

The Buyat Case: Straddling between Environmental Securitization and Desecuritization

Abstrak :

Security studies have moved from traditional state-centric conception of security to wider security issues and actors. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde's Copenhagen School of securitization theory offers a framework to rethink about security studies beyond state/military notion which includes other sectors such as environment. As the School brings forward the concept of politicization, securitization, and de-securitization, a reverse process of securitization, Buyat Case (2004) which involves PT Newmont Minahasa Raya, is put forward to make sense the interrelatedness of politics, security, environmental change, human security, and sustainable development within the framework of Copenhagen School. Whilst the essay particularly attempts to address the question whether the Indonesian government has de-securitized the Buyat Bay case which had been made security issue, the findings show that the securitization of Buyat Bay case is both an act and a process in itself.

Keyword :

Daftar Pustaka :

C. Amorin "Introduction", in Dodds, F. and Pippard, T (eds.), 2005. Human and Environmental Security: An Agenda for Change Earthscan 2005 London
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The Buyat Case: Straddling between Environmental Securitization and De-securitization

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ABSTRACT

Security studies have moved from traditional state-centric conception of security to wider security issues and actors. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde's Copenhagen School of securitization theory offers a framework to rethink about security studies beyond state/military notion which includes other sectors such as environment. As the School brings forward the concept of politicization, securitization, and de-securitization, a reverse process of securitization, Buyat Case (2004) which involves PT Newmont Minahasa Raya, is put forward to make sense the interrelatedness of politics, security, environmental change, human security, and sustainable development within the framework of Copenhagen School. Whilst the essay particularly attempts to address the question whether the Indonesian government has de-securitized the Buyat Bay case which had been made security issue, the findings show that the securitization of Buyat Bay case is both an act and a process in itself.

Keywords: *security, securitization, de-securitization, Copenhagen School, Buyat Case, Newmont Minahasa Raya.*

Kajian keamanan telah bergeser dari definisi keamanan tradisional yang berfokus pada negara menjadi kajian yang lebih luas. Konsep sekuritisasi yang diusung oleh Copenhagen School, terutama oleh Barry Buzan, Ole Waever dan Jaap de Wilde, memberikan kerangka analisis untuk mengkaji kembali studi keamanan di luar fokus negara/militer dengan mempertimbangkan aspek lain, misalnya lingkungan. Konsep keamanan Copenhagen School yang menekankan pada konsep politisasi, sekuritisasi, dan de-sekuritisasi, digunakan sebagai alat untuk membedah kasus PT Newmont Minahasa Raya yang diduga mencemari lingkungan, untuk menunjukkan keterkaitan antara politik, keamanan, perubahan lingkungan, keamanan manusia, dan pembangunan berkelanjutan. Dalam tulisan ini terungkap bahwa sekuritisasi kasus Buyat merupakan tindakan dan juga proses sekuritisasi.

Kata-Kata Kunci: *keamanan, sekuritisasi, de-sekuritisasi, Copenhagen School, kasus Buyat, Newmont Minahasa Raya.*

Security studies have moved from the traditional state-centric conception of security, being occupied by 4s which are state, strategy, science, and status quo, to wider security issues and actors. The definition of security, however, remains a contested concept since there can be no consensus to its meaning (Williams 2008, 1). Propagated by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, Copenhagen School of securitization theory offers a framework to rethink about security studies beyond state/military notion and to include five different sectors namely military, political, societal, economic, and environmental (Emmers 2010, 137; Buzan et al. 1998, 8). The importance of environmental security, as the focus of this essay, argued Buzan (in Williams 2008, 3), covers preservation of the local and planetary biosphere as the vital support system on which all humankind depends. Concerns over the effect of ozone depletion and global warming further acknowledge environmental change as a new security threat (Collins 2010, 8).

The complexity of environmental security goes hand in hand with human security under the umbrella of sustainable development, a notion which was advanced in the 1992 Rio Conference. Jon Barnett (2010 in Collins 2010, 235) argues that environmental security is indeed an important component of human security. Bryant and Parnwell (1996, 1) state that sustainable development is increasingly used as “*a means to classify a wide variety of economic activities according to their apparent greenness or lack thereof*”. They further assert that with the rapid development of economic growth and prevalent environmental degradation, South-east Asia provides numerous political issues and problems associated with sustainable development and environmental change (Bryant and Parnwell 1996, 2).

