

SISHANKAMRATA: An Approach to a Versatile Asymmetric Strategy for Weak and Strong from Clausewitz Trinity Perspective

Robby Maulidiyawan^{a,1}, Rudy Sutanto^{b,2}, Suhirwan^{c,3}

^{a,b,c} Faculty of Defence Strategy, Indonesia Defence Univesity, Indonesia
¹ heramsky2@gmail.com, ² rudy.susanto@idu.ac.id, ³ suhirwan@idu.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to examine the relevance of this system at a time when asymmetric war elements dominate many current conflicts. This research has two problem formulations, the research objectives of which are as follows: (1) How does SISHANKAMRATA integrate the principles of Clausewitz's Trinity to create a cohesive and adaptive defence strategy against modern asymmetric threats? (2) What are the strengths and limitations of SISHANKAMRATA as a strategic model for weak and strong actors? The method used is a qualitative research method of library research with the acquisition of secondary data such as laws, doctrine, posture, books and scientific articles. This study concludes that SISHANKAMRATA is versatile for facing conventional, asymmetric, and even hybrid threats. The nature of SISHANKAMRATA also invites people to prioritize this system through quantity. However, the weakness lies in the quality, in terms of the preparation stage, and in the later stage of maintaining it. It is crucial during the conflict since Indonesia possesses vast territory and archipelago.

Keywords: Asymmetric Warfare, Clausewitz Trinity, Hybrid Threats, SISHANKAMRATA, Strategic Asymmetry, Tactical Asymmetry

I. INTRODUCTION

In the quarter of the 21st century, threats to state sovereignty have reached a rapid development intensity and are predicted to continue to grow. In terms of technology and strategy, it has given rise to demands for each country to update its efforts in response to potential threats that may occur. For example, the development of professional combat quadcopter drones such as the SONGAR™ Armed Drone System from Asisguard or KARGU® from STM are small examples of technological developments. Meanwhile, Russia's Special Military Operation on February 24, 2022, marked an example of the latest military strategy developments that have also attracted the attention of researchers. This conflict is unique because of its strong relevance to the study of asymmetric warfare, in which a major power such as the Russian Federation can be overwhelmed when facing Ukraine. The use of non-conventional strategies such as drones, mercenaries and trench warfare are also small examples of the development of military strategy.

Throughout this situation, the Republic of Indonesia is a vast archipelagic country with an area of 1,922,570 km² and a water area of 3,257,483 k [1]. Indonesia also has a population of 282,477,584 people with diverse ethnicities, forming a unique and rich environment [2]. It provides good and bad potential opportunities, especially in the field of defence. The vast archipelago, accompanied by population density, ethnic heterogeneity and a history of struggle and conflict that has occurred and is happening, is a green light for the use of asymmetric war strategies by the enemy without the support of intense nationalism and a stable defence policy. Many regions will suffer the same fate as regions that are vulnerable to terror and separatism.

SISHANKAMRATA, or the Universal People's Defence and Security System, is present as a foundation that helps foster strong nationalism, which then consequently strengthens defence from within. In simple terms, this doctrine is the integration of government authority,

military capabilities, and civilian participation. According to the mandate of President Prabowo Subianto, represented by Colonel Istiawan in commemoration of National Defence Day 2024, SISHANKAMRATA is considered the best national defence system due to the superiority of the population and the vast territory of the archipelago[3]. This system mobilizes all elements of national power institutions, armed forces, and society to create a cohesive and resilient defence mechanism. By combining a traditional military approach with civilian participation and strategic adaptability, SISHANKAMRATA is closely aligned with Clausewitz's Trinity, in which government, military, and people form the fundamental pillars of national security. This comprehensive approach ensures Indonesia's readiness to face various modern asymmetric threats, including terrorism, cyber-attacks, and other unconventional conflicts. Thus, these things are the background for the researcher's desire to explore more deeply how SISHANKAMRATA is the correct doctrine for Indonesia.

