

Gunboat Diplomacy in Natuna Waters 2010-2020: Indonesia's Deterrence in South China Sea Conflict

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Abstract

SCS conflict comprises a substantial threat to Indonesia as China's nine-dash line overlaps with Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone EEZ in Natuna waters. The spillover effect of the conflict was exposed through China's incursions in Natuna waters from 2010 to 2020. China regards it as having the right to carry out activities in several areas of Natuna waters that are considered part of Indonesia's maritime territorial violations. Indonesia deploys the capabilities of its naval forces in Natuna waters in response to China's incursions, which could be regarded as gunboat diplomacy. This study aimed to reveal the efficacy of Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy to deter China's incursions in Natuna Waters. The qualitative method will analyze official documents and relevant literature to answer the study's objective. Employing gunboat diplomacy and deterrence as the conceptual framework, this study discerns that Indonesian naval forces became the forefront instrument of gunboat diplomacy in deterring China's assertiveness in the SCS dispute, which led to the incursions over Indonesia's maritime territory in Natuna. This study discovered that through the concept of gunboat diplomacy, Indonesia leveraged warships as a purposeful and expressive force to deter Chinese vessels' activities in Natuna waters. By using warships as the media of diplomacy, Indonesia cracked down on China's incursions at a particular point of the occasion. However, as Indonesia's deterrence means, gunboat diplomacy has not thoroughly delivered a deterrent effect to China since Chinese vessels' activities still recurred in Natuna waters.

Keywords: *deterrence, gunboat diplomacy, Indonesia, Natuna, South China Sea conflict*

Abstrak

Konflik Laut Tiongkok Selatan (LTS) memuat ancaman bagi Indonesia karena sembilan garis putus-putus Tiongkok tumpang tindih dengan Zona Ekonomi Eksklusif Indonesia (ZEE) di perairan Natuna. Limpahan konflik tersebut terpapar pada aktivitas kapal Tiongkok di perairan Natuna sejak tahun 2010 hingga 2020 di mana Tiongkok menganggap memiliki hak untuk beraktivitas di beberapa area di perairan Natuna, sedangkan hal tersebut dianggap sebagai pelanggaran wilayah maritim bagi Indonesia. Indonesia mengerahkan kemampuan angkatan lautnya di perairan Natuna sebagai tanggapan atas serbuan Tiongkok di mana fenomena ini dapat dilihat sebagai diplomasi kapal perang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap seberapa ampuh diplomasi kapal perang Indonesia untuk menangkal serbuan Tiongkok di perairan Natuna. Melalui metode kualitatif, dokumen resmi dan literatur yang relevan akan di analisis untuk menjawab tujuan penelitian. Menggunakan diplomasi kapal perang dan deterensi sebagai kerangka konseptual, penelitian ini melihat bahwa kekuatan angkatan laut menjadi instrumen terdepan sebagai diplomasi kapal perang untuk menangkal perilaku asertif Tiongkok di konflik LTS yang menyebabkan kapal-kapal Tiongkok beraktivitas pada wilayah di perairan Natuna. Studi ini menemukan bahwa melalui konsep diplomasi kapal perang, Indonesia menggunakan kapal perang sebagai sarana ekspresif dan bertujuan untuk menghalau aktivitas kapal-kapal Tiongkok di perairan Natuna. Dengan menggunakan kapal perang sebagai media diplomasi, Indonesia berhasil menindak aktivitas kapal-kapal Tiongkok di perairan Natuna pada beberapa peristiwa. Namun, diplomasi kapal perang sebagai sarana deterensi Indonesia belum sepenuhnya memberikan efek jera kepada Tiongkok karena aktivitas kapal Tiongkok masih terjadi di perairan Natuna.

Kata Kunci: *deterensi, diplomasi kapal perang, Indonesia, konflik Laut Tiongkok Selatan, Natuna*

INTRODUCTION

Despite not becoming the South China Sea (SCS) claimant state, the SCS conflict is part of Indonesia's strategic challenges that deliver a substantial threat. As the closest territory to the SCS, the Natuna waters frequently become hotspots of the Indonesia-China relationship due to the overlapping territorial claims around the Natuna waters (Kartikasari, 2019, p. 177). For Indonesia, Natuna waters are part of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). At the same time China attempts to claim the area around the Natuna waters, referring to China's-made nine-dash line in SCS.

Referring to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) EEZ's clause, Indonesia has the sovereign right over the Natuna waters without interfering with other countries (Wangke, 2020, p. 7). Therefore, Indonesia urges China to abide by international law and does not recognize China's territorial claim in Natuna waters. However, China asserts that it has sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the relevant waters around Natuna (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019). Due to the ongoing circumstances, Chinese vessels often sail in the Natuna waters, mainly to undergo fishing activities or illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), from 2010 until 2020 the latest (Siow, 2021). A debate arises whether China's presence in Natuna is only a matter of IUU fishing or transcending the issue. In a broader sense, however, contested maritime boundaries with China in Natuna waters potentially threaten Indonesia's territorial waters' sovereignty and sovereign rights and influence Indonesia's behavior to strengthen its

diplomacy and defense posture in the region (Pramono, Wibisono, & Suko, 2021, p. 6).

