

The Threat of Asymmetric War Against The Border Area (Study of East Kalimantan As The Capital City of The Archipelago)

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Abstract

The border area of a country is a manifestation of its sovereignty. Security in border areas becomes a challenge for every country because the border area is generally a space for the development of asymmetric warfare threats, especially in its position as the National Capital. East Kalimantan is a manifestation of Indonesia's border area that has the potential to face complex asymmetric warfare threats. This research is a qualitative study aimed at analyzing the forms of asymmetric warfare threats to East Kalimantan as a border area and the National Capital. Based on the research, it is concluded that East Kalimantan is a strategic border area with complex security risks. This area is characterized by actual and potential asymmetric warfare threats ranging from local to transnational scales, such as local conflicts, transnational crimes, and terrorist threats. Threats to East Kalimantan at least have an impact on national security, both directly and indirectly. Therefore, the threats in East Kalimantan need to be a shared concern, given that security gaps in border areas are vulnerable to being exploited by asymmetric actors to present threats.

Keywords: *Asymmetrical War Threats, Border Region, Capital City.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as an archipelago state. This nickname is given to describe Indonesia's territory consisting of many islands, which creates many borders with other countries. In Indonesia, the national borders consist of coastal lines, continental land borders with neighboring countries such as Malaysia, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea, as well as maritime borders with neighboring countries such as the Philippines, Australia, and India. Some borders in Indonesia are still the subject of debate and controversial issues. At the same time, asymmetric threats contribute to the complexity of problems in Indonesia's border areas (Zein, 2019).

East Kalimantan is one of Indonesia's largest border areas, second only to Papua. The management area of the East Kalimantan sea covers 25,656 km², while the land area covers 127,267.52 km². The East Kalimantan region stretches from the north (Nunukan Regency) to the south (Kutai Barat Regency). The East Kalimantan region is a strategic border area as it serves as a shipping lane in national and international economic activities. The abundant natural resources add to the strategic value of this area, making it the main source of foreign exchange for the country, especially in the mining, forest, and other resource sectors that are successfully managed and mostly exported overseas.

. However, like most border areas, East Kalimantan also faces several fundamental problems such as: a) low quality of human resources; b) limited infrastructure, telecommunications and supporting facilities; c) poor health conditions; d) low quality of education; e) poor economic conditions; f) expansion of regions that are not accompanied by the readiness of officials; g) degradation of natural resources; h) fading nationalism and weak political awareness; and i) threatened border boundaries (The Partnership for Governance Reform, 2011).

Since Indonesia became a sovereign country, strategic issues in the field of defense and national security in the border areas have received serious attention. Because in the context of national security, border areas are a strategic sector for a country. Thus, the weakness of a country's border areas will have significant consequences for its defense and security. This is becoming increasingly serious because East Kalimantan has officially become the capital of the archipelago. The new status of East Kalimantan will certainly divert the state's attention to the security situation in the region. As the capital of the archipelago, East Kalimantan will become more vulnerable to asymmetrical threats.

Basically, the agenda of moving the capital city is one of the efforts to realize national interests in accordance with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which is "...to protect the entire Indonesian nation and all Indonesian blood and to advance the public welfare...". In addition, other considerations in moving the capital city are as a solution to answer challenges and problems as well as dynamics in various sectors of community life, both in economic and business aspects, spatial planning, land use, environmental aspects, as well as defense and national security. Thus, East Kalimantan occupies a very strategic position.

The National Capital is the center of gravity of a country. Therefore, the development of East Kalimantan must be accompanied by in-depth studies to prevent or at least minimize the risk of asymmetric warfare threats. Asymmetric warfare is a new type of warfare that does not focus on the structure of power (weapons), but in certain scales, it can be depicted in the form of a combination of military and non-military power. Asymmetric warfare utilizes all dimensions of a country such as politics, economy, socio-culture, and military. This type of warfare generally involves state and non-state actors, thus the strengths of the involved parties are often disproportionate (Buffaloe, 2006).

East Kalimantan is an Indonesian region with abundant natural resources potential. However, its location on the border area opens up serious security disturbances for East Kalimantan. Especially with its status as the National Capital of the Archipelago, East Kalimantan becomes more vulnerable to asymmetric warfare threats from both state and non-state actors. East Kalimantan is known to border several neighboring regions, which may provide opportunities for foreign interests in horizontal and vertical conflicts to undermine the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia.

