

## Maritime Humanity Concept for Strengthening National Interests in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of Maritime Humanity as a framework for reinforcing national interests in Indonesia. In light of Indonesia's strategic position as an archipelagic state with vast maritime resources, the paper argues that embracing a Maritime Humanity perspective is crucial for strengthening national identity and advancing national interests. The study examines how this concept can enhance Indonesia's geopolitical standing, foster economic growth, and ensure sustainable management of marine resources. By integrating historical, cultural, and economic dimensions of Indonesia's maritime heritage, the paper provides a comprehensive analysis of how Maritime Humanity can contribute to national cohesion and resilience. It further discusses policy implications and strategies for leveraging maritime values to promote Indonesia's interests on the global stage, emphasizing the need for a unified approach to maritime governance and international diplomacy. Through this exploration, the paper aims to offer insights into how Indonesia can effectively harness its maritime potential to secure its national interests and achieve long-term prosperity

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## INTRODUCTION

One form of the success of the Indonesian nation and state is the vast and abundant maritime resources that can be utilized by the broader community, especially in coastal areas. The "Nawacita" program, initiated by President Joko Widodo, emphasizes the rise and strengthening of Indonesia's identity as a maritime nation. Therefore, it is crucial to nurture and empower a resilient maritime community as a manifestation of national defense to ensure the continuity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) toward becoming a global maritime axis.

The responsibility for safeguarding and securing waters and outer islands is not solely the duty of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and other security agencies; it is an absolute responsibility of society at large. This is articulated in Law No. 3 of 2002, Article 9, Paragraph 1, concerning National Defense, which states, "Every citizen has the right and obligation to participate in efforts to defend the state, realized in the implementation of national defense." Therefore, the concept of national defense aimed at empowering the maritime community in Indonesia also deserves attention. External threats may challenge the integrity of the nation and state, making the empowerment of the maritime community urgent to build awareness of national defense in order to counter all forms of external threats.

National interests are closely related to state power as both a goal and an instrument, particularly in destructive (hard power) contexts. When national interests aim to pursue power and that power is used as an instrument to achieve national interests, the consequence in an international system perceived as anarchic except for its own power – is competition, the emergence of a balance of power, conflict, and war. Another aspect of national interest pursued through persuasive means involves the use of public diplomacy (PD), particularly in the more specific realms of tourism and cultural diplomacy. The concept of a maritime community is part of national interests, especially in maritime affairs. The maritime community possesses unique attributes for diplomacy as a form of soft power, both in maintaining security and in promoting the prosperity of coastal communities through education that advances maritime values.

National interest, in the context of both hard and soft power, is inseparable from the state's ability to project influence internally and externally. In a realist sense, when national interest is framed as the pursuit of power, competition and conflict are inevitable in an anarchic international system (Morgenthau, 2006). However, Indonesia's strategic approach also involves public diplomacy, especially through tourism, cultural diplomacy, and educational outreach in coastal regions. These instruments represent the application of soft power, wherein the maritime community serves as a medium of cultural and diplomatic engagement (Nye, 2004; Sukma, 2011).

The maritime community, with its rich local wisdom, historical connection to the sea, and embedded values of cooperation and resilience, possesses strategic diplomatic assets. Community-based tourism, sustainable marine economy initiatives, and education on maritime literacy are part of a larger framework to integrate maritime values into national identity and global representation

(Farhan & Pramono, 2020). The empowerment of maritime communities thus intersects with three strategic dimensions: (1) national defense through civilian participation, (2) economic growth through sustainable blue economy practices, and (3) international diplomacy via cultural exchange and soft power projection.

## **LITERATURE RIVIEW**

### **The Concept of Maritime Humanity**

The concept of Maritime Humanity has not been extensively discussed in academic literature. However, it can be understood as an approach that places human values within the context of maritime life. In the Indonesian context, this concept may encompass an understanding of the relationship between humans and the sea, maritime culture, and the role of the ocean in shaping national identity. As the largest archipelagic country in the world, Indonesia has a deep historical and cultural connection to the sea, which is reflected in various social and cultural practices of coastal communities.

### **National Identity and Maritime Vision**

Indonesia's national identity as a maritime nation has long been an integral part of its national development. The concept of Wawasan Nusantara (Archipelagic Outlook) or Maritime Vision emphasizes the importance of the sea as a unifying element of the nation and a strategic resource. Sulistiyono (2016) asserts that the maritime paradigm needs to be revitalized in order to optimize national development by positioning the sea at the center of national identity and development strategies.