Indonesia's presence in the SCS conflict is not a new event in international relations discourses. As the disputed area is close to Indonesia's territory, Indonesia's presence in this issue is represented by its efforts to fight for its interest, even try to resolve the conflict peacefully as the natural leader in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Raharjo, 2014, p. 55). However, it is found that the SCS conflict approach under Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) presidency has shifted from an active diplomatic actor seeking a peaceful settlement of broader disputes to an approach primarily focused on protecting its interests around the Natuna Islands. This condition is caused by China's activity in Natuna waters harming Indonesia, better known as China's incursions in Natuna waters (Connelly, 2016, p. 9). Moreover, these events are predictable, considering China's insistence on the SCS. It threatens Indonesia's sovereignty over what happens in Natuna waters, making the SCS conflict impactful to Indonesia anytime (Bhatnagar, 2016).

To this end, China's presence and claim over Natuna waters are considered violations of Indonesia's sovereign rights in Natuna waters, refer to the EEZ clause in UNCLOS. Moreover, China's nine-dash line used to claim the SCS by China was rejected by the UNCLOS arbitral tribunal (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016). However, China still shows its persistence over SCS's claim and insists that no violations refer to its activities in Natuna Waters, which lead to maritime spats frequently occurring between both countries in the area. It is unknown how many times both countries are involved in a maritime

spat; however, Indonesia-China maritime spats could be seen at three different junctures from 2010 to 2020; 2010-2013, 2016s, 2019-2020.

Shoring up military capabilities related to the Natuna Islands has become one of Indonesia's approaches to respond to the challenges from China's assertiveness around the area amid the erratic of the SCS conflict (Parameswaran, 2020). The ongoing phenomenon occurred due to the construction of the threat posed by China refer to what happened in Natuna waters, which led Indonesia to change its orientation towards Natuna waters management from economic oriented to security and militaristic approach (Wahyudi & Luerdi, 2021, p. 11). In this sense, the involvement of military instruments in Natuna leverages protecting, controlling, and supervising Indonesia's maritime security (Suwarno, Sumantri, & Bahar, 2021, p. 87). Moreover, maritime security and defense must be maintained considering Indonesia's identity as a maritime country (Yamin, 2015, pp. 78-79).

One of Indonesia's mainstream military instruments in response to China's assertiveness around the area is the deployment of Indonesia's naval forces capability. In the latest 2020, Indonesia intensified its naval activities in Natuna waters due to the recurring incidents of Chinese vessel activities in the area since 2010 (Azanella, 2020). The deployment of naval forces to respond to Chinese vessel activities in Natuna is represented by the expulsion of China's vessels in Natuna waters, naval patrols, and military exercises in the area (Chew, 2021; Hendartyo, 2020; Strangio, 2021). Referring to this phenomenon, Sudirman, Mooy, Malutfi, and Ramadhan (2019) expose that the militarization in Natuna could be

regarded as responsive gunboat diplomacy following the uncertainty in the SCS security, instead of relying only on military forces for deterrence and defense purposes. Thus, Indonesia's naval demonstration in Natuna waters could be considered part of gunboat diplomacy. The naval forces are carrying a diplomatic role for Indonesia in the vortex of the SCS conflict.

Furthermore, research about the involvement of maritime forces in Indonesia's diplomacy related to the SCS conflict is not a new discourse. Dipua, Prakoso, & Nurdiansyah (2017) exposes that the Indonesian Navy has diplomatic functions that could carry out its role in the SCS conflict. Prasetya and Estriani (2018) emphasized that the SCS conflict impacts Indonesia's maritime stability and Indonesia needs to leverage its maritime diplomacy. Riska (2017) discovered how maritime forces represent Indonesia's maritime diplomacy to respond to the IUU fishing by China in Natuna waters. Besides, Saragih (2018) pointed out that strengthening naval forces' capability could be leveraged as part of Indonesia's defense diplomacy in the SCS conflict to preserve Indonesia's objective. Moreover, Anggraini, Kusumawardhana, & Ramadhan (2018) demonstrated that President Jokowi's 'Global Maritime Axis' agenda demands Indonesia's capability to secure its maritime security and national sovereignty. Nevertheless, there is still limited literature to discuss Indonesia's activity in Natuna waters related to the SCS conflict employing gunboat diplomacy as the concept and explaining its implementation's output.

