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### **INDONESIA'S STRATEGY AND DIPLOMACY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONFLICT**

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#### **Abstract**

This study describes the government's strategy in Indonesia under the leadership of Joko Widodo to strengthen the Natuna border area. The Natuna area is a point of discussion as there are often territorial conflicts. This study aims to answer the question about the government's strategy to strengthen the border zone in Natuna. This study uses library research methodology and the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) concept to analyze the process. After conducting research, it can be concluded that to reinforce the border area at Natuna, the government is making efforts to improve the military posture by constructing several new military units. Then the government is also looking at diplomatic means in the ASEAN region to resolve the territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea. This is because there is no mutual agreement, considering that Indonesia is based on the 1982 UNCLOS, while China has a view of the Nine-Dash Line.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

The parts of the country that are located in the border areas between countries certainly do not always have a good relationship. At least there are often frictions between parts of the country in the border areas. The frictions trigger phenomenon of international conflicts from general wars with great powers, and the spread of international conflicts to political turmoil at home and abroad (Starr & Thomas, 2005). One of the border areas in Indonesia that often heats up is the Natuna Islands.

The Natuna Islands are the most northern part of Indonesia within the Karimata Strait. The Natuna Islands are composed of small islands which are directly adjacent to the maritime territory of three countries, namely Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. The Natuna Islands have the largest supply of natural gas in the Asia-Pacific region and even in the world. Natuna's oil reserves are estimated to be 14,386,470 barrels, whereas its natural gas reserves are 112,356,680 barrels (Purwatiningsih & Masykur, 2021). The Natuna Sea area has

strategic value because it is one of the Indonesian Archipelago Sea Lanes (IASL) routes and also becomes an international sea route for ships coming from the Indian Ocean and then entering industrial countries around the sea and also heading to the Pacific Ocean (Ruyat, 2017). Not only that, but the Natuna Islands' position is also in the spotlight because it is included in the South China Sea zone.

From a geographical point of view, the South China Sea area has a strategic position, both in terms of economy and politics. Based on its geographical location, the South China Sea is surrounded by coastal countries, namely Indonesia, Thailand, China, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Singapore. The extent of the South China Sea area including the Gulf of Siam which is bordered by Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand as well as the Gulf of Tonkin is also controlled by China and Vietnam. The territorial waters of the South China Sea are strategic areas in the field of commerce (Sea Lanes of Trade) and the field of international communication (Sea Lanes of Communication). Not only that, the presence of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean in the region is considered quite economical (Arif, Putri, Fachrurrozi, & Jessika, 2020). This is because about 40% of world trade routes pass through these two oceans (Wippel, 2015).

In foreign policy, the concept of nationalism in the policies of the Jokowi era was well realized. This is marked by the sinking of foreign vessels carrying out illegal fishing and the execution of foreign nationals for narcotics crimes. Apart from that, Jokowi's attention is also focused on Natuna Islands region which concerns disputes in the South China Sea. This issue is a top priority as Jokowi's foreign policy safeguards state sovereignty (McRae, 2019).

The Natuna Islands are an area that often causes friction between countries

regarding border areas. For example, the tension between Indonesia and China. In this tension, China demands that Indonesia stop drilling for oil and natural gas (oil and gas) in the region because China claims it belongs to them. Even, Indonesia firmly states that the southern tip of the South China Sea area was Indonesia's exclusive economic zone based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and in 2017 named the North Natuna Sea (Iswara, 2021).

Research into the South China Sea dispute has become a public concern. There are several previous studies have focused on this issue, including the first research undertaken by Sulistyani, Pertiwi, & Sari (2021) concluded that Indonesia's national interest in the South China Sea region is the maintenance of its territorial sovereignty and sovereign rights to explore and exploit natural resources, and maintain regional stability in the North Natuna Sea. The second study by Laksmi, Mangku, & Yuliartini (2022) concluded that the cause of disputes in the South China Sea arose from the existence of economic zones, and the strategic and political interests of these countries. The third study by Sidjabat, Octavian, & Said (2018) concludes that the synergy of Indonesia's maritime power instruments still needs to be optimized to deal with China's claims over Indonesia's jurisdiction in the South China Sea. The author's position in this study discusses Indonesia's strategy in defending the border area in Natuna by strengthening its military posture and conducting diplomacy to resolve the South China Sea conflict.

