# The Role of Government in The Agrarian Conflict Rempang Island Government Communication and Political Ecology Perspective

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### Abstract

This article aims to examine the role of the government in the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island involving the indigenous people of Rempang Island and to analyze the occurrence of the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island from the perspective of government communication and the impacts caused by the conflict from the perspective of political ecology. Rempang Island, whose territory is rich in natural resources, has become the centre of tension between indigenous people and interested parties in using land and natural resources. This conflict was triggered by the overlap between the Rempang Eco City development project and the rights of indigenous people to customary land or customary land. The government has a vital role in resolving agrarian conflicts, such as making policy breakthroughs by forming a team tasked with accelerating conflict resolution and strengthening agrarian reform policies. Conflict resolution carried out by the government also involves litigation and non-litigation disputes. The government has attempted to resolve the conflict non-litigationally through negotiation. Where in the negotiation, the government has decided to handle the chaos by way of compensation in the form of a plot of land measuring 500 square meters with a type 45 house as a new residence with complete and temporary facilities, living costs of Rp1.034.636 per individual for each family card, provision of vocational school scholarships for children of the Rempang community who have achievements, and compensation for assets owned by the Rempang community. The government is expected to overcome tensions and create equitable solutions through fair law enforcement and appropriate land redistribution policies. From the perspective of government communication, the main focus is on the dialogue, mediation, and communication carried out by the government to resolve the conflict. At the same time, political ecology examines the impact of environmental conditions, indigenous peoples and socio-politics on the Rempang ecological area. By understanding the role of the government in agrarian conflicts and from the perspective of government communication and political ecology, this study contributes to formulating recommendations for more equitable and sustainable policies. Keywords: Agrarian conflict; Government role; Political ecology; Government communication

#### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran pemerintah terhadap konflik agraria di Pulau Rempang yang melibatkan masyarakat adat Pulau Rempang, serta menganalisis terjadinya konflik agraria Pulau Rempang dalam perspektif komunikasi pemerintahan dan dampak yang ditimbulkan konflik dalam perspektif ekologi politik. Pulau Rempang yang wilayahnya kaya akan sumber daya alam menjadi pusat ketegangan antara masyarakat adat dan pihak yang berkepentingan dalam pemanfaatan wilayah lahan serta sumber daya alam. Konflik ini dipicu oleh tumpang tindih antara proyek pembangunan Rempang Eco City dan hak dari masyarakat adat atas tanah ulayat atau tanah adat. Pemerintah memiliki peran penting dalam menyelesaikan konflik agraria seperti membuat terobosan kebijakan dengan membentuk tim yang bertugas untuk mempercepat penyelesaian konflik serta mengukuhkan kebijakan reforma agraria. Penyelesaian konflik yang dilakukan pemerintah juga melalui sengketa litigasi dan non-litigasi. Pemerintah telah berupaya menyelesaikan konflik secara non-litigasi berupa negosiasi. Dimana dalam negosiasi tersebut pemerintah telah mengambil keputusan untuk menangani kekisruhan dengan cara ganti rugi berupa sebidang tanah seluas 500 meter persegi dengan rumah bertype 45 sebagai tempat tinggal baru dengan fasilitas lengkap dan sementara, biaya hidup Rp 1.034.636 per individu setiap kartu keluarga, pemberian beasiswa sekolah kejuruan bagi anak-anak masyarakat Rempang yang memiliki prestasi, serta kompensasi aset-aset yang dimiliki masyarakat Rempang. Melalui penegakan hukum yang adil dan kebijakan redestribusi tanah yang tepat, pemerintah diharapkan mampu mengatasi ketegangan dan menciptakan solusi yang berkeadilan. Dalam perpsektif komunikasi pemerintahan fokus utama adalah pada upaya dialog, mediasi dan komunikasi yang dilakukan pemerintah dalam menyelesaikan konflik. Sementara ekologi politik melihat bagaimana dampak pada kondisi lingkungan, masyarakat adat serta sosial politik terhadap kawasan lingkungan Rempang. Dengan memahami peran dari pemerintah terhadap konflik agraria serta dalam perspektif komunikasi pemerintahan dan ekologi politik, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi untuk merumuskan rekomendasi kebijakan yang lebih berkeadilan dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: konflik agraria; peran pemerintah; ekologi politik; komunikasi pemerintahan

### INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people are a group of people who have lived in a particular area for generations and have ties of kinship or blood relations with ancestors or ancestors. Indigenous peoples in a particular area have full sovereignty over the land and natural resource wealth. Indigenous peoples are part of the history of the Indonesian nation. Therefore, their existence must be protected (Nurtresna et al., 2023). The existence of indigenous communities in Indonesia has been recognized and protected in statutory regulations, contained in article 18B section 2, which reads, "The state recognizes and respects customary law communities and their traditional rights and units as long as they still exist by the development of society and principles from the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia as regulated in law" (Gunawan, 2021). Even though indigenous peoples have been recognized and protected by legal regulations, currently, indigenous peoples are not free from agrarian conflicts, which result in disputes between indigenous peoples and the government or companies.

