

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): Securing Indonesia's Future Under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Dilla Hariyanti^{1*}, Mugiati²

Universitas Borobudur, Indonesia

Email: dilla_htarigan@borobudur.ac.id^{1*}, mugiati@borobudur.ac.id²

Keywords:

exclusive economic zone (eez),
the guarantee of indonesia's
future, law

ABSTRACT

The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has economic value, it is not uncommon for a conflict between intersecting countries such as between Indonesia and Malaysia over the islands of Sipadan and the island of Ligitan. Between Indonesia and Vietnam, there is a territorial dispute in the waters around the Natuna Islands. In the occurrence of conflicts in the EEZ boundary area, the Government must better anticipate the occurrence of disputes by making efforts to strengthen the position of state sovereignty and law enforcement in the EEZ. Problem Formulation: 1. How is the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia as an archipelagic country in managing and utilizing the Exclusive Economic Zone? 2. Can the law enforcement carried out by the Indonesian government to be able to guarantee the natural resources contained in the Exclusive Economic Zone Area can meet the survival of the nation? Using normative legal research. Indonesian state sovereignty in the international system is the recognition of another country over the country's border areas in the EEZ and has the sovereign right to explore, exploit, conserve and manage natural resources both biological and non-biological and waters above the seabed and land below, as affirmed in Article 56 paragraph (1) of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. The State of Indonesia may take action in the form of boarding a ship, inspecting, arresting and conducting judicial proceedings based on Article 73 paragraph (1) of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea and may carry out an act of instant pursuit (hot pursuit) against a foreign ship if the authorities have sufficient reason to suspect that the ship violates the laws of the State of Indonesia, as stipulated in Article 111 of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a sovereign country has an area of "8,300,000 km², with a landscape figure consisting of the sea covering an area of 6,400,000 km² (77.11%) and land covering an area of 1,900,000 km² (22.89%), of which 17,504 islands are connected, and with a coastline of 108,000 km²". Based on the reality of the region, Indonesia has been declared the largest archipelagic country in the world (Merdekawati et al., 2021). Indonesia's sovereignty as an archipelagic country includes land areas, inland waters, archipelagic waters, and territorial seas, including the airspace above it and the seabed and land below, including the natural resources contained therein. Indonesia's sovereignty is subject to the provisions of laws and regulations and in international relations regarding the sea, including Exclusive Economic Zones are regulated in *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) 1982 (1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) and related international law within the jurisdiction of the Indonesian seas, one of which is the Exclusive Economic Zone.

According to Muh. Rasman Manafi, et al., stated that "The area of rights and authority to manage Indonesia's marine Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is 3,110,000 km² (Darmawan et al., 2022)".

The natural resources contained in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) are a gift from Allah SWT, which must be maintained and preserved (Afriansyah et al., 2022) and maintain the integrity of the marine ecosystem so that it can be used to meet the needs of humanity's life. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea) contained in Article 56 paragraph 1 letter a, provides sovereign rights to the Indonesian state to utilize and manage natural resources such as exploring natural resources, fishing rights and other activities that have economic value, which are contained in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Regarding the EEZ, the State of Indonesia has a sovereign right to manage and utilize, both biological and non-biological, for the prosperity of the Indonesian people as mandated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, in addition to that the State of Indonesia also has the obligation to respect and protect the rights and freedoms of other countries.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is an area outside the sea and adjacent to the territorial sea of Indonesia, which has economic value, it is not uncommon for conflicts between countries to intersect such as the dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia over "the island of Sipadan and the island of Ligitan. On 17 December 2002, the International Court of Justice granted sovereignty over the island of Sipadan and the island of Ligitan to Malaysia (Herno Della & Kuntasa, 2024)". Disputes between Indonesia and Vietnam dispute over territory in the waters around the Natuna Islands where an agreement on the boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) occurred in December 2022. Both countries are based on the principles of international law, especially the 1982 UN Convention on UNCLOS.