This issue is interesting to discuss because the Natuna Islands are an area that has abundant natural resources. On another side, it is also a problem due to territorial disputes between countries. The position of the Natuna Islands, which are Indonesia's borders, is prone to be recognized by neighboring countries. The existence of unilateral territorial claims made by each country makes the situation in Natuna Islands often heat up. In response to these

problems, this study aims to find out the government's strategy for strengthening the border area in Natuna Islands. This is important because if Indonesia is not firm in maintaining its defense and territorial boundaries, these areas may be taken over by other countries.

## METHODS

The concept of military revolution has been around since the 1950s. There have been many revolutions in military strategy across history. Like the innovation of strength in the 14th century, the introduction of gunpowder and artillery in the 15th century. Besides, the communications revolution was caused by the telegraph, and mechanization at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century by producing technologies such as tanks, aircraft, submarines, and perhaps more important, nuclear weapons (Neuneck, 2008).

The term Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) began circulating in the United States largely as a result of the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq. Marshall defines RMA as “a fundamental and far-reaching change in the modern military, both in terms of planning and execution” (Cuoco, 2010). The RMA has three main elements, namely doctrine, technology, and tactics. This concept emerged as a result of the influence of the development of information technology and digitalization on the battlefield. RMA teaches every military elite how to use technology for benefit of military development. The Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) as the main component in carrying out the national defense was formed and fostered to become a professional army that has high capabilities, is reliable, and tough. This professionalism is manifested by three elements of RMA which are continuously disseminated through tiered education and training that continuous (Amdan, 2016).

This study uses qualitative research using library research. Qualitative research

is research to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivation, actions, and others in a holistic manner (Moleong, 2018). The process of this research begins with collecting various kinds of information from books, magazines, articles, and various sources related to research (Mardalis, 2006). The method of data analysis that will be used by researchers in this study is descriptive-analytical. This method is an analysis of the problem by describing the facts first and then followed by analysis (Ratna, 2004). Through this method, this study attempts to describe problems related to the Indonesian border area in Natuna, especially in the South China Sea. From these problems, this study tries to explain the strategy of the Indonesian government in dealing with border areas. All data that has been collected will be filtered objectively to produce data accuracy that is either substantial or essential.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Natuna, the 1982 UNCLOS, and Indonesian Territorial Sovereignty**

Administratively, Natuna Regency is located in Riau Islands Province. Natuna has an area of land and sea that is wide enough to reach 264,198.37 km<sup>2</sup>. The number of islands in Natuna is 154 islands. Of the 154 islands, 127 are still uninhabited. Natuna Regency is located between 1° 16' - 7° 19' North Latitude and 105° 00' - 110°00' East Longitude. The areas bordering Natuna are (Natuna Integrated Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Center Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, n.d.):

1. North: bordered by Vietnam and Cambodia.
2. East: bordered by Eastern Malaysia (Sarawak) and Kalimantan.
3. South: bordered by Bintan Regency.
4. West: bordered by Peninsular Malaysia and Anambas Islands Regency.

From Figure 1, it can be seen that the position of the Natuna Islands is strategic,



regulations for violations that occur in the ZEE, for example, actions against foreign vessels illegally catching fish without official permits. If referring to UNCLOS, Indonesia means that the southern end of the South China Sea is part of its ZEE. Therefore, the waters in the region in 2017 were named North Natuna Sea. Indonesia's attitude makes China object. This is because China claims that territory is part of its territory which is marked by the nine-dash lines (Azanella, 2021).

One of the policies relevant to the South China Sea area, the Jokowi government has implemented a firm policy to sink foreign fishing vessels found operating illegally in Indonesian waters. Ships are often sunk in spectacular explosions before watching the press, sometimes coinciding with national holidays. This policy ruled out the continuation of the Yudhoyono government's covert approach to the incident involving China near Natuna. Instead, the Jokowi administration chose to respond to this incident publicly. Minister of Fisheries, Susi Pudjiastuti held a press conference after the confrontation in March 2016, for example, to announce plans for a strong protest through a diplomatic note to China and summoning Beijing's envoy in Jakarta. Later that same year, she held an Independence Day celebration on the island of Natuna. President Jokowi also took symbolic actions. Following the third incident in 2016, he held a limited cabinet meeting near Natuna aboard a vessel that had seized a Chinese fishing vessel, resulting in an image of the president frequently circulating near warship guns. By doing so, he appears to have kept his promise in one of the presidential election debates to 'make trouble' if a neighboring country claims Indonesian territory (McRae, 2019).

