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by Rifki Dermawan

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SECURITIZING THE ENVIRONMENT: A CASE OF MARINE DEBRIS IN INDONESIA

Rifki Dermawan

Department of International Relations, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

Email: rifkidermawan@soc.unand.ac.id

Abstract

Marine debris has become a major environmental problem at a global level in recent years. The world has taken actions to counter this issue through various methods such as campaigns, social movements and government policies. Indonesia is trying to reduce the negative impact of marine waste toward the environment. This paper aims to look at the securitization process of marine debris issue by the Indonesian government. It applies the securitization framework, a concept proposed by the Copenhagen School. The research is conducted with a qualitative research method. This paper consists of introduction, research method, discussion and analysis, and conclusion as well as recommendation. The result of the research indicates that the securitization process has started from Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's era to Joko Widodo administration. However, a comprehensive parameter is needed to measure the impact of securitization on society as the relevant audience.

Keywords: Securitization, Marine Debris, Indonesia, Environment.

INTRODUCTION

The threat of marine debris toward the environment has caught people attention from all across the world. Marine debris can be defined as “any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment...” [1]. As a matter of fact, around 80% of marine debris is plastic waste [2]. Videos and pictures of sea creatures dying because of plastic straws, plastic bags, and six-pack rings are viral on internet attracting global viewers. As a result, many governments have taken clear actions in order to counter this environmental problem.

In 2018, there are around 50 countries have attempted to minimize the impact of plastic waste in their region [3]. Indonesia is one of them as the government has a long term plan to deal with marine waste problem. Under Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP), Indonesia is working together with other governments, civil societies, and big companies to save the environment from plastic waste. This is proven through Indonesian government's commitment to reduce the amount of marine plastic waste by 70% in 2025 [4]. The plan indicates that the government has special concern on environment, especially on the sea.

At regional level, the members of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) agree that waste are the real threat for the environment. The 34th ASEAN Summit Meeting held this year has produced two documents related to countering marine debris. They are The Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region and the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris (Framework of Action) [5]. These regional initiatives basically cover plans of collective action and strategies to reduce the impact of marine debris in Southeast Asia.

The paragraphs above have shown that the actions taken to save the sea from waste are occurring globally. Even the regional organization, such as ASEAN, has officially declared that the problem of marine debris is threatening the environment. For Indonesia, marine issues are very significant for the country. The geographical area of Indonesia consists 75% of sea with abundant natural resources [6]. Citizens depend on fishery industries as there are 12 million people work in this field [7]. Furthermore,

the maritime sector in the country plays an important role as it has become one pillar of Indonesia Economic Development [8]. Based on this fact, I conclude that maritime area could be considered as national interest of Indonesia.

Currently, this national interest is being threatened. Indonesia is struggling to deal with marine debris, especially plastic waste. Even Indonesia is placed as the second biggest contributor of plastic waste in the ocean globally. The country produces 480.000-1.290.000 ton of waste annually which ended in the sea [9]. This condition puts marine debris issue into security domain since it poses a threat to the environment, specifically maritime area, which belongs to the national interest of Indonesia. Therefore, this paper addresses actions by Indonesian government to —secure the sea from marine debris impact through the lens of securitization theoretical framework. It questions whether the act of securitizing the ocean from marine debris has been successful or not.

Many scholars have conducted research on environmental security using securitization concept popularized by the Copenhagen School. Scott [10] explicates the possibility of climate change securitization at the international level. She emphasizes the role of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to securitize this environmental issue. Discussion also goes to current development of climate change position in global security domain where it is clear that some states perceive this threat differently. Scott then concludes that climate change is not merely about environmental issue but it involves many different aspects. Her article basically portrays the prediction of securitization move at global level which the UNSC plays a leading role. She provides a new perspective on how securitization of the environment works outside domestic area.

Issue of environment discussed from the perspective of securitization is also written by Piedade [11]. He brings the topic of securitization on the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) as maritime area. The analysis explains the process of securitization which focuses on the aspect of maritime security. One of his points is also related to idea proposed by Scott [10] about the role of UNSC in managing global security issues. Piedade makes conclusion that the securitization process on GoG is still ongoing. His writing produces two major points, they are the discussion on maritime security concept and securitization process of the environment.

