

Analysis Of The Indonesian Government's Policy In Handling Illegal Fishing In The Border Area Of The Malacca Strait Waters (2020-2024)

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ABSTRACT

The issue of illegal fishing in the border waters of the Malacca Strait is a serious threat to Indonesia's maritime sovereignty and the sustainability of its marine resources. The unauthorized activities of foreign vessels, especially those from Malaysia, have caused significant economic losses and marine ecosystem degradation. This study analyzes Indonesia's foreign policy in responding to these challenges throughout the 2020-2024 period. Using foreign policy theory as a foundation, and also using the behavioralism perspective as the main theory that must be owned by a government's foreign policy in international relations, emphasizes that a country's foreign policy is the result of behavior or decisions made by leaders or related actors. This research was conducted with a descriptive qualitative method through literature studies, documentation, and direct interviews with the Water and Air Police Directorate (Ditpolairud) of Riau. The results of this study are the formation of two policies by the Indonesian government, namely internal and external policies. Where Indonesia strengthens the fishing licensing system, optimizes supervision through sea and air patrols, and establishes bilateral and regional cooperation. Empowerment of coastal communities is also carried out as a form of participatory supervision. Although these efforts have a positive impact, the effectiveness of the policy still needs to be improved through strengthening maritime diplomacy as well as increasing the capacity of technology and institutional coordination.

Keywords : Government Policy, Illegal Fishing, Strait of Malacca

Article Info :

Submitted: 05 November 2025

Reviewed: 10 December 2025

Accepted : 23 January 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

The large marine region of the archipelagic nation of Indonesia is abundant in natural resources, especially fisheries. Indonesia is among the nations having maritime territory in the Strait of Malacca, with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that extends 200 nautical miles from the baseline (Lukman et al., 2022). The Strait of Malacca, which separates the island of Sumatra from the Malay Peninsula, is a direct boundary between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The strait's length is roughly 805 km (500 miles), and its breadth varies from about 60 km (40 miles) in the south to about 250 km (155 miles) in the north.



Figure 1. The Malacca Strait

(Source: Internationalization of the Malacca Strait, Edy Burmansyah, 2016)

At its narrowest point near the Phillips Channel, adjacent to Singapore, the Strait of Malacca spans merely about 1.5 nautical miles (Nasith, 2024). Recognized as one of the most strategic maritime passages globally, the strait plays a crucial role in facilitating international trade. Geographically, Indonesia occupies the western segment of the strait, extending from the northern tip of Sumatra in Aceh to the Riau Islands. On the eastern side lies Malaysia, stretching from Perlis to Johor Bahru, while Singapore is located at the southern entrance, bordering the Singapore Strait. To the north, the strait approaches Thailand near the Andaman Sea (A. D. Sari et al., 2024). The maritime zone of the Strait of Malacca is abundant in natural resources, including both living (biotic) resources such as fish and marine biodiversity, and non-living (abiotic) resources like petroleum and natural gas. Commercially valuable marine species such as tuna, red snapper, grouper, shrimp, and crab are found in these waters and are widely sought after in both domestic and global markets. This abundance positions Indonesia advantageously in terms of enhancing national revenue and optimizing the exploitation of its maritime resources.

According to Indonesian Law Number 5 of 1983 on the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone, the EEZ refers to a maritime area that lies beyond and adjacent to the country's territorial waters. This zone extends up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline used to measure the breadth of the territorial sea and encompasses the water column, seabed, subsoil, and the airspace above. The concept of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) originates from the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which Indonesia formally ratified through Law Number 17 of 1985. This legal framework remains in force today and forms the basis for Indonesia's sovereign rights over marine resources within its EEZ. Furthermore, UNCLOS not only defines the EEZ but also outlines other maritime jurisdictions such as the Territorial Sea, the Contiguous Zone, the Continental Shelf, and the High Seas. These classifications serve to delineate rights and responsibilities among coastal states and play a vital role in maintaining order and cooperation in the global maritime domain.