Indonesia is no exception in this matter. The Buyat Bay case which covers the alleged environmental destruction of North Sulawesi water committed by PT. Newmont Minahasa Raya (hereinafter PT. NMR) in 2004 is put forward to make sense the interrelatedness of politics, security, environmental change, human security, and sustainable development within the framework of Copenhagen School of security. This essay particularly attempts to address the question: *has the Indonesian government de-securitized the Buyat Bay case which had been made to a security issue?* It would be instructive to see how and to what extent such securitization is helpful in managing the environmental issue involving multinational corporation in developing countries especially Indonesia and whether the case could serve as a precedent in dealing and preventing such issue from happening in the future. The paper shows that the securitization of Buyat Bay case is both an act and process in itself. The remainder of the essay is constructed as follows: introduction to the dynamic framework of Copenhagen School of security studies, followed by analysis of the Buyat Bay case and conclusion.

The Copenhagen School of Security Studies

The Copenhagen School introduces a wider agenda of security studies, covering a wide array of security sectors, which was used to fall into the so-called non-traditional security. It brings forward the concept of politicization and securitization. The former refers to issue that is “*part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocation or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance*” (Buzan et al. 1998, 23; Emmers 2010, 139), whilst the latter is understood when an issue is “*presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure*” (Buzan et al. 1998, 24; Emmers 2010, 139). In this light, de-securitization is explained as the “*reverse process of securitization*”, that is when the issue is pushed back into normal politics (Emmers 2010, 139).

In brief, a successful securitization of an issue involves a two-stage process: first, the depiction of certain issue or entities as existential threats to referent objects that is defined as “*things that are seen to be existentially threatened and have legitimate claim to survival*” (Buzan et al. 1998, 36). The second stage is accomplished when the securitizing actor, referring to actor who “*securitizes issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened*” (Buzan et al. 1998, 36) has succeeded in convincing a relevant audience (public opinion, politicians, military, or other elites) that a referent object is existentially threatened, thus, extraordinary measures can be applied (Emmers 2010, 139). Another key element of securitization is the speech act referring to language of security used by securitizing actor to convince the target audience (Hadiwinata 2006, 199). Security as a speech act, Waever (1998, 55) argues, is that “*the utterance itself is the act*” (by saying it, something is done). In the case of environmental issue, the securitizing actor may proclaim any substantial damage to environment has significantly threatened the population.

The Buyat Bay Case: Scrutinising Pollution Allegation

Identifying the Buyat Bay case with the key elements of the framework given, the issue has become the headlines in 2004 when four villagers and two babies were reported dead from the disease allegedly caused by toxic waste dumped into Buyat Bay by PT. NMR, a gold company based in Denver, US, whilst others complained of tumours, skin rashes, and dizziness (“Buyat Disease” 2004; Parlez 2006). Not only causing health problem for the people living in the Buyat Bay, the report said the toxic waste also caused the fish which were disappearing, whilst the remaining fish were contaminated, endangering sea biota and biodiversity. Local NGOs, Yayasan Suara Nurani (YSN) and Yayasan Sahabat Perempuan

(YSP), together with LBH Kesehatan Jakarta have called government for actions to dealing with the case based upon the research conducted by Markus Lasut, a researcher in Sam Ratulangi University, who concluded that 25 people were contaminated with high level of mercury in their blood (“Buyat Disease” 2004). They later submitted a complaint against Minahasa health department and Ratatotok health centre to the authority for public deception since the latter fiercely denied any pollution in Buyat Bay (“Buyat Disease” 2004).

The media involvement in this issue has attracted attention of other environmental NGOs, notably Walhi (Friends of Earth Indonesia) and JATAM (Mining Advocacy Network) to closely scrutiny the issue. Siti Maimunah of JATAM revealed that since Newmont closed its operation on 31 August 2004, it left more than 4 million ton tailing waste in the Buyat’s seabed. Hence, more than 70 families who relied on fisheries have lost their source of income and more than 80% of them suffered serious health problems in 2004. They thus joined forces with other local NGOs after a series of research they conducted, turned out to be supportive to the claim that Buyat Bay was indeed polluted by dangerous minerals such as mercury and arsenic far beyond normal standard, by the tailing waste of PT. NMR. Radja Siregar (Kompas 2004) from Walhi stated that high level of arsenic found in the fish would be dangerous if constantly consumed especially by children.