Garcia and Breslin [12] write in their article about the conflict in the South China Sea (SCS) using the combination of securitization and capacity building concept. They focus on the specific issue regarding the East Asian Supercomplex (EAS) where the transition from a bipolar to multipolar happens. Process of securitization and desecuritization in the SCS dispute gives new views on how countries in the region make decision for their foreign policy. Garcia and Breslin's explanation help the readers to understand situation in the SCS through the lens of securitization. They successfully capture the securitization process occurs in a maritime disputed region that is the SCS.

The three articles above emphasize the concept of securitization on several different cases. They successfully portray the implementation of securitization theoretical framework to reveal issue behind climate change, sea resources, and conflict in maritime area. These studies could be starting point to explore more about securitization aspect from cases related to the environment. This is essentially needed as many environmental problem occur globally nowadays.

In general, this paper has several purposes. First, it aims to understand how environmental issue is being securitized based on the concept of securitization. Discussion on environment becomes global phenomenon, thus, I believe that it is very important to do research concerning environment from security studies point of view. Second, Indonesia is currently facing many problems pertaining to the environment, such as haze, plastic waste, over exploitation of natural resources and many other issues. Therefore, understanding how securitization works in particular issue is very important for policy makers and general public.

I expect this paper will contribute to the development of security studies field, especially regarding securitization concept. The article provides an empirical research about securitization on environmental aspect, specifically plastic waste problem. This is an interesting issue as the world is getting aware of

threat created by plastic waste and many scholars are still trying to figure out solutions for this problem. Hopefully, the paper will be able to provide new insights to deal with this global threat.

The paper is structured as follows. First, I start with the introduction explaining marine debris phenomenon, research focus, previous studies as well as purposes of the paper. Second, it continues with the research method section. This part explains the approach used for this paper and brief explanation regarding the theoretical framework, that is securitization. Third, the discussion and analysis section which covers explanation on the securitization stage and effectiveness of the securitization act. Lastly, this paper ends with a conclusion.

RESEARCH METHOD

I completed this paper using the qualitative research method, which is defined by Bryman, Teevan, and Bell [13] as research that is “concerned primarily with words and images rather than numbers.” To support my analysis, I gathered the data, such as journal article, research paper, news, and statistics, mostly from online resources. With the theoretical framework, I interpreted and analyzed the data and references that I have collected to answer the research question. The approach used for this paper was securitization concept proposed by scholars of the Copenhagen School. I applied securitization framework on marine debris case in Indonesia since I addressed question how marine debris problem becomes urgent that it requires quick and proper actions from the state. I believe that this approach is able to reveal the development of marine debris issue in public sphere and policy makers domain.

The emergence of securitization as a tool of analysis has expanded people understanding regarding security [14]. It does not merely deal with classic security topics such as state and military, but it develops to other fields, for example, security in the environment, economics, and politics. Securitization can be defined as an act of moving a particular issue into a higher level which is more than just ordinary politics [15]. In regards to securitization process, Buzan et al. [15] emphasize on the important roles of securitizing actors and referent objects. They define securitizing actors as ‘actors who securitize issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened’. While referent objects refer to ‘things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have legitimate claim to survival.’

As explained by Buzan et al. [15], the model of securitization can be divided into three levels. First, non-politicized condition, where the issue is not discussed and not considered significant by public and government. Second, the issue reaches politicized level where it belongs to ‘standard political system’ and is ‘part of public policy’. Third is securitized stage in which ‘a securitizing actor (for example, government, political elite, military, civil society) articulates an already politicized issue as an existential threat to a referent object (for example, state, groups, national sovereignty, ideology, economy)’ [14].

Buzan et al. [15] continue the explanation regarding securitization process as they point out the important transition of an issue from being politicized to securitized. They argue that this transition is called a securitization act. In regards to this process, ‘speech act’ plays a significant role since the theorists believe that the speech act is the first step of securitization process. Emmers [14] defines speech act as ‘the discursive representation of certain issue as an existential threat to security’.