This study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of SISHANKAMRATA as an investigative hypothesis versatile asymmetric strategy that can be adapted to both the weak and strong actors in conflict scenarios. By analyzing its theoretical foundations, practical applications, and alignment with Clausewitz's Trinity, this study seeks to evaluate its effectiveness in addressing modern asymmetric threats. In addition, and as expected by the researcher, this article aims to position SISHANKAMRATA as a strategic model not only for Indonesia's defence system but also as a policy framework that can potentially be applied in an international context. This study addresses two main research questions: (1) How does SISHANKAMRATA integrate the principles of Clausewitz's Trinity to create a versatile defence strategy for Indonesia? (2) What are the strengths and limitations of SISHANKAMRATA as a strategic model for both weak and strong actors?

This study offers significant insights into the strategic value of SISHANKAMRATA in navigating the complexities of modern asymmetric warfare. By bridging theoretical frameworks such as Clausewitz's Trinity, this research highlights SISHANKAMRATA's adaptability in overcoming various threats to hybrid conflicts. In addition, this study is expected to contribute to the academic discourse on national defence strategy by providing a unique case study of an innovative approach from Indonesia. These insights have the potential to enrich the global understanding of how asymmetric strategy can be adapted to address national and international security challenges.

The findings of this paper will be helpful to a wide range of readers. Policymakers and defence strategists can utilize these recommendations to improve national security frameworks and policy development. Military professionals will gain practical knowledge on how SISHANKAMRATA is integrated into various force elements to counter complex threats. Ultimately, the general public, especially those interested in national security, will gain a deeper appreciation of Indonesia's defence strategy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Asymmetric Warfare

Asymmetric warfare is one of the significant areas of war studies. This term underlines some continuity with other terms such as irregular war, 4th Generation Warfare or military threats other than war. When examined logically, this term should mean studying warfare that is not patterned, unusual, unpredictable or unbalanced. Metz & Johnson concluded from several definitions from the Joint Doctrine and Joint Strategic Review manuscripts that in the context of military and national security, asymmetric warfare manifests actions, organization and thinking that are different from the opponent in order to maximize one's advantages, exploit the opponent's weaknesses, gain initiative or freedom to act [4]. They also added that the scope of this can include a combination of political, military and operational strategies and can be

followed by various integrations of methods, technology, values, organization and even time perspectives in physical and psychological functions. This definition contains a detailed view of the essence of asymmetric warfare, starting from the strategic value of the concept, methods and even its impact. Buffaloe reviews the definition as ambiguous because of its complexity, covering up to six aspects of asymmetric warfare. Buffaloe [5] argues that Asymmetric Warfare is a people-centred war carried out by a party that is superior in military strength with a party that is lacking in evaluating and addressing threats, carrying out operations, cultural understanding and asymmetric cost analysis.

Asymmetric threats can roughly be divided into two: armed Asymmetric threats and unarmed Asymmetric threats. Armed Asymmetric Threats encompass the actions of states or non-state actors that are directly or via proxies involved in armed conflicts such as terrorism, insurgency and separatism. This threat has the primary goal of presenting chaos. In accordance with Galula, by promoting chaos, insurgents can directly influence counterinsurgency actors and national stability [6], while unarmed asymmetric threats will target the economy, public trust and political conditions. Buffaloe explains that the most apparent asymmetric threats in the economic sector include foreign aid, trade policies and foreign investment because these actions can be carried out legally. Still, their impact will be significant to the political direction of a country [5]. In this study, the Asymmetric Warfare approach is used to represent the state of modern conflict that is not limited to armed conflict and war. Buffaloe [5] & Galula [6] also agree in emphasizing asymmetric warfare that is centred on society, namely terrorism, separatism, and armed rebellion, which are actual forms of threats and dominate after World War II. They believe that one of the significant factors that favour this concept is its low cost and its impact, which also weakens defence.