A growing concern over the alleged pollution in Buyat Bay for the people and the environment as respective referent objects in this case was heavily captured in media coverage of local, national, and even international media during 2004. In this sense, NGOs have successfully sparked awareness and drawn the attention to the public and urged the government to take immediate action in addressing this issue. Intense reportage for months and some interactive talk shows in radio and television about Buyat case during August 2004 showed how public reacted on the issue by expressing their concern for the victim and distaste of the PT. NMR which they claimed as arrogance and inhumane. They demanded that the company should be responsible and be punished (Wibowo 2004). A popular comedy or social commentary drama scripted the case for TV prime-time episode whilst Indonesian famous rock band, Slank, made public appeals to support the Buyat villagers in televised concert (Down to Earth 2005). The villagers, with the help of NGOs, filled a 543 million US dollar lawsuit against PT. NMR in August, citing that the company’s tailing had caused serious illness and ruined their income from fishing (Perlez 2004). They also came to Jakarta to strengthen their case by showing the public about their suffering caused by the polluted bay (Indosiar 2004).

The securitization of the problem through the speech act by the NGOs appeared to have resonated with the Indonesian public and government. The legitimacy of NGOs as securitizing actor is justified according to the Copenhagen School. The power of NGOs lies in their line of work that across a wide spectrum in terms of their politics and the extent to which they work to influence the government such as lobby for legislation as well as to engage in research, training, public education, and disseminating information (Trzyna 2008). The public was convinced that PT. NMR polluted the Buyat Bay which in turned caused disease to the people living in the area when confronted with the data and scientific research. Buzan et al (1998, 72) argue that scientific arguments form the basis of securitizing moves and structure environmental security debates. When confronted with scientific arguments based on data (in this case, regardless of the methodology employed because of the public's lack of understanding in this matter), public is left with whether to trust or mistrust the professionals and make their political choices based on that intuitive basis. Walhi, for example, relied on their findings based on the laboratory examination of blood sample of Buyat Pante conducted in Speciality Laboratories, a Santa Monica (US) based laboratory, to make their case ("Buyat Disease" 2004).

Furthermore, under NGO and public scrutiny, Indonesian government began taking serious action to investigating the case. The government, which initially dismissed any allegation on PT. NMR through its Environmental Minister, Nabel Makarim and Health Minister Achmad Sujudi (Walhi 2004), later acted out as a securitizing actor alongside NGOs. Framing this issue as a security issue using the speech act, government based on Ministry of Environmental decree number 97/2004 created consolidated team which encompassing government officials, academia, researchers, and NGO (Tambunan 2004). The environmental minister, Mr. Makarim, explained that the team was instructed by President Megawati Sukarnoputri to solve the problematic issue immediately, saying "if there is no pollution, the fishermen are dissatisfied. On the other hand, if Newmont committed environmental damage, it needs to be addressed" (*Tempo Interaktif* 2004). The findings of the government-formed scientific team have led Makarim to issue statement that PT. NMR has violated environmental-safety standard produced by tailing of its mining activities (*Kompas* 2004).

With solid scientific proof in their hands, Indonesian government represented by their newly appointed Environmental Minister, Rachmat Witoelar, submitted a civil lawsuit to South Jakarta District Court in March 2005, demanding the company to pay 117.68 million US dollar compensation for lost income and environmental damage and another 16.3 million US dollar for damaging Indonesia's reputation (Mines and Communities 2006). Spokesman for Indonesia's Attorney General said

the company would be charged with purposely disposing hazardous and poisonous material into the water though they were fully aware that the material was dangerous, polluting and dangerous for the people's health (Perlez 2004). Regarding the lawsuit, Witoelar said that the company has been doing things without permit, referring to the argument that Newmont had failed to obtain permits for toxic waste. Masnellyati Hilman, a Deputy Minister of Environment, supported the argument by saying that the company may dump waste as long as they obtained permit and follow procedures (Perlez 2006).

The heightened case against Newmont has generated public furore in Indonesia, sending five senior Newmont employees to jail for a month before released (Perlez 2004). Richard Ness, the president of PT. NMR, was held responsible for the wrongdoing his company has allegedly committed (Case 2007). He was charged with criminal lawsuit based on police accusations that PT. NMR dumped potentially lethal amount of mercury and arsenic into Buyat Bay (Mines and Communities 2006). Isa Karmisa, another Deputy Environment Minister, was optimistic that the government had accurate data that Newmont indeed violated Indonesia's environmental laws and was fairly sure it could win (Donnan 2005).