The repressive actions carried out by the Indonesian government are an effort to enforce sovereign rights in the waters of Indonesian jurisdiction. In addition, the steps taken by the Government of Indonesia are by the rules described in

article 73 of 1982 UNCLOS, namely in exercising its sovereign right to explore, exploit, conserve and manage natural resources in the ZEE. On that basis, taking into account the rules and provisions in this convention, the state can take direct action such as boarding a ship and inspecting and detaining any ship that violates. Not only that, Indonesia is allowed to carry out prosecutions to enforce the laws of its country (Chadhafi, 2021).

In this case, the government's attitude is considered very brave to uphold sovereignty in the border area. President Joko Widodo's commitment to secure an inch of territory from claims by neighboring countries has been realized. It is not without reason that government dares to be firm. Of course, if the government acts without a clear legal basis, it can potentially lead to prolonged conflict. Concerning the 1982 UNCLOS, the government's attitude in responding to polemics in Indonesian waters is a form of practice from the UN convention on the law of the sea.

### **Analysis of Indonesia's Strategy for Strengthening Border Areas**

#### *Improvement of Military Posture as a Defense Effort*

In this 21st-century globalization era, a nation is required to have national resilience in the fields of energy, food, and mastery of science and technology. On a global scale, to survive and excel, a nation must increase the development of military technology rapidly as a result of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). The former Chief of Naval Staff (KSAL or *Kepala Staff Angkatan Laut*), Marsetio (2013) in his writings stated that the existence of the RMA could have an impact on military development. These developments can be in form of military doctrine and strategy, then also in aspects of military technology, to the concept of operations and organization. Furthermore, RMA can also have an impact on political,

economic, and social aspects.

In 2018, the government through the Indonesian Armed Forces (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* or TNI) inaugurated several TNI units to strengthen the border area in Natuna. The TNI Commander, Marshal TNI Hadi Tjahjanto, said that the inauguration of the Natuna Integrated TNI Unit was a finalization step, one of the medium-term strategic planning programs to build TNI's strength which is expected to be able to provide a deterrence effect against threats, especially at the border (Puspen Markas Besar Tentara Nasional Indonesia, 2018).

The inauguration of several TNI units is a form of the government's seriousness in maintaining the territorial integrity of Indonesia. This inauguration at the same time emphasizes the government's commitment to securing the area not only as a plan but has been realized in a tangible form, namely the presence of new TNI units. Besides aiming to provide a deterrence effect, this also shows the international community that the government through TNI is present not only in urban areas but also in border areas. The development of military defense posture has been established as a policy in the field of defense comprehensive and can be used as guidelines for making it happen (Hadisancoko, 2019).

Furthermore, the TNI Commander revealed that the steps taken were the realization of a strategic plan in the defense sector to secure strategic islands. Therefore, it is necessary to form several TNI units to support national defense at the border. Several TNI units formed from the Army, Navy, and Air Force, among others (Puspen Markas Besar Tentara Nasional Indonesia, 2018):

1. Indonesian Army (*TNI Angkatan Darat* or TNI AD): Composite Battalion reinforced by Combat Engineer Company, Air Defense Artillery Missile Battery, and Field Artillery Battery.
2. Indonesian Navy (*TNI Angkatan Laut* or TNI AL): Marine Composite Company

and port facilities to support the operations of TNI AL warships, which operate around Natuna waters.

3. Indonesian Air Force (*TNI Angkatan Udara* or TNI AU): The Air Force Base is equipped with various facilities, such as the Integrative Hangar and the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Squadron Hangar to support the operations of TNI Aircraft.