Moreover, Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest population, making this approach very relevant. According to Metz & Johnson [4], two asymmetric strategies can be applied, namely positive and negative asymmetry. They explain it as follows: Positive asymmetric strategy is the utilization of various available strengths, while the negative strategy is to utilize the opponent's movements, responses and weaknesses and vice versa, thereby gaining the freedom to act. They also explain that this strategy can be achieved by utilizing six fundamental aspects, namely method, technology, intention/will, normative, organization and patience.

B. Clausewitz Trinity

Clausewitz's trinity, as outlined in on war, explains war as a dynamic interaction between the people, the government, and the military. Clausewitz describes the people as primordial violence, hatred, and hostility; the military as chance and probability; and the government as subordinate to rational policy. Modern interpretations by Summers [7] and van Creveld [8] emphasize that this framework is relevant for both conventional and asymmetric conflicts. This trinity highlights the imbalanced roles of the people, government, and military. Weak actors exploit this imbalance by rallying popular support, disrupting enemy governments, and using unorthodox tactics to counter superior forces. In contrast, strong actors seek to maintain stability and legitimacy through rational policies and proportionate operations.

Clausewitz views the people as the source of the emotional energy of war [9]. In asymmetric warfare, society becomes a vital element, both as a supporter and mobilization target. Rebels often exploit popular discontent to create grassroots movements, while there is a strong need to maintain public trust to maintain legitimacy. According to Clausewitz [9], government is a representation of reason that is tasked with formulating rational war policies. In asymmetric conflicts, governments face the challenge of political subversion from weak actors who try to undermine the resolve and credibility of the strong side. A solid policy foundation is needed to maintain the coherence of war strategy. The military represents chance and probability in

Clausewitz's Trinity[9]. In asymmetric warfare, weak actors exploit uncertainty through guerrilla tactics, cyberattacks, and sabotage, while strong actors rely on technology and intelligence to maintain operational superiority[10].

C. SISHANKAMRATA

SISHANKAMRATA is an acronym for *Sistem Pertahanan dan Keamanan Rakyat Semesta*, roughly translated as the Total People's Defence and Security System; this is Indonesia's unique defence doctrine, which is based on the philosophy of the Indonesian people's struggle against colonialism. Based on the 1945 Constitution Article 30 Act 1 [11], every citizen has the right and obligation to participate in national defence efforts and is explained in detail in Law No. 23 of 2019 [12] concerning National Resource Management considering that the national defence system is a universal defence system that involves all citizens, territories, and other national resources. Then, in detail, in Chapter I, article 1, paragraphs 8-10 [12], it explains the essence and function of the main, reserve and supporting components in carrying out defence tasks.

The national defence doctrine[13] explains the universal nature of combining military and non-military defence. It focuses on preparation, structuring and development gradually and continuously due to the actual conditions of building a defence system, which takes time. At the same time, the threat of war can occur at any time. The main component of national defence, namely the TNI, is actively prepared to guarantee its main tasks. However, due to the geographical conditions of Indonesia as an archipelagic country and a relatively large area, the arrangement and style will inevitably seem slow. Therefore, the participation of all Indonesian citizens in strengthening defence is crucial.

This research will try to explore SISHANKAMRATA in Clausewitz's Trinity approach as a theoretical lens for analyzing how this system should work (*das sein*) and the actual situation, including government implementation and the impact of its current policies (*das sollen*). By examining the interaction between society, government, and military in the Indonesian context, this study seeks to understand how these elements can be aligned to counter modern asymmetric threats.

III. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design and is based on literature research. According to Creswell [14], research design is the scope of all plans and procedures that need to be taken, starting from management considerations from basic assumptions such as background and problems to specific methods such as data collection and analysis. He also added that determining the research design must be adjusted to the circumstances of the subjects being studied and also take into account the researcher's experience. The use of qualitative methods in this research is to provide an overall framework about how many procedures are needed to start and determine how to process data appropriately to present detailed information and adequate analysis. The reason lies solely in the form of data that will be used in this study. It aims to analyze President Soekarno's leadership in depth using thematic and comparative analysis methods from verified sources. In this context, it focuses on revealing how the data obtained is in accordance with the qualitative design.