By filing both civil and criminal lawsuits against PT. NMR, a subsidiary of a giant gold mining company in the world, Indonesian government has taken extraordinary measures outside the normal politics. It was the first pollution case against multinational mining company despite other serious environmental damage and human rights violation which was raised by NGOs against large mining companies such as Freeport, Rio Tinto, and Inco whose track records needed proper investigation by the government (Down to Earth 2005). Such case was unimaginable to happen during the reign of Suharto whereas the state was the single securitizing actor to define and shape security issue in the name of development, hence, almost every issue has been securitized. The regime has systematically designed a security structure under the umbrella of the so-called "IPOLEKSOSBUDHANKAMNAS" (ideology, politic, social, culture, defence, security, and national) that confined all aspect of political and social in order to control people's life effectively (Muna 2006, 94). What consider as normal political action when dealing with multinational company is seeking arbitration first before proceeding to legal action. In this case, the Indonesian government went ahead without seeking arbitration. The very same argument was used by South Jakarta District Court to dismiss the civil lawsuit against PT. NMR, ruling that under the term of government contract (Contract of Work) with PT. NMR, any dispute must be settled through international arbitration or conciliation (Mines and Communities 2006; Down to Earth 2005).

Nevertheless, the lawsuits were justified and supported by the government and NGOs. Responding to the court rule, the Environment Ministry has indicated that it would appeal the decision, arguing that the case was an example of the breach of Indonesian Environmental Law under which all parties are subject to, not simply related to the contractual matters (Down to Earth 2005). This point was specifically noted in article 26 of the Contract of Work between Indonesian government and PT. NMR. NGOs activists also expressed their disappointment of the court. Radja Siregar of Walhi urged the government to appeal the case to a higher level and refused to reduce the case to a breach of contract (AFX News Limited 2005). His argument was supported by Andri Chaniago of the Greenlaw Indonesia Environmental who claimed that the crux of the dispute was about environmental pollution allegedly carried out by Newmont and not about a breach of contract (AFX News Limited 2005).

Drawing the analysis within the framework of Copenhagen School of security, the NGOs and the Indonesian government represented by Environmental Ministry as securitizing actors have successfully securitized the Buyat Bay case as a security issue. Employing the language of security (the speech act), they convinced the audience, that is, the public and eventually government that referent objects (the Buyat Bay and people living in the area) were existentially threatened. Securitizing moves by the NGOs were considered as the first stage of securitizing process, whilst the government completed the second stage by taking extraordinary measure that is beyond normal politics to address the issue.

As the case progressed, the complexity of the issue also involved the act of de-securitization whereas the issue has been pushed back to the normal politics. Following the lost in the civil court, government has tried to seek settlement out of court with PT. NMR. In February 2006, both parties have agreed that PT. NMR would pay the Indonesian government 30 million dollar to end the 134 million dollar civil lawsuit (Mines and Communities 2006; Perlez 2006). Under the terms of a good will agreement, the settlement called for a six member of scientific team to monitor the environment around the mine for the next ten years. It particularly dedicated to the monitoring and to community development in Northern Sulawesi (Perlez 2006). That has been said, however, that the settlement would not affect the ongoing criminal lawsuit. Mahendra Siregar, Deputy Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, reiterated that agreement did not emphasize on the pollution issue (Perlez 2006).

Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Aburizal Bakrie, who was the proponent for an out of court settlement, stated that the lawsuit would be withdrawn after the government receives proof of transfer of the initial 12 million dollar (Mines and Communities 2006). Bakrie argued that the

agreement prioritised the people first and demonstrated commitment to sustainable development and proper care of the environment. In a statement, he quoted as saying (Mines & Communities 2006):

We believe this reiterates that our joint commitment to responsible mining is more than just words. Newmont has undertaken extensive community development and environmental programs over the life of the mine. In moving forward together, our priorities are the welfare of the communities around the mine and the long term health and safety of the environment.

The 30 million dollar settlement is likely seen as an act of de-securitization by the Indonesian government as de-securitizing actor. They brought back the issue into the public realm, reinstating the issue into a normal bargaining process of the political sphere (Emmers 2010, 139). It drew public debate about the effect of the agreement on Indonesian politics, economy, and the future of the case and the environmental protection in general. Sonny Keraf, Chief Environmental Commission in the House of Representative (Indonesian Parliament), questioned government decision to make peace with PT. NMR instead of proceed with the appeal. This action, argued Keraf (Tempo Interaktif, 2006), could bring a bad precedent for addressing environmental issue. In a more blunt comment, he accused that Newmont has bribed the Indonesian government. The deal sent a heavy blow to the environmentalists who expressed the same concern as Keraf stating that the decision would weaken government bargaining power in criminal process as it showed that the government is powerless in dealing with a big international company (Kusuma 2006).

