Media and Politics Identify The New Threat in the South China Sea

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Abstract. The South China Sea (SCS) is a strategic maritime area and is rich in natural resources. However, this area is also contested by several countries, including China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. This debate was triggered by the emergence of identity politics initiated by social media. The aim of this research is to analyze how media and identity politics can become a new threat in the LCS. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data was collected through literature reviews and social media analysis. The research results suggest that media and identity politics may be a new threat in the LCS. Social media can be used to spread misinformation and hatred, which can fuel conflict between countries. Identity politics can also strengthen nationalism and complicate conflict. This study concludes that media and identity politics may be a new threat in the LCS. Efforts such as increasing media coverage and encouraging tolerance between countries are needed to prevent and overcome this threat.

Key words: South China Sea, media, identity politics, new threats, conflict

1   Introduction

The South China Sea is an important trade and transportation route in Southeast Asia, rich in natural resources such as oil and gas. This area has become a source of maritime territorial coercion between several countries, such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, which claim the wealth of part or all of the region [1]. This dispute did not occur. only about geography and resources, but also about identity politics which has complex dimensions. Each country tries to strengthen the legitimacy of its territorial claims by mobilizing nationalist feelings and building identity stories that are closely related to control of protected areas [2].

The media in these countries played an important role in building the story. They often display nationalist rhetoric and anti-foreign sentiment in news coverage of rescue operations, which can increase tensions and undermine efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully [3]. Dov Shinar sees this phenomenon as illustrating the importance of the media's role in resolving the deadlock of a shared vision on how to resolve international conflicts that involve many intersections with many national interests and goals [4].

Social media can be an effective weapon to strengthen identity in virtual media. This also applies in the United States. This is possible due to various characteristics associated with it: including the speed of information dissemination (masculinity) and the size of the audience. It is also enhanced by the algorithms that create it and can be used to manipulate and control opinion. Behavior involves at least three social media algorithmic approaches, namely tuning, which directs the course of user behavior at the right time and place, herding, which involves the direct context of social media to get a response, or conditioning, which targets users to provide a response. mass transmission of certain actions [5].

Several examples of how the media plays a role in creating identity politics debates regarding the protection of the South China Sea: *first*, Chinese media constructs conservation as a matter of national sovereignty and creates an image of the South China Sea as "ancestral land" that must be protected [6]. *Second*, Vietnamese media uses historical stories about the struggle against foreign aggression to mobilize anti-Chinese sentiment [7]. *Third*, the Philippine media presents the country as a victim of Chinese intimidation and emphasizes the importance of an alliance with the United States to counter China's claims [8]. *Fourth*, the media in Malaysia and Brunei handled this issue more moderately to avoid direct confrontation with China [9]. The politicization of identity through this media can become a new threat that makes it difficult to resolve disputes, provokes military provocations and questions relations between countries in the region. Based on the narrative above, the author wants to examine the role of media and communication culture in ending the conflict that occurred in the South China Sea (SCS) with the theme Media and Identity Politics, New Threats in the South China Sea.

2   Method

A qualitative approach uses a qualitative approach to explore in-depth perspectives and interpretations from various parties regarding the impact of media and identity politics on South China Sea conservation [10]. Using critical discourse analysis, carrying out critical discourse analysis of media coverage of the struggle to find ideology, represent and apply discursive practices related to identity politics [11].

3.   Results and Discussion

The South China Sea is a geopolitically strategic water area and is rich in natural resources such as oil and gas. This area is a source of territorial defense between several countries, such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, which claim sovereignty over part or all of the area [12]. This dispute not only concerns geographical aspects and natural resources, but also regarding political identity between countries.

Some of the dangers that may arise from identity politics regarding the protection of the South China Sea are *first*, excessive provocation of nationalist sentiment could trigger open military confrontation in the region. *Second*, mutual intimidation and lack of diplomacy can guarantee a peaceful solution. *Third*, news in the media that spreads hatred can create public support for confrontation and aggression. *Fourth*, damage to relations between countries can affect economic cooperation and regional stability. *Fifth*, competing territorial claims can raise new questions regarding maritime boundaries and exclusive economic zones. Therefore, a more moderate and rational approach is needed in the media. A press that protects peace and avoids provocation is urgently needed. National leaders must also continue diplomatic efforts and peace negotiations for regional stability.

The role of the media and identity politics The media in disputing countries often depicts nationalism and hostility towards foreigners, even though this reflects the so-called South China Sea Dispute. This can trigger tensions and divisions in relations between countries [13]. The politicization of identity through the media has the following consequences: *first*, excessive provocation of nationalist sentiment can trigger open military confrontation in the region. *Second*, mutual intimidation expressed by the media and lack of diplomacy can achieve a peaceful solution. *Third*, news in the media that spreads hatred can mobilize public support for confrontation and aggression. *Fourth*, damage to relations between countries can affect economic cooperation and regional stability [14]. *Fifth*, competing territorial claims made by the mass media can trigger new peace regarding maritime boundaries and economic zones [15].