Agrarian conflict is a land conflict. Land is the most critical asset in people's lives because it is a source of life. As an agricultural country, Indonesia relies on land as a source of production, so there are regulations regarding land use rights, ownership rights, rental rights, land clearing rights, rights to collect forest products, use rights, and building use rights, which are regulated and limited inRepublic of Indonesia Law Number 5 of 1960 concerning Basic Agrarian Principles (Adiansah, et al., 2019). Land is not only a source of life for society but also encompasses all environmental, cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions, so it has a unique position in society (Safitri & Hamid, 2023). The agrarian conflict in the middle of the current government is increasingly intense and aimed at improving the community's economic welfare. Agrarian conflicts in the current reform era are undeniably dominated by conflicts between the community and the government or companies (Fahrimal & Safpuriyadi, 2018).

Based on the records of the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA) in the 2021 Agrarian Conflict and Policy Situation Report, it was reported that there were 207 conflict eruptions in 32 provinces spread across 507 villages and cities. As a result of the conflict incidents, 198,895 families (KK) were affected as victims, with an area of land in conflict of ½ million hectares or around 500,062.58 hectares (KPA, 2021). The eruption of agrarian conflicts in 2021 has become a task or note for the government. This condition indicates that agrarian conflicts are increasingly targeting areas where communities live, densely populated areas and where communities have controlled, cultivated (managed) and managed land. This report pays special attention to the three sectors that contributed the most to conflict in 2021, namely the plantation sector, the infrastructure development sector and the mining sector. So, the resolution of agrarian conflicts in Indonesia must involve the active participation of all related parties,

including local indigenous communities, the role of the government and companies. Undeniably, the eruption of agrarian conflicts is likely to increase yearly.

Agrarian conflicts in the Indonesian archipelago continue to persist. According to the 2022 End-of-Year Report (Catatan Akhir Tahun, or Catahu) published by the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria/KPA), there were at least 212 agrarian conflict eruptions reported throughout the year. Although this figure represents an increase of five cases compared to 2021, efforts toward resolution have stagnated, and the scope of the conflicts appears to be expanding. In 2022, the plantation sector remained the leading contributor to agrarian conflicts, continuing a trend that has persisted for over a decade. The KPA recorded 99 agrarian conflict cases in the plantation sector, affecting approximately 377,197 hectares of land and impacting 141,001 households—with the palm oil industry accounting for the majority of these cases. The National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) identified agrarian conflict as the most frequently reported human rights issue. Atnike Nova Sigiro, Chairperson of Komnas HAM, stated that many of these conflicts are the result of government policies and poor agrarian governance, indicating that such policies often fail to align with human rights principles. Agus Widjayanto, Director General of Agrarian Conflict Resolution, Spatial Use, and Land Affairs at the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN), affirmed the Ministry's commitment to addressing agrarian conflicts. He noted the formation of a special task force involving non-governmental organizations, including the KPA, to facilitate collaborative conflict resolution.

One of the cases that is currently being discussed both on social media and directly is the agrarian conflict between the government and the indigenous people of Rempang Island, Batam. If we look at the phenomena regarding the conflict, it was caused by the indigenous people of Rempang Island rejecting the relocation of residential areas for the Rempang Eco City project, which is included in the National Strategic Project (PSN). The project will displace 16 old villages in the project environment (Sakti, 2023). The relocation disrupts the livelihoods of indigenous people as fishermen. The fishermen fear losing their livelihood due to the Rempang Eco-City development project (Trianita, 2023). The impact of agrarian conflict in Rempang affects not only the community but also the environment and socio-politics in the Rempang area. The plan for the Rempang Eco-City development project has been around since 2004. The government has collaborated with the private sector through the Batam Business Agency and the Batam City Government in implementing the cooperation (cnnindonesia.com, 2023). It should be noted that the land used in this project is Kampung Tua land, and the land owners are indigenous people who rely on natural resources for their livelihood (Ismail et al., 2024). The development of the

Rempang Eco City project, which ignores the interests of indigenous peoples, is the beginning of a very crucial conflict in the current agrarian conflict.

If resolved immediately, Agrarian conflicts can avoid triggering political instability in the region and causing distrust of the government. So, conflict management sometimes requires intervention from higher parties. Therefore, conflict resolution must be a top priority in improving the social and political situation in the region (Aryan Firdaus, 2023). From the perspective of government communication, the agrarian conflict of the indigenous people of Rempang Island certainly looks at the communication process from the central government or local government to the community. If we look at the conflict in Rempang, there are problems with communication from the government that result in miscommunication of information received by the indigenous people of Rempang Island. So, in the agrarian conflict of the indigenous people of Rempang Island, communication from the government can also trigger conflict if it is not delivered correctly and does not involve the community. In the paradigm of government communication, viewed from a theoretical and pragmatic perspective, there are three aspects of governance: structural, procedural, and cultural (Erliana, 2010). For this reason, both the central and regional governments must share responsibility for resolving agrarian conflicts in their respective jurisdictions (Azizah Raja, 2019).

