

## Fishermen Empowerment Strategy as a Solution in the Security Management Crisis in the North Natuna Sea

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### Abstract

Indonesia faces tremendous pressure in dealing with the crisis in the North Natuna Sea with China, which often violates Indonesia's EEZ in the North Natuna Sea. The frequency of crises in the North Natuna Sea is increasingly frequent. It requires an effective strategy without damaging diplomatic relations, and local Natuna fishers immediately feel the benefits. Diplomatic efforts carried out since 1994 and military policies have no significant effect in preventing China's aggressiveness. Up until now, Chinese fishing vessels and the Chinese Coast Guard are still carrying out provocative actions by violating Indonesia's IUU Fishing and EEZ by adhering to the Nine-Dash Line principle, which has disrupted maritime security and has harmed Indonesia for not respecting the 1982 UNCLOS. Moreover, Jakarta's response to that event sent fishing boats from Pantura Java to take fish in the Natuna area, making it worse for local Natuna fishers. Thus act sparked a conflict, which meant Natuna fishers faced two threats from foreign parties and conflicts with Pantura Java fishers. The researcher aims to analyze the strategies that the Government of Indonesia has carried out in dealing with the crisis in the North Natuna Sea with China by using qualitative methods and triangulation analysis techniques with the concept of national interest. The researcher analyzed how the strategy used by the Indonesian Government did not have a significant impact on reducing China's aggressiveness and conflicts with Pantura Java fishers. The study results indicate that additional strategies are needed to encourage the effectiveness of the expected results by prioritizing local Natuna fishermen as part of the solution, with maximum coordination between the Indonesian Navy, Indonesian Maritime Security Agency, and the Natuna Fisherman Community. Researchers suggest that the central Government coordinates with stakeholders to form a "Sovereignty Patrol Fisherman Team" accompanied by Bakamla as a concrete action to safeguard the sovereignty and sovereign rights of professional fishers to facilitate up-to-date and surviving fishing vessels in the North Natuna Sea as a form of state defence and empowerment of local Natuna fishers.

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### Introduction

Indonesia suffered great losses due to IUU fishing violations committed by Chinese fishing vessels accompanied by the Coast Guard in the North Natuna Sea. Losses based on the eight caught ships are estimated at 24 billion Rupiah, with the amount of fish stolen estimated 130-150 tons. The theft is carried out using trawling or tiger trawler, which the Government of Indonesia prohibits because it can damage the environment and biological resources in the North Natuna Sea. (Juanita 2021, 1-10). Indonesia-China relations look harmonious on the surface, but in reality, Indonesia needs to swallow the bitter pill of tolerance limits that China continues to push in the North Natuna Sea. Severe losses and threats carried out by China continue to be play out and at any time can endanger the long-standing relationship between the two countries. It should be noted that between 2019 and 2020, 26 verbal notes were recorded, along with two diplomatic letters and one official statement on South

China Sea issues from about 12 countries. Most of these diplomatic steps clarified their respective positions on specific legal issues and the South China Sea issue as a whole. Indonesia took the plunge by sending its verbal note in May 2020 and June 2020. This verbal note emphasizes that Indonesia does not recognize China's nine-dash line claim (Kembara 2020, 36-38). Violations are carried out as if to test Indonesia's patience, increasingly with a stagnating escalation making this crisis to be a crisis that will never end and Indonesia's diplomacy is running in circles. Still, the researchers found an interesting thing that Indonesia has the opportunity to manage the crisis by involving local Natuna's fishing communities to have authority or power rights in the Natuna waters area.

It is known that the North Natuna Sea area is in the waters of the South China Sea. This position makes the North Natuna Sea location close to China's nine-dash line conflict zone, which intersects with countries claiming parts of the South China Sea namely Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (ROC) Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, and don't forget the geopolitical interests of the United States. Chinese fishers often cross the fishing line to the Indonesian EEZ accompanied by the Chinese Coast Guard. The Indonesian Government has often summoned the People's Republic of China Ambassador, but the way China handle the situation seems like to test Indonesia patience limit. In 2020, the Government of Indonesia responded to the actions of Chinese fishers and their Coast Guard by bringing 30 units of ships from Pantura Java to be present in Natuna waters, it is known that all ships are equipped with cantrang fishing rods which are clearly dangerous and were banned in Indonesia by the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries 2014-2019 period Sri Pudjiastuti which was then allowed in the next period by Edhie Prabowo, those change makes a public confusion. According to the Governor of the Riau Islands, the reason for bringing Pantura fishermen is because local Natuna fishermen are not able to go to sea up to 12 miles and above, because the condition of the boat and equipment they have is inadequate (Wahyuni 2019, 13-41). This strategy gets serious contra from local Natuna fishermen (Wijaksono, Suwarno, and Supriyadi 2021, 219-226). Thus, there are two threats faced by local Natuna fishermen, first external threats and then the threat of horizontal conflict with Pantura Java fishers.