To fill literature gaps in this issue, this paper observes how efficacious Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy responds to China's incursions in Natuna waters that led to violations of

Indonesia's sovereign rights in Natuna waters. Referring to the deployment of Indonesia naval forces in response to China's incursions in Natuna waters, gunboat diplomacy and deterrence are employed as the conceptual framework to reveal the paper's objectives. This paper argues that the entanglement of gunboat diplomacy is part of Indonesia's deterrence in the SCS conflict vortex, which protects its maritime territory from China's incursions in Natuna waters.

Theoretical Framework

Diplomacy has been the prevailing method in managing relationships among states. Typically, diplomacy is considered the nation-state's effort to fight over its national interest on the international stage (Holsti, 1984, pp. 82–83). Diplomacy is inclined to be interpreted as the art to pursue a state's national interest through negotiations by peaceful means whenever possible in dealing with other countries. Nevertheless, when peaceful means fail to achieve the desired goal, diplomacy can be sustained using threat or real force to achieve the state's objectives.

The role of threat or force in diplomacy could be conceptualized as coercive diplomacy. Alexander George describes that coercive diplomacy is a political-diplomatic strategy that aims to influence an adversary's will or incentive structure by combining threat of force, and limited or specific use of force if necessary in discrete and controlled increments in a bargaining strategy that includes positive inducements (Levy, 2008, p. 539). There are several concepts in diplomacy to see how the use of force is deployed for diplomatic purposes. For example, in the case of Natuna waters between Indonesia and China, limited

use of force for diplomatic context could be conceptualized in gunboat diplomacy.

Of two concepts employed in this study to answer the research question, gunboat diplomacy is the first concept employed in this research. According to James Cable, the essential means of gunboat diplomacy is the use or threat of naval forces. A warship plays an essential part even if there are other available means to be employed (Cable, 1994, p. 14). Cable confines the preposition of gunboat diplomacy as "*some things the government do to foreigners*" to aim at other states to attain the state's national interest (Cable, 1994, p. 7). In its specific purpose, gunboat diplomacy could be intended as an aggression or self-defense action (Cable, 1994, p. 6).

Besides, gunboat diplomacy could not be considered an act of war but constitutes the furtherance of a dispute between states or against foreign nationals since it wields diplomatic characters instead of war (Cable, 1994, p. 10). Hence, considering naval power as part of a diplomatic process, gunboat diplomacy is more suitable to be considered as coercive diplomacy (Berridge & James, 2003, p. 120). From this understanding, gunboat diplomacy is comprehensively defined by Cable:

"the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state" (Cable, 1994, p. 14).

Furthermore, Cable (1994, p. 15) classifies the use of limited naval force in gunboat diplomacy into four

principles and precedents: (1) *Definitive Force*, gunboat diplomacy is defined as an act of superior force when it has a definite purpose that is apparent for both state that a states' limited naval forces are definitely will achieve the objectives of the states and led a *fait accompli* condition for the opposing party. In definitive forces, gunboat diplomacy could be considered as the action of the strong to force the weak with the strength that is measured based on the point of an issue instead of the whole state's potential strength; (2) *Purposeful Force*, gunboat Diplomacy employment to change, affect, and find out the policy or character of a foreign government defined as a purposeful force. The use of limited naval forces aimed to make foreign governments do something or stop doing it or refrain from a contemplated course of action. The success of the purposeful force is ultimately dependent on the choice to be taken by a foreign government. Limited naval force in purposeful forces was mainly sometimes deployed or threatened to solve a dispute, yet the purposeful force could lead to war; (3) *Catalytic Force*, limited naval forces are applied as a readiness to respond to the arises situation based on something that is felt going to happen, but somehow it can be prevented if the presence of the naval forces available at the critical point. However, the achievement of catalytic force is still undetermined since the use of the limited naval force deployed to standby for the possibility of undesirable conditions; (4) *Expressive Force*, in this mode, warships are employed to assert attitudes, present verisimilitude to the unconvincing statement, or provide an outlet for emotion. Besides, limited naval force resembles ceremonial

aspects and ordinary diplomacy representations.

Deterrence is the second concept employed in this research. Although deterrence can be interpreted as discouraging the likelihood of the event, deterrence could be explained as discouraging or restraining the nation-state from taking unwanted actions, such as an armed attack (Mazarr, 2018, p. 2). Specifically in international politics, deterrence is implemented explicitly and narrowly to the threat of preventing outright military attack (Morgan, 2003, p. 2). To prevent the unwanted possibility from occurring, deterrence involves the threat to use force to serve as the means to convince the opposing side not to carry out the intended action because of the costs and losses the target would incur (Morgan, 1983, p. 9).