The inauguration of the Natuna Integrated TNI Unit is also a manifestation of the continuity ideas, where the planning involves intergenerational TNI officers, from TNI Headquarters and Army, Navy, and Air Force Headquarters. The construction of the Integrated TNI Unit will continue in other strategic islands according to development stages in the next Strategic Plan. The Integrated TNI Unit is currently still in form of an embryo consisting of units of the Indonesian Army (TNI AD), Indonesian Navy (TNI AL), and Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU). In addition, it is also equipped with a Mess and an Integrative Hospital, to provide health services for all TNI in Natuna. Furthermore, the TNI Commander stated that the Natuna Integrated TNI Unit would continue to grow, according to the increasing threat escalation. According to him, future planning is possible to perfect the Integrated TNI Unit into a permanent and integrated organization in one command and equipped with an operation control system based on network-centric warfare capabilities. Slowly but surely, the TNI began to gradually strengthen the Natuna area. On October 22, 2021, the Indonesian Air Force inaugurated four new units. The four units that were inaugurated were the 52nd Air Squadron, the Air Defense Detachment (*Detasemen Pertahanan Udara* or Denhanud) 475, 476, and the 477 Special Forces Corps of the Indonesian Air Force (*Korps Pasukan Khas Angkatan Udara* or *Korps Paskhas AU*) (Puspen Markas Besar Tentara Nasional Indonesia, 2021).

Anticipating potential threats to the

sovereignty and existence of the Indonesian state, the Chief of Naval Staff (KSAL or *Kepala Staff Angkatan Laut*), Admiral TNI Yudo Margono, inaugurated the Republic of Indonesia Fleet Command (*Komando Armada Republik Indonesia*). The vortex of struggle for influence by the world's major powers in Asia and Southeast Asia region is suspected to be able to give birth to potential threats so that defense strengthening must be carried out. The inauguration of Indonesia Fleet Command was held at Pier I Pondok Dayung, Tanjung Priok, North Jakarta, on February 3, 2022.

KSAL said the formation of Indonesia Fleet Command will further create an effective implementation of command-and-control operations as well as the development of all components in the Integrated Fleet Weapon System as the core strength of defense in the marine dimension. According to KSAL, the birth of the new organization Indonesia Fleet Command which has the motto *Ekapada Banda Jala Nusa* which means Uniting the Sea Powers of the Archipelago is an answer to the demand for the importance of sensitivity and adaptation to dynamics and developments of the current and future strategic environment.

The formation of Indonesia Fleet Command as a new organization is strategic for the glory of the Navy, nation, and state. The formation of Indonesia Fleet Command is the result of a long process with careful thought through a force planning approach that is faced with calculating potential threats and dynamics. Admiral Yudo emphasized that building national defense with an archipelagic state orientation has become the people's mandate as stated in the Law on National Defense which was drawn up by taking into account the geographical conditions of Indonesia as an archipelagic country. Therefore, for the Indonesian people, a solid sea defense is a fundamental need (Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Laut, 2022). The TNI's efforts to

strengthen border areas are also supported by policies from President Joko Widodo.

In 2022, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo signed Presidential Regulation (*Peraturan Presiden*) Number 41 of 2022 concerning the Zoning Plan for the Natuna-North Natuna Sea Interregional Area. In the Presidential Regulation, Jokowi regulates aspects of the country's defense and security strategy to secure border areas, especially in Natuna waters. Article 7 of the Presidential Regulation states that to create a defense and security zone, it is necessary to establish a zoning plan for territorial waters. This aims to support the stability of regional security and defense. To realize defense and security zone, two regulations are poured to support their implementation, namely:

1. The first regulation: effective and efficient management of defense areas, as well as environmentally friendly.
2. The second regulation is the improvement of state defense and security facilities and infrastructure as an effort to support sovereignty and security in national border areas.

The two regulations above are listed in Article 13 paragraph 1. To facilitate the implementation of the first regulation, the Indonesian government has prepared four strategies which include:

1. Increase the effectiveness of activities in the defense area by taking into account the use of other spaces in the Public Utilization Area and Marine Conservation Area.
2. Controlling environmental impacts in defense areas in the form of a military training area.
3. Implement defense and security dynamically.
4. Increase the capacity, effectiveness, and reach of defense and security management in the waters according to the distribution of work areas in the organizational unit or defense and security unit.

Meanwhile, to support the

implementation of the second regulation, the Indonesian government's strategies are as stated in the Presidential Regulation, namely (Lembaga Kajian Pertahanan Strategis, 2022):

1. Develop security posts in border areas according to regional characteristics and in terms of potential vulnerabilities in national border areas.
2. Put shipping navigational aids by the needs of the country's defense and security as well as to ensure the safety of shipping.
3. Develop a surveillance system for all forms of activities that have the potential to threaten and can disrupt national defense and national stability.