The external security threats faced by local Natuna fishermen are very burdensome, from IUU fishing, environmental damage by Chinese fishing trawlers, to the presence of Chinese warships that pose a defense threat. On September 13, 2021, through the Natuna Fisherman's amateur camera at coordinates 6.17237° N and 109.01578° East Longitude, they witnessed six Chinese warships led by the destroyer Kunming-172 in the Indonesian EEZ zone (Panca 2021). Then, the threat of horizontal conflict with Pantura Java fishers, the Natuna fishermen swallowed the bitter pill with the fact that the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, through the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Mahfud MD, gave instructions to send fishing boats from the Pantura of Central Java to go to Natuna waters to respond of China IUU Fishing, and Javanese fishers could take the fish in Natuna waters. The results of sending Pantura Java fisher program were far from what was expected. Within a month of the two to three month plan targeted by the government, the catch is not as expected, even after the request for expansion of the fishing area to the Indonesia-Malaysia border by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (Firdaus 2020). Bringing Pantura Java fishers obviously destroys local Natuna fishermen marine system arrangement, which is suppresses fishing competition area and market in the Natuna waters.

Referring to the 2019 *Badan Pusat Statistika* (Central Agency on Statistics), the welfare condition of the Natuna people, most of whom work as fishermen, is very alarming with the poverty line even though they are in an area rich in marine resources. (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Natuna 2020, 81). As an example of reality, according to fisherman Sudiro, he must spend Rp. 210,000.00 in one goes to sea for 10 up to 20 miles, while the income from the catch is on average Rp.200,000.00 to a maximum of Rp.500,000.00 if he is lucky. Still, with famine conditions and threats from Chinese fishermen high frequency, fishermen return home without getting a proper gain forced fishermen to "dig holes-cover holes" debt (Lumbanrau 2020). The sad thing is that the income of Natuna fishermen is assumed to be due to limited vessels facilities, but the data we collect shows indeed a limited of boat facilities is one thing, but there are such as government support in the execution of supporting local fishing boat facilities to be able to fish to the maximum extent is another

thing, as well as intimidation from the foreign fishermen, foreign coast guards, and even warships that make it more difficult for Natuna fishermen to go to sea are several factors that must be acknowledged by the Government to be fixed up immediately. This has caught the researcher's attention that there's an absence of a proper research of this issue by the Government. The Government of Indonesia's actions are impulsive and inappropriate, Indonesia needs to focus on long-term systems that can be utilized by fishermen and to safeguard Indonesia's sovereign rights.

Indonesia can learn from the Australian Government's efforts to respect indigenous tribal groups by recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, and other customary rights regimes that influence the policies of protected area management agencies. Australian Government institutions make indigenous tribes rights holders with so much respect (Smyth and Isherwood 2016, 307-326) which is not easy. There are times where the saltwater indigenous peoples express disappointment, frustration, anger at the Government's failure to fulfill their legitimate interests in managing the country's marine resources, but due to the process of substantial improvement in the last few decades by Australian Government so the indigenous tribal groups feel the improvement benefits immediately, it can be said that the process is excellent as an example of improvement steps that can be used as a reference by the Indonesian Government.

Australian Government Institutions, together with indigenous peoples, understand the sea country where the sea and land are closely related to a unified complex of cultural, identity, spiritual rights, and responsibilities, including the right to access, use and distribute marine resources as the foundation of a sustainable indigenous peoples economy in the 21st century. So as the relationship that occurs is that the Clan members are the owners of their country, they belong to their country, they identify themselves with their country, and they are servants of their country, including their sea country (Smyth 1994, 2-37). Reciprocal relations as state defense can be understood in Indonesia, but by giving each other feedback and trying to improve substantially close the social and economy gap of coastal local community.

Natuna local fishermen witness and are aware of foreign ships entering Indonesian waters on a daily basis. With the frequency of Chinese fishing vessels violating Indonesia's EEZ and the presence of warships, the local Natuna fishermen are the ones who are on the spot area and know the event first. The Natuna waters are clearly an important area because they are Indonesia's borders and sovereign rights. Due to frequent encounters with foreign fishing vessels, research vessels, and warships, a fisherman named Henri admits he is no longer reluctant to take video evidence because after published in news media, there was no real follow-up from the authorities, even though he was intimidated by foreign parties every time he went to sea. Then he admitted that the patrols that had been budgeted to protect local fishermen were not optimal and continued, even though fishermen were willing to be invited to cooperate ("Nelayan Natuna" 2021).