Deterrence could be distinguished into two fundamental approaches; denial and retaliation. Deterrence by denial aims to convince the opposing side that its political and military interest will not be achieved if they perform certain aggression (Gerson & Whiteneck, 2009, p. 24). By denial, deterrence seeks to make the opposing side believe that its action will become infeasible or unlikely to succeed (Mazarr, 2018). The immediate balance of forces in the contested territory is one example of deterrence by denial (Mazarr, 2018, p. 2). On the other hand, deterrence by retaliation refers to a threat of imposing penalties due to unwanted behavior by the opposing side (Gerson & Whiteneck, 2009, p. 24). Unlike denial, deterrence by retaliation employs greater coercion to generate significant punishment for the opposing side's assets, such as targeting enemy forces, leadership, weapons programs, or any other asset

highly valued by decision-makers (Gerson & Whiteneck, 2009, p. 24).

Patrick J. Morgan (2003, p. 8) explores why the state commits a deterrence. He examined six critical elements that encourage the state to conduct deterrence; Conflict Severity, Rationality, Retaliatory Threat, Unacceptable Damage, Credibility Notion, and Stability. In this study, conflict severity and credibility might be the elements best to explain Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy as deterrence in SCS conflict. Due to the uncertainty of conflict severity, the opposing side could generate harmful actions anytime the opportunity available, thus a state needs to maintain its deterrence. Meanwhile, China's incursions in Natuna waters draw Indonesia's concern to show the credibility of Indonesia as the owner of the Natuna waters.

Furthermore, Gerson and Whiteneck (2009) explain the naval force's efficacy as deterrence. Naval infrastructure has a peculiar contribution to deterrence as it characteristically projects and sustains a military capability that could be deployed during war, crisis, or peacetime. Besides, naval forces do not require a footprint on land like the army and air forces (Gerson & Whiteneck, 2009, p. 73).

Refer to the deployment of Indonesia naval forces in response to China's incursions in Natuna waters, both conceptual frameworks; gunboat diplomacy and deterrence's, are employed to explain how Indonesia achieved a deterrent effect through gunboat diplomacy from China's assertiveness in SCS conflict that impinged Indonesia's Natuna waters' EEZ. Despite any deployment of naval force to support diplomatic could be considered gunboat diplomacy (Cable,

1994). This paper, will focus on the expulsions of Chinese vessels and the occasion following China's incursions in Natuna waters that occurred in three different junctures; 2010-2013, 2016s, and 2020 to scrutinize Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy.

Research Methods

This paper's focal point elucidates Indonesia's deterrence in SCS conflict through gunboat diplomacy. Therefore, the qualitative methodology was employed in this research to obtain the study's objective. Through the qualitative method, the study seeks to develop a complex portrait of the issues involving reporting perspectives, identifying multiple factors in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges (Creswell W & Creswell, 2018, p. 258). The material for this study's result and analysis is obtained from primary data such as official documents, secondary data such as related research, scientific journals, online media, and reliable literature, analyzed further with an employed theoretical basis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, results and analysis divided into three subsections. The first subsection will discuss the spillover effect of the SCS conflict on Indonesia related to Natuna waters. Secondly, the subsection will discuss China's incursions in Natuna waters that will be divided into three parts of junctures. Then, the last subsection will analyze the implementation of Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy regarding China's incursions in Natuna Swaters.

The Spill Over Effect of China's Claim in the South China Sea to Indonesia

The SCS comprises a vulnerability to become the hotspot of interstates conflict in the region from the geopolitical landscape. It has an extensive 3,500,000 km², stretches across several countries, from the Malacca Strait to the Taiwan Strait, in which countries in the area contrive to manage their rights. Moreover, it is not a secret that the area contains lucrative amounts of natural resources and its strategic position as an international merchant route. Hence, the SCS's significance thus covers economic, political, and strategic aspects. The areas are claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. In contrast, China claimed most of the sites in the SCS infuriated the other claimant states due to the overlapping claims.

China's claim on the SCS delineated in the Declaration of China's Territorial Sea 1958 explains China's territorial sea covering the islands around the SCS, *Nansha* or Spratly Islands, *Xisha* or Paracel Islands, and *Zhongsha* Islands. These islands are part of China's national territory (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, n.d.). Since 2009, China's territorial claim in SCS represented in the demarcation line created unilaterally known as the nine-dash line covers the territorial sea around the islands in SCS. However, in 2016, UNCLOS' arbitral tribunal adjudication made China's nine-dash line has no legal effect (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016). Nevertheless, China pays no heed to the tribunal's decision as it is considered null and void with no binding force (Denyer & Rauhala, 2016). Thus, it implies the provisions of international legal binding are unsusceptible to obstruct China, and it still manages to entrench its claim over SCS.