Not only from the perspective of government communication, the agrarian conflict of the indigenous people of Rempang Island in this study is also viewed from the perspective of political ecology. They were seeing what kind of impact the agrarian conflict caused in terms of political ecology. If viewed from the agrarian conflict of indigenous peoples on Rempang Island, of course, it has an impact in terms of the environment, indigenous peoples and socio-politics in the Rempang area. From the perspective of political ecology, the agrarian conflict of indigenous peoples on Rempang Island can result in environmental changes and damage. The impacts of environmental damage include the loss of natural habitat, environmental damage that impacts community discomfort and even the health of people around the area is also disturbed. Not only are ecological changes and damage caused by agrarian conflicts, but they also cause social tensions among the communities involved. This social tension can arise due to differences in interests, discriminatory actions, and physical or psychological violence. The social stress caused by agrarian conflicts negatively impacts social relations between communities in the area. Of course, this has dramatically influenced environmental changes on Rempang Island. However, it is not only the environment seen in agrarian conflicts but also the relationship between humans and their environment. Nowadays, it is often found that environmental management is not in line with environmental conservation efforts. The reason is to encourage economic growth and investment. The government facilitates various actions

and even has to sacrifice ecological areas to be relocated to industrial, trade or tourism areas (Habiba et al., 2023).

From the background above, it is undoubtedly exciting to look further into the Rempang agrarian conflict regarding the role of the government, government communication and political ecology. This will explain the occurrence of the Rempang agrarian conflict when viewed from government communication and the impacts caused by the agrarian conflict from a political ecology perspective. The Rempang agrarian conflict affects not only the environment but also the socio-political and local communities whose areas are affected by the conflict. Therefore, the government's strategy to resolve the Rempang Island agrarian conflict is essential. Because the government has a role in regulating and supervising the use of natural resources, maintaining a balance between the interests of indigenous peoples and industry is often challenging. To achieve a fair and sustainable solution, there needs to be intensive dialogue and participation from all parties involved. Thus, it can build an adequate framework to handle this conflict in the future, involving all parties sustainably while respecting indigenous peoples' rights and maintaining environmental sustainability (Sari et al., 2023).

The importance of this article is to find out and analyze the agrarian conflict of Indigenous peoples on Rempang Island in terms of government communication and political ecology and the role of the government in handling the agrarian conflict. This article is essential because it examines the role of the government and the impact of the agrarian conflict of Indigenous peoples on Rempang Island from a political ecology perspective and how the agrarian conflict of Rempang occurs from the standpoint of government communication. The results of this study are to prove whether the agrarian conflict of Indigenous peoples on Rempang Island has an impact on the environmental area, Indigenous peoples and socio-politics in the area affected by the conflict from the perspective of political ecology and whether the occurrence of the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island also comes from poor government communication, resulting in miscommunication between the government and Indigenous peoples. Moreover, to see what the role or strategy of the government is in handling the agrarian conflict of indigenous peoples on Rempang Island.

The benefit of this research is that it can be used as input for studies in agrarian conflict. They are expected to contribute positively to understanding and resolving agrarian conflicts by paying attention to the aspects of the role of government, political ecology and underlying government communication.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Environmentalism**

This research uses environmentalism theory. Environmentalism is environmental protection, which includes efforts to balance the human environment and the diversity of other living creatures in that environment. This balance is essential because humans are very dependent on the environment. Environmentalism is a social movement led by environmentalists. This movement tries by all means, without violence, from street actions and political lobbying to public education to protect natural resources and ecosystems (Paterson, 2005). Environmentalism includes social and political movements that aim to preserve, restore, and improve the quality of life through public education, advocating lifestyle changes, improving community planning, economic change, and government policy reform (Munggoro & Armansyah, 2008). Environmentalism is considered a social movement because of its involvement with living organisms, especially humans, and a political movement because of its focus on addressing environmental problems through government policy. The concept of environmentalism is closely related to the process of sustainable development (Lestari, 2018).

Sustainable development aims to achieve modernity and follow globalization trends. The continued growth of industrialization aims to achieve modernity, ultimately impacting environmental problems. The relationship between environment and development cannot be separated; each has a different influence. Conceptually, environmentalism can be linked to Mark's ideas, which identify class conflict as a social problem. On environmental issues, resistance emerges from bourgeois groups closely related to the capitalist system. The exploitation carried out by the bourgeoisie leads to environmental impacts. Industrialization driven by the bourgeoisie often marginalized the proletariat while simultaneously exploiting the environment. The relationship between environmentalism theory and ecology is closely related because ecology provides insight into the impact of environmental degradation on living organisms and potential improvement solutions.

### **Government Communications**

This research also uses government communication theory. Government communication is communication between people that occurs in the context of government organizations. Therefore, government communication cannot be separated from the context of organizational communication and is also part of organizational communication (Silalahi, 2004). Viewed from a theoretical and pragmatic point of view, there are three aspects of government administration according to Silalahi (2004) that is:

### 1. Structure

The structural approach model includes the organizational structure of a government, whether it contains the principle of "poor structure, rich function" or

whether the structure is open or closed. In this context, it is very influential and depends on the relevant organization's vision, mission, and strategy.

