

# Strategy for Establishing Indonesian Marine Reserve Components to Face China's Gray Zone Operations in North Natuna Sea

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**ABSTRACT :** *The presence of China as a hegemon in the East Asian region not only has an impact on America and its allies but also has an impact on countries that have EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) claims in the South China Sea region, especially Indonesia. The nine-dash line claim unilaterally creates ambiguity in the eyes of the international community or what is more popularly known as the gray zone operation. Where the role of the reserve component which is supported by the main component is very influential in achieving the goals of a country. So the purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the problems of the North Natuna Sea conflict as a gray zone operation and the right strategy for the formation of a marine reserve component in facing China in the North Natuna Sea by using a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques using literature studies which are then analyzed processed using the Lykke theory to create a strategy for the formation of components of the marine reserve component. The results of this study indicate that the strategy for establishing components of the marine dimension reserve does not only involve human resources but also natural resources and artificial resources including technology owned by state institutions.*

**KEYWORDS** -Gray zone operation, Hegemon, Marine reservecomponent, Lyyke's theory.

## I.INTRODUCTION

The presence of China as a Hegemon in the East Asia region does not only have an impact on America and its allies. However, it has an impact on the Southeast Asian region, especially countries that have EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) claims in the South China Sea region. One of them is Indonesia, which is part of the North Natuna Sea area which is claimed by China as its territory or better known as the nine-dash line claim..

These claims made unilaterally by China have created ambiguity in the eyes of the international community.China has ratified the international law of the sea or UNCLOS 1982 (United Nations Convention on the Law of The Sea) but has expanded its maritime territory beyond the EEZ to the North Natuna Sea. Even fishermen with Chinese flags deliberately go in and out and catch fish in the EEZ area north of the Natunas of Indonesia, which is reinforced by the statement from Bakamla and the Indonesian Navy [1].

This phenomenon creates a new stage or what is more popularly known as the gray zone operation. Where the role of the reserve component which is supported by the main component is very influential in achieving the goals/interests of a country. Therefore, the researcher would like to discuss the strategy for

forming components of the marine reserve component from the perspective of Indonesia as an effort to overcome China's unilateral claims related to gray zone operations in the North Natuna Sea.

## **1.1 Theoretical basis**

### **1.1.1 Strategy**

Lykke mentions that strategy consists of end/object components, ways/concept and means/resources. These three components are a repetition of the traditional strategy of linking goals and means. Clausewitz also emphasized that victory in war is meaningless without a political goal. So it can be said that political goals or state interests can be achieved by deploying the military [2].

### **1.1.2 Reserve components**

Indonesia adheres to a universal people's defense system (sishankamrata)[3]. This system is similar to the Total War concept that had been developed by Napoleon Bonaparte in the outbreak of the French war in Europe. This concept empowers human resources in large numbers as a military force. The vast territorial waters of Indonesia and the very large population support the potential for defense in the formation of reserve components of the marine dimension.

In the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2019 concerning the Management of National Resources, it is explained that the national defense system consists of main components, reserves, and supporters. All three are prepared to deal with military, non-military, and/or hybrid threats. Indirectly, the reserve component has a dual-task, namely assisting military activities related to national defense if necessary and being able to carry out non-military tasks according to their profession. The reserve component in question consists of national resources, namely human resources, natural resources, and artificial resources[4].

### **1.1.3 Gray Zone Operation**

Term the gray zone was first used to describe the war that took place between Russia and Ukraine in 2014 in the Donbas. This makes it ambiguous as to whether the war happened or not. So that it obscures the context of conventional warfare. This term was later developed to describe China's steps in claiming its extra-territorial territory in the South China Sea area following the Russian method[5].

Gray zone operation is an important dimension for hybrid warfare. Where the use of military and non-military forces is made in a synergistic manner that is coercive, makes changes, and limits the enemy's capabilities. In the maritime world, issues/problems that are often used as mediation for the emergence of this operation are claims to border areas, rights and authorities of waters, and geographical location [6].

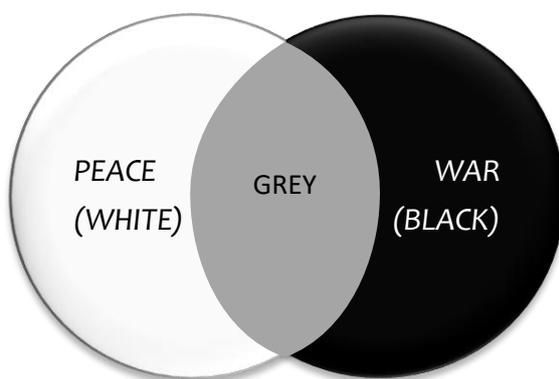


Figure 1. Dimensions of Gray Zone Operation[7]

## **1.2 Research purposes**

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the problems of the North Natuna sea conflict as a gray zone operation and the right strategy for the formation of components of the marine reserve component in dealing with China.