In addition to facing local-level issues, East Kalimantan also faces other national challenges that must be resolved, such as threats to the state's credibility, national economic inequality, and intolerance. These issues certainly trigger tensions in society, which to some extent will lead to ethnic and religious issues, as well as friction between local residents and immigrant communities. If these issues continue to develop, they will further widen the gap between local communities, leading to national fragmentation. On a transnational scale, the asymmetric warfare threats faced by East Kalimantan include border violations, piracy and theft of natural resources, and illegal transactions of goods or people for the benefit of criminal groups such as terrorists or other transnational crimes.

Based on the above explanation, this study is expected to describe the asymmetric warfare threats to the border area of East Kalimantan and the extent of the impact resulting from asymmetric warfare in the area, particularly in its status as the National Capital of the Archipelago.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is written using a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. In this research, secondary data obtained through a literature review of books, journals, and other relevant secondary data related to the research problem were used. Furthermore, the data was processed and analyzed so that it could be presented in the form of narrative text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Indonesian government has designated two locations in East Kalimantan to be the new center of government, namely Sepaku subdistrict in Penajam Paser Utara regency and Samboja subdistrict in Kutai Kartanegara regency. East Kalimantan was chosen as the new capital city of Indonesia because geographically it is located in the middle of the archipelago, so this location is expected to facilitate connectivity and economic movement which in turn can reduce the disparity between Java island and outside Java.



Figure 1. New Capital City Location, source: (MetroTvNews, 2019)

The relocation of the capital city of the Republic of Indonesia has happened in the past. From January 1946 to December 1949, Indonesia moved the capital to Yogyakarta due to the war for independence. Bukittinggi in West Sumatra also briefly became the capital city when President Soekarno formed an emergency government before being captured by the Dutch between December 1948 and June 1949. Additionally, Bireuen in Aceh province also briefly became the capital city for only one week. After these events, the capital city returned to Jakarta until the declaration of independence through the Proclamation of the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia (Hutasoit, 2018).

According to Gottmann and Harper, the capital city is defined as follows (Ristawati, 2020):

“The capital is by definition a seat of power and a place of decision-making processes that affect the lives and the future of the nation ruled, and that may influence trends and events beyond its borders. Capitals differ from other cities: the capital function secures strong and lasting centrality; it calls for a special hosting environment to provide what is required for the safe efficient performance of the functions of government and decision-making characteristics of the place.”

Based on this definition, it can be understood that generally the capital city of a country is the center of power, government, business, and policy in a country. Although not every country applies this concept in practice, at least the capital city in every country can depict the center of power of a country. Peter Hall categorizes the capital city into several forms according to its function (Hall, 2000):

1. *Multi-function capitals* (London, Paris, Madrid, Stockholm);
2. *A subset of the former called global capitals* (Tokyo, London);
3. *Political capitals, without many commercial functions* (The Hague, Washington, Bonn, Ottawa, Canberra, Brasilia);
4. *Former capitals* (Leningrad, Berlin, Rio de Janeiro);
5. *Eximperial capitals* (Madrid, London, Lisbon, Vienna);
6. *Provincial capitals that once had greater regional autonomy* (Stuttgart, Turin, Much, Montreal);
7. *Super-capitals serving international government and organizations* (Brussels, Strasbourg, Rome, Geneva, New York).

Meanwhile in Indonesia, the Capital City has a special function in terms of duties, rights, obligations, and responsibilities in the implementation of government by the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. The Capital City is also the seat of foreign representatives/Indonesian institutions.

The relocation of the Capital City to East Kalimantan is part of the government's strategic agenda to organize Indonesia in various aspects of life, including politics, socio-economics, as well as defense and national security. The relocation opens up opportunities to build Indonesia towards a higher quality by utilizing national resources and other important elements that represent the progress of the Indonesian nation.

However, as a strategic region that plays an important role in creating an effective government, East Kalimantan is vulnerable to complex asymmetric warfare threats. Asymmetric warfare is defined by Steven Metz and Douglas Johnston as actions, organization, and thinking that differ from opponents to maximize their own advantage, exploit opponent weaknesses, initiate or gain freedom of movement or action (Schmitt, 2010). Asymmetric warfare can be manifested in political, military, or a combination of both strategies. The highly dynamic strategic environment is the main trigger for the development of asymmetric warfare models by targeting the state's strategic elements in terms of ideology, politics, economics, socio-culture, defense, and security.