### 2. Procedure

In contrast to structure, procedures are processes in an organization that are seen as the "soul" of the organizational structure. Effectiveness results from the contribution of procedures in an organization, which includes several aspects: (1) communication, (2) decision-making, (3) achievements, and socialization and career. If a procedure does not work well, then unwanted problems can arise because procedures help make the performance of an organization more effective.

### 3. Culture

An anthropologist explains that culture as a complexity includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and other skills needed by individuals as members of society. Culture includes behavioral patterns that reflect the results of different human groups, can be expressed explicitly or implicitly, and can also be manifested in symbols. This culture's central core consists of traditional ideas (passed down from generation to generation and chosen or selected, especially the values associated with them).

## **Role of Government**

As a decision maker, the government has a vital role in easing the agrarian conflict in Rempang Island. Apart from the constitutional legal aspect, Indonesia, as a multicultural country, has customary and religious laws as integral elements in its social structure. Recognition of the existence of customary law, indigenous peoples, and customary land rights is essential in resolving conflicts and achieving satisfactory solutions between the parties concerned. Some general steps taken by the government to handle agrarian conflicts (Izka et al., 2024):

- 1. Dialogue facilitator, the government as a dialogue facilitator for the parties involved and seeking joint solutions;
- 2. Provider of information and clarification regarding land ownership, agrarian regulations, and farmers' rights to avoid ambiguity that results in conflict;
- 3. Alternative dispute resolution, acting as a mediator to help reach an agreement between the disputing parties and providing alternative dispute resolution;
- 4. Ensuring fair law enforcement to protect property rights and anticipate violations that cause conflict;
- 5. Designing agrarian policies that support land redistribution, natural resource management and farmers' rights reasonably;
- 6. Strengthening institutions such as the National Land Agency (BPN) to provide adequate services in resolving conflicts;
- 7. Encouraging community participation in decision-making regarding land and natural resources; and

8. Integrating a sustainable development approach in resolving agrarian conflicts to ensure positive impacts in the long term.

### RESEARCH METHOD

The research took place from October to Januari 2024. This research used descriptive qualitative research methods. Descriptive qualitative is a research method that leads to a qualitative approach. The object of this research is all information related to the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island. This research uses library research and collects sources of evidence or data through research journals and news portals on websites such as www.cnnindonesia.com, www.kompas.id, www.kompasiana.com, www.tempo.co, www.kumparan.com, and Twitter social media are convincing references for this research. Data is obtained from #rempang on the Twitter account. Using descriptive qualitative research methods aims to obtain descriptions through detailed words sourced from research results based on the title. Furthermore, the data obtained in this research was then processed using the Nvivo 14 application. The Nvivo 14 application is software that can help process qualitative research data. Using Nvivo 14 also helps categorize data in qualitative research. So it can make it easier to analyze large amounts of research data.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Agrarian Conflict of Indigenous Peoples on Rempang Island**

The residential land on Rempang Island, Batam, which had been occupied by indigenous people hundreds of years ago for generations from their ancestors long before the formation of BP Batam, was the start of one of the agrarian conflicts on Rempang Island. Based on the Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia (Keppres) Number 41 of 1973 concerning the Batam Island Industrial Area, in BAB III Formation and Use of Land Article 6 Section 2 with the following provisions (Presidential Decree Number 41 of 1973 concerning the Batam Industrial Area, 1973):

- a. All land areas located on Batam Island are handed over, with management rights to the Chairman of the Batam Island Industrial Area Development Authority;
- b. The management rights in this sub-paragraph authorize the Chairman of the Batam Island Industrial Area Development Authority to:
  - 1. Planning the designation and use of the land;
  - 2. Use the land to carry out their duties;
  - 3. Hand over parts of the land to third parties with use rights by the provisions of Article 41 to Article 43 of the Basic Agrarian Law;
  - 4. Receive income or compensation money and annual mandatory money.

With the issuance of the Presidential Decree, the Batam Authority granted Management Rights (HPL). The conflict between indigenous communities and the government has been going on since around 2001. Quoting from Rosyadi (2016), Government Regulation Number 46 of 2007 became the basis for the dissolution of the Batam Authority. It was subsequently replaced with the formation of the Batam Free Trade Zone and Free Port Concession Agency (BP Batam). With the issuance of Law Number 46 of 2007, it turns out that it did not positively impact the implementation of potential areas on Rempang and Galang Islands as promising areas to be managed as icons for investment in the Batam-Rempang-Galang Islands region. The unclear status of the Rempang and Galang land has resulted in legal uncertainty, which has resulted in the cessation of all construction and development activities in the area. So, the fate of the indigenous people who have lived for a long time in the Rempang Island area is that they need land ownership certificates. Because most of the island's land was originally a forest area under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), the issuance of Government Regulation Law Number 46 of 2007 made it difficult for indigenous communities on Rempang Island to have land rights (Ayuningmas et al., 2023).