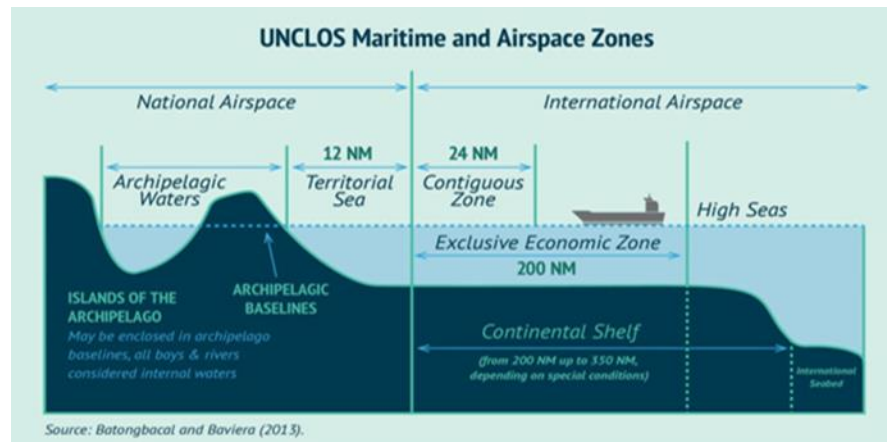


Figure 2. Delimitation of maritime boundaries and zones by UNCLOS

According to international maritime law as outlined in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the maritime domain of a nation is segmented into various zones, each defined by specific legal rights and responsibilities. In Indonesia, this zoning framework has been incorporated into the national governance system and institutional arrangements concerning maritime. The sea zone extending 0–3 miles from the coastline is categorized as inland and archipelagic waters, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Water and Air Police Unit (Polairud). The focus of supervision in this area includes law enforcement against domestic shipping and fishing activities. Furthermore, the maritime area at a distance of 3–12 nautical miles, known as the territorial sea, is under the supervision of agencies such as Immigration, Customs, and Port Quarantine. Activities in this zone are related to the traffic of foreign vessels, cargo inspections, and control over potential smuggling or immigration violations. Beyond the 12-nautical mile limit, maritime zones such as the Contiguous Zone and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) fall largely under the limited jurisdiction of the Indonesian Navy. Within these areas, the Indonesian National Armed Forces specifically the Navy hold a critical function in safeguarding maritime security, particularly in addressing cross-border challenges such as illegal fishing conducted by foreign. In its implementation, inter-agency coordination becomes crucial, so the presence of the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) serves as a cross-sector liaison to achieve integrated and effective maritime surveillance.

In contrast, the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) stretches up to 200 nautical miles from the edge of a nation's territorial sea. While the EEZ does not grant full sovereignty, coastal nations are entitled to exercise exclusive rights for resource exploration and utilization within this zone. Indonesia, due to its strategic location particularly along the Malacca Strait faces increased maritime traffic and exposure to cross-border maritime crimes, including illegal fishing. Illegal Fishing is an unlawful crime committed by individuals or groups from more than one country, commonly referred to as transnational crime. This criminal act is not only committed by foreign fishermen, but also by fishermen from within their own country. Illegal fishing, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), refers to any fishing activity that breaches legal frameworks at either national, regional, or global levels. This includes operations that go unreported, those that provide false data, the use of unregistered or stateless vessels, fishing in areas governed by regional fishery management bodies, and unregulated fishing that lacks oversight and legal accountability. The FAO identifies five principal forms of such illegal practices recognized by its member nations (Hakim & Mu'allifin, 2023).

This illegal fishing activity is generally carried out by foreign fishermen from countries that have geographical proximity to Indonesian waters, especially those directly adjacent to the EEZ, so that they can easily enter the defense area and carry out illegal actions. Foreign fishermen who often carry out illegal fishing activities in Indonesia's sea territory generally come from nearby countries such as

Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Myanmar. In carrying out their actions, the irresponsible foreign fishermen often enter Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with various strategies and *modus operandi*. Sakti Wahyu Trenggono, former Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia, has identified a number of patterns or background methods used by illegal fishing perpetrators. The government has so far summarized at least twelve *modus operandi* that are often used. Some of these include: not landing fish at the base port, falsifying vessel documents, using multiple vessel registrations, transshipment practices, turning off VMS and AIS devices, violating fishing lines, mark downs, and using prohibited fishing gear (Afdini, 2021).

Among the various *modus operandi* used in illegal fishing activities, one of the most common is the use of the flag of convenience. This is done by flying the flag of a country on a vessel, even though the vessel has no legal or administrative relationship with the country that owns the flag. In practice, this allows the shipowner to avoid the legal and supervisory responsibilities of the country of origin, as well as to take advantage of weaknesses in the supervisory system of the country whose flag is flown. This condition makes the practice of flag of convenience one of the strategies that are difficult to detect and control in efforts to eradicate illegal fishing activities globally. Another mode that is often used is flags of non-compliance, which is the use of flags of countries that have a bad reputation in law enforcement against Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) practices. By using flags of countries with less stringent monitoring, these vessels are able to avoid detection and legal sanctions.

Furthermore, there is the port of convenience mode, where foreign fishing vessels choose to land their catch at ports that have low supervision or minimal inspection. This allows them to avoid inspection of illegal catches. Another mode is to turn off automatic tracking devices such as the Automatic Identification System (AIS) and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). By disabling these devices, fishing vessels can move without being detected by other vessels or local authority monitoring systems. It is not uncommon for the perpetrators to use fake documents and identities for the vessels, making it difficult to identify and track the real vessel owners. The above modes are very often found in cases of illegal fishing practices that are often carried out in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) where there are many fish or other marine biota that generate high prices when sold (Afdini, 2021).

The rampant practice of illegal fishing in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is inseparable from various interrelated structural and non-structural factors. One of the main factors is the high demand for fisheries raw materials from countries that engage in illegal fishing. The second is limited infrastructure and operational funds for surveillance. The limited supporting facilities and infrastructure, as well as the lack of operational budget, are the main obstacles in the implementation of optimal marine surveillance. This hampers the ability of the authorities to detect and effectively take action against illegal fishing practices. Third, there is limited involvement by the community or traditional fishermen in maintaining the security of Indonesian waters from illegal fishing. Fourth, the movement of patrol boats at sea can be tracked or monitored by certain parties, allowing them to know the position of the authorities due to sophisticated communication equipment, resulting in suboptimal operational results.

Furthermore, the extensive maritime area of Indonesia is not matched by the adequate distribution of fisheries courts. Currently, such courts are only found in a few areas, including the North Jakarta District Court, Medan, Pontianak, Bitung, and Tual, resulting in challenges in accessing legal institutions for maritime law enforcement. The long distance between the location of the incident and the court causes the legal process to often be delayed, and even not resolved optimally. As a result, state losses cannot be effectively prevented, and the large number of cases that are not followed up leads to the assumption among perpetrators that their actions are not serious offenses (Mariane, 2020). And the last is the lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies. The lack of synergy between authorized agencies, such as the Indonesian Navy, Indonesian National Police, as well as Civil

Servant Investigators (PPNS) from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Ministry of Transportation, Directorate General of Customs, Immigration, and Ministry of Environment, often leads to overlapping authority in the field. Each agency tends to run operations independently without adequate coordination. In some cases, this even opens up opportunities for unscrupulous officials to cooperate with illegal fishing perpetrators, making law enforcement efforts ineffective.