Constructivism theory is a social science perspective that emphasizes that social reality is the result of human construction through interaction and interpretation of the world around it. This theory assumes that knowledge, identity and meaning are not something that already exists or is given, but are created through social and cultural processes. In the context of media studies and identity politics in the South China Sea, theoretical constructivism can be analyzed, how the media and related actors construct insurance realities, national identities, and political narratives that influence the perceptions and actions of conflict parties [16]. What is important in looking at the issue of the South China Sea conflict is: *first*, the construction of national identity by the media and political elites plays a role in building national identity through stories that define who we are and differentiate us from other people [17]. *Second*, security is a process in which a particular problem or threat is constructed as an existential threat to the identity and interests of a group or country [18]. *Third*, intersubjectivity of reality and social meaning is formed through interaction and mutual understanding (intersubjectivity) between related participants, and creates discourse that influences the dynamics of the South China Sea environment and

leads to certain actions and policies [19]. Securitization professional action is discursive actions carried out by security actors to express a problem as an existential threat to a reference object, working in such a way that the threat is accepted as real and requires certain actions. treat in a normal way [20]. In the context of the South China Sea conflict, this theory can be used to analyze how media and political actors construct threats through certain stories that depict regional threats as existential. threats to national identity, confidentiality and state interests. This can influence public perception and encourage certain security actions or practices [21]. Nationalism refers to the ideology that the highest strain of individual loyalty must be submitted to the state and nation (nation state). This includes the feeling of sharing culture, territory, language and history with a group of people within a country. The theory of nationalism tries to explain the origins, causes and consequences of nationalism from several important perspectives in the theory of nationalism:

a) Civic Nationalism emphasizes the equal rights and responsibilities of citizens, regardless of ethnic or cultural origin [22], as the basis of nationalism as the binding force of a nation's nationalism [23].

b) Nationalist constructivism views nationalism as a social construction that is created and produced through political, cultural and media processes [24].

This theory explains how the media plays an important role in creating and spreading nationalist narratives that can shape people's perceptions, identities and loyalty to the nation-state. The media is seen not only as a neutral means of conveying information, but also as an actor who actively creates nationalist discourse through reporting, symbolic representation, and certain frames. The main concepts of this theory are as follows:

a) Narrative Construction Nationalists and the media build stories that emphasize national identity, pride and loyalty to the country through reporting, symbols and celebrations of history and culture.

b) The reproduction of national identity stories disseminated by mass media helps continuously produce and strengthen national identity. and a sense of nationality in everyday life [25].

c) Banal nationalism is a concept that shows that nationalist narratives are not always extreme or confrontational, but also through simple and everyday things [26].

d) Imagined communities mass media. plays a role in creating and maintaining imagined communities, where people feel connected to a national identity, even if they do not know it [27].

To understand global communicative relations, international communication places varying emphasis on three elements:

a. Actor

International is an arena dominated by countries which are the main sources of institutions. Therefore, international communication theory in this paradigm is basically a theory about how countries interact with each other. The state is the only actor who has the legitimacy to create domestic and international laws that control the behavior of these other actors. According to actor theory, actors with certain interests who want to influence public opinion influence the content and dissemination of media information. The main actors influencing media content are:

1. Media owners have certain financial and political interests that can influence the media according to their interests.

2. Advertising companies have a lot of influence over media content because they are the source of the main source of media revenue.

3. Governments can use regulation and censorship to influence media content to suit their political interests.

4. Interest groups such as civil society organizations, social movements, and NGOs can influence media content. to fight for their interests.

5. Journalists play an important role in determining media content because they decide what and how to report.

Actor theory emphasizes that media content is not only influenced by internal factors such as work routines and journalistic values, but also external factors such as the economic, political and social interests of the actors involved in the news production process [28].

b. Technology

The communications technology revolution at the end of the 19th and 20th centuries was the strongest factor. The focus is on efforts to understand the impact of new communications technologies on international relations such as the internet. The development of communication technology and new media greatly influences how media content is produced, distributed and consumed. This theory focuses on how technological innovation shapes and changes media structures, processes, and content. Some basic truths of media technology theory are:

1. The development of new technology encourages the emergence of new forms. from the media. and changing existing media practices.
2. Each media technology has its own capabilities and limitations that shape the way media is used and consumed.
3. Media technology not only affects the way we communicate, but also society's social, economic and cultural structures.
4. New media tends to adapt and refine old media forms, thereby creating complex relationships between various media.

Media technology theory is often associated with thinkers such as Marshall. McLuhan, Harold Innis, and Neil Postman, who emphasized the importance of understanding how technology shapes and changes media [29].

c. Production

An economic system that produces goods and services, provides employment, regulates trade relations, and generates patterns of wealth creation and investment has become the third main element in the development of international communication theory. International communications reflect economic relations, for example news flow trends reflect global trade patterns. The theory of media production methods confirms that several main factors influence the media content production process:

1. Media production routines are regulated by work routines and procedures established by media organizations, such as schedules, distribution. tasks and available resources.
2. A reporter's professional values, such as objectivity, balance, and accuracy, influence how he or she selects, packages, and presents information.
3. Organization and management: organizational structure, management practices, and business interests of corporate media influence the content production process.
4. The information sources used by the media, such as sources, news agencies, and official sources, influence the content and viewpoints presented.
5. External factors such as political pressure, interests, the economy, and legal regulations can also influence the media production process.

Media production criticizes the assumption that media is an objective mirror of reality. Instead, this theory emphasizes that the media content production process is influenced by various factors that shape and filter the information presented to the public [30].

4   Conclusion

In the context of the South China Sea dispute, it is necessary to analyze how the media of the countries participating in the dispute create nationalist narratives that strengthen sovereignty, create a sense of threat and mobilize national feelings to support certain policy areas related to the dispute. Coordinated recommendation efforts from various parties to overcome this threat. First, the media must act as a peaceful press that avoids provocation and presents peaceful solutions. Second, the government must defuse tensions through diplomacy, negotiation and international peace agreements. Third, the public must be educated not to create hostile feelings and understand the importance of regional peace. Fourth, relevant countries must build mutual understanding, support the supremacy of law and prioritize regional stability.

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