With the Management Rights, the Batam Concession Agency plans to vacate the Rempang Island area, which has a population of around 7,500 people, to expedite the development of Rempang Eco City. The development of Rempang Eco City is included in the National Strategic Project (PSN), which will later build the Rempang Eco City project as an industrial, service, and tourism area, which will be worked on by PT Makmur Elok Graha (MEG) and investors from China's Xinyi Group with a target cost of around Rp. 381 trillion until 2080. This development aims to develop investment on Rempang Island. However, this was not discussed beforehand with the local indigenous community. This resulted in clashes between the Rempang-Galang community, who refused to relocate. The resistance of indigenous communities became increasingly evident when clashes with joint TNI-Polri officers forced their way into indigenous communities' territories. Some people were even intimidated when they insisted on refusing to be relocated. Intimidation also takes the form of physical violence and shooting tear gas.

The existence of agrarian conflict between indigenous communities on Rempang Island certainly hurts the social life of the community, such as decreasing economic prosperity, political instability, and even environmental damage. Poor communication from the government has also exacerbated the conflict problem in Rempang. This is because previously, the central or regional government had yet to have discussions or meetings with the Rempang Island indigenous community regarding relocating their residences to be used as the Rempang Eco City project. Therefore, this research looks at the impact of the agrarian conflict from a political ecology perspective and how the government's communication led to the Rempang agrarian conflict. We examine the

relationship between humans and the surrounding environment using environmentalism theory. The theory of environmentalism is closely related to ecology because ecology provides information about how environmental damage affects living things and how to repair them. Government communication theory also looks at communication from the central or regional government in the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island.

# **Public Opinion About the Rempang Island Agrarian Conflict on Twitter Social Media**

Public opinion regarding #rempang has become a trending topic on Twitter and other social media platforms. As in Figure, data collected through #rempang shows the opinions of Twitter account users regarding the Rempang Island agrarian conflict. #rempang was chosen because it is easy to find and has many tweets and retweets, so it attracts people's attention. Using this hashtag, the phenomenon can quickly obtain what you seek. This opinion from the community can provide an idea of a group to act on an emerging issue or problem, for example, regarding the agrarian conflict of the Rempang Island indigenous community, which is widely discussed on Twitter with various opinions. At the research data in Figure, the results of the Word Frequency Query on Nvivo 14 data show the themes that appear most frequently. These words give meaning to each problem, and the main topic discussed concerns public opinion regarding the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island via Twitter and social media. Using the Nvivo software, assigning codes independently according to a predefined coding scheme is possible. Nvivo is software that can import and organize files quickly and easily, whether text files, audio, visuals, emails, or posts from social media (Clarke et al., 2021).



Public Opinion Data Regarding the Rempang Agrarian Conflict Through #rempang on Twitter Accounts Source: Nvivo 14

The first is a tweet on October 7, 2023, with the account name Agus Widodo caption "#rempang residents' (@arwidodo) and the tweet Bahlil"https://twitter.com/arwidodo. The account also uses videos to express criticism and opinion towards the Indonesian Minister of Investment. The contents of the video reveal that the public needs to learn about the Pasir Panjang land, Rempang. People also said that despite Pharaoh's evil, he never expelled his people from their country. As a result of the relocation of the Rempang land, the community felt threatened; the community also refused and would not want to be relocated even just an inch because their ancestors had fought for the Rempang land. The video is intended to message the Indonesian Minister of Investment.

Furthermore, on October 5, 2023, with the account name NeverAlonely (@never\_alonely) and the tweet, "A joint team is still carrying out forced land vacation in #rempang, there are 2 TNI and PTPN officers visiting residents to intimidate residents into vacating their houses, "https://twitter.com/never\_alonely. This account believes that land clearing in Rempang is continuing. The fact that there were 2 members of TNI members and officers from PTPN who went to residents' houses and distributed letters to vacate the houses had an impact of unrest on several residents involved. The account also includes videos as a form of opinion from the public. It was seen that the people were agitated and vented their anger at the PTPN delegation officers and chased them away, not to vacate the land in the Rempang area.

Furthermore, on October 6, the account name of Kawan Baik Komodo (@KawanBaikKomodo) with the tweet, "The power of this regime is terrible. Residents were evicted from their hometowns; protective forests were converted to be distributed to companies. As in #rempang, eviction of residents and conversion of forests also occurred in Flores. Residents are trying to defend themselves as best they can. #SolidarityForRempang"https://twitter.com/KawanBaikKomodo. This account uses videos to criticize the government regarding the land conflict on Rempang Island. Suppose Rempang Island is a protective forest for the Rempang environment. In that case, if it is converted for a project from a large company such as China, it will greatly impact environmental safety around the island. So, the people of Rempang reject the relocation of their residence. In the uploaded video, the community can be seen holding a demonstration to voice their rights to the Rempang land and reject relocation. The commotion between the community and the police also looks chaotic in the video.

The Rempang community feels threatened due to relocation or shifting of residence. The relocation was caused by the National Strategic Project (PSN), namely the construction of Rempang Eco City by corporate investors from China. The community will continue to defend the Rempang land and continue to refuse to have their land converted into a national project because their rights as indigenous people

who have lived on the Rempang land for hundreds of years from their ancestors must continue to be fought for.