Illegal fishing not only negatively impacts Indonesia's fisheries and marine economy but also causes severe harm to marine ecosystems and poses a threat to biodiversity, potentially leading to extinction. The use of destructive and environmentally harmful fishing gear by illegal foreign fishermen results in ecological damage and adversely affects the livelihoods of local fishing communities. These foreign vessels often operate with significant capital and large ships but rely on unsustainable fishing methods to maximize their catch (Afdini, 2021). Efforts to combat illegal fishing in Indonesia are supported by various national laws, including Law No. 45 of 2009 and Law No. 31 of 2004 concerning Fisheries, which govern the management of fishery resources and safeguard fishermen. Additionally, Law No. 5 of 1983 defines Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), granting rights to manage marine resources up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline. Other relevant laws are Law No. 21 of 1992 on Shipping, which regulates vessel control and maritime safety, and Law No. 6 of 1996 on Indonesian Waters, which delineates maritime boundaries and jurisdiction. Collectively, these regulations establish the legal framework to detect, prevent, and enforce actions against illegal fishing within Indonesia's maritime territory (Ambanaga & Burhanuddin, 2023).

International law functions as an independent and autonomous legal system that is closely connected to the dynamics of international relations and politics. Moreover, it serves to address the needs of the global community, including sovereign states. Based on the analysis conducted, several international legal frameworks regulate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The first is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982, which Indonesia ratified through Law Number 17 of 1985. This convention grants Indonesia sovereign rights over the exploitation of resources within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and on the high seas. Articles 63 and 64 specifically address transboundary fishing and migratory species. The second is the FAO Compliance Agreement of 1993, established in response to the rise of overfishing and illegal fishing since the 1970s. This agreement encourages countries to regulate fishing vessels through national legislation, such as the Indonesian Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Regulation No. 60/Men/2001 and Law No. 31 of 2004 on Fisheries.

The third is the 1995 UNIA (UNCLOS Implementation Agreement), which regulates the conservation and management of transboundary fish stocks and highly migratory species. Effective since 2001, this agreement benefits Indonesia by allowing better utilization of the high seas and enhancing its role in international fisheries management forums. The fourth is the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, established under the FAO framework, which offers global guidelines for sustainable fisheries management grounded in ecosystem principles and biodiversity preservation. Lastly, the fifth is the 2001 International Plan of Action on IUU Fishing. A voluntary instrument from FAO to encourage countries to develop national policies to prevent, counteract and eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (Ambanaga & Burhanuddin, 2023). The Indonesian government has implemented a variety of policies to address illegal fishing, including the enhancement of legal frameworks, the expansion of marine surveillance capabilities, and the promotion of cooperation at both regional and international levels. However, the effectiveness of these policies still faces challenges, such as limited infrastructure, lack of inter-agency coordination, and weak law enforcement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theory of Foreign Policy

1) Definition

The Decision-Making Theory, developed by Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, explains that foreign policy decisions are shaped by both internal and external influences on decision-makers. This theory aims to examine the underlying reasons behind the choices made by policymakers. Their research highlights various factors referred to as settings that impact a nation's actions on the international stage. The primary objective of Snyder and his colleagues is to gain a deeper understanding of how foreign policy is formulated. According to Richard Snyder, the process of making foreign policy decisions is affected by both external and internal elements, which together influence a country's international behavior. Internal or domestic factors arise from conditions and developments within the country itself and encompass various components that play a role in shaping foreign policy (Djumati et al., 2020).

A key factor in shaping foreign policy within International Relations is the national interest. This interest or need drives a country to formulate its foreign policy decisions. In addressing issues like illegal fishing, the Indonesian government approaches the problem through the framework of international law. Furthermore, Indonesia's efforts in law enforcement and preventive actions represent practical applications of its foreign policy aimed at safeguarding national interests. Various actors are involved in this process, ranging from individual decision-makers such as the President and the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, who exercise authority and contribute ideas and strategies. On a broader level, national institutions such as defense and security agencies including the Indonesian Navy, the National Police, and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries also play vital roles in executing these policies.

2) Function

A government develops foreign policies as a reaction to external threats posed by other nations, while also considering the influence of public opinion and domestic priorities. For instance, Indonesia's approach to illegal fishing by foreign vessels in its waters (an external challenge) may involve strengthening international partnerships to address the problem. Simultaneously, these policies are shaped by internal factors, like the need to protect local fisheries, which play a key role in supporting the economy of coastal communities.

B. Behaviorism Perspective

1) Definition

Behaviorism stands as one of the most influential contemporary approaches in political science. This framework suggests that a government's foreign policy in international relations is primarily shaped by the actions and decisions of its leaders or key stakeholders. These decisions are frequently driven by psychological motivations, ideological beliefs, or strategic objectives, highlighting the human and cognitive elements behind state behavior.

2) Function

According to Robert Dahl, this approach can identify patterns of behavior of state actors, and even help predict the direction of certain countries' foreign policies, taking into account more concrete variables such as national interests, economic pressures, and international interactions. For example, the Indonesian government's policy in dealing with illegal fishing in the border region of the Malacca Strait. It focuses on state actors making decisions regarding problem-solving that have an impact on foreign policy.