## **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method used is qualitative-descriptive with the study of literature/library which is then analyzed and processed into a strategy using Lykke's theory. The purpose of the descriptive qualitative study approach is to clarify the picture or obtain information from research data as a whole, broadly and more deeply[8]. Literature research is a data collection technique through an assessment of literature, books, notes, and various reports related to the problems raised by researchers[9].

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 China's Gray Zone Operation in the North Natuna Sea**

In China's 2019 defense white paper, it is clearly stated that the South China Sea islands and the Diaoyu Islands are its territories. In addition, conflicts that occur on the border are resolved based on respect for historical facts and international law[10]. This of course reinforces China's hegemony efforts in the South China Sea region based on historical claims. To clarify the concept of gray zone operation in the North Natuna Sea, I can describe it as follows:

#### **3.1.1 Militia fishermen**

Militia or paramilitaries can be categorized as veterans, trained civilians, or reserve components as well as the military who disguise themselves as civilians to carry out the functions of government[11]. They are prepared to blend in causing conflicts that are still on the verge of war[12]. Thus preventing a military confrontation or conventional war. Indirectly, it can continuously cause disturbances that can harm the defense of a country.

China as a country that ratified UNCLOS should recognize the boundaries of the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). But the fact is that they deliberately spread their fishermen to enter the EEZ area in the North Natuna Sea. The fishermen who enter Indonesian waters in Natuna are not on a small scale, but on a large scale, as if they want to expand their territory by depleting fish resources and destroying the ecosystem in the Natuna area[13].

Chinese fishermen who go in and out of the North Natuna Sea are not entirely civilians. On average, they are veterans or part of a reduction in the strength of the Chinese military forces that are deliberately financed and supplied by the Chinese government to create friction and provide strategic information[12]. This can be seen from their courage to enter Indonesian territorial waters and the way they provide information to the China Coast Guard and also the Chinese navy in a systematic and organized manner.

The status of fishermen, of course, limited the movement of the Indonesian military. Because civilians who violate the law will only be subject to criminal sanctions. It is far from the shadow of war and the risk is very low. The use of fishermen or militia in the gray zone dimension is effective because the budget is smaller than the use of military force and its ability to disrupt the stability of a country's defense. The momentum of Chinese fishermen's activities that are carried out continuously will make the defense focus focused on one point. This creates opportunities or gaps on the other side.

#### **3.1.2 UUV (Unmanned Underwater Vehicle)**

In 2021, it was found that the UUV (Unmanned Underwater Vehicle) or underwater drone belonging to the Shenyang Institute of Automation Chinese Academic of Sciences was malfunctioning or technically disturbed in the waters of Sulawesi[14]. This fact shows that concern for the fishing militia in the North Natuna Sea has succeeded in creating a defense gap. The Chinese fishermen's militias may mediate the launch of UUV in the Natuna waters, which are carried by the current to Sulawesi, which then malfunctions because they cross the range limit.



Figure 2. UUV found in water Selayar Island [15]

UUV is commonly used for research in the field of science, biota, or mining under the sea. However, its capabilities in the field of intelligence can be developed to monitor shipping activities, military, and institutional patrol vessels as well as submarines. In addition, UUV's initial capabilities can be modified to deploy biological weapons, COVID-19 samples are carried by UUV and distributed at certain desired points. Because of its relatively small size and the need for special tools to detect it.

From a defense perspective, the use of technology for intelligence purposes has not yet been officially regulated by international law. Who is responsible for its use and what form does the punishment or crime take. For example, in the use of UUV, China could have evaded accusations of data theft or intelligence activities by saying that it was for research purposes or that the tool was purchased by another party/hijacked/ hacked. So that it can lead to fighting between countries by blaming other countries.

### 3.1.3 China Coast Guard (CCG)

The formation of an artificial archipelago on the Fieri Cross coral island in the Spartley archipelago, which has now become a Chinese military base, has a very strategic location in the South China Sea. Its position which is very close to the territory of Indonesia, especially in Natuna, makes it easier for fishermen to access logistics and support for the coast guard and the Chinese military.