Data collection will refer to separate, sequential methods that need to be done to obtain, sort, classify, and examine the required data from its sources. According to Flick [15], qualitative data collection is the selection and production of linguistic (or visual) material to analyze and understand phenomena, social fields, subjective and collective experiences, and related meaning-making processes. Since this study is entirely focused on data that only comes from document-type sources, data collection will use document analysis techniques. Data

collection is a process for data collection; this study relied on document and literature analysis with a focus on secondary data to ensure a comprehensive examination. The use of this method allows for a more in-depth analysis of secondary sources. Thus, it is expected to reveal the dynamics that occur through a critical contrasting system. It is in line with the perspective of Yin [16], who stated in his book the importance of triangulating information from various sources to build a richer understanding, which increases the depth and validity of findings. Secondary sources will involve reports and documents from global defence institutions within the same period.

Data analysis is a series of processes needed to obtain a meaningful state that has been established from each data that has gone through a series of tests and verifications. The meaningful state of this processed data is the condition of data that has been completely refined and is considered adequate for concluding, clear points, problem-solving, and definite values in order to obtain answers to questions from the problem formulation section. According to Flick [15], Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic or visual material to make statements about the dimensions and structure of meaning that are implicit or explicit in the material and what is represented in it. This research article mainly uses secondary data sources such as government constitutions, laws, documents, and recent research journals from related studies. This research utilized discourse analysis. According to Taylor [17], discourse analysis is a type that aims to examine how claims are constructed and interpreted, revealing them as subjective creations that can be contested to unravel their objective truths. She also stated through a case study from Byford's research that the analysis draws on the researcher's knowledge of the context, including its recent history. Therefore, after the researcher manages to collect relevant data sources, it immediately serves as evidence to support or deny the main research variables. To ensure the entire analysis process carried out at this stage prioritizes objectivity and maximizes word efficiency, the result and discussion only contain completed analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings and analysis to address the research problem proposed in this study. This discussion aims to bridge theoretical insights with empirical observations that offer a different understanding of their relevance and applicability. This study addresses two main questions: First, (1) How does SISHANKAMRATA integrate Clausewitz's Trinity principles to create a versatile strategy for Indonesia? (2) What are the strengths and limitations of SISHANKAMRATA as a strategic model for both weak and strong actors? These findings will explore the dynamics of SISHANKAMRATA in responding to Indonesia's specific security challenges, analyze its integration within Clausewitz's theoretical framework and evaluate its strengths and limitations in countering contemporary threats. This section will attempt to delve into a deeper understanding of SISHANKAMRATA as both a defence strategy and a philosophical construct, highlighting its potential as a versatile approach to addressing the challenges of asymmetric warfare. Let's start by reviewing the strategic and tactical dimensions of implementation.

A. Strategic Dimensions of SISHANKAMRATA

SISHANKAMRATA provides a robust strategic framework that leverages Indonesia's unique socio-political and geographical conditions. The strategic strength of this doctrine lies in its emphasis on total defence that integrates all elements of society, from civil society to government institutions and military forces [13]. For example, the decentralized nature of strategy allows local communities to monitor and respond to threats in real time, thereby

effectively reducing response times to asymmetric challenges such as insurgency and guerilla warfare.



FIGURE 1. STRATIFICATION OF NATIONAL DEFENCE COMPONENTS [18]

From a Clausewitzian perspective, the government element of the trinity aligns with the rational dimension of SISHANKAMRATA. Policies developed based on this doctrine ensure balanced resource allocation that promotes prevention and resilience. Nitit & Saksono [19] show that government policies firmly back up the participation of civilians as a supporting component in the defence effort. Therefore, the government also provides regulations to support and encourage civilians. To enforce this, the Indonesian Defence doctrine [13] shows different civilian roles that strongly support national security and resilience. However, as asymmetric threats increasingly involve cyber and hybrid domains, the strategic framework must evolve to integrate advanced technological capabilities and require further development of sustainable defence systems.