The legal row against PT. NMR was seen by many economists as an act that could jeopardise the foreign investment in Indonesia, which affecting the general economy performance of the country. David Case (2007) noted that before the US President George Walker Bush visited Indonesia in November 2006, *Agence France-Presse*, France's news agency, reported that Richard Ness case has cast a shadow on the president trip. *Reuters* noted that there was growing concern that other foreign companies would be less likely to invest in Indonesia if PT. NMR and Ness were convicted. Tom Donohue, President of the US Chamber of Commerce in an interview with *Rocky Mountain News* commented that "*disposition of that case will most definitely have an impact on the foreign investment climate in Indonesia*" (Shaw &Welford 2007). The US Embassy sparked the same comment saying in a statement that positive solution would have positive impact for Indonesia and strengthen the trust of foreign investors (Pusat Informasi dan Data Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Alam Sulawesi 2007). The solution of the case was also important for two parties, the Indonesian government and Newmont who operates a far larger gold mine in Batu Hijau Sumbawa. Newmont's image which was already negative amongst Indonesian public was at stake if Newmont

wanted to have a smooth sailing in operating the mine although environmental NGOs have pointed another environmental pollution in Sumbawa (Down to Earth 2005).

The act of securitization and de-securitization of the Buyat Bay case involved a complex political issue. The security of the issue was seen as both act and a process in itself since the securitizing actors (NGOs and the Indonesian government) have successfully convinced the audience. It is also interesting to note that the case could serve as a precedent in dealing with such environmental problem in the future. Abdul Situmorang (2007) argued that the case could become Indonesia's "silent spring" of the country's environmental awareness. He mentioned that during the first three weeks of Buyat case, there were social protests in South Kalimantan and Central Sulawesi regions to remind public and regional government of the impact of large scale mining activities for environment and people livelihood. On the national level, Widi Pratikto, General Director of Ministry of Ocean and Fishing, said that the government was formulating Government Regulation on Ocean Planning to anticipate Buyat case from happening again. He mentioned that the plan was to include everything that related to waste disposal into the ocean by mining companies (*Tempo Interaktif*, 2004).

Analysing Buyat Bay case from the lens of Copenhagen School helps to point out the limits and potential of the school theory in explaining the non-traditional security issue. By labelling certain issue as a security issue, it helps to obtain faster response to addressing the problem. It is clear in Buyat Bay case that the government was slow in response, and even judged the case as no pollution happened in Buyat without preliminary research. Environmental sector which is categorised as non-traditional security still receives less attention from the public. In developing countries where the countries rely heavily on foreign investment, the environmental problem arising from the economic development process is mostly overlooked in favour of economic gain. The environmental issue also witnesses the importance of the role of the non state actor, particularly NGOs, in devising what constitutes as security threat and referent object. It also legitimises its position as securitizing actor alongside the traditional state. It is especially important in developing countries where the NGO is often seen to play important role in empowering the society as well as lobbying the government to pass certain regulation that favouring society. In this line of argument, where Buzan et al (1998) argues that de-securitization is more desirable, de-securitization of the Buyat case is seen as a bad precedent that conveying message to public and NGO that government is powerless against MNCs.

The case also reflects the limitation of the Copenhagen School in several points. First, securitization although more favourable presents

ramification to the short term political gain which happens mostly in developing countries where the securitization is used to obtain political gains for regime in power to secure its political support. The newly elected President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was likely used the case to support his political base by letting the Ministry of Environment to pursue legal actions (Down to Earth 2005). However, the case then ceased to de-securitization after some time. Second, there is no explicit measure so as to how to gauge emergency measure. This leads to the blur demarcation between the securitization and politicization. The case provides an example of how thin and sometimes hard to measure the line between the two processes since there is no indicator(s) to gauge emergency measure(s) in order to complete the process of securitization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Buyat Bay case showed the act of securitization and de-securitization. Indonesian government alongside with NGOs acted out as securitizing actors by employing language of security to convince the target audience (public and government) that the referent objects, the Buyat Bay environment and people living in the area, were existentially threatened. In performing the act of securitization, it is regarded as an act (by producing government regulation in this regard) and process (by performing security act and successfully persuaded the audience about the existential threat as well as draw awareness among public about the environmental issue) although the lawsuit was dismissed. However, as de-securitizing actor, the Indonesian government has also successfully de-securitized the issue and pushed it back into the normal politics of public scrutiny. This decision was widely seen as giving bad precedent for the future environmental dispute against multinational company.

The dynamic triangle interactions between multinational company (MNC), host country, and local community often spark conflict due to different interests. Indonesia still has many unfinished homework concerning environmental problems arising from giant MNCs activities such as Freeport in Papua and Rio Tinto in Kalimantan. It would be interesting to see how these issues unfold and what government is likely to do when facing with such organised public protests led by environmental NGO. Whether Newmont Minahasa Raya episode becomes precedent remains to be seen.

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