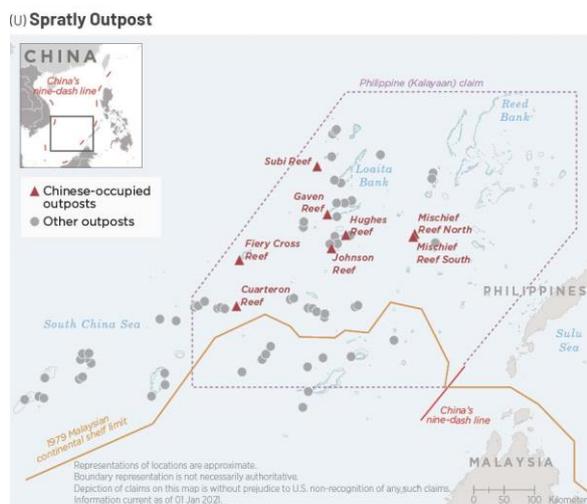


Figure 3. Military bases in the Spartan Islands [16]



Figure 4. The shape of the military base [17]

The adjacent base helps China Coast Guard (CCG) vessels frequently patrol the Natuna waters and assist their fishing militia in conducting illegal fishing[18]. It is proven that on March 19, 2016, there was an incident between the fishing militia escorted by the CCG and the Indonesian fisheries authorities, which then arbitrarily hit the fishing militia boat[19].

In mid-2018, CCG underwent reform. Previously the CCG was under the control of the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) and the People Armed Police (PAP), then it was overhauled and under the Central Military Commission (CMC). These changes make CCG have an ambiguous value. Apart from being a civilian agency in charge of guarding/carrying out maritime border patrols, the CCG is also projected to be the main force in maintaining military friction. Indirectly, the CCG has the authority in military weapons when needed or in conditions that threaten China's sovereignty[20].

The issuance of the new Maritime Law unilaterally on September 1, 2021, has strengthened the authority of the CCG[21]. Every ship crossing China's territorial waters is obliged to report, not only civilian ships but warships and submarines are also required to report their interests and plans. If not, then legally CCG has the right to shoot unlicensed ships.

This condition can increase conflict tensions in the North Natuna Sea. The location of the advanced bases in the Spratley Islands made it possible for a frontal war to occur by using force and suddenness. This has forced Indonesia to prepare strategic plans related to increasing regional defense to reduce the level of tension.

### **3.2 Impact of China Gray Zone Operation for Indonesia**

By jurisdiction, China's unilateral gray zone operation poses a threat to the country's defense and stability. The EEZ waters in the North Natuna Sea that can be processed by Indonesia are disrupted, especially in fishing and maintaining marine ecosystems. The reduced economic income in fishing certainly has a psychological impact on the Natuna coastal community.

Those who depend on the sea for their lives are threatened when they want to enjoy marine products in their territory. The results obtained from the sea cannot be maximized because the Chinese militia's technology and fishing equipment are superior and deliberately use fish catchers that can damage the marine ecosystem. Finally, in regional resilience, especially in Natuna, the community will experience social inequality which can be a gap for propaganda or outside influences to enter the border area, especially the Natuna coastal community.

China's rapid organizational structure reshuffle has the effect of increasing tension. China deliberately brought projections toward conventional warfare. This was further strengthened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine which was accompanied by efforts for a deterrence effect on Taiwan with the passage of Chinese fighter jets in Taiwan's airspace[22]. Indirectly, it makes other countries, especially Indonesia, think harder to deal with conventional warfare or to face the gray zone which is carried out continuously.

### **3.3 Strategy for Establishing Marine Reserve Components**

Indonesia's National Interest is clearly stated in the preamble to the 1945 Constitution namely to protect the entire Indonesian nation and the entire homeland of Indonesia and to promote public welfare, educate the nation's life, and participate in carrying out world order based on independence, eternal peace and social justice [23]. To create a strategy for forming components of the marine dimension reserve, the author uses the Lykke theory which is described in the table below.