The involvement of civilians as participants and stakeholders in defence is in line with the passion component of Clausewitz's Trinity[9]. By mobilizing community support and participation, SISHANKAMRATA creates a sense of shared responsibility, strengthens national unity and deters external threats. As Zeligke et al. [21] However, the involvement of civilians also poses potential risks. Critics argue that untrained civilians participating in defence efforts could cause operational inefficiencies and additional vulnerabilities. Addressing these issues requires systematic training programs and strong governance structures to ensure that civilian roles complement military objectives.

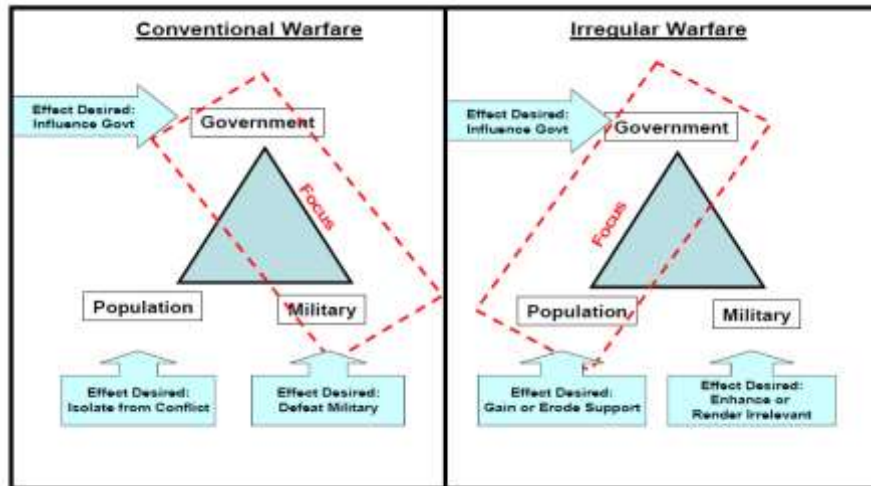


FIGURE 2. CONTRASTING CONVENTIONAL AND IRREGULAR WARFARE [20]

B. Tactical Dimensions of SISHANKAMRATA

At the tactical level, SISHANKAMRATA emphasizes local responses that leverage terrain familiarity, cultural connections, and unconventional methods to counter a more powerful enemy. Tactics such as guerilla warfare and community-based intelligence networks allowed Indonesia to compensate for its weaknesses against technologically superior powers. As Čajić[22] states, the essential to the military during the war is backing from the public; therefore, it is most potent against the threat. The unpredictability of asymmetric warfare often forces actors to adapt quickly to evolving threats. SISHANKAMRATA addresses this by empowering local commanders and civilian leaders to act independently within a broader strategic framework, increasing flexibility and responsiveness. However, the success of these tactics depends heavily on the coherence of communications and training across multiple regions.

SISHANKAMRATA's primary strength lies in its ability to mobilize national resources and foster resilience to multiple threats. Its emphasis on total defence aligns with Indonesia's historical and cultural context, making it a deeply rooted and widely supported strategy. However, its limitations, such as operational inefficiencies and the need for modernization, must be addressed to ensure its continued relevance. Ultimately, this piece highlights the importance of integrating traditional defence concepts with modern innovations to counter asymmetric and hybrid threats effectively. SISHANKAMRATA serves as a compelling case study of how a country can adapt its defence strategy to align with its unique challenges and opportunities, providing valuable insights for other countries facing similar threats.

C. SISHANKAMRATA, as a Powerful Actor

The nature of SISHANKAMRATA emphasizes Indonesia's ability to integrate its comprehensive resources to neutralize threats. Positive asymmetry arises from the total war concept that incorporates not only professional military personnel but also the ability to enforce civilian-to-back defence efforts by actively participating or by simply doing their work to support economic participation. On the other hand, SISHANKAMRATA implicates a complex adaptive social system. Friedman [23] states that it encompasses human organizations of all sorts, from governments and social movements to charitable organizations to flash mobs. By leveraging its centralized yet adaptable defence posture, Indonesia can launch precision strikes against rebel hideouts while leveraging local civilian support networks for intelligence gathering.