3. METODE

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was selected because it allows for a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the Indonesian government's policies in addressing illegal fishing activities in the waters of the Malacca Strait. This approach emphasizes the search for meaning, social construction, and the dynamics of complex interactions in a social reality. The main goal is to gain a complete understanding of the experiences, social processes, cultural interactions, and meanings constructed by the actors in the phenomenon (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Descriptive qualitative research allows researchers to explore complex and contextual information related to the problem under study, and explain phenomena based on facts in the field and reliable sources. Data sources in this research consist of secondary data and primary data, obtained through literature study, documentation and interviews. Literature sources include books, scientific journal articles, official reports from government agencies such as the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), data from the Riau Police Air and Water Police Directorate (Ditpolairud), as well as national and international legal sources related to marine resource management and tackling Illegal Fishing.

Government policy documents were also analyzed to understand the background, implementation, and impact of the policy. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, literature review and systematic documentation. This process includes searching for relevant literature, identifying strategic policies, and analyzing statistical data and information from annual reports of relevant institutions. Data validity was strengthened by triangulating sources. The data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques. The process involved several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. During data reduction, relevant information aligned with the research focus was carefully selected. The data was then organized and displayed through narratives and tables to aid in interpretation. Finally, conclusions were formulated by identifying patterns within the data and linking them to the relevant theories and the phenomenon under study.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Government of Indonesia's policy in dealing with Illegal Fishing in the Malacca Strait waters includes internal and external policies implemented through various institutions, regulations, and international cooperation. This research found that efforts to tackle illegal fishing have been carried out consistently since 2020, although the challenges in the field are still very complex.

A. Internal Policy

The government continues to make efforts to eliminate illegal fishing perpetrators, one of which is through the establishment of the Illegal Fishing Eradication Task Force, formalized by Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2015 (referred to as the "Task Force 115 Presidential Regulation"). This task force holds the primary responsibility for conducting law enforcement operations aimed at eradicating illegal fishing activities. In carrying out its duties, the task force sets operational targets and manages the command and control system for all elements involved in Task Force 115. These elements consist of fleets of ships, aircraft, and other technological equipment from the Navy, Indonesian National Police, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Marine Security Agency (BAKAMLA), and the Attorney General's Office, all integrated under Task Force 115. Regulations concerning this issue are stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia Number 37/Permen-KP/2017, which outlines the Standard Operating Procedures for the Law Enforcement of the Illegal Fishing Eradication Task Force (Kurniadi et al., 2024). There are several internal policies carried out by the Indonesian government:

First, improving the system and mechanism of capture fisheries licensing. The number of fishing vessels allowed to operate in a fishing area should not exceed the permitted catch limit so that fishing can be conducted profitably and sustainably. Transparent and efficient licensing procedures are the most crucial aspects. The granting of operating permits to foreign vessels in Indonesian waters is not intended as an effort to legalize illegal fishing practices, but as one of the solutions to overcome the problem of illegal fishing. The granting of this license is accompanied by strict provisions, one of which is the obligation of foreign vessels to land their catches at Indonesian fishing ports. In addition, the country of origin of the vessel is also required to contribute to the development of fisheries infrastructure and facilities at the fish landing site.

Second, the government continues to develop surveillance strategies. One of them is by utilizing VMS (Vessel Monitoring System) technology as recommended by FAO. This system uses a database integrated with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), allowing VMS operators to track the real-time position of vessels in a particular sea area. Thus, the movement of foreign vessels can be detected more quickly and allow for a more swift response. The next step is to strengthen the capacity of monitoring institutions and engage communities in a community-based monitoring system. By improving the understanding of fishermen and coastal communities about the importance of protecting marine resources for the sustainability of ecosystems and livelihoods, it is hoped that they can become the frontline in preventing destructive and illegal fishing practices. This approach has been adopted by a number of developed marine countries.

In addition, improving surveillance facilities and infrastructure is also a priority, which is carried out in stages according to urgency and field conditions. Sea patrol operations by related institutions such as the Marine Police (Polairud) and the Marine Security Agency are a form of implementation of state responsibility in maintaining maritime security. One form of strategic policy implemented by the Indonesian government in dealing with the issue of Illegal Fishing occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, social and economic conditions experienced significant pressure, which also had an impact on increasing criminal activities in various sectors, including the marine and fisheries sector. To tackle these issues, the government, via the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), implemented both preventive and enforcement actions to safeguard the sustainability of Indonesia's marine resources. Key measures included enhancing surveillance in strategic maritime zones, intensifying inspections of foreign vessels suspected of illegal fishing, and apprehending ships confirmed to have violated Indonesian fisheries laws (KKP, 2020).

During the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly between March and April 2020, Indonesia intensified its maritime surveillance operations as part of its commitment to combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The operations were mainly concentrated in the Malacca Strait and adjacent waters such as the Natuna Sea and parts of the Java Sea, areas recognized as hotspots for transnational fishing violations. This enforcement effort was in line with the government's national agenda to preserve marine resources, protect national sovereignty, and maintain economic sustainability in coastal regions, especially during a time of economic uncertainty and reduced mobility due to the pandemic.

Data gathered from the Directorate General of Marine and Fisheries Resources Surveillance (PSDKP) reveal that a total of 28 fishing vessels were apprehended during the operation period. These vessels came from various flag states, including Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Taiwan, with the majority being Vietnamese-flagged. A striking pattern observed among these cases is the dominant use of pair trawl and trawl gear types, fishing methods known for their high catch efficiency but also their destructive impact on marine biodiversity and benthic habitats.