By refusing eviction or relocation, the community encouraged the Batam government to stop removing Rempang land. The indigenous people in Rempang want the government to listen to the rights of their people. So, the government is not only thinking about significant investments from Chinese companies but must also consider the rights of indigenous peoples and the sustainability impact of future national projects.

The conversion of Rempang Island into a National Strategic Project (PSN), of course, empties several areas affected by this project. The project, which will be used as an industrial area, tourist area, and even a traditional area with the Eco City concept, is undoubtedly a vast area that will be used as a project. Because Rempang is an island included in the small category, the construction of this development will significantly impact the condition of the area in Rempang. Both in terms of marine ecosystems and environmental conditions around Rempang land.

# Agrarian Conflict of Rempang Island: Perspective of Government Communication and Analysis of the Perspective of Government Role

The agrarian conflict on Rempang Island can be understood from a government communication perspective, which involves interactions between the government and indigenous communities. In this context, government communication is a crucial factor influencing conflict dynamics and resolution. If you look at various information in the media, the Rempang project started with poor communication from the start; this was the root of the problem, giving rise to problems. Suppose from the start, the government started communication, such as dialogue or discussion with the indigenous community on Rempang Island. In that case, it is possible that the issue of the Rempang conflict would not have caused a clash between the community and the government. The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, said that the problems on Rempang Island were due to a lack of communication between the government and the indigenous people of Rempang Island. So the president immediately ordered the Minister of Investment, Bahlil Lahadalia, to go into the field to explain the Rempang conflict and provide a solution to the indigenous people of Rempang Island.

If linked to government communication theory, there are three aspects of government administration, which include (1) structural aspects, (2) procedural aspects, and (3) cultural aspects (Erliana, 2010). Of these three aspects, the one relevant to the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island is the procedural aspect. Procedural aspects in government communication are essential in conflict dynamics and their resolution. Effectiveness is the contribution of procedures to an organization, including communication, decision-making, performance evaluation, socialization, and career. The relationship between communication procedures lies in management's ability to

receive, convey, and implement communication for the organization's survival. If we look at the government's communication process with indigenous communities regarding the Rempang conflict, miscommunication or poor communication by the government still occurs. So, the information received by the public creates problems and worries due to news about residential relocation.

Indeed, communications from the government need to comply with procedures. Communication from the central and regional governments regarding the development of the Rempang Eco City was not conveyed systematically to the public, which resulted in riots in the Rempang area. Decision-making that does not involve the participation of the indigenous community makes the Rempang Island indigenous community show their demonstrations. Therefore, to mitigate the existence of inappropriate information among the Rempang Island indigenous community, the investment minister, Bahlil, by instructions from the president, immediately went to the field to provide outreach and solutions to the Rempang community regarding the relocation of the Rempang Eco City project. By continuing to pay attention to procedural aspects of government communication in the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island, appropriate ways can be found to increase transparency, participation, and mutual understanding, supporting more effective and sustainable conflict resolution.

The analysis of the role of the government in resolving the Rempang Island agrarian conflict is that the government has made a policy breakthrough in 2021, namely regarding Presidential Decree Number 1B/T/2021 concerning the Establishment of an Agrarian Conflict Resolution Acceleration Team, which is considered a significant step in efforts to handle agrarian conflicts within the framework of implementing agrarian reform. This team is part of an ad-hoc group formed to accelerate the implementation steps, and this team is tasked with designing and implementing a joint action plan to expedite the resolution of agrarian conflicts and strengthen agrarian reform policies.

The role of the government in resolving the agrarian conflict in Rempang Island, Riau Province, is also through 2 methods: litigation and non-litigation. Litigation dispute resolution is a legal process involving disputing parties and submitting their problems to court. In resolving this litigation dispute, the parties save the differences in legal provisions by collecting evidence and submitting information about a case so that the judge can comprehensively understand the related issues and decide who wins and loses. This dispute resolution is the last resort submitted to the court after various alternatives to other dispute resolutions have not produced satisfactory results. The advantages of dispute resolution through litigation are formal procedures by official state institutions, and the judge's decision has permanent legal force. It is binding on all parties, and the process is open and fair.

Meanwhile, the non-litigation resolution is the resolution of conflicts outside the courtroom, also known as dispute resolution, without involving the courts. Khumar Mahendra explained that "the government has made efforts to resolve non-litigation disputes in the form of negotiations. Where in the talks, the government has made decisions in handling the chaos by way of compensation in the form of (Mahendra, 2023):

### a. Compensation according to Rempang residents' assets

President Joko Widodo ordered Investment Minister Bahlil Lahadalia to clarify the compensation to the Rempang community related to the Rempang Eco City project. Bahlil stated that the compensation would be based on the value of community assets and adjusted to previously established rights.

## b. 500 meters of land and type 45 house

The Rempang community will receive compensation for 500 meters of land by providing a type 45 house worth IDR 120 million, a waiting fee of IDR 1.2 million per person, and a rental fee of IDR 1.2 million. Compensation will be adjusted to an equivalent value for people with land with a title status and a house above type 45. For example, if the home is worth IDR 350 million, the government will provide compensation equivalent to

## c. New residence equipped with facilities

The Rempang community will be relocated to Dapur3 Si Jantung or the Maritime City Fishermen's Development Village. After land preparation, the relocation is estimated to take 12 months. The new housing will be equipped with educational facilities, health services, sports, social services, places of worship, public cemeteries, and docks for fishing boats.