SISHANKAMRATA also embodies negative asymmetries by utilizing unconventional methods when combating hybrid threats. For example, in countering cyber espionage

campaigns, Indonesia uses decentralized civilian cyber units to identify and counter misinformation, blending traditional state capabilities with root engagement. This adaptability ensures the military maintains an element of unpredictability, even as a dominant power. As a powerful actor, the reliance on total population mobilization under SISHANKAMRATA can be a liability in asymmetric contexts where adversaries exploit the population's vulnerabilities. Civilians can be targeted by insurgents, leading to societal tensions and potential loss of public trust if operations are not carefully managed.

D. SISHANKAMRATA as a Weaker Actor

In a scenario where Indonesia takes on the role of the weaker actor, SISHANKAMRATA emphasizes resilience and unconventional strategies to offset losses. Positive asymmetry is realized by leveraging Indonesia's geographic diversity, population scale, and cultural cohesion. For example, in the event of a large-scale invasion, SISHANKAMRATA's decentralized design allows local communities to wage guerrilla warfare, leveraging their deep knowledge of the terrain to disrupt supply chains and attack enemy forces. It aligns with Paul[24] that by limited offensive capability, weaker challengers must immediately seize initiation as soon as possible unless they are willing to fight the stronger opponent with their maximum power. In addition, Indonesia has long been battle-hardened in utilizing guerilla warfare as the result of independence, and the post-independence struggle has proven to be a valuable experience in performing as a weakened actor in a possible future conflict.

Negative asymmetry strategies are also crucial in this context, as weaker actors rely on exploiting vulnerabilities in stronger adversaries. SISHANKAMRATA will encourage asymmetric tactics such as cyberattacks against critical infrastructure, disinformation campaigns to erode adversaries' public trust, and high-impact selective attacks targeting command structures. The inherent uncertainty of these actions, combined with the mobilization of civilian forces, provides a powerful deterrent mechanism. This philosophy is in line with Clausewitz's Trinity, where society plays a vital role in maintaining morale and contributing to national resilience. However, as a weaker actor, the risk of unduly burdening civilian participants or exposing them to adverse impacts without adequate safeguards is a significant challenge. Moreover, reliance on unconventional methods can invite international scrutiny, complicating diplomatic efforts.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that SISHANKAMRATA is a versatile asymmetric strategy that is uniquely suited to address the diverse challenges of modern warfare. It is known that SISHANKAMRATA integrates the capacities of Indonesian society, government, and military into a cohesive defence strategy that effectively overcomes strategic and tactical asymmetries. The doctrine is aligned with Clausewitz's Trinity, which emphasizes the roles of government, military, and people, making it highly adaptable to the complexities of asymmetric and hybrid threats. This adaptability ensures that SISHANKAMRATA can function effectively whether Indonesia is positioned as a stronger or weaker actor in the conflict.

This article highlights areas for further research, such as advanced plans and policies to find the perfect balance to implement the system in a vast archipelagic country such as Indonesia or the integration of advanced technologies into the SISHANKAMRATA framework and its application in global defence strategy. It is acknowledged that this paper is limited to a very narrow approach to manifest a versatile asymmetric strategy. It might only serve as a reference for policymakers, military planners, and academics seeking to understand the dynamics of asymmetric warfare and the relevance of traditional defence doctrine in contemporary conflicts. The researchers are also planning for the future continuation of this article in the hope it could

expand this framework by analyzing its operational outcomes in real-world scenarios and its potential to adapt to other countries facing similar asymmetric threats. Further critiques, suggestions or collaborative efforts are warmly welcome to broaden and ensure the quality of this research or future research.

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