It is clear that foreign intimidation threatens not only damaging the economy, the environment, and security but also Indonesia's defense, so it needs accurate steps with deep field research that reveal the latest conditions and urgent needs immediately that will benefit Natuna fishermen and Indonesia's sovereign right. Based on these problems, the need for additional strategies to overcome marine security problems in the North Natuna Sea area is very necessary considering that local Natuna fishermen have been a victim of the unfair condition. Through this study, the researcher proposes that empowering local Natuna fishermen as part of the solution to the crisis in the North Natuna Sea.

This study aims to provide an overview of the strategy for the Government of Indonesia to give a chance to empower local Natuna fishermen by offering facilities to fishermen in the form of capable vessels to support and increase the productivity of local fishermen's income as well as the urgency of providing operational training to local fishermen to help maintain Indonesia's sovereignty and sovereign rights in Natuna Waters in coordination with Bakamla and the Navy. This research is a systematic recommendation for the Government of Indonesia because there has been no previous research that reviews the involvement of local Natuna fishermen explicitly as one of the solution agents, as well as the importance of uncovering the welfare problems of Natuna fishermen affected by the crisis in the North Natuna Sea. Previous research is still limited to evaluating strategies that have been programmed by the Government and even strategies by mobilizing fishermen from other areas

but not involving local Natuna fishermen. It is hoped that this research can provide an effective solution related to crisis resolution strategies in Natuna waters and local Natuna fishermen.

## Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative descriptive was chosen by the researcher as the research design because of the flexibility and variability of the method. Qualitative descriptive research specifically has the aim of exploring, identifying, describing, understanding, or investigating one or several phenomena contained in the research problem (Suardi 2017, 1-11). This method is suitable to reveal in detail the problem and find new structure to support that emerged during the research.

Data collection techniques in this study used literature studies, in-depth interviews of maritime security experts, and study of report documents related to research problems. The data that has been collected is very valuable in a study as material for solving research problems. All of the data is processed and analyzed for further research, researchers can draw research conclusions and make recommendations academically and practically.

The data that has been obtained before being processed and analyzed further must be carried out a data validation process to determine the validity of the data because incorrect data can potentially produce wrong research results and vice versa. In the process of data validation and analysis, researchers used triangulation source techniques. Triangulation source is a data analysis approach that performs the process of testing between data quickly and synthesizing data from various sources to then can be used to strengthen and improve the interpretation of researchers in understanding and solving research problems (Bachri 2010, 46-62).

## The Urgency of Fisherman Empowerment Strategy

Empowerment is the answer to the critical situation of local Natuna fishermen and maritime security. Empowerment is all about co-management, involving user groups and stakeholders that previously excluded, lose their rights, and sometimes alienated in the decision-making process of fisheries management chain. To make co-management of fisheries to be sustainable, empowerment must occur at both the collective and individual levels. Empowerment is not just about re-organizing the management authority, but it requires initiative and awareness from the empowered party. Building new social roles and relationships involving co-management factors that involve more than just institutional design and participatory democracy and capacity building (Jentoft 2005, 1-7).

Maritime security in the North Natuna Sea is vital because it can directly intersect with national defense. A strategy is needed that can be applied as a long-term system that the effectiveness can be measured. The problems in the North Natuna Sea, especially with China, have become severe discussions on a national and international scale. In addition, now, with the increasing variety of threats in the North Natuna Sea by China's dominance in the South China Sea that has started a new chapter with the presence of the AUKUS alliance (trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) as a balance of power. Thus, the stagnant scale of the crisis from IUU Fishing can widen into a major power conflict that drags Indonesia into a conflict drama arena. Referring to the concept of national interest, the researcher found that the use of the strategy was not effective due to the use of the old strategy that did not prioritize local Natuna fishermen as community entities. Based on the data of previous strategy, the researchers found a solution that could be achieved is to include local Natuna fishermen to co-management the fisheries management chain in Natuna. Local Natuna fishermen will act as "Sovereignty Patrol Fisherman Team" maritime security agents that will coordinate with BAKAMLA and the Indonesia Navy together to protect Indonesia sea border and achieving the national interest. Researchers found a missing element when Government discussing solutions for North Natuna Sea problem is that local Natuna fishermen exist and ready to serve the country as well as in defined as *Bela Negara* (State Defence Programme). *Bela Negara* is a programme to succeed national defence by involving every citizen is in-line-with the 1945

Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The system is essentially a defence involving all citizens in accordance with their roles and functions (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia 2015, vi).

