



The Vuca of Strategic Environment in the Defense Planning of Indonesian Marine Corps

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The objective of this research is to analyze the VUCA of strategic environment in Indonesian Marine Corps defense planning. Among the global political policy developments, the region of Indo-Pacific becomes the zone with a great deal of interests so it raises VUCA situations. This research utilizes a phenomenologic qualitative approach which tries to analyze social issues related to VUCA environment and the defense planning of Indonesian Marine Corps. The result shows that VUCA strategic environment in the defense planning of Indonesian Marine Corps turns out to be a situation which changes fast and complex, so it forces military as the component of defense to be able to identify and understand the potential of threats and the risks they create. This research concludes that military planners must be able to identify the reasons why VUCA situation exists in order to respond each development of strategic environment in Indonesia's maritime defense area. The causes of VUCA strategic environment are the limitation of cognition, resources, International Systems, Strategic Interaction, Intelligence and Deception, and Technology.

Keywords: *VUCA Strategic Environment, Defense Planning, Indonesian Marine Corps (IDMC)*



1. INTRODUCTION

As time goes by, defense planning which is used in conceiving defence has developed into detailed defense planning and additional strategic guidance (Mattelaer, 2018). This phenomenon serves as the base of the importance of strategic planning in state defense. However, there is no general definition related to defense policy, defense management, defense planning, or 'defense decision.' Besides, there is no general view about describing each other, either (Garnett, 1976; Johnson, et al., 2003). Beside being approached by strategic approach, military defense also needs the allocation of specific perspective in positioning military as a sociopolitical phenomena (Breitenbauch, & Jakobsson, 2020).

The approach of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) of environment has been adhered to defense planning so that it needs critical informations so much. The abundance of accessible data merely become a risky knowledge if they are not equipped with adequate military strategies and tactics (Szymanski, 2019). Strategies and tactics keep becoming the guidance necessary among the utilizations of machines which raises the dependency and inability to control the realms beyond the range (Wang, & D'Cruze, 2020), risk potentials in security matters and their implications to defense planners in making short, medium, and long range plannings. So that is why it is so urgent to identify what risks which could be minimized based on the prioritized resources and what risks that is accomodable in dealing with VUCA strategic environment (Jackson, 2020).

In this research, VUCA strategic environment is defined as the fundamental thinking of strategic process in gaining victory. According to Keeney (1996), "*your decision problems, create alternatives, and articulate ... be thought of as decision opportunities rather than as decision ... that decisions can be made about risk communication*". This includes the decisions which are negotiated with the development of strategic environment. The VUCA of strategic environment is the phenomena which is important to be considered in planning.

The situation which is "VUCA" according to Jacobs (2009) is potraying external environment as *Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, dan Ambiguity* (Gerras., et al; 2010). The environment in the era of reformation which is full of VUCA does not provide enough correct solutions and gives out carelessness when trying to understand the environment, anticipating changes, and managing risks. The components of volatility, uncertainty, complexcity, and ambiguity are the words used much to potray an environment which is contrary to the diagnosis which ensure and confuse the executives (Bennett, & Lemoine, 2014). Even a well arranged plan appears to fail due to the fluctuations existed. For instance, planning for the power in the uncertain region of Indo-Pacific will influence the precision of the plans that have already been arranged.



The dynamic of VUCA environment which presents direct threat and risk against the defense of Indonesia lies on maritime zone. Indonesia is known as the largest maritime country with the shore line of 54,716 kilometers long and has three (3) archipelagic sea lanes. Such situation inevitably raise up the fluctuation of geopolitical issues in Indonesia's maritime territory such as natural resources thefts, borderline disputes, et cetera. That is why, a defence planning strategy based on victory concept is absolutely needed by Indonesian Marine Corps (IDMC) as the main component of defense in maintaining the sovereignty of The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

The fact proves that defense planners have thought so hard of how to make alternatives with as small risk as possible in the future (*risk averse*). Indonesian Marine Corps decision makers realize that every decision has its own risk. Commandant of Indonesian Marine Corps, Major General TNI (Marines) Suhartono M. Tr, Han presented in the strategic planning that the wide geografic range of territory and national resources which are not optimum yet that creates an imbalance among the capacity, the capability and readiness in performing the tasks and functions of supporting the operational availability become the risk that must be faced in Defense Planning. The issue here is that even a correct decision does not always give the outcome desired (Frühling, 2006).

The result of initial observation and interview that IDMC's planners often found that it is hard to make a defense planning in facing VUCA environments since capability based planning and threat approach are not sufficient anymore with such situation. The defense planning staffs realize the difficulty of analyzing strategic environment, defining critical points concerning strategy, the demand of force structure, program, and budget, as well as determining the actions in the future. It is not easy for defence planners to interpret the strategic risks of defining the demand of building and developing military force structure. On the contrary, defense planners are facing more new issues before coming to long term plans. This is influenced a lot by the VUCA of environment which urges that warfare is not territorial anymore but turns to be a total battle in a concept of universal defense.

The interaction among strategic environment, threat, and strategy is analyzed in order to find out how defense planning is influenced by environment's VUCA in determining the future risks. The risks are studied well by the planners with the perspective of VUCA environment and theory. From the defense planners' point of view, VUCA environment provides strategic informations as strategic risks. From theoretical perspective, the formulation of strategy must be free from mistakes in order to enable an action and program be accommodated in defense planning. Susceptibility analysis is based on several risks. These risks contain the main issues of VUCA environments.

Based on the analysis of VUCA environment, the most important prerequisites of gaining a victory are gathering, identifying, analyzing, and distributing consistently. The issue found is



identified and analyzed with the condition that risks, threats, and strategies become the actions / decisions in the future. This shows that some conditions could be fulfilled in any situation. There are still open problems and some discussions which are related and contrary to such conditions. This defense planning could be approached in several ways, including more detailed strategic approaches concerning VUCA, since VUCA environment and threats as strategic risk patterns will have influences against the formulation and formation of strategy in defense planning. That is why it is essential to analyze the VUCA of strategic environment in the defense planning of Indonesian Marine