The Presidential Regulation No. 41 of 2022 confirms that the stability of state defense and security is an important element in the survival of a country. Recognizing that the position of the Natuna region is an area that is prone to interference from neighboring countries, President Jokowi issued a firm order as the basis for law enforcement in Indonesian waters. This step is also supported by the TNI which is the main component in the field of national defense. With the presence of integrated TNI units in Natuna, the Presidential Decree has been implemented. This implementation is certainly not without reason, at least with the presence of these integrated units, Indonesia's position in the eyes of its neighbors is seen to be stronger. So that neighboring countries will be careful to take actions that have the potential to violate the law and lead to conflict.

#### *Indonesian Diplomacy in the South China Sea*

Diplomacy is a political activity carried out by actors to pursue goals and defend their interests through negotiations without violence, propaganda, or law. Diplomacy itself consists of communication between some parties designed to seek agreement (Chadhafi, 2021). Diplomacy is also a peaceful way to resolve a problem between

countries. Diplomacy is often chosen as a way to resolve conflicts with minimal casualties. Unlike aggressive actions such as war, diplomacy can position heads of state to discuss problems to find joint solutions.

One of diplomacy's goals is to prevent conflict (Sudarsono, Mahroza, & Waluyo, 2018). The Indonesian government uses diplomacy in resolving matters that have the potential to cause conflict. By using diplomacy, the government can find out what strategies can be used to resolve conflict so that it can benefit interested parties. Therefore, diplomacy is important in resolving conflicts in the South China Sea with China.

Not long ago, the international world was immediately shocked by various upheavals of events. One of the things that received the greatest attention from Indonesia was the shipping of several Chinese ships to Indonesian ZEE in Natuna Islands, Riau Islands Province. Moreover, two of the dozens of ships that sailed were Chinese coast guard ships specifically tasked with securing China's interests in its claim areas in the South China Sea. This certainly gets the attention of the Indonesian people. First, China's actions in the Natuna area are illegal. China specifically violates the UNCLOS, which regulates maritime control zones based on coastlines. However, China itself has its version of the ZEE called the Nine-Dash Line which is a line created unilaterally by China without going through any legal conventions. The determination of the nine-dash line itself refers to the history of China's fishing seas since the Dynasty era and began to appear on maps of modern China in 1947. Legally since 2016, the arbitral tribunal established under Annex VII to the 1982 UNCLOS ruled that China has no legal basis for claiming 'historic rights' in its nine-dash line (Jatmika, 2020).

As known, China and Indonesia established diplomatic relations on April 13, 1950, which were temporarily



suspended on October 30, 1967, due to the 'event of November 30' 1965. Bilateral relations began to subside in the 1980s. Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen met with the President of Indonesia Suharto, and Minister of State Secretary, Moerdiono, respectively in 1989 to discuss the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In December 1989, the two sides held talks on technical issues regarding the normalization of bilateral relations and signed the minutes (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Indonesia, 2004). Diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China were finally restored in August 1990. However, this did not mean a complete recovery from the old pattern. It takes some time for both parties to adjust to the fact that the new relationship will continue to be overshadowed by an unhappy history (Sukma, 2009).

The tangled web of overlapping maritime claims in the South China Sea has presented one of the Indonesian government's longest-running strategic challenges. Indonesia is directly involved in the South China Sea dispute because of its efforts to build and maintain control over the waters of the South China Sea which borders the Natuna Islands, including natural resources in the region. Here, the 200 nautical mile ZEE claimed by Indonesia overlaps with ZEE claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, and China. China claims that the area is its nine-dash line that encircles most of the South China Sea (McRae, 2019).

The South China Sea problem is the most crucial matter at the moment because it concerns Indonesia's sovereignty in Indonesia's ZEE waters, especially in North Natuna waters. Moreover, the South China Sea has potential natural resources, especially abundant fisheries and other sectors such as oil and gas. China claims that the North Natuna waters are traditional fishing grounds. On the other side, even though China is also a country that ratified the 1982 UNCLOS, it does not recognize

other countries' ZEE in the South China Sea. Inside maps of the South China Sea published by China referring to the nine-dash line, China's territorial waters extend to Natuna which is thousands of kilometers away from mainland China (Simanjuntak, 2020). From the explanation above, the dispute between China and Indonesia has become Indonesia's most prominent foreign policy issue under Jokowi's era.