Among the early apprehensions were vessels such as KM KG 94376 TS (103.42 GT), KM PAF 4696, and KM PAF 4837 (100.06 GT), all flying the Vietnamese flag and operating in the Exclusive

Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Natuna Sea. The crews of these vessels, ranging from 6 to 21 individuals, were entirely composed of Vietnamese nationals. Their use of pair trawl gear indicates a targeting of demersal species in large volumes activities that are illegal under Indonesian law without proper licensing and registration. Further surveillance also led to the capture of KM KG 94654 TS and KM KG 95786 TS, also Vietnamese vessels of 100 GT capacity, similarly operating with pair trawl gear. These operations were concentrated in the same region, pointing to a coordinated pattern of incursion by foreign vessels, potentially backed by commercial fishing entities from abroad.

The trend expanded beyond Vietnam, with several Malaysian-flagged vessels such as KM PKFB 422 (50.64 GT), KM SLFA 2030 (51.74 GT), and KM SLFA 4429 (49.77 GT) operating in the Strait of Malacca using either pair trawl or trawl gear. Interestingly, these vessels were manned mostly by Myanmar crew, suggesting complex labor outsourcing practices, possibly driven by cost-cutting strategies within the illegal fishing network. Some vessels, such as KM PK 3835, had mixed crew compositions and were involved in multiple regulatory violations, further complicating legal accountability. The Northern Natuna Sea also recorded several apprehensions involving smaller vessels, such as KM BD 30942 TS, KM BD 30199 TS, and KM BD 90239 TS, which had lower gross tonnage (20 GT) and used purse seine and squid nets. Despite their smaller size, these vessels often escaped detection, relying on agility and knowledge of local waters. However, advanced satellite-based monitoring systems such as VMS (Vessel Monitoring System) and the cooperation between KKP, the Indonesian Navy, and Bakamla allowed for greater interception capacity during this period (PSDKP, 2020).

What makes these arrests significant is not only the diversity of origin and methods used but also the jurisdictional clarity under which they were enforced. As per Indonesia's Law No. 45 of 2009 on Fisheries, along with Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2015 on the establishment of Task Force 115, the country has clear authority to inspect, detain, and process foreign vessels operating illegally within its EEZ. This legal foundation is further strengthened by Indonesia's ratification of UNCLOS 1982 through Law No. 17 of 1985, which legitimizes Indonesia's control over marine resources within 200 nautical miles from its baseline. Meanwhile, several Indonesian-flagged vessels were also apprehended, including KM Arif Wijaya Perkasa and KM Dwi Manunggal, both utilizing cantrang (seine net) gear types. Though operating under the Indonesian flag, these vessels were found violating national fisheries regulations due to licensing violations, area restrictions, or gear-type prohibitions.

Their capture reinforces the government's commitment to impartial enforcement ensuring that not only foreign violators but also domestic actors are held accountable under the law. Other notable entries include vessels from the Philippines, such as KM Berlian Jaya A02, KM FB Makmur 13, KM FBCA Sallin 02, and KM FBCA Quardo Ocho, most of which employed hand line fishing methods and were active in the Sulawesi Sea EEZ. While less destructive than trawl methods, their unregistered status and entry into protected waters still constitute legal violations. The arrest of KM Sheng Teng Chun No. 66, a Taiwanese vessel crewed by both Taiwanese and Filipino fishers using longline gear, also demonstrates the transnational complexity of IUU fishing, highlighting how multiple nationalities often collaborate in unauthorized fishing operations.

Overall, the arrest records during this two-month enforcement window offer a comprehensive glimpse into the scale and structure of illegal fishing operations in Indonesian waters. The concentration of foreign vessels in strategic zones such as the Natuna Sea, Strait of Malacca, and Sulawesi Sea points to an ongoing challenge of securing maritime boundaries and protecting sovereign fishing rights. Moreover, the operational diversity from high-capacity industrial vessels to smaller artisanal boats illustrates the need for a multi-tiered surveillance strategy that combines technological monitoring, community-based reporting, and international diplomatic engagement. In conclusion, the government's response during this period reflects not only a reactive law enforcement approach but also an assertive expression of maritime sovereignty. The data underscores the importance of

consistent monitoring, regional coordination, and strict legal enforcement to deter future violations. It also reaffirms Indonesia's strategic position and legal authority in upholding sustainable fisheries governance within its maritime domain (PSDKP, 2020).

Table 1. Data on Destructive Fishing Violations from Regional Maritime and Fisheries Office Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic (March – April 2020)

No	Suspected Violation	Crew (Nationality)	Location Captured
1.	Use of explosives	3 Indonesian crew	Bomba Village, Tomini Bay
2.	Use of chemicals	1 Indonesian crew	Labuan Bajo, Sumbawa
3.	Use of explosives	5 Indonesian crew	Padei Sea, Morowali, Central Sulawesi

Source: Directorate of Law Enforcement, Directorate General of Marine and Fisheries Resources Surveillance (PSDKP), May 9, 2020

According to data from the Directorate General of Marine and Fisheries Resources Surveillance (PSDKP), foreign vessels apprehended in the Malacca Strait were predominantly flagged under Malaysia and Myanmar. The type of fishing gear used were mostly trawl nets and unregistered longlines, often associated with environmental damage.