The problem of the dispute over the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in Indonesia must be resolved immediately (Darusman et al., 2020). Where the weaknesses of the Indonesian state include the lack of clear determination and regulations regarding Indonesia's territorial boundaries, especially for sea areas. Moreover, countries such as Japan and the United States are not subject to the 1982 UNCLOS Convention so that the boundaries of the waters determined have the potential to be violated by other countries. In the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, there is no clear authority in the management of Indonesia's borders so that the condition of Indonesia's borders is currently in a critical stage, especially in terms of security stability. Another problem that is no less important is the lack of public involvement related to issues at the border. In addition, rampant violations of the law that occur in the EEZ area such as smuggling, fish theft and many more occur in the EEZ Area.

Frequent conflicts in the boundary areas of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the Government must anticipate the occurrence of disputes by making efforts to strengthen the position of state sovereignty in the EEZ, so that exploration and utilization of marine resources in the EEZ can be carried out optimally and in a targeted manner. Coastal areas have high potential and economic value, but their sustainability is threatened. Special handling is needed so that coastal areas can be managed sustainably. Coastal areas are unique areas, because in the context of landscapes, coastal areas are places where land and ocean meet (Sugianto et al., 2024). Furthermore, coastal areas are important areas to be reviewed from various perspectives of planning and management that can overcome poverty and can improve the economy of coastal communities as well as guarantee the future of a prosperous and prosperous Indonesian nation. For this reason, the management of coastal areas needs to be carried out in the context of developing community welfare that is not optimal, by preserving the ecosystem and based on the people's economy. Resource management is an important effort to maintain resource sustainability (Hamzah et al., 2022) (*sustainability*). This is intended so that not only the current generation can enjoy the wealth of resources, but also future generations.

The State of Indonesia as a sovereign state to manage and utilize the EEZ, based on the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, strengthens the position of the Indonesian state through a clear and forward-looking marine policy because it concerns geopolitics and basic policies on marine resource management (Aulawi & Edwina, 2023). Policies regarding various breakthroughs to utilize marine resources optimally and sustainably as a competitive advantage of the nation. Given that the potential of marine resources owned by Indonesia is very large, this marine wealth must be Indonesia's competitive advantage, in fostering sustainable economic growth to improve the welfare of the Indonesian people and lead the Indonesian nation towards a just, prosperous, and independent nation.

The research gap lies in the fact that many discussions of Indonesia's EEZ focus separately on legal status, maritime disputes, fisheries violations, or geopolitical tension, while fewer studies integrate these dimensions into one normative legal analysis of the EEZ as a guarantee of Indonesia's future. Existing studies often explain the legal basis of sovereign rights, but they do not sufficiently connect those rights with long-term national survival, resource sustainability, coastal welfare, and the strategic function of law enforcement. The manuscript fills this gap by linking UNCLOS 1982, Indonesian national law, EEZ resource governance, and enforcement mechanisms such as ship inspection, arrest, judicial proceedings, and hot pursuit.

The urgency of this research is strengthened by the fact that Indonesia's EEZ contains valuable natural resources that can support national economic resilience, but these resources are vulnerable to illegal exploitation, weak surveillance, and maritime disputes. If Indonesia cannot enforce its rights effectively, the EEZ may become a space where national resources are extracted by foreign actors without sufficient benefit for Indonesian citizens. Conversely, if the EEZ is governed through strong law enforcement, sustainable resource management, and coherent maritime policy, it can support fisheries, marine industries, energy development, environmental protection, and the welfare of coastal communities. Therefore, EEZ governance is directly related to Indonesia's ability to protect present and future generations.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the EEZ as a legal, economic, and strategic guarantee for Indonesia's future under UNCLOS 1982. Rather than treating the EEZ only as a maritime boundary issue, this study positions it as a national development instrument that requires synchronization between international law, national legislation, maritime security, and sustainable resource management. The research also highlights how legal enforcement mechanisms under Article 73 and Article 111 of UNCLOS can strengthen Indonesia's position in protecting marine resources from illegal activities. In this sense, the study contributes a more integrated understanding of the EEZ as both a jurisdictional space and a foundation for national resilience.

Based on these considerations, the purpose of this research is to examine Indonesia's sovereign rights as an archipelagic state in managing and utilizing the EEZ, and to analyze whether law enforcement conducted by the Indonesian government can guarantee the protection of natural resources for the survival of the nation. The contribution of this research is expected to enrich normative legal studies on maritime law, provide conceptual clarity on Indonesia's rights and obligations under UNCLOS 1982, and offer practical insight for strengthening maritime governance. The objective is to formulate a legal analysis that connects EEZ sovereignty, resource protection, and enforcement authority, while the benefit of the study is to support policymakers, legal scholars, and maritime institutions in developing stronger strategies for securing Indonesia's marine future.