Aware of being the impactful side in the SCS conflict from the very first time, since the early 1990s, Indonesia has attempted various proceedings to solve the dispute prominently at the diplomatic level (Prabowo, 2013, p. 121). Indonesia's diplomatic success is considerably seen in setting the normative agenda within ASEAN in the arrangement of two important documents to set SCS claimant states' behavior which are the Conduct of Parties in the SCS (DoC) and Code of Conduct (CoC) (Wicaksana, 2019, p. 45). However, attempted norms are still arduous to come into force considering ongoing provocative actions in SCS by the claimant states.

Regardless of Indonesia's effort to deliver a conflict resolution, the SCS conflict's overflow becomes more apparent to Indonesia when it is discovered that China's sea territory overlaps with Indonesia's EEZ in Natuna waters inferred in China's 2009 map submission the United Nations (UN). The intersection points of overlapping claims between countries located in the Spratly Islands adjacent waters of China's nine-dash line overlapped with Indonesia's Natuna waters EEZ (Nabbs-Keller, 2020). As a result, Indonesia does not recognize China's nine-dash line as a lack of legal basis and contrary to the UNCLOS. Meanwhile, China asserts it has the right to activities over the adjacent waters near the Spratly Islands since it is part of China's indisputable sovereignty (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019). The overlapping claim between both countries could be seen in the figure 1:



Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative via the Sydney Morning Herald, 2020

Figure 1.
Indonesia-China Overlapping Maritime Claim Map

Indonesia insists that the area has been regulated within the UNCLOS of EEZ's clause, making China's nine-dash line and claim over Indonesia's territorial waters in Natuna unrecognizable (Maulia, 2020). On the other hand, China has recognized Indonesia's sovereignty over the Natuna islands since 1995 while not specific to acknowledging the adjacent waters in Natuna (Suryadinata & Izzuddin, 2017, p. 15). As a result, Beijing has been aspiring to discuss the issues of overlapping claims around Natuna waters under bilateral discussion. However, Jakarta insists that "there is nothing to be negotiated" as they assert that there are no overlapping claims over adjacent waters in Natuna since it belongs to Indonesia based on UNCLOS and urges Beijing to follow the provisions (Siregar, 2020b). Besides, approving Beijing's invitation to talks over the disputed area will only show Jakarta's legitimacy over the condition that there is a territorial dispute over Natuna waters (Connelly, 2016, p. 4).

In 2016, China explicitly declared the overlapping waters with Indonesia around Natuna waters for the first time. China declared it as part of the Chinese

traditional fishing ground and stressed that its position has already complied with UNCLOS and international law provisions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016). However, from 2010 to 2020, Chinese vessels have impinged Indonesia's EEZ, usually by conducting fisheries that make both countries involved in several maritime spat in Natuna waters (Tiola & Dinarto, 2020).

China's Incursions in Natuna Waters

Showing its bold claim in SCS, China has impinged Natuna waters' EEZ, which has led to some maritime spat between Indonesia and China since China's nine-dash line was published internationally in 2009. Unfortunately, there are no exact numbers of how many times Indonesia has encountered China's incursions in Natuna waters. However, the maritime spat between both countries could be observed at three different juncture; 2010 to 2013, 2016s, and 2019 to 2020s.

The First Juncture: 2010-2013

The first juncture of Indonesia-China maritime spat in Natuna waters

occurred from 2010 to 2013, with an unclear number of incidents, yet two incidents can be identified. The first incident occurred in 2010 when *Todak* class Patrol Boat (PB) of the Indonesian Navy discovered Chinese vessels that entered Indonesia's EEZ in Natuna. Indonesia's PB was unable to arrest Chinese fishing vessels due to China's Fisheries and Law Enforcement Command (FLEC) vessels pointing a machine gun at Indonesia's vessels and forcing them to comply with FLEC vessels to release Chinese fishing vessels. FLEC vessels' maneuver to release Chinese fishing vessels left Indonesia's PB no chance but to leave. In contrast, Indonesia's PB could have defeated the two FLEC vessels with its superior weaponry and range of fire on the occasion (Bentley, 2014).

A similar incident occurred on 26 March, 2013. This time, the Indonesia Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) vessel discovered that Chinese vessels in Natuna waters had no choice but to release the Chinese fishing vessels due to harassment by a FLEC vessel (Bentley, 2013). The incidents between 2010 and 2013 were tried to be kept secret by Indonesia's officials, tarnishing Indonesia's image as the neutral party in the SCS conflict (Bentley, 2014). However, the 2010-2013 incidents showed how Indonesia has threatened by China's claim in SCS and became the wakeup call for Indonesia's officials to strengthen its defensive posture to defend Natuna waters.