### d. Temporary compensation

BP Batam has also prepared interim compensation for the Rempang community, including temporary housing and living expenses assistance of Rp 1.034.636 per individual in each family card (KK) during the relocation. People who live with relatives or outside the temporary housing will receive an additional rental fee of Rp 1 million per month.

## e. Awarded a scholarship

Investment Minister Bahlil Lahadalia announced plans to provide vocational school scholarships for children of the Rempang community in the future. Those who excel will be facilitated with scholarships up to the international level.

In addition to non-litigation and litigation solutions, institutional resolution is vital in resolving the conflict on Rempang Island. Institutions that can be used to resolve agrarian conflicts involve the parties involved, such as (1) National Land Agency, (2) Land Dispute Resolution Commission, (3) Agricultural Mediation Institution, (4) Land

Court, (5) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), (6) Legal Consultation and Research Institution, (7) Local Dialogue Forum.

# The Impact of the Rempang Island Agrarian Conflict from a Political Ecology Perspective

The impact of the development of Rempang Eco City resulted in various problems resulting from the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island. Rempang Island, located in the Riau Islands, is a coastal water area that is a source of livelihood for fishermen. However, the construction of Rempang Eco-City could change the area on Rempang Island. The areas that will be built in Rempang Eco City include trade, tourism, and even the world's largest glass industry. The activities of this industry will undoubtedly have the potential to threaten the environment of coastal areas, especially the depletion of sea sand, which can have an impact on marine ecosystems, resulting in the decrease of fish and coral reef populations. Of course, this prevents fishermen from catching fish, which is their daily job and can endanger the sustainability and stability of the marine ecosystem (Kumparan.com, 2023).

The agrarian conflict between the indigenous communities of Rempang Island, where Rempang Eco-City will be built, can also have an environmental impact. The fact is that agrarian conflict can result in environmental damage, such as ecosystem damage and loss of natural habitat. It can also result in environmental pollution in areas affected by agrarian conflict due to the construction of Rempang Eco City. Not only that, the Rempang agrarian conflict can also lead to violations of environmental law. The relationship between political ecology and the Rempang conflict is very close from a political ecology perspective. As explained above, the Rempang agrarian conflict has significantly impacted the environmental and ecosystem status of Rempang Island. Agrarian conflicts not only disrupt the environment but also relocate indigenous communities. A total of 16 traditional villages are threatened with eviction due to the National Strategic Project (PSN).

The government's role in the agrarian conflict in Rempang is vital in determining what kind of authority can act as a middle ground between the various parties involved. As a temporary measure, BP Batam assists with rent, waiting allowance, and temporary accommodation for residents wishing to relocate. Due to the completion of the construction of permanent residences, the first stage is scheduled for August 2024. Therefore, BP Batam remains committed to informing the public about the Rempang Eco City development plan by conducting door-to-door visits so that people begin to open up slowly. With door-to-door outreach, communication and understanding regarding relocation can undoubtedly be better. Transparently and directly, it can clarify the objectives of the Rempang Eco City project. In the relocation process, the government accommodates the aspirations of the affected communities by

building permanent residences and providing other essential facilities such as schools, roads, health facilities, and land compensation for heads of families registered and willing to relocate (Wibowo, 2023). The compensation also includes granting ownership rights and building use rights (HGB) to provide legal certainty over land to communities affected by the relocation (Saly & Ekalia, 2023). However, even though there has been outreach from the government, some people will still fight for their traditional land and will not abandon the land their ancestors fought for.

Based on evidence, the development of Rempang Eco City impacts indigenous communities on Rempang Island. People were forced to leave ancestral lands occupied for hundreds of years. This causes economic losses, damage to social relations between communities, and loss of ties to the land passed down from generation to generation. Apart from that, the consequences that occur on environmental ecology, especially the ecology of marine ecosystems, can endanger fish populations and coral reefs due to large-scale sand mining. So, repairing and restoring damaged marine ecosystems requires significant costs (Triani et al., 2023).

The theory of environmentalism explains that environmental problems are caused by human activities and existing political structures and are expected to be able to overcome them. According to adherents of environmentalism, the development of human civilization has hurt the environment. This idea comes from many environmental crises, such as global warming, deforestation and forest fires, climate change, species extinction, and water, air, and land pollution due to industrial activities carried out by countries. Environmentaslime believes that political, social, and economic structures can fix problems, assuming that the state system can respond effectively to ongoing environmental problems (Paterson et al., 2005).