The potential for asymmetric warfare is increasingly concerning when it threatens a country's sovereignty from its border areas. According to Green Maryan, Shaw Malcolm, J. G. Starke, and Burhan Tsani, the border area of a country is "the outermost boundary of a country in the form of an imaginary line that separates the territory of one country from the territory of another on land, sea, or air that can be qualified in the terminology of a 'border zone' or 'customs-free zone'." Furthermore, Soegijoko limits the definition of border areas as "a special area because it borders on neighboring countries, so its development requires specificity." Based on these definitions, it is known that border areas are strategic areas that reflect the interests of a country, especially in the field of defense and security (Sulistya, 2018).

Currently, East Kalimantan is the center of gravity for the country of Indonesia. Center of gravity in a country means the place where everything depends on, so the nation's morale is greatly determined by the strength of the country's capital city. In the context of war, Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great referred to the center of gravity as the main force. If the center of gravity experiences an imbalance in conditions, it will be easy for the enemy to destroy the country. This view is in line with Clausewitz's theory in his book titled On

War, which explains that there are at least several actions considered most important to defeat the enemy, including (Clausewitz, 1976):

1. Significantly destroying the enemy's forces;
2. Seizing the capital, not only the seat of government but also the center of social, professional, and political activities; and
3. Delivering an effective attack against allies, especially if the ally has superior strength.

Based on the above view, the National Capital as the center of gravity holds the main control in maintaining the safety, security, sovereignty, territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, and national interests. However, placing the National Capital in a border area presents its own challenges for Indonesia. This situation has the potential to place East Kalimantan as a vulnerable space that triggers asymmetric actors to bring threats to achieve certain goals such as political and economic objectives. This can be seen from the suboptimal function of the state in providing governance in border areas, including law enforcement, health, welfare, and even regional security, compared to neighboring countries (The Partnership for Governance Reform, 2011).

The asymmetric warfare threat in East Kalimantan can refer to armed conflicts that occur in the region with characteristics that are not symmetrical or balanced between the parties involved. This conflict can involve parties that have different strengths, resources, and strategies. Among the forms of asymmetric warfare threats in East Kalimantan are, first, acts of terrorism and bombings carried out by extremist groups. Terrorism is a global threat that can occur anywhere, including in East Kalimantan. Terrorist groups can launch attacks on civilian or military targets, which can cause significant damage and casualties. As is known, East Kalimantan has a dark history due to a terrorist attack in 2016 during a worship event at the Oikumene Church. The bombing that occurred in the church courtyard resulted in four children being injured and one person killed. Furthermore, in 2019, Densus 88 Antiteror Polri arrested suspected terrorists related to the JAD (Jaringan Ansharut Daulah) network and the Sibolga bombing in the Berau region of East Kalimantan.

Second, East Kalimantan is a border region that has the potential for transnational crime, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and arms smuggling. Border areas are often used as the main gateway for transnational criminal groups to trade resources and distribute logistics. Third, East Kalimantan consists of various ethnic groups that have different interests and perspectives. If these differences are not addressed properly, armed conflict can occur between these groups. Sometimes the conflict is also accompanied the spread of propaganda and psychological actions to create fear and chaos in society. This threat can be illustrated by local conflicts or ethnic conflict. Fourth, cyber threats and the destruction of information and communication technology infrastructure. Five, separatist rebellion. There are several separatist groups that want to secede from Indonesia and form their own state. If these groups are dissatisfied with the political, economic, or social conditions in East Kalimantan, they can start an armed rebellion. Six, agrarian conflict that occurs when there is a difference in views between the local community and the government or companies that want to use land for economic purposes. This conflict can involve violence and armed confrontation.

The vulnerability of East Kalimantan as a border area has become a security gap for Indonesia, which also opens opportunities for asymmetric warfare actors, both state and non-state actors, to weaken the state's sovereignty. Regional-level fundamental issues such as territorial disputes, international migration, national or international organized crime, and internal conflict also pose serious challenges for the government. As the capital city of the nation, East Kalimantan is involved in new strategic environmental dynamics with increasingly unlimited threat dimensions. In this condition, the government needs to enhance defense and security systems in East Kalimantan and anticipate potential asymmetric warfare threats that could disrupt the

stability of the development of the capital city of the nation. Some asymmetric warfare threats in East Kalimantan can have serious direct and indirect impacts on national security, including:

1. Disruption of social-economic activities that affect other important sectors;
2. Physical damage to infrastructure, buildings, and public facilities;
3. Weakening of the regional and national economy;
4. Reduced security and safety for the community;
5. The emergence of bigger threats or conflicts due to different political orientations or interests.