METHOD

This research used normative legal methods. According to Soejono Soekanto, normative research or also called normative law research or also called literature law research is: "Legal

research is carried out by researching literature materials or mere secondary data" (Negara, 2023). This study used secondary data. According to Johnny Ibrahim is referred to by secondary data "Data whose source is obtained from a literature review and carried out by inventorying all regulations and data related to the research object obtained from: Primary legal material, namely law that is directly related to the object of research. Secondary legal material is legal materials that provide explanations of primary legal materials. Tertiary Law is a material that provides an explanation of primary legal material and secondary legal material in the form of a legal dictionary and encyclopedia". Literature materials and secondary data as a reference in conducting related research Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as a guarantee for the future of the Indonesian nation is reviewed from the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia as an Archipelagic State in Managing the Exclusive Economic Zone

Based on the 1945 Constitution, the state of Indonesia is a Unitary State in the form of a Republic. The 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, one of the substances of which regulates a new regime in the law of the sea, namely the Archipelago State, and Indonesia has ratified the Convention on the Law of the Sea with Law Number 17 of 1985 (Kurnia & Martinelli, 2023) concerning the Ratification of the UN Convention about the Law of the Sea, then the State of Indonesia changed its status to an archipelagic State. As an implementation of Indonesia's participation in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Indonesian waters include the territorial sea of Indonesia, the waters of the Indonesian archipelago, and the inland waters of Indonesia, which includes the airspace above it, the seabed area below it according to the provisions of the Indonesian Waters Law is subject to and is under the sovereignty of the Indonesian state. Marine management as part of the management of Indonesia's natural resources. The sea requires state management efforts, especially related to the issue of sovereign rights to utilize and manage natural resources contained in the EEZ such as exploring natural resources, fishing rights and other activities that have economic value. Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which has a width of 200 nautical miles from the baseline based on the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (Djalal, 2020).

The Indonesian state's attachment to international maritime law has a basis for philosophy, theory and legal principles that bind the state to implement international maritime law in its national legal system through Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone, where the State of Indonesia has sovereign rights over the EEZ. In fact, the expansion of state rights to sovereign rights is a positive phenomenon in the manifestation of a country's sovereignty and independence.

Theoretically, it is necessary to distinguish between the two, namely that state sovereignty is full and exclusive and sovereign rights are limited to certain rights, while juridically, the meaning of the sovereign rights owned by the State of Indonesia based on the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea is the legal basis for coastal states to exercise their sovereign rights in the EEZ. The sovereignty of the Indonesian state in the international system is the recognition of another country over the country's border areas in the EEZ. To affirm the sovereign rights of the Indonesian state in the EEZ, the state has issued Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone. The sovereign rights of the Indonesian state are in the form of exploration, exploitation, conservation and management of natural resources, both biological and non-biological (Afriansyah et al., 2022), and waters above the seabed and the land below, as affirmed in Article 56 paragraph (1) of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. In the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, the state is given the sovereign right to conduct exploration and exploitation including the creation and use of

artificial islands, installations and buildings for the purposes of scientific research, the protection and preservation of the marine environment or those related to exploration and economic exploitation activities of the zone such as the potential for energy production from water, current, and wind.

The State of Indonesia, in exercising its sovereign rights and fulfilling its obligations under the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea in the EEZ, must pay due attention to the rights and obligations of other States, such as giving the right to non-coastal countries to participate in the exploitation of the appropriate share of the excess biological resources of the economic zone, as affirmed in Article 69 paragraph (1) of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. Management in the form of exploration and exploitation will be licensed to the State or foreign legal entity in accordance with the provisions of Indonesian national law or based on international agreements. The EEZ can enjoy freedom of navigation, flight and the freedom to lay submarine cables and pipelines and other legal uses of the sea according to international law, for all countries whether coastal or offshore. Coastal states in providing opportunities to other countries to utilize and manage biological resources in the EEZ must take into account all relevant factors including the internal importance of biological resources for the area for the improvement of the economy of coastal countries.