Table 2. Data on Illegal Fishing Vessels Apprehended in the Malacca Strait, 2021-2024

NO	Vessel Name	Crew (Nationality)	Fishing Violation Type
1.	KM. JHF 4631 B	3 Malaysian crew	Trap net (bubu) gear
2.	KM. SLFA 4107	4 Myanmar crew	Trawl net fishing
3.	KM. SLFA 4598	4 Myanmar crew	Trawl net fishing
4.	PK 6911F	6 Myanmar crew	Trawl net fishing
5.	KM. SLFA 5323, 68 GT	5 Myanmar crew	Fish theft practices
6	KM. KF 5032, 60 GT	5 Myanmar crew	Mixed Fish theft, 110 kg in total

(Source: Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), Directorate General of Marine and Fisheries Surveillance (DJPSDKP)

Based on interview with officers from the Riau Water and Air Police Directorate in Pekanbaru, routine patrols have been conducted in the Malacca Strait. These operations identified several illegal fishing practices, often involving not foreign vessels, but Indonesian fishermen using prohibited fishing gear that significantly damages the marine ecosystem.

Table 3. Data on Fisheries Violations Handled by Riau Regional Water and Air Police Directorate (2020-2023)

No.	Case Type	Number of Suspects	Location of Arrest	Alleged Violation
1.	Fisheries (Lobster Seed)	5 individuals arrested	Tenggayun Village, Bandar Laksaman Subdistrict, Bengkalis	Lobster seed smuggling from Indonesia to Malaysia
2.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Coastal waters	Use of twin bottom trawl net
3.	Fisheries	2 individuals	Coastal waters	Use of twin bottom trawl

		arrested		net.
4.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Tokong Island, Pasir Limau Kapas Subdistrict, Rokan Hilir.	Use of Twin bottom trawl net
5.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Tokong Island, Pasir Limau Kapas Subdistrict, Rokan Hilir.	Use of Twin bottom trawl net
6.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Tokong Island, Pasir Limau Kapas Subdistrict, Rokan Hilir	Use of Twin bottom trawl net
7.	Fisheries	10 individual arrested	Panipahan Waters	Use of one set of trawl gear
8.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Tokong Island, Pasir Limau Kapas Subdistrict, Rokan Hilir	Use of twin bottom trawl nets
9.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Tokong Island, Pasir Limau Kapas Subdistrict, Rokan Hilir	Use of twin bottom trawl nets
10.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Rokan Hilir Waters	Use of fishing gear damaging to the marine environment.
11.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Tokong Island, Pasir Limau Kapas Subdistrict, Rokan Hilir.	Use of fishing gear with harmful environmental impact.
12.	Fisheries	1 individual arrested	Tokong Island, Pasir Limau Kapas Subdistrict, Rokan Hilir.	Use of environmentally destructive fishing equipment

Source: Riau Regional Directorate of water and air police (Ditpolairud Polda Riau)

In addition, the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) as a non-ministerial government institution directly under the President of the Republic of Indonesia, has strategic authority in carrying out security patrols in national waters. One of Bakamla's important rights is to pursue ships in inland waters, islands, and territorial seas. This action can then be continued with the stopping of ships, inspection, arrest, escort, and handover of ships to relevant law enforcement agencies for further legal proceedings. The effectiveness of Bakamla's role is increasingly visible with the increase in maritime surveillance and various arrest operations against foreign ships carrying out illegal fishing. One of the major cases in the spotlight is the arrest of the MV Hai Fa, which is known as one of the largest actions in the history of Indonesian fisheries law enforcement (Y. Sari, 2019).

Third, strengthening the legal and judicial framework for fisheries. The challenges in combating illegal fishing in Indonesia stem largely from weak legislation and low enforcement morale at sea. However, the enactment of Fisheries Law No. 31 of 2004 is expected to enhance law enforcement efforts in maritime areas. Under this law, Indonesian-flagged vessels found violating regulations can result in operators and ship owners facing up to six years of imprisonment and fines reaching Rp 2 billion. For foreign-flagged vessels committing violations, the penalties are harsher, with potential imprisonment up to six years and fines up to Rp 20 billion.

Fourth, modernization and capacity building of the national fishing fleet. One of the causes of the rampant illegal fishing practices in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone is the scarcity of Indonesian fishing vessels operating in the area due to the low capacity of their fleet or short-term capabilities and short sailing times (Almuzzamil, 2017). In this case, modernization of the Indonesian fishing fleet is needed, which includes several aspects, such as replacing wooden ships with steel ships that are more durable and meet international standards. And increasing the capacity of ship sizes and modern technology such as environmentally friendly shipping systems and fishing gear. Fifth, empowerment and distribution of assistance to local fishermen. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) chose to distribute ships seized from illegal fishing cases to traditional Indonesian fishermen, which aims to improve their welfare and economy by using larger ships.

In 2024, the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Sakti Wahyu Trenggono and the Directorate General of PSDDKP implemented the policy by providing an ex-IUUF fishing vessel now named the KALAMO WANGI 01 vessel measuring 110 GT to the Pasir Marketing Cooperative and the Mina Blambangan Muncar Village Unit Cooperative, in Kalipuro District, Banyuwangi, East Java. This received a good response from the Banyuwangi Regent who expressed his appreciation to the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries as a committed central government policy, for the provision of fishing vessel assistance to Banyuwangi fishermen. This is a real form of government concern for fishermen (Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, 2024).



Figure 3. Handover of Confiscated Foreign Fishing Vessel to Traditional Fishermen
Source: Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), official website

B. External Policy

Indonesia's external cooperation in addressing illegal fishing in the Malacca Strait reflects not only a technical approach to maritime security, but also a form of maritime diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy. Viewed through the lens of foreign policy theory, Indonesia's bilateral and regional collaborations represent adaptive responses to international pressures demanding enhanced maritime security and regional stability. As part of its external policy, the Indonesian government has engaged in bilateral cooperation with neighboring countries, particularly Malaysia, to resolve maritime challenges in the Malacca Strait. This partnership focuses on strengthening joint security efforts, including coordinated patrols at sea and aerial surveillance, aimed at monitoring and preventing illegal fishing activities in shared maritime zones.