Indonesia's efforts to strengthen its watershed and position as an archipelagic country were marked by the issuance of the Djuanda Declaration on December 13, 1957 (McRae, 2019). The declaration fights for the law of the sea to strengthen Indonesia's sovereignty. The declaration was coined by the Prime Minister of Indonesia at that time, Djuanda Kartawidjaja, who declared to the world that the Indonesian seas included the seas around, between, and within the Indonesian archipelago to form a unified Indonesian territory. The declaration emphasized that for the sake of territorial integrity and protecting Indonesia's wealth, all islands and seas between them must be seen as one unified whole. In addition, this Declaration also states that the determination of a 12-mile wide boundary is measured by the line connecting the outermost islands of the Indonesian state (Tsauro, 2017).

Indonesia's diplomatic campaign to gain international recognition as an archipelagic country lasted more than 25 years after the Djuanda Declaration until the concept was enshrined in 1982 UNCLOS. In the history of their UNCLOS diplomacy, many twists and turns have occurred. However, there are at least two distinct advantages that are relevant to disputes in the South China Sea that Indonesia has obtained under UNCLOS, namely (McRae, 2019):

1. Indonesia gains a very large territorial expansion—and thus controls resources—through its recognition as an archipelagic country because then Indonesia can measure its territorial sea of 12 nautical miles and its ZEE 200

nautical miles out of a straight baseline connecting outermost points Indonesian island.

2. UNCLOS standardizes the basis for making claims to maritime territories and resources so that severely limiting the ability of other countries to make counter-claims to Indonesia's newly confirmed maritime territory. As an archipelagic country, Indonesia can draw baselines around its outer islands from which its territorial sea and ZEE are measured; other states cannot draw a baseline equivalent to UNCLOS.

In addition, with the existence of the 1982 UNCLOS, Indonesia has the right to regulate and supervise innocent traffic in the territorial sea. The first right is to determine the criteria for crossing peace. Meanwhile, the second right is to have the policy to issue laws and regulations related to peaceful passage as stated in article 21 of UNCLOS (Hadju, 2021).

The situation in the South China Sea is now relatively calm. This is marked by China's willingness to consider the Code of Conduct (CoC) in the South China Sea proposed by ASEAN and adopt it. This willingness is progress in solving the South China Sea problem (Damuri, Perkasa, Atje, & Hirawan, 2019). Through CoC and UNCLOS diplomacy, Indonesia can reduce tensions with China in the South China Sea disputes. This is marked by the non-widening of bilateral conflicts, such as armed contact which can cause many victims. Then, the bilateral relations between the two countries continued to run harmoniously. This step is certainly very important considering that China is a neighboring country in the Asian region as well as a partner country. The history of Indonesia-China relations is not a story built in one or two years but has been going on for decades.

## **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS**

Based on the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that in response to the polemic in Natuna, the government has a special strategy. The Indonesian strategy for maintaining territorial sovereignty in Natuna is in two ways. First, the Indonesian government is seeking to strengthen its military posture by training new TNI units to increase the force of existing troops in border areas. The new force consisted of a Composite Battalion reinforced by a Combat Engineer Company, Air Defense Artillery Missile Battery, and Field Artillery Battery; a Marine Composite Company and port facilities to support the operations of TNI AL warships, which operate around Natuna waters; and The Air Force Base is equipped with various facilities, such as the Integrative Hangar and the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Squadron Hangar to support the operations of TNI Aircraft. The government does not only focus on one field of defense, but the government focuses on all fields that are included in the main component of defense. Then, the second strategy is that Indonesia continues to make diplomatic efforts as a form of approach that prioritizes peace. It is hoped that this diplomatic path will be able to find the best solution to resolve disputes in the South China Sea. This diplomacy is also not without reason the government prefers to prioritize peace rather than the potential for conflict. This makes sense considering that China is Indonesia's partner in politics and statehood. Therefore, maintaining good bilateral relations is a must for the sustainability of the national and international political constellation.

The limitation of the discussion in this

study focuses on strategies and diplomacy realized by the government in overcoming conflicts in Natuna, especially the South China Sea. The researcher recommends discussing further the dynamics of conflict in the South China Sea from the history, political, international law, and defense aspects of the South China Sea.

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