Suppose it is related to the agrarian conflict of indigenous communities on Rempang Island due to the construction of Rempang Eco City, which will be used as an industrial, trade, and even tourism area. In that case, it will severely impact the environment or society; even in social, political, and economic terms, there will also be problems due to the agrarian conflict. Therefore, the government has given it the authority to act as a middle ground for this agrarian conflict. Several policies regarding community relocation were provided, such as the construction of permanent housing and land compensation money for communities affected by relocation due to the construction of Rempang Eco City. The government is also providing waiting money and temporary housing because permanent housing is expected to be completed in August 2024. In this way, it is hoped that it will be able to overcome the agrarian conflict on Rempang Island. When a political structure also causes agrarian conflict, the political structure is also expected to be able to resolve the conflict. When an agrarian conflict results in social tension among the people involved in the agrarian conflict and gives rise to differences in views or interests, discriminatory actions, physical violence,

or acts of revenge, the social tensions resulting from agrarian conflicts can undoubtedly hurt relations between communities in the region. The result can potentially worsen security and disrupt people's social life. Agrarian conflicts can also trigger political instability in the region. The government and security forces often handle conflicts, sometimes requiring higher-level intervention. If this agrarian conflict is not resolved immediately, this could trigger political instability and give rise to distrust in the government. Therefore, resolving this agrarian conflict must be a top priority to improve the social and political situation in the areas affected by the conflict. The government, community, and parties involved must work together to resolve conflicts peacefully and develop good social relations between local communities. In this way, it can prevent social tensions and strengthen socio-political stability in the region.

Efforts are needed to overcome agrarian conflicts in Rempang and minimize the negative impacts they cause. By looking at the Rempang agrarian conflict from a political ecology perspective, it should also be concluded that the existence of the Rempang agrarian conflict for the construction of Rempang Eco City also resulted in environmental damage. For this reason, it is also necessary to note that when Rempang Island is to be made into a National Strategic Project, it is necessary to pay attention to the impacts that occur. It can be said that Rempang Island is used for relatively large-scale investment purposes. This situation can cause suffering for local communities affected by land relocation due to this investment. Reducing natural resources used for large-scale investment will damage the lives of the people on Rempang Island. The ecological burden of Rempang, a small island, if used for large-scale investment, will also exacerbate the threat of ecological disaster (WALHI, 2023).

### CONCLUSIONS

### **Conclusions**

The results of the study indicate that the agrarian conflict of Indigenous peoples on Rempang Island has a significant impact on Indigenous peoples, the environment and socio-politics in the Rempang area from a political ecology perspective, and government communication in agrarian conflicts significantly affects information to Indigenous peoples on Rempang Island. Indigenous peoples whose areas are affected by conflict experience relocation or eviction of their homes due to the construction of national projects. Regarding the environment, agrarian conflicts damage marine ecosystems and loss of livelihoods as fishermen, which have become their livelihood. In socio-politics, agrarian conflicts impact social tensions, which hurt community relations in the area. It can worsen the security situation and disrupt the social life of the local community. The research data in Figure 2 shows that the opinions of the community conveyed on Twitter social media also consider that the existence of agrarian conflicts that require indigenous peoples to be relocated poses a threat to the local community. These accounts completely reject their land being converted for the Rempang Eco City national project.

By refusing to be relocated, the community will continue to fight for the customary land passed down from their ancestors. So, in resolving the agrarian conflict in Rempang, the role and strategy of the government are very important. The government uses litigation and non-litigation solutions. Non-litigation solutions include consultation, mediation, negotiation, conciliation, and expert assessment. The government has made efforts to resolve the conflict non-litigation through negotiation. In the negotiation, the government has decided to handle the chaos through compensation: a plot measuring 500 square meters with a type 45 house as a new residence with complete and temporary facilities, living costs of Rp. 1.034.636 there are per individual in each family card, providing vocational school scholarships for children of the Rempang community who have achievements and compensation for assets owned by the Rempang community. The most essential step in resolving this agrarian conflict is establishing communication to avoid the recurrence of undesirable events, such as clashes between the government, police, and local Indigenous communities. The communication that will be implemented will also need to include a discussion related to the national strategic project development plan implemented on Rempang Island. Providing communication according to procedures and still involving active participation from the community will certainly positively impact the response of the Indigenous community on Rempang Island.

### Recommendations

From the discussion, this research provides suggestions including:

- 1. The government must provide a middle ground regarding the rights of indigenous peoples.
- 2. In resolving agrarian conflicts on Rempang Island, the government prioritizes community participation and maintains and strengthens good communication between the government and the community.
- 3. The government also needs to consider investing in the Eco-City project to ensure the environmental sustainability of Rempang Island.
- 4. The government must be more severe and consistent in protecting the land rights of the indigenous people of Rempang Island.
- 5. The government needs to make policy recommendations to resolve agrarian conflicts on Rempang Island, such as holding open dialogue or mediation with the community to reach a mutually beneficial solution (the government acts as a facilitator), providing fair and transparent compensation in the compensation process to avoid dissatisfaction, consistent law enforcement ensures that all parties, both the government and companies comply with agrarian laws and do not violate the rights of indigenous peoples.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I want to thank Mrs. Dr. Dian Suluh Kusuma Dewi, M.AP, Mr. Khoirurrosyidin S.IP.,M.Si and Mr. Drs. Bambang Triono M.Si the supervising lecturers from the Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, who always guided writing this article.

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