Fishermen at the border experienced various serious issues, especially high-scale intimidation from foreign parties, such as dealing with Chinese fishers accompanied by coast guards and even watching warships in the Indonesian EEZ. Violations are actually not only committed by China. Vietnam also often passes through the EEZ on the pretext of having territorial disputes in the EEZ with Indonesia. However, the issue with China is based on China's belief about the nine-dash line for historical reasons, not based on applicable law UNCLOS 1982. In addition, the presence of Pantura Java fishermen as new parties in utilizing Natuna's marine resources creates friction of social conflicts that the Government should not do if, before making policy conduct in-depth research first to form a long-term system rather than a reckless response that is detrimental to all parties. With the occurrence of social conflict, society is divided into groups and classes with different control over scarce resources, and empowerment implies a weak redistribution of power needed to control the level of power possessed by a society. Researchers recommend the effort as a form of settlement with a new strategy by empowering the economy and involving local Natuna fishermen to maintain Indonesia's maritime security.

### Implementation of the Concept of National Interest in Fishermen Empowerment Strategies

The researcher uses the concept of national interest in conducting analysis related to the strategic solutions being studied. In the national interest, it is necessary to support elements of the national security strategy in the form of economic, diplomatic, and military, each of which provides important information in determining the strategy to achieve the national interest, referring to the concept of the US Army War Coll model in (Said 2012, 1-16) namely by incorporating elements of empowerment of Natuna fishermen to increase the effectiveness of the Maritime Security strategy. The following is an overview of strategies that can be carried out by comparing the previous strategy and the strategy proposed by the researcher, which is analyzed in more detail by the researcher in Table 1.

Table 1. Implementation of the concept of national interest for the formulation of fishermen empowerment strategies.

	<i>Past Strategy</i>	<i>Proposed Strategy</i>
<i>Economy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using symbolic act sending Pantura Java fisherrmen to Natuna waters, budgeting 1.2 billion Rupiah per fishing vessel in response to the crisis in the North Natuna Sea as an effort to process marine resources and create Indonesia's presence at the border is considered futile, within three months of fishing the fishermen are disappointed and return to the Pantura.</li> <li>The lack of facilities for small fishermen with the absence of radar, GPS (Global Positioning System), and radio communication makes it difficult for Natuna fishermen to sail further to catch more fish even though Natuna is a fish paradise. The North Natuna Sea has strong winds and waves, these natural conditions often become obstacles for small ships to sail.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating an integrated system with the procurement of modern fishing vessels</li> <li>Conducting fish management training by experts following the conditions of Natuna Fishermen</li> <li>The Government opens opportunities, especially for the North Natuna Community from the beginning <i>hulu</i> suply chain to end <i>hilir</i> downstream fishing industry in Natuna for better fish distribution and improving the fishermen's economy, creating blue ocean environmental conditions</li> <li>Monitor the system and record economic developments after the implementation of support for local communities.</li> </ol>

*Past Strategy*

*Proposed Strategy*

Military

**Indonesian Army**

Kodam I Bukit Barisan inaugurated the Composite Battalion 1/ Garpati in Kab. Natuna, Kep. Riau. The formation of Composite 1/ Gardadi is the answer to the TNI movement unit facing urgent assignments and being deployed in a short time as a projected task for Military Operations for War (*Operasi Militer Perang*/OMP) and Military Operations Other Than War (*Operasi Militer Selain Perang*/OMSP) on a national and international scale. The follow-up to adding the title of power is expected to have a deterrent effect against threats that disturb the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia.

**Indonesia Navy**

The integration of *TNI Angkatan Laut* (Navy) units in Natuna by building the headquarters of the Marine Combat Cluster Command I Koarmada I as the Combat Operations Executing Command in western Indonesia and the Maritime Security Command Post.

1. Strengthening the Ranai Base in Natuna as the main base named the Maritime Regional Command by extending the runway to hundreds of meters to the sea and widening the runway for fighter aircraft to 45 meters at the R Sajad Ranai Air Base, so that it can be used by two warplanes simultaneously. In addition, increasing the capacity of Lanal Ranai's Tjijptasi Mess.
2. Construction of Submarine Auxiliary Station (Sionban) in the Lampa Strait, Natuna. With the construction of this auxiliary station to support the operations of these warships, especially submarines.
3. Placing a company of marines at the Gardadi Composite Battalion Headquarters, Sepempang, East Bunguran, Kab. Natuna, Kep. Riau and alerted three frigates or warships, as well as a Sea Raider type ship to chase ships that violated maritime boundaries.