### **Maritime Diplomacy and National Interests**

Indonesia's maritime diplomacy plays a significant role in strengthening the country's position on the international stage. Hanggarini et al. (2022) argue that Indonesia's maritime culture can serve as an effective soft power instrument in diplomacy, helping to build a positive image and strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations. In addition, the sustainable management of marine resources through a blue economy approach is also a key focus in advancing national interests.

### **Blue Economy and Sustainable Development**

The concept of the blue economy emphasizes the sustainable utilization of marine resources to support economic growth. Research by Bhayangkara et al. (2020) shows that the blue economy has a significant impact on national economic growth, highlighting the importance of business innovation and environmental sustainability in marine resource exploitation.

### **Indonesia's Maritime History and Culture**

Indonesia's maritime history and culture are fundamental in building national identity. Research by Saputra et al. (2021) reveals that the social and cultural dimensions of Indonesia's maritime tradition include traditional ecological knowledge and the resilience mechanisms of island communities, which contribute to the development of maritime defense and national resilience.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative method through literature studies, where the researcher relies on various sources to obtain research data. A qualitative approach is utilized because the resulting data consists of words or descriptions. Literature research, or library research, focuses on written works or literature. In this study, research is conducted by utilizing related or similar studies (Purwanto, 2008:168). Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Culture and Character of the Maritime Community**

Foreign migrants often refer to their homeland as "motherland," which, when translated into Indonesian, is more accurately understood as "bumi pertiwi" or "ibu pertiwi." This term may originate from the worship of a universal fertility goddess. While the ancestors of the Indonesian people also practiced such worship, it is more fitting to refer to their birthplace as "tanah air," considering the diverse ethnic groups of Indonesia that inhabit islands surrounded by vast oceans.

The Republic of Indonesia, as an archipelagic nation, is characterized by its diversity of ethnicities, languages, and cultures. Physically, one culture is separated from another by the sea. However, this separation should not be viewed from a maritime perspective, as all the waters of the archipelago serve as a unifying force that integrates the thousands of scattered islands.

The maritime community generally comprises a large portion of the population engaged in marine resource-based livelihoods, such as fishing, aquaculture, sand mining, and maritime transport. The education levels of coastal residents are also relatively low. The living conditions in coastal communities, particularly among fishermen, are often poorly organized and appear slum-like. Given the socio-economic conditions of these communities, which are relatively low in terms of welfare, long-term pressure on coastal resources will increase as they strive to meet their needs. Therefore, the following are the characteristics and traits of the maritime community:

1. Strongly influenced by the type of activities, for example, fishing practices such as capture fisheries, aquaculture, and fisheries management are predominantly carried out.
2. Heavily influenced by environmental factors, seasons, and markets. The social structure is still simple and has not been significantly penetrated by outside parties. This is due to the relatively homogeneous culture, way of life, and activities within the community, where individuals feel they share common interests and responsibilities in enforcing and overseeing the agreed-upon laws. This tends to result in relatively low levels of education and welfare.

3. The majority of coastal resident's work as fishermen. Fisherman is an individual citizen of Indonesia or a corporation whose livelihood or business involves catching fish, particularly in maritime areas.

### **Concept of the Maritime Community**

The concept of the maritime community refers to social units that fully or largely depend on their social and economic lives directly or indirectly on the utilization of marine resources and maritime services. These units include working groups such as fishing and sailing communities, the Navy and maritime security task forces, miners, traders, and entrepreneurs in the seafood industry, as well as tourism industrial areas. Each of these groups has specific functions that begin with the utilization of marine resources, security, and protection, as well as in the tourism enhancement sector (Maynar, S., 2017).

With the characteristic of open access, ownership is not regulated, allowing anyone to utilize the resources freely. This often leads to conflicts over spatial and resource utilization during regional development, as well as increased risks of environmental degradation and greater externality issues due to limited management regulations.

The sea itself serves as a venue for livelihood for maritime communities. Initially, the community's goal was to find and sustain life, but ultimately, they also aim to develop welfare, or in other words, to build prosperity and wealth from maritime activities in pursuit of national goals. The sea becomes a unifying medium for the nation, as it facilitates interaction among people from various nations through diverse activities. Through the sea, individuals engage in economic activities via maritime services across continents or between islands. Thus, all matters related to the advancement of the maritime world deserve to be empowered.