For other countries that utilize biological resources in the EEZ, they must comply with conservation measures, provisions and requirements determined by the State of Indonesia in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including:

- a. The granting of permits to fishermen, fishing vessels and their equipment, including the payment of duties and other forms of levies, can be in the form of compensation that occurs in the field of financing, equipment and technology related to the fishing industry.
- b. Determination of the types of fish that can be caught and determining the catch quota, either related to the preparation of fish types and or groups related to the type of fish for a certain period of time or the amount that can be caught by citizens of a country for a certain period of time,
- c. Setting the season and fishing area, the type, size and number of fishing gear, as well as the type, size and number of fishing vessels that may be used.
- d. General determination and size of fish and other types that can be caught.
- e. Details of the required information from the fishing vessel, including catch and catch attempt statistics as well as reports on the vessel's position.
- f. Requirements under the control and supervision of the Coastal State, the conduct of certain fisheries research programs and arrangements for the implementation of such research, including the taking of catch samples, the disposition of such samples and the reporting of related scientific data.
- g. Placement of observers or trainees on board by the Coastal State.
- h. Terms and conditions related to joint ventures or arrangements of Cooperation
- i. The reduction of all or part of the catch by the ship at the Port of the Coastal State.
- j. Terms and conditions relate to joint ventures or other Cooperation arrangements.
- k. The provisions and regulations relate to joint ventures or other joint venture arrangements, requirements for personnel training and transfer of fisheries technology, including the enhancement of coastal States' ability to conduct fisheries research.

Management of stocks of the same type of fish or stocks of fish belonging to the same type and long-migratory fish types (*highly migratory species*) in the EEZ of two or more Coastal States, countries must directly through sub-regional organizations and international organizations try to reach agreement on the actions necessary to coordinate and ensure the conservation and development of fish stocks. The policy of the Indonesian government with Presidential Regulation Number 15 of 1984 stipulates that the biological natural resources in the EEZ are used to develop Indonesia's fisheries business, and any foreign legal entity can be

given the opportunity to make catches as long as the person/legal entity engaged in Indonesian fisheries has not been able to fully utilize the number of catches allowed. Each person/legal entity that is allowed to fish in the ZEEI is determined by the Minister of Agriculture who determines the number of catches allowed based on the results of research, surveys, evaluations and/or the results of fishing activities. In addition, the Minister of Agriculture determines the allocation of the number of fishing vessel units and the type of fishing gear from each vessel by taking into account the number of catches allowed.

The sustainable use of marine resources in the EEZ can improve the welfare of the community, especially for those living in coastal areas (Mugijayani et al., 2023), such as:

1. Increase fishermen's income By optimizing fisheries management and implementing environmentally friendly fishing technology, fishermen can increase their catches and incomes. This can also encourage the creation of a more advanced fish processing industry, so that the added value of fishery products is higher.
2. Opening new jobs, namely The development of the marine tourism and marine energy sector will open up new job opportunities in various fields, such as tourism management, tour guides, marine energy technicians, and marine researchers. This will reduce the unemployment rate and improve people's living standards.
3. Improving the quality of life, namely the sustainable use of marine resources, can also improve the quality of life of the community. For example, by maintaining the cleanliness of the sea and its ecosystems, people will avoid various diseases caused by pollution. In addition, infrastructure development in coastal areas will also increase access to education, health, and transportation.

Law enforcement carried out by the Government of Indonesia to be able to guarantee the natural resources contained in the exclusive economic zone area

The State of Indonesia as a coastal state in exercising its sovereign rights to the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone (ZEEI) can take actions in the form of boarding ships, inspecting, arresting and conducting judicial proceedings based on Article 73 paragraph (1) of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (Diani et al., 2022), this is necessary to ensure obedience or compliance with laws and regulations as a form of law enforcement action. The Government of Indonesia can also take action Momentary chase (*Hot pursuit*) against a foreign vessel when the authorities have sufficient grounds to suspect that the vessel violates the laws of the Indonesian state, as stipulated in Article 111 of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. This immediate pursuit action is a form of law enforcement of coastal countries such as Indonesia. *Right of Hot Pursuit* as the right of each coastal country to carry out immediate pursuit actions against foreign vessels that are suspected of violating the laws and regulations of the coastal country. The pursuit must begin, when the offending vessel is in inland waters, territorial seas, or ZEEIs, and should only continue into the high seas if it is carried out continuously (*continuous*). If the pursuit is interrupted or the ship enters the territorial waters of its own country or a third country, the right of pursuit is forfeited (Lee, 2025).