Table 1. Strategy for Establishing Marine Reserve Components Using Lykke Theory

<b>ENDS</b>	<b>ISUE (GRAY ZONE)</b>	<b>WAYS</b>	<b>MEANS (MARINE RESERVE COMPONENTS)</b>
<p>-Protect the entire Indonesian nation and the entire homeland of Indonesia.</p> <p>-Enrich the life of a nation.</p> <p>- Participate in carrying out world order based on freedom, eternal peace and social justice.</p>	-Chinese fishing militia .	-Forming a fishing militia funded by the state by empowering a growing group of fishermen.	-The fishing group in Natuna. -Groups of fishermen assisted by the government and the Navy. - Security practitioners (veterans of the Navy).
	-Chinese fishing militia in and out of Indonesia's EEZ in the North Natuna Sea	- Spreading Indonesian fishermen in the EEZ waters of the North Natuna Sea which are often entered by Chinese militia fishermen as control of the outer border ring. -Guidance and socialization of Indonesian fishermen for communication mechanisms and quick reports -Utilizing the shipping activities of Indonesian ships passing through Natuna waters as the eyes and ears of the Government -Utilizing flight activities that pass over the waters of North Natuna to provide a visual picture. -Using ship monitoring technology that can detect the position of the ship	-Commerce ship -Civil Aviation -Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) -Indonesian fishing militia in the North Natuna Sea -Customs Ship
	-The technology and nets used by the Chinese fishing militia are more sophisticated.	-Procurement of boats for fishermen. -Transfer of knowledge and technology by relevant <i>stakeholders</i> . - Community service activities (real work lectures) in the Natuna area as an additional task in efforts to defend the country and socialize maritime resource management. -Creating conservation areas guarded by the government in spots rich in natural resources.	-Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP). - Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment (Kemenkomarves). -Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). -Ministry of Research and Technology/National Agency for Research and Innovation (Kemenristek/BRIN). -State-owned universities (academics). -Foundations that develop the potential of marine ecosystems.
	used by the Chinese militia are not in accordance with	-Utilizing the role of Indonesian fishermen's militia to monitor the activities of Chinese fishermen . -Utilizing the shipping activities of	-Commerce ship -Marine Security Agency (Bakamla) -KKP

<b>ENDS</b>	<b>ISUE (GRAY ZONE)</b>	<b>WAYS</b>	<b>MEANS (MARINE RESERVE COMPONENTS)</b>
	the law and damage the ecosystem	Indonesian ships passing through Natuna waters to monitor violations of Chinese fishermen. -Provide strict sanctions such as destroying ships and high fines. -KKP using ship monitoring technology that can detect the position of the ship	-Indonesian fishing militia in the North Natuna Sea. -Water and air police (Polairud) and law enforcement components at sea.
	-CCG accompanies its fishing militia and takes action against violations	-Utilizing the role of Bakamla in marine patrol activities and in collaboration with the KKP. - Granting authority to Bakamla in taking action.	Bakamla -KKP
	-UUV in the use of intelligence	-Install an underwater activity detection device or Remote Operation Vehicle (ROV). - Approve the continental shelf and licensing regulations for underwater activities as well as legal sanctions.	-National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas). -House of Representatives. -Ministry of Defense. -Bakamla. - KKP. - Security practitioners (veterans of the Navy).

From the table above, the strategies that can be used in the formation of components of the marine dimension reserve are:

- a. Forming a militia from fishing groups or practitioners such as Navy veterans who have experience in operating tasks in conflict areas.
- b. Forming integration and fostering the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) from related institutions as well as commercial shipping actors/as well as prospective civilian sailors in supervising the activities of the Chinese fishing militia.
- c. Creating a command structure/organizational component of the marine reserve component which is equipped with communication/coordination lines and responsibilities as an effort to report quickly and act quickly.
- d. Procurement of underwater detection technology, as well as research development related to marine resources and conservation in Natuna in collaboration with existing practitioners, institutional foundations and universities (academics) to improve people's welfare.
- e. Granting authority to Bakamla in enforcement operations.
- f. Utilizing the technology owned by the KKP in detecting the position of ships entering the waters of North Natuna and can be integrated with Bakamla or the Navy.

#### IV.CONCLUSION

GRAY zone operation carried out by China in the northern Natuna sea under the guise of a historical background cannot be taken lightly. Continuous offense activity causes the defense focus to become monocentric. Taking lightly the routines of China's fishing militia can lead to negligence. Because reading the situation against the routine of the same object continuously makes the level of alertness decrease.

The strategy for establishing components of the marine reserve component does not only involve human resources but also natural resources and artificial resources, including technology owned by state institutions. The synergy due to the gray zone operation can be said to be very complex. Because the synergy between the military and non-military components is rarely carried out by Indonesia.

The limited ability of Bakamla, KKP, and TNI AL (Indonesian Navy) to deal with Chinese fishing militias in very large numbers can be supported by the formation of a marine reserve component consisting of civilians or fishermen, military veterans or practitioners, academics, shipping crews, related institutional ASNs, conservation and as well as research and technology development.

It is hoped that the formation of a marine reserve component can change the situation of tension and control under the Indonesian state. So that the use of marine resources can be maximized for the benefit of the state.

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