Based on an interview with a senior official from the Riau Regional Water and Air Police Directorate, it was stated that an annual meeting is held in the middle of the Malacca Strait between Indonesian maritime authorities and the Royal Malaysia Police. The objective of this meeting is to

enhance coordination and strengthen bilateral cooperation in maintaining security and order in the region. These regular engagements allow both national police forces to exchange intelligence, monitor suspicious maritime activities, and develop joint operational plans to counter potential threats particularly illegal fishing operations. Such collaboration helps to mitigate the risk of conflict resulting from unlawful activities in the shared maritime zone. In 2023, the Indonesian Air Force based in Riau conducted a coordinated aerial patrol with the Royal Malaysian Air Force (TUDM) over the Malacca Strait, which is one of the busiest maritime routes in the world. This initiative, known as the Malaysia-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (Patkor Malindo), is carried out annually to ensure regional stability, enhance mutual maritime surveillance, and strengthen defense cooperation in safeguarding the area (Wahyudi & Marito, 2023).

Indonesia's primary interest in this cooperation is to counter the negative international perception that its portion of the Malacca Strait ranks among the world's most dangerous maritime zones second only to Somalia. Therefore, the active involvement of the Indonesian National Armed Forces, particularly through inter-military and intelligence cooperation, serves to demonstrate the country's capability in addressing potential threats and maintaining regional stability in the Malacca Strait (Fathun, 2019). Such efforts also aim to prevent possible conflicts arising from unlawful activities in the area. Additionally, this bilateral cooperation seeks to establish a collective surveillance system involving active participation from both nations. It is not merely a matter of technical coordination, but also a mechanism to strengthen mutual strategic trust among law enforcement personnel on the ground. Through joint patrol operations, both countries are able to monitor, intervene, and take legal action against violations occurring in areas prone to diplomatic tensions.

Secondly, Indonesia engages in regional cooperation that aligns closely with the principles outlined in the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Article 2 of the Charter affirms the commitment of member states to establish relations grounded in international law and the values enshrined in the United Nations Charter. This provision serves as the legal foundation for ASEAN's approach to addressing maritime security issues, including those in the Malacca Strait. Additionally, Article 7 of the ASEAN Charter underscores the importance of regional cooperation in fostering peace, stability, and security within the region. Indonesia's participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) further demonstrates its dedication to promoting maritime collaboration. The ARF Declaration of 1995, particularly Article 3, highlights the significance of regional dialogue and cooperation in maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. Through its active role in the ARF, Indonesia contributes to building mutual understanding and synergy among neighboring countries to collectively address various maritime security challenges, including those occurring in the Malacca Strait.

In addition, regional cooperation has materialized through bilateral and multilateral agreements established between Indonesia and its neighboring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore. A tangible outcome of this collaboration is the trilateral joint patrol conducted by these three nations in the waters of the Malacca Strait. These agreements involve mechanisms for information sharing, cross-border coordination, and joint maritime operations aimed at enhancing surveillance and law enforcement in this strategic maritime zone. Maritime boundary delimitation plays a critical role in determining national sovereignty, resource management, and strategic interests. Within bilateral relations particularly in Southeast Asia, a region rich in marine resources and crisscrossed by vital international shipping routes maritime boundary issues have become a central agenda item. One notable development at the regional level is the maritime boundary agreement between Indonesia and Malaysia, officially concluded in 2023. The agreement covers boundary demarcation in the Sulawesi Sea and the Malacca Strait, both of which hold substantial strategic significance for both countries. This agreement represents a major milestone in the diplomatic history of two nations with adjacent maritime zones.

The agreement on maritime boundaries between the two countries reflects the outcome of a prolonged process of maritime delimitation. Maritime delimitation refers to the process of establishing dividing lines of jurisdiction between neighboring states in oceanic areas. Indonesia has long pursued efforts to resolve these boundary issues, particularly following the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). What now becomes essential is to assess the implications and opportunities for maritime cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia in the aftermath of the boundary agreement (Yuan & Burhanuddin, 2023).

In addition, Indonesia's active participation in various multilateral forums, such as the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), highlights its commitment to regional maritime cooperation. The AMF serves as a platform to enhance collaboration among ASEAN member states in addressing maritime challenges, particularly in securing the Malacca Strait. This regional cooperation also extends beyond the ASEAN framework, involving external partners such as Australia, Japan, and the United States. Indonesia's involvement reflects a clear awareness of the need for transboundary cooperation to tackle maritime security issues in the region. Through a comprehensive and strategic regional partnership, Indonesia seeks to build strong alliances to address maritime security threats. This collaboration includes data and information sharing, joint patrol operations, and coordinated maritime exercises aimed at improving the effectiveness of surveillance and law enforcement in the Malacca Strait. Legal frameworks such as provisions within ASEAN instruments, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and bilateral agreements form the legal foundation upon which Indonesia strengthens its maritime security architecture in the region (Amarullah, 2024).

C. Challenges in Indonesia's Policy to Combat Illegal Fishing

The persistence of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Indonesian waters is largely attributed to the suboptimal performance of law enforcement authorities. Several contributing factors hinder effective enforcement, including the limited availability of surveillance infrastructure within Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), budgetary constraints that affect monitoring operations, and an insufficient number of fisheries enforcement officers and authorized civil investigators (PPNS). Furthermore, the technological capabilities required for maritime surveillance remain inadequate, and Indonesian fishermen still lack the strength and capacity to assert presence particularly within the EEZ. Other contributing factors include declining fish stocks in Indonesia's waters, as well as resource scarcity in the territorial seas of foreign fishing nations, which motivates intrusions into Indonesian maritime zones (Afdini, 2021).