Reason enough to think that the foreign ship violated the ZEEI based on Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone as a form of implementation Article 73 paragraph (1) of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, where acts or acts that fall into the category of crimes in ZEEI, namely:

1. Conducting exploration and/or exploitation of natural resources or other activities, in the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone, without permission from the Government of the Republic of Indonesia or based on international agreement with the Government of Indonesia and carried out in accordance with the requirements of international licensing or approval, as affirmed in Article 5 paragraph (1) of Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone.

2. Creating and/or using artificial islands, installations or other buildings in the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone, without permission from the Government of Indonesia as affirmed in Article 6 of Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone.
3. Conducting scientific research activities in the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone without prior approval from and carried out based on the conditions set by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia.
- d. Committing actions that cause environmental damage or environmental pollution within the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone can be threatened with criminal charges according to Article 16 paragraph (3) of Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone.

The government has taken law enforcement actions against ships entering the EEZ, without permission from the Indonesian government or without international agreement with the Government of Indonesia and not carried out according to the requirements of international licensing or approval. Based on data from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) reveals that:

"In the period from January to November 2025, as many as 41 units of ships were successfully secured in the operation to supervise illegal *fishing* in the North Natuna Sea area, Riau Islands".

The arrest of ships and/or persons suspected of committing violations in Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone includes the act of stopping the ship until the surrender of the ship and/or persons at the port where the case can be further processed. The court authorized to adjudicate violations of the provisions of this law is the district court whose jurisdiction includes the port where the detention of the ship and/or persons is carried out. If it is legally and convincingly proven that the competent district court can impose a criminal sanction of a fine of up to Rp. 225,000,000,- (Nursalim et al., 2024) (two hundred and twenty-five million rupiah), if it violates Article 5 paragraph (1) and Article 6 of Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning the Exclusive Economic Zone of Indonesia, as affirmed in Article 16 paragraph (1) of Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning the Exclusive Economic Zone of Indonesia and if it violates the provisions of Article 16 paragraph (3) of Law Number 5 of 1983 concerning the Exclusive Economic Zone of Indonesia in the field of environment, then Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management is applied. The Government of Indonesia may also take special action in the form of burning or sinking foreign fishing vessels or foreign-flagged vessels without permission (Merdekawati et al., 2021) or based on sufficient preliminary evidence to enter the EEZ area, based on Article 64 paragraph (4) of Law Number 45 of 2009 concerning Amendments to Law Number 31 of 2004 concerning Fisheries.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) plays a strategic role in guaranteeing the nation's future through the protection, management, and sustainable utilization of marine resources under the framework of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982). Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic state, possesses sovereign rights to explore, exploit, conserve, and manage biological and non-biological resources within its EEZ in accordance with Article 56 of UNCLOS 1982. The study demonstrates that the implementation of these sovereign rights is essential for strengthening national sovereignty, improving coastal community welfare, supporting economic resilience, and maintaining maritime security. In addition, the Indonesian government has legal authority to conduct maritime law enforcement actions such as ship inspections, arrests, judicial proceedings, and hot pursuit against foreign vessels violating Indonesian maritime regulations. These enforcement mechanisms are important to prevent illegal fishing, resource exploitation, environmental degradation, and other transnational

maritime crimes that threaten Indonesia's maritime interests and long-term sustainability. This research also emphasizes that effective EEZ governance requires stronger integration between international maritime law, national regulations, institutional coordination, and sustainable marine resource management (Suwarno et al., 2021). Although Indonesia already possesses a strong legal basis under UNCLOS 1982 and national legislation, challenges related to maritime boundary disputes, illegal fishing activities, weak surveillance systems, and limited law enforcement capacity still need to be addressed comprehensively. Therefore, future research is recommended to focus on the effectiveness of Indonesia's maritime enforcement institutions, the role of maritime technology and digital surveillance in EEZ protection, comparative studies of EEZ governance among ASEAN countries, and the socio-economic impact of EEZ management on coastal communities. Future studies may also adopt empirical or interdisciplinary approaches to examine how maritime diplomacy, environmental sustainability, and blue economy policies can contribute to strengthening Indonesia's position as a global maritime nation.

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