Indonesia starts a sterner approach to defend the waters after the incidents throughout the first juncture. A series of events started, such as intensifying force guard in Natuna and hosting joint naval exercises as the maritime spats drew Indonesia's official attention. At that time,

Indonesia's army commander in chief, General Moeldoko, stated the intensification of additional force in Natuna to "anticipate the instability" (Parameswaran, 2015). Concern for strengthening defensive posture in Natuna showed when Indonesia initiated Komodo joint naval exercise in 2014. The exercise was focused on the improvement of naval capabilities for disaster relief. However, at the same time, it represents Indonesia's marine approach to showing Natuna waters sovereignty belongs to Indonesia in response to China's aggressive stance by entering the Natuna area as stated by Indonesia military officials (Fadli, 2013). Focusing on maritime significance, Jokowi, as the newly-elected president in 2014, established Indonesia's Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) to carry out the coast guard function in Indonesian territorial waters and jurisdiction. Many warships deployed to Natuna around 2015 to conduct routine maritime patrol in Natuna and military exercises, displaying more assertive gestures to defend the waters (Kompas, 2015; Saputro, 2015).

The Second Juncture: 2016

Despite sterner actions to safeguard its marine area, China's incursions to Indonesia's EEZ reoccurred in three incidents throughout 2016. The first incident occurred on 19 March when Chinese trawler fishing boats were spotted by the KKP vessel. KKP tries to chase the Chinese vessel, give warning shots, chase the vessel, and tow it back to Indonesia port. However, 12 hours later, armed CCG vessels appeared, forcing KKP to release the Chinese fishing vessels (Ariyanti, 2016; Supriyanto, Lockman, & Collin, 2016). Unlike the first juncture incidents,

Indonesia's officials publicized the incidents showing its assertive stance over China's IUU fishing in Natuna waters (Connelly, 2016). In response, the Indonesian defense minister, Ryamizard Ryacudu, publicly announced the plan to securitize the waters by sending three frigates, five F-16 fighter jets, and one TNI battalion to Natuna (Connelly, 2016, p. 5).

Despite all previous attempts to secure Natuna following the March incident, on 27 May, Republic of Indonesia Ship (KRI) Navy frigate *Oswald Siahaan* discovered the Chinese trawlers at a similar location around Natuna. Therefore, Indonesia's frigate tried to capture the Chinese trawlers, firing a warning shot and capturing the trawlers right in the eastern borders of Indonesia's EEZ in Natuna (Muhaimin, 2018, p. 32). During this incident, CCG vessels were unable to intervene, although they were also around the area.

Another maritime spat occurred on 17 June, despite Indonesia's navy crackdown on Chinese vessels in May. This time, Indonesia corvette KRI Imam Bonjol patrolled and received an air surveillance report informing 12 foreign vessels to conduct illegal fishing in Natuna waters. Indonesia's Navy sends four other warships to capture the Chinese fishing vessels trying to run away (Heriyanto, 2016). As the Chinese fishing vessels behaved stubbornly, Indonesia's corvette fired warning shots into the air and water and then hit one of the Chinese-flagged ships (Kusumadewi, 2016). Following the shooting of the Chinese vessel, Indonesia asserts that the arrest operation complies with Indonesia's legal procedure (Sarwanto, 2016). Following the third incident of 2016, Indonesia's Navy sent six other warships to show force in a 12-day

naval exercise near Indonesia's EEZ entered by Chinese vessels (Chang, 2020).

Compared to the first juncture, the peculiarity of the second juncture's incidents was exposed when President Jokowi directly visited the Natuna on 23 June, a week after 2016's third Indonesia-China maritime spats. His cabinet secretary, Pramono Anung, signifies that Jokowi is a visit to make sure the sovereignty of Indonesia, asserting that Natuna always will be part of Indonesia (Amindoni, 2016). Furthermore, a strong message was seen when President Jokowi held limited cabinet meetings on KRI Imam Bonjol, expressing the necessity to strengthen Indonesia's military capability to protect Indonesia's sea (Kapoor & Jensen, 2016). After a series of proceedings, Indonesia fisheries minister Susi Pudjiastuti stated that Indonesia's response had a deterrent effect on China's incursions. As a result, there have been no further accidents since the 17 June accident (Wadhams & Faries, 2016). However, the third juncture of Indonesia-China maritime spats occurred in late 2019.

The Third Juncture: 2019-2020

There were two maritime spat incidents in the third juncture. The first incident started in December 2019 when Bakamla spotted more than 50 fishing vessels, two CCG vessels, and one Chinese frigate warship in Natuna waters (CNN Indonesia, 2020). After being ordered to back off by Bakamla, Chinese vessels came back to sail inside Indonesia's EEZ on 23 December 2019 (Septiari, 2020). Outnumbered by Chinese vessels' abilities on occasion, Bakamla could not act further (CNN Indonesia, 2020). In response, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi, calls China's Ambassador to

express the Indonesian government's protest of China's activities in Indonesia Natuna waters (Kompas, 2020). Simultaneously, China's Foreign Ministry asserts that Chinese vessels carried out activities in China's jurisdiction territory (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