Securitization can be considered successful when the referent objects are convinced that particular issue is regarded as a threat. Speech act takes an important position here as it is being used as a tool to make referent objects agree and understand that a threat does exist. Furthermore, securitization does not always come with extraordinary measures to counter a threat. A normal political act is enough to address certain issue and put it in securitization level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Non-politicized and Politicized Stage

Issue of marine debris does not get much attention in the past, whether at national or international level. In the last couple of years, the world start to focus on this environmental problem considering that the threat becomes real. Looking back at the previous government of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s (SBY) administration, managing waste problem is part of his policies but it does not

specifically address marine litter. Government Regulation No.81/2012 on Managing Household Waste and Others Waste and Law No.18/2008 on Waste Management are regulations made under SBY's leadership which deal with waste material [16].

Despite lack of attention regarding marine debris, in 2013 the government has already made a grand plan to find solutions for plastic waste in the ocean. This program was managed under Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Unfortunately, development of this plan was stagnant and it had never been executed under SBY's administration. In 2018, Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs in President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) era carried out this plan of action. They have been working to achieve targets in the grand strategy of countering marine debris to this day [17].

In securitization framework, marine debris issue in SBY administration period belongs to the transition from non-politicized stage to politicized one. Prior to creation of the grand plan on combating plastic debris, the issue was not in governments concerns which indicates that it was being non-politicized. When SBY and his ministries addressed marine debris in their plan of action, then it became politicized. However, the threat of marine waste was not articulated clearly since there was no regulations came into force to 'secure' the ocean from the threat. Thus, the SBY's grand plan cannot be considered as a securitization move.

Securitization Stage

I believe that international community also plays a role to drive governments to secure certain issues. In 2012, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) was established. This act shows that finally the world agrees that the environment should be priority of global citizens and the UNEA aims to bring environmental issues into the spotlight [18]. In 2013, during the first UNEA, this institution produced a resolution on marine debris which was also followed by the new resolution at the second UNEA in 2014. Both of these resolutions call for action from the states and other body of organizations to stand against marine waste. They emphasize on the role of international actors, either state or non-state, to actively involve in various attempts to solve this environmental issue. In the third UNEA conducted in 2015, Indonesia together with Norway made a contribution through a resolution regarding anticipated outcome to reduce marine waste [19].

Indonesia seems to consider the role at international level as an important one. It is not only at the UNEA, but Indonesia also maintains cooperation with several states to solve marine debris problem. The country expands its international network through various frameworks, such as Problue Fund, Marine Debris and Ocean Resources Multi-Donor Trust Fund, Ocean Global Leadership Forum (OGLF), and Our Ocean Conference [17]. These mechanism help Indonesia building stronger power to deal with marine waste.

2017 was a historical year for Indonesia as the government officially declared National Plan of Action on Marine Plastic Debris. This grand plan was announced in many different international conferences and meetings by government officials. It was firstly expressed by Arif Havas Oegroseno, Deputy Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs, at Our Ocean Conference in Malta in 2017. He accentuated the ambitious target that Indonesia intends to achieve in regards to reducing marine waste as he stated "We have put in place a robust National Plan of Action on Marine Plastic Debris as the road map to reduce marine plastic litter by 70% in 2025... The National Plan of Action also supports initiatives on river and beach clean up ,development of bio-plastic, tax for single-use plastic bag, developing tests for plastic-tar road, waste to energy, strengthening waste banks initiatives, and grass roots, and youth movement" [20].

President Jokowi also took the lead and articulated the significance of National Plan of Action on Marine Plastic Debris. As he said in a speech at G20 Summit in 2017 that "we are working to reduce our waste by 30 percent in 2025 through the reduce, reuse and recycle concept, and we have set a target to reduce marine plastic waste by 70 percent in the same year" [21]. To achieve the goal of National Plan of Action on Marine Plastic Debris, the government translated this document into several regulations, they are Government Regulation 97/2017 and Presidential Decree 83/2018 [22].