Indonesia's maritime economic potential is immense, yet it remains underutilized. In the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025–2045, the government emphasizes the importance of a paradigm shift and strong commitment in recognizing the role of the sea in national development. The fair, modern, and sustainable management of marine resources is key to improving public welfare. In the maritime community, including in Indonesia, various sectors and subsectors of the maritime economy have emerged, giving rise to different social segments or categories such as miners, industrial workers, tourism managers and employees, marines, academics/researchers, bureaucrats, and others. The growth of these economic sectors and services with their respective segments requires corresponding developments and changes in institutional frameworks and regulations.

Another tangible form of empowerment is the motorization of fishing boats to enhance business operations, supported by advanced marine fisheries technology, along with the development of human resources within the maritime community itself. This will positively impact the maritime community in exploring existing marine resources and reducing the risks of conflicts among fishermen, as well as addressing their economic vulnerabilities. Empowerment itself means creating opportunities for the maritime community to identify their needs, plan, and implement their activities, ultimately fostering permanent

independence in their lives. Thus, the spirit of national defense integrated with forms of empowerment for the maritime community at every level will ensure the integrity of the nation and state of Indonesia, helping to uphold the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and Indonesia's existence on the international stage.

These debates are also related to fundamental issues regarding the concept of Indonesia as a maritime nation, which remains more of a discourse than a practical reality in governance. This has led to numerous desires to establish Indonesia as a maritime nation, yet these aspirations are not supported by a clear conceptual and legal foundation. The lack of a well-defined conceptual framework has caused the strategy for building Indonesia as a maritime nation to face challenges. Senior international law expert Hasyim Djalal has stated that, to this day, Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic country in the world, has not succeeded in becoming a maritime nation, indicated by its inability to fully utilize the potential marine resources available.

The maritime paradigm in politics at the very least includes ideological foundations, governance systems, and defense and security. A prosperous maritime Indonesia in the future requires a clear ideological basis. In this regard, aligned with the commitments of the founding fathers who established Pancasila as the ideology of the Indonesian nation, it remains and will continue to be relevant in the future. Pancasila ideally weaves together all aspects of life—personal, societal, and national—including belief systems, humanity, nationalism, democratic governance, and social justice in communal life. All these aspects are essential for building a shared life as a national community.

The maritime paradigm, or what might also be referred to as the vision of maritime affairs as described above, will influence how Indonesia is defined as a maritime nation. Many people have held a dichotomous view that contrasts land and sea aspects. In reality, building Indonesia should mean developing the maritime sector. Developing the land on the islands is merely a small part of the broader goal of building Indonesia as a maritime nation. Therefore, an integrative way of thinking is necessary, one that synergizes maritime and island aspects, similar to what great maritime nations have done throughout history.

A maritime nation suitable for Indonesia is one that can build its maritime strength, encompassing merchant shipping, maritime defense and security capabilities, and advancements in maritime technology to synergistically utilize its potential—both land and sea—within the framework of geopolitical dynamics to achieve national prosperity and glory. With this maritime strength, Indonesia will be able to optimally harness its own resources, including natural resources (both islands and seas), human resources, political resources, and cultural resources, as well as leverage the potential arising from its strategic geopolitical environment to attain national greatness.

It is important to remember that as a maritime nation, the territory of the NKRI (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) is both a container and a content that consists of seas with islands within them. Just as the great maritime empires of the archipelago produced various commodities on the islands primarily for international maritime trade, as well as for their own needs, the maritime

paradigm outlined above must be translated and realized in the fields of politics, law, governance, and national defense and security systems. In other words, the political, legal, governance, and national defense and security systems must be oriented towards developing Indonesia as a maritime nation.

### **Maritime Transport Fleet**

The merchant shipping fleet is one of the most important factors for the economic development of an advanced maritime nation. Ownership of a fleet of ships is crucial for a maritime country. Unfortunately, a troubling situation is currently unfolding in Indonesia. For example, in 2005, only about 53 percent of domestic shipping and 3.4 percent of international shipping were still in the hands of Indonesian national companies. This figure has tended to decline further (Kamaluddin, 2005: 37). From a macroeconomic perspective, efficient inter-island and international trade served by domestic shipping companies will prevent foreign exchange outflows.

Meanwhile, it is vital for a maritime nation to have a strong navy and maritime police patrols (maritime fighting instruments) to secure its waters from all types of criminal activities and political and military expansion by foreign countries. The authority of a maritime nation depends on this capability. Patrol vessels that are unable to pursue illegal fishing boats represent a form of degradation of a maritime nation's authority.