Indonesia's sterner action led to a standoff to repel Chinese vessels in Natuna waters. Indonesia deployed many warships, fighter jets, and mobilizing troops to Natuna to secure the area in early January 2020 (Agence France-Presse, 2020). Similar to what happened in 2016, President Jokowi revisited Natuna. He delivered a strong signal onboard Indonesia's corvette KRI Usman Harun in response to the maritime spat incident. During his visit, the president stated that his presence in Natuna ensures Indonesian sovereign rights law enforcement. He asserts that nothing could be negotiated about national sovereignty (Rivki, 2020). After a lengthy standoff, Chinese vessels have primarily cleared off from the Natuna EEZ in mid-January 2020 (Siregar, 2020a).

Not long after the last incident, China's impinge on Indonesia's Natuna EEZ recurred in September 2020. Only CCG vessels discovered enter Indonesia's EEZ without Chinese fishing vessels. It takes at least two days for the Bakamla to repel CCG vessels from Natuna waters as CCG vessels insist they sail in Chinese territory (Tarigan, 2020). Following the incident, the Chinese government asserted that Chinese vessels carried out -regular patrol duties in waters under Chinese jurisdiction- despite the objection from Indonesia (Costa, 2020). The September 2020 incident marked the latest maritime spat between Indonesia and China.

Analysis of Indonesia's Applicable Deterrence: Gunboat Diplomacy

It is identified that the SCS conflict delivers a threat to Indonesia's sovereign rights due to China's activities in Natuna waters' EEZ. Despite its dynamics and challenges, the naval forces have been at the forefront of Indonesia's instrument response to China's incursions in Natuna waters. Referring to Indonesia's case, the deployment of naval forces in response to China's incursions in Natuna waters could be considered part of the gunboat diplomacy effort. Therefore, this part of the article analyzes Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy in response to China's incursions in Natuna waters.

Referring to the concept of deterrence, several elements make deterrence is a compulsion for Indonesia due to China's assertive actions in claiming the SCS. Based on Patrick J. Morgan's (2003) elements of deterrence, conflict severity and credibility could be discerned to be the catalysator of Indonesia's deterrence in the SCS conflict. In terms of SCS conflict severity, China's incursions have been entrenched, and the impact overflowed to Indonesia shows in the Natuna waters incursion. In this regard, the intensity and the uncertainty of China's assertiveness make deterrence need to be presented all the time since there is a possibility of more tremendous implications. Meanwhile, Indonesia needs to show its credibility as the "owner" of the Natuna to make the opposite party believe in Indonesia's capacity to force China to stop the incursions in Natuna waters.

To analyze the deployment of Indonesia's naval capabilities to deter China's incursions in Natuna waters, it is feasible to elucidate the phenomenon

with gunboat diplomacy. The conceptual framework itself is defined as “the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their state” (Cable, 1994, p. 14).

Inferred from all three different junctures of Indonesia-China Natuna maritime spats from 2010 to 2020, Indonesia's naval capabilities play a pivotal role in securing the advantage and averting loss from China's incursions. During the first juncture, gunboat diplomacy characteristic of Indonesia was insufficient to crackdown on China's incursions in Natuna waters. However, as a deterrence means, it was discovered that Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy was set as a defensive gesture to repeal China's incursions in Natuna waters. The condition is shown when Indonesia's armed patrol takes no further actions despite its capacity to defeat Chinese vessels in the 2010 incident. The first juncture incidents thus alarmed the impact of the SCS conflict on Indonesia, leading to a sterner approach to defending Natuna. However, it had not detained further China's incursions as the Chinese vessel re-entered Natuna waters throughout 2016.

Nevertheless, lucid features of Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy to respond to China's incursions in Natuna waters showed throughout the 2016 incidents. After March 2016 tragedy, Indonesia's securitization plan in Natuna Islands supported Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy aspect. This fact shows that Indonesia managed a better response than in the first juncture incidents since the Indonesian naval

frigate managed the capture Chinese vessels without being interfered with by the CCG vessel despite its presence in the area during the May incident. Another success of Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy was also inferred from the June incident as Indonesia warships handled the capture and expulsion of Chinese vessels from Natuna waters.

The second juncture thus presents the precedent of gunboat diplomacy as *purposeful force* since Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy can alter the opposing party's behavior compared to previous incidents. Before the second juncture, Indonesia naval forces were unable to crackdown Chinese vessels in Natuna waters due to harassment and intervention by CCG. As Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy was able to crackdown Chinese vessels in the second juncture, the better outcome was behavioral alteration by Chinese vessels, which inferred gunboat diplomacy as a *purposeful force*. Furthermore, gunboat diplomacy became more conspicuous throughout the second juncture as President Jokowi held a limited cabinet meeting onboard KRI Imam Bonjol, identical Indonesia's warship involved in a shooting incident with Chinese vessels on 17 June. This occasion thus presents gunboat diplomacy as an *expressive force* since the warship is employed to assert Indonesia's attitudes properly towards China's incursions in Natuna waters.