**Indonesia Air Force**

1. Placing an air defense cannon, an aircraft slide, and drones and radar so that what happens in the South China Sea can be monitored from Jakarta.
2. Formed four new units in Ranai, Kab. Natuna to strengthen air defense. The four units are Air Squadron 52, Air Defense Detachment (Denhanud) 475 Paskhas, Denhanud 476 Paskhas, and Denhanud 477 Paskhas. The Indonesian Air Force Special Forces (Paskhas) has a strength of about 150 personnel. Thus, the strength of these three new Defense Forces is equivalent to one Paskhas battalion (Sucipto 2021).

1. Conducting State Defense training for Fishermen facilitated by the Indonesian National Army as self-defense and provision when serving as Maritime Security agents while at sea in the North Natuna Sea. Th
2. Coordinate three-way strategic communication in carrying out the system of maintaining sovereignty by fishermen involving fishermen, Bakamla, TNI AL so that patrols are more effective and controlled.
3. Simplify reports for fishermen by opening an interactive room and clear procedures for fishermen by the TNI using the AAA system. The researcher propose this system to help Government and local Natuna fishermen to coordination system between the government and local Natuna fishermen to be able to overcome communication problems so that coordination between stakeholders in North Natuna can run optimally. This system consists of three stages consisting of *aduan*, advocacy, and action.

- **Aduan** (in English Complaints) is the stage where fishermen report indications of security threats to the Government through an application system integrated with the central Government.
- **Advocacy** is the stage where the central Government receives a complaint report by providing feedback in the form of coordination with the local Government and local Natuna fishermen.
- **Action** is the stage of deploying an operational team consisting of the Government's leading sector and local Natuna fishermen. This can be started by forming a special unit from the leading sectors of the ministries involved, which will later create a technology-based system that can be controlled and integrated with the Government center in Jakarta.

Diplomacy

1. Diplomacy has been carried out since 1994 with the repeated summons of the the People's Republic of China (PRC) Ambassador when there was a boundary violation by Fishermen and the Chinese Coast Guard.
2. Affirmation of Sovereignty in the North Natuna Sea by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
3. It uses the traditional pattern that is run through the ASEAN Way.

1. Include a clause on maintaining the safety of natuna fishermen as a clause in negotiations with China not to intimidate and comply with the EEZ by staying away from the Indonesian EEZ to avoid uprising crisis.
2. Affirming to prohibit the use of trawlers around the EEZ to maintain the availability of fish in the North Natuna Sea for local Natuna fishermen and protect the marine environment.
3. Affirming that Indonesia will take criminal and civil action against Chinese fishing vessels and the Coast Guard who violate the agreement and acts of intimidation against natuna fishermen without exception.

**Conclusion**

The proposal for a fisherman empowerment strategy is an effort to improve maritime security and the welfare of the local Natuna community. With the strategy proposed by the Natuna community, they are the parties who know best the field conditions and can be invited to cooperate in carrying out the mission of defending the country, not to disparage the strategies that have been carried out but to increase the effectiveness of the efforts that the Government has made. Thus, the Government's support and political will from the President can open the wider potential for the Natuna community. By including a clause to include fishermen, it means opening up opportunities for fishermen and the

Natuna community to participate in protecting their territory defined as *Bela Negara* so that economic and security welfare can be achieved. For in the diplomatic aspect, it can not only be carried out by high-level officials negotiations, but also by the local community carrying out the spearhead of diplomacy by maintaining sovereignty by going to sea and guarding the border as agents of maritime security, "Sovereignty Patrol Fisherman Team" with the *TNI Angkatan Laut* (Indonesian Navy) and Bakamla.

The suggestion for the Government is to create an *Aduan*, Advocacy, Action (AAA) system to respond to complaints from fishermen about the situation in the North Natuna Sea in order to simplify the bureaucracy, and this requires Political Will from the President, who must focus on building the system rather than a momentary response as was done in the past. The AAA system is a coordination system between the government and local Natuna fishermen to be able to overcome communication problems so that coordination between stakeholders in North Natuna can run optimally. This system consists of three stages consisting of *aduan*, advocacy, and action. *Aduan* (in English Complaints) is the stage where fishermen report indications of security threats to the Government through an application system integrated with the central Government. Advocacy is the stage where the central Government receives a complaint report by providing feedback in the form of coordination with the local Government and local Natuna fishermen. Action is the stage of deploying an operational team consisting of the Government's leading sector and local Natuna fishermen. This can be started by forming a special unit from the leading sectors of the ministries involved, which will later create a technology-based system that can be controlled and integrated with the Government center in Jakarta.

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