East Kalimantan is a border region with complex threat dynamics. Crucial factors such as jurisdiction and state sovereignty, politics, social, economic, and defense and security are fundamental reasons for the presence of threats to the East Kalimantan region. Border areas tend to be marked by various threats such as smuggling, terrorism, or other illegal activities of concern. Considering the complex threat situation in the border region and its important function as a manifestation of state sovereignty, the Indonesian government no longer has an excuse not to properly manage its borders using appropriate strategies. Security is a vital aspect of national border management, aimed at maintaining security and ensuring the preservation of the unity and sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia.

In facing threats to national defense and security, defense organization efforts are based on Minister of Defense Decree Number 19 of 2015 on National Defense Organization Policy. The defense system is universal, involving all national resources, territories, and national infrastructure that are prepared early and carried out in a total, integrated, directed, and continuous manner. Defense efforts against non-military threats are conducted by placing ministries or agencies outside the defense sector as the main elements, in accordance with the form and nature of the threats faced. These defense efforts are supported by other elements of the nation's strength, including the Indonesian National Armed Forces and Regional Governments.

To address the asymmetric warfare threat in East Kalimantan, a proper and comprehensive strategy is needed from security forces, the government, and the community. Some actions that can be taken include:

1. Addressing social and economic issues that are the cause of conflicts, such as poverty, social inequality, and injustice;
2. Building good cooperation and dialogue between different groups, as well as strengthening institutions and laws that guarantee the rights and interests of the community;
3. Increasing surveillance and security at the border to prevent transnational crime;
4. Developing policies and programs that strengthen national defense and security, including improving military and police capabilities;
5. Improving the capacity and skills of the community in resolving conflicts and building peace.

Furthermore, some of strategies above can also be optimized through the strategies needed to develop border areas in general, include (Kennedy, 2021):

1. Making border areas as gateways to neighboring countries;
2. Developing border areas with a harmonized approach of prosperity, security, and environmental sustainability;
3. Developing economic growth centers in border districts selectively and gradually according to needs and priority scales;
4. Enhancing the protection of natural resources, tropical forests, and conservation areas, as well as developing productive cultivation areas for the welfare of local communities;
5. Improving the quality of human resources through development in education, health, transportation, and information; and

6. Enhancing development cooperation in social, cultural, security, and economic fields with neighboring countries.

The effort to manage and secure the border area certainly cannot be separated from the national planning system. In addition, it is necessary to integrate these strategies with priority needs and patterns of threats faced in the border areas, especially in the area that serves as the government center of the country, the National Capital of the Archipelago. The national defense and security system in the border areas must be carried out in an integrated and planned manner so that the steps taken to maintain national sovereignty can be done properly and can support the strengthening of defense and security in East Kalimantan.

CONCLUSION

East Kalimantan is strategically important due to its central location in the Indonesian archipelago, acting as a hub for enhancing connectivity and economic activity. Its position facilitates trade and transportation, essential for the government's infrastructure development and economic growth, particularly in connecting the eastern and western parts of Indonesia. This makes the region a key player in national integration and regional development. However, as the new National Capital City (IKN), East Kalimantan faces additional security challenges. Its strategic importance makes it vulnerable to asymmetric warfare, including cyberattacks, terrorism, and insurgencies. The proximity to neighboring countries heightens the risks of cross-border conflicts, smuggling, and external interference. To address these threats, a comprehensive security strategy is necessary. It must focus on the region's specific risks, including strengthening defense resources like military presence, intelligence, and border security. Collaboration between local authorities, national security forces, and regional partners is crucial for anticipating and countering emerging threats. Moreover, East Kalimantan's development as a secure and stable capital city must be supported by resilient infrastructure, public services, and law enforcement. A secure East Kalimantan will not only serve as a symbol of Indonesia's national strength but also demonstrate the country's ability to navigate geopolitical challenges while maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity. By integrating security measures with development, East Kalimantan can become a thriving, modern capital that supports Indonesia's ambitions while effectively managing regional security risks.

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