The Indonesian government has demonstrated a commendable level of commitment and responsibility in addressing illegal fishing practices. Surveillance efforts are not solely carried out by the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), but are also supported by other national security institutions to collectively safeguard Indonesia's maritime sovereignty. These coordinated efforts go beyond internal monitoring. The government has also established partnerships with several countries and international organizations as part of its broader strategy to combat illegal fishing, particularly in coastal areas (Hakim & Mu'allifin, 2023).

Crimes in the marine and fisheries sector, particularly within Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), have caused significant damage, including depletion of fish resources, deterioration of marine ecosystems, and a decline in the economic value of the national fisheries sector. According to figures published by Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries in 2024, illegal fishing resulted in estimated financial losses amounting to IDR 3.7 trillion. Given the substantial economic and environmental impacts, it is crucial for the government to implement strategic and vigorous measures to prevent the recurrence of such activities, especially those carried out by foreign fishers. These actions represent serious violations of law and national sovereignty. Previously, during the leadership

of Minister Susi Pudjiastuti, the government enforced strict policies by sinking foreign vessels caught conducting illegal fishing. This measure represented a firm stance by the government in asserting maritime sovereignty, and it successfully captured national and international public attention.

However, this policy was not consistently maintained following the end of Minister Susi Pudjiastuti's term, primarily due to the high operational costs associated with sinking vessels. Nevertheless, these expenses were considered justified by the positive outcomes, such as deterring illegal fishing activities by depriving offenders of their main assets. This approach also supported efforts to conserve marine resources. It is important to note that the legal basis for the vessel sinking policy is stipulated in Article 69, paragraph (4) of Law Number 45 of 2009 on Fisheries. The article states that when sufficient evidence exists regarding violations such as fish theft or unauthorized navigation within Indonesian waters, the offending vessels may be subject to destruction, including by sinking or burning.

Despite the implementation of two major policies by the Indonesian government, their effectiveness has yet to be fully realized. Internally, several challenges persist. A longstanding issue is the shortage of skilled human resources; the number of personnel assigned to maritime surveillance remains insufficient compared to the vastness of Indonesia's territorial waters. Many officers in the field lack specialized training in identifying maritime violations and are not proficient in operating modern monitoring systems. Another significant problem is the limited technological infrastructure, particularly in remote areas. Effective maritime surveillance relies heavily on technologies such as Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), maritime radar, and reconnaissance drones. However, these devices have not been evenly deployed, especially in isolated and border regions. For instance, in vulnerable areas like the waters near Rupert Island or the Aceh-Malaysia border, communication signals and maritime radar can still easily bypass monitoring systems without being detected.

Thirdly, weak coordination among law enforcement agencies remains a major obstacle. Maritime surveillance duties often involve multiple institutions such as the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla), the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL), the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), and the Water Police (Polairud). However, overlapping authorities, delays in information sharing, and a lack of synergy during joint operations are common issues. For example, during a pursuit of foreign vessels, there have been instances where one agency had already tracked the vessel's location but failed to take action due to lack of communication from related agencies. As a result, the offending vessel escaped. These gaps in maritime monitoring have been exploited by illegal fishing operators, particularly those from neighboring countries. On the other hand, Indonesia's external policies focus on bilateral and regional cooperation aimed at building maritime security synergy. Yet, the effectiveness of these external efforts remains limited. Diverging national interests, weak enforcement of collective sanctions, and the absence of an integrated coordination mechanism hinder the establishment of robust maritime surveillance in the Strait of Malacca.

These policies should align with Indonesia's vision of becoming a global maritime axis, as declared by President Joko Widodo in 2014. This vision highlights Indonesia's strategic role as a center of global maritime power, encompassing maritime security, sustainable management of marine resources, and the enhancement of connectivity and economic competitiveness based on marine sectors. However, the ongoing prevalence of illegal fishing in strategic areas such as the Strait of Malacca indicates that the implementation of this maritime axis vision has not been fully realized. Policy inconsistencies, weak law enforcement, and suboptimal institutional collaboration remain critical challenges in achieving this goal. Therefore, it can be concluded that although Indonesia's internal and external policies to combat illegal fishing have made some progress, their effectiveness still requires significant improvement. A comprehensive evaluation of maritime surveillance systems, strengthening human resource capacity, and enhancing more strategic and measurable cross-border

cooperation are essential. These efforts are crucial not only for addressing maritime crimes but also for reinforcing Indonesia's position as a global maritime power in accordance with its maritime axis vision.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research and analysis presented, the author concludes that illegal fishing has been a persistent issue in Indonesian waters for a considerable time. This phenomenon not only threatens national sovereignty but also significantly affects the sustainability of marine resources and the welfare of local fishermen. Consequently, the Indonesian government has demonstrated its commitment to addressing this problem through various strategies. These efforts include strengthening the bureaucratic structure within the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries by establishing specialized teams or units focused on combating illegal fishing. Additionally, the government has reinforced regulations by revising laws to ensure legal and transparent management of fishing permits. In addition to strengthening regulations, efforts to monitor and enforce laws against illegal fishing offenders have been significantly increased. Moreover, enhancing the capacity of human resources has become a priority, which includes conducting outreach and educational initiatives for coastal communities to boost their awareness and comprehension of sustainable marine resource management.

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