Indonesia actually has the potential to become a major maritime nation. Alfred Thayer Mahan (1965) argued that there are six conditions necessary to become a great maritime nation: geographical position, characteristics of land and coast, territorial extent, population size, character of the population, and character of the government. Among these six conditions, it may be the fifth and sixth that Indonesia has yet to fully develop: the character of the population and the character of the government. Therefore, the maritime paradigm needs to be applied not only to political and economic development but also to the development of maritime social and cultural aspects, which have suffered during colonial dominance.

There is a need for the socialization and internalization of maritime values in the social and cultural life of the Indonesian people. Maritime social and cultural development can be carried out through both formal and informal education, which serve as mediums for socializing and internalizing maritime history and cultural values. Additionally, laying a cultural foundation can be achieved through the revitalization and strengthening of social institutions that are already rooted in society. Similarly, the creation of modern institutions that function as think tanks for maritime development is also necessary. Thus, both the government and the people have equally important roles in the social and cultural development of a great maritime nation in the future.

Indonesia is a political unity that binds together thousands of islands and hundreds of ethnic groups. This reflects the dynamic development of relationships among islands, ethnic groups, and nations that have played a crucial role in the formation of the Indonesian nation. In this context, the sea, with all its forms of transportation, serves as the main means of connection. Through these maritime links, indigenous rulers from various regions of Indonesia established

relationships with outside parties. From these interactions, activities such as exchange, trade, and cultural encounters emerged, leading to increasingly advanced civilizations and enriched local cultures. The manifestation of cultural progress can be seen in the growth of coastal cities with their ports, which became centers of trade dynamics, shipping, maritime technology, and political power.

Thus, through the study of maritime history, students can gain wisdom about maritime values that strengthen cross-cultural communication, which serves as a solid foundation for the integration of the Indonesian nation as a maritime country in the future.

### **Indonesia's National Interests**

The foreign policy of each country is always aimed at achieving its national interests. According to Plano and Olton (1999) in the Dictionary of International Relations, every foreign policy is designed to reach national goals. National interest is a vital concept for every country, as the essence of a state's existence is to achieve its national interests. Hans J. Morgenthau (2010) in his book *Politics Among Nations* defines national interest as the minimum capacity of a nation-state to protect its physical identity (territory), political identity (political economic regime), and cultural identity (ethnic, linguistic, historical norms) from the interference of other states or nations. Meanwhile, Holsti (1987) in *International Politics: A Framework Analysis* states that a country's foreign policy goals must be specific and tailored to the needs of the state or national interests. Holsti then identifies national interests in three classifications.

First, core values, which are considered vital for the state and pertain to the existence of a country, in this case, sovereignty. Second, middle-range objectives, which relate to the need to develop or enhance the country's economy. Third, long-range goals, which refer to long-term interests that are ideal in nature, such as the desire to achieve world peace and order.

According to Jack C. Plano and Roy Olton (1999: 7), the concept of national interest is defined as the struggle to achieve and maintain power through political actions. National interests, according to Plano and Olton (1999), consist of elements that include self-preservation, independence, territorial integrity, military security, and economic well-being. The definitions and elements of national interest proposed by these three scholars essentially share the same substance.

Based on this understanding, this paper aims to explore three main aspects of Indonesia's national interests in the formation of the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF). First, interests related to national identity, particularly as an archipelagic state. Second, interests related to maritime territorial integrity, which is closely tied to the dimension of sovereignty as a substantial core value for the state. Third, interests related to maritime economic well-being, which Holsti identifies as the medium-term interests of a state. These three aspects will be elaborated upon in the discussion of this paper.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The spirit of promoting and the awareness that Indonesia is a maritime nation must continue to be implemented in government policies and the tangible activities of all citizens. It is unfortunate that at the level of implementation in the field and among the general population, there is still a lack of awareness as a

maritime nation. Support for the concept of national defense can be understood in a non-physical sense, defined as all efforts to advance society, especially the maritime community in Indonesia. With a maritime community aimed at seeking and sustaining livelihoods, they ultimately also aim to develop welfare, or in other words, to build prosperity and wealth from maritime activities in order to achieve national goals. For future research, the concept of maritime humanity can be explored further through comparative studies within more inclusive societies, with broader research scope and deeper analysis and methodology. This would contribute to advancing maritime-themed research and enhancing maritime literacy in Indonesia.

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