Price, 1971).

2. Monitoring of the Lebanese Maritime Area: Monitoring Lebanon's maritime areas is a crucial aspect of UNIFIL MTF operations. Indonesian Navy warships are equipped with advanced surveillance technology to monitor maritime activity in the region. Moreover, the Indonesian Navy collaborates with the LAF-Navy in aerial surveillance to detect and prevent threats from the air. Effective surveillance involves the integration of maritime and aerial assets to identify potential security threats early, as highlighted in recent UNIFIL operations (United Nations, 2022). This proactive approach helps detect and address threats before they escalate into larger issues, ensuring stability in the region.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

This study highlights the effectiveness of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy within the framework of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Maritime Task Force (MTF). Indonesia's involvement in the MTF exemplifies its commitment to supporting UN peace missions and fostering international cooperation. This commitment is recognized by non-Indonesian sources, including UNIFIL reports, which highlight Indonesia's contributions to enhancing maritime security in the region. Additionally, the Lebanese Navy has acknowledged Indonesia's role in strengthening their capacity through joint training exercises and operational support, as documented in UNIFIL mission summaries (United Nation, 2022). By actively participating in peacekeeping operations, Indonesia not only contributes to maintaining stability in Lebanon but also reinforces its standing as a nation dedicated to global peace and security. The Indonesian Navy's presence in the MTF emphasizes the critical role maritime forces play in diplomacy and the broader context of Indonesia's foreign policy. Through its active participation in the MTF, Indonesia has demonstrated a significant capacity for contributing to peacekeeping missions. The experiences garnered from this involvement highlight the necessity of maintaining a robust naval presence in international diplomatic efforts. Indonesia's participation in UNIFIL has been recognized in official mission reports as a significant contribution to maintaining regional stability and enhancing maritime security. UNIFIL documents emphasize that Indonesia's proactive role in the Maritime Task Force (MTF) has not only bolstered security efforts in Lebanon but also demonstrated the strategic value of naval diplomacy in fostering international cooperation (United Nations, 2022). By participating in peacekeeping operations, Indonesia projects its influence and reinforces its standing as a responsible global actor committed to peace and security.

Overall, the findings of this study affirm that Indonesia's participation in UNIFIL, particularly through the Maritime Task Force, underscores the strategic importance of naval diplomacy as an instrument for enhancing maritime security while simultaneously strengthening international partnerships. The Indonesian Navy's active and sustained role within the MTF demonstrates credible operational capabilities and reflects

Indonesia's consistent commitment to global peacekeeping efforts, as acknowledged in official UNIFIL mission reports and partner-nation assessments. These experiences further indicate that effective engagement in multinational peace operations is closely linked to continued investment in maritime capabilities, professional human resources, and structured international cooperation, all of which are essential to ensuring that Indonesia remains capable of contributing meaningfully to future peacekeeping missions and reinforcing its position as a responsible and reliable actor in the global security architecture.

Recommendations to stakeholders emphasize the need for an integrated and sustainable approach to strengthening Indonesia's maritime contribution, particularly within the UNIFIL MTF framework. First, the Indonesian Navy must continue to improve the capacity and readiness of its warships to address diverse operational challenges by prioritizing investments in advanced maritime surveillance technologies and providing specialized training for boarding teams, thereby ensuring the effectiveness of maritime interdiction operations and enhancing its ability to respond to emerging security threats as well as contribute to international peacekeeping missions. In parallel, strengthening international cooperation through joint exercises, systematic information sharing, and the development of robust networks with other participating naval forces is essential to maximize the impact of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy, facilitate smoother operations, and enhance collective capabilities in addressing regional security challenges. Furthermore, the continuous refinement of naval doctrines and operational procedures should be prioritized to ensure alignment with the evolving operational environment in Lebanon, supported by intensive training and regular evaluations to maintain high levels of operational readiness and adaptability. Finally, sustained training and capacity-building initiatives for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy (LAF-Navy), complemented by tailored technical assistance that addresses local needs, are crucial to enabling the LAF-Navy to independently maintain maritime security, while simultaneously reinforcing regional stability and Indonesia's strategic role as a credible and influential actor in maritime security cooperation.

While this study outlines actionable recommendations for enhancing Indonesia's role in UNIFIL, it is essential to acknowledge some limitations. The evolving geopolitical landscape in Lebanon and the broader Middle East may present unforeseen challenges that could impact the effectiveness of these recommendations. Additionally, resource constraints within the Indonesian Navy may hinder its capacity to implement all suggested improvements. Future research should explore these limitations further and consider how Indonesia can navigate these challenges while maintaining its commitment to international peace and security. In conclusion, by implementing these recommendations, Indonesia's role in the UNIFIL MTF can be further strengthened, significantly contributing to international peace and security. The success of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy in UNIFIL serves as an exemplary model for other nations supporting UN peacekeeping missions, highlighting the importance of maritime forces in promoting stability and cooperation on a global scale. Indonesia's proactive engagement in

peacekeeping not only elevates its status in the international arena but also showcases the potential of naval diplomacy as a strategic tool for enhancing maritime security.

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