Furthermore, the national plan also get strong support from domestic level. Several regional administrations, such as in Bogor, Banjarmasin, and Balikpapan, have made regulations to ban plastic waste at retail market and issued public notices as efforts in reducing plastic waste [17]. On 16 July 2019, President Jokowi invited local government leaders to discuss waste-to-energy power plants. In the meeting, Jokowi also addressed the issue of marine debris as he stated “We have to solve the marine debris problem. This is a global problem not just Indonesia. We are in the second position (countries polluting the ocean)” [23].

I argue that during Jokowi’s administration¹ marine debris issue has transferred into securitization domain. It can be seen from declaration of **National Plan of Action on Marine Plastic Debris** in many occasions, regulations and public notices made based on this government plan, and coordination with international actors to find the solution of marine waste. The government under President Jokowi treats marine debris as national security problem as well as a global threat. They took firm and concrete actions to deal with matter. The government even set a clear target that they want to achieve. ⁶is act of securitization was initiated through ‘speech acts’ delivered by the President himself and also Arif Havas Oegroseno, Deputy Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs in international and national forums. Their statements are used to convince the audience that marine debris is jeopardizing Indonesia’s environment. The environment acts as the referent object.¹ In this case, the relevant audience are Indonesian citizens because it is stated in the first strategy of **National Plan of Action on Marine Plastic Debris** that the programs under this strategy aim to increase public awareness through socialization and education regarding the negative impact of marine waste.

Is the Securitization Act Successful?

To answer this question, one needs to look up explanation offered by Emmers [14]. He states “the act of securitization is successful only once the relevant audience has been convinced of the existential threat to the referent object.” I have explained in the previous section that the relevant audience in Indonesian marine debris case is its citizens. Thus, the securitization can be considered successful if the citizens are convinced that marine waste is a threat to the environment.

Unfortunately, based on the Central Statistic Agency (BPS) index of Environment Indifferent Behaviour in 2018, 72% Indonesian citizens do not care about waste, especially plastic waste [24]. Even though this report does not address marine debris specifically, it shows that more than half of Indonesia population lack of understanding on how to manage the waste properly.

Nevertheless, Indonesia has seen many social movements that fight plastic waste. They emerge as a response from society towards this environmental problem. These grassroots movements are trying to attract people to pay more attention on the environmental issue. In Indonesia, there are many different groups who stand against plastic waste. Some of them are Bye Bye Plastic Bags, Gerakan Indonesia Diet Kantong Plastik, Zero Waste Nusantara, Sustanation, and Get Plastic [25]. Moreover, this environmental movement becomes part of the trend in society. For example, anti-plastic straw campaign which has gone viral on social media. Even a major company, such as McDonald’s Indonesia, also lead this change on online platform through #StartWithoutStraw initiative and reduce the use of plastic straw in its restaurant chains.

There has been mixed response from society towards the securitization act on environmental issue, specifically, marine debris. Based on the report from BPS, it shows that the securitization is unsuccessful since citizens are not convinced that they are under the threat of waste. On the other hand, some groups in society start to care more for the environment. They appear through various social movement, such as anti-plastic waste and plastic straw campaign. These two different perspectives indicate that it is difficult to justify whether the securitization is successful or not since there is no clear parameter on that issue. More specific studies and data are required to look at the society’s response to marine debris problem in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The paper has shown the securitization process of marine debris issue in Indonesia. The transition of government from SBY to Jokowi's administration plays an important role regarding development of the securitization act. For the last seven years, marine waste problem has undergone three steps of securitization, from non-politicized to securitized stage. Based on the result of the research, this securitization act has not provided clear outcome since there is no strong parameter to measure the effectiveness of securitizing the environment from marine debris impact. Furthermore, I would like to recommend researchers focusing on securitization and marine debris issue in Indonesia to develop more comprehensive parameter to be a standard of measurement for the impact of securitization on society's response. Detailed statistics or survey would be helpful to provide deeper understanding in this issue.

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