Likewise, the third juncture incidents show similar characteristics of Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy with the second juncture. At this juncture, Indonesia's naval forces crackdown on Chinese vessels' presence in Natuna waters in two different incidents. Besides, President Jokowi also visited Natuna back onboard Indonesia's warship in January 2020 following China's incursions into Natuna waters.

However, the third juncture marks repeated China's incursions over Natuna waters in three different junctures from 2010. As a result, recurred incidents in the third juncture exposed Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy efficacy.

Despite all of Indonesia's attempts to deter China's incursions in Natuna waters from the first juncture, the latest recurring incident throughout the third juncture shows Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy was not efficacious enough to deter China. At every juncture, gunboat diplomacy plays a significant role in the crackdown on China's incursions in Natuna, particularly in the second and third junctures. However, the deterrence effect is limited to particular junctures, instead of delivering a deterrence effect that completely neutralizes China's incursions in Natuna waters. Therefore, in broader eyesight, recurring incidents in Natuna indicate that Indonesia cannot deter China from stopping impinging its Natuna waters. These circumstances that led to the Natuna issue appear to remain a challenge for Indonesia in the foreseeable future.

Indeed, China's presence in Natuna waters needs to be supported with other means and measures. However, considering the recurring incidents, all the measures, actions, and policies taken by Indonesia to deter China's incursions in Natuna waters are still not entirely practical, including the deployment of Indonesia's naval forces to secure Natuna (Damastuti, Hendrianti, & Laras, 2018, p. 57; Parameswaran, 2020). Nevertheless, despite the drawback of encountering China in Natuna, Indonesia needs to maintain the proceedings to deter China. Otherwise, China may perceive its presence in Natuna waters as

"normal circumstances" to validate its claim over Natuna waters.

Deterring China's incursions over Natuna waters will help untie the strands of the harmful SCS conflict for Indonesia. Moreover, gunboat diplomacy could become a responsive means for Indonesia amid SCS conflict uncertainty (Sudirman et al., 2019, p. 30). Besides, gunboat diplomacy also contains diplomatic characteristics that conform with Indonesia's prestige in the SCS conflict in which diplomatic disposition has been attached to Indonesia considering its role as the honest broker and avail norm setter in the dispute.

Considering the significant role of Indonesia's naval forces as gunboat diplomacy to deter China's incursions regardless of its drawback, deterrence could be focused on deterrence as a denial. As Bowers (2017, pp. 554–555) explained, mainly due to asymmetrical power with China, littoral states around SCS should not rely on attaining the victory of the battle as the primary objective. However, to maintain the naval capabilities to alter the negative party perception towards the advantages of aggression. In this issue, Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy could concentrate its deployment to prevent the aggressor from reaching its immediate goals by raising the cost or friction that impedes China from achieving its interest in Natuna waters. This strategy aims to impose sufficient costs that can prevent Natuna waters incursions by China in the future.

CONCLUSION

From the very first time, the SCS conflict contains the substantial possibility to be impactful for Indonesia. The impact of the conflict became more apparent due to the recurring incidents of Chinese vessels

entering Indonesia's EEZ in Natuna waters that could be seen at three different junctures from 2010 to 2020. As a result, the deployment of naval forces through gunboat diplomacy became the forefront instrument to respond to China's violations of Indonesia's sovereign rights in Natuna waters. In response to China's incursions, Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy traits conclude in two precedents. First, a purposeful force leveraged to alter China's behavior in Natuna incursions enabling Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy to crackdown on Chinese vessels. Second, expressive forces in which a warship employed to assert Indonesia's attitude in response to China incursions could be observed on President Jokowi's occasion to Natuna onboard the Indonesia warship in 2016 and 2020. Indonesia's gunboat diplomacy has successfully repelled China's presence at least in the second (2016s) and third (2019-2020) junctures of Indonesia-China maritime spats in Natuna waters. However, it may not have delivered a deterrent

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effect for entirely stopping China's presence in Natuna waters, as the incursions continued in 2020.

Nevertheless, further study is required to analyze further the causes of Indonesia's drawback of deterring China in Natuna waters. However, despite its drawback, Indonesia needs to maintain deterring China and consider China's persistence in considering Natuna waters as part of its traditional fishing ground, referring to its nine-dash line of SCS. In this sense, deterring China could be concentrated on raising the cost or friction for China to achieve its interest in Natuna waters instantly. It will strain a sufficient cost to prevent future recurring China's incursions in Natuna waters and help to untie the strands of the harmful SCS conflict for Indonesia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to give thanks to Dr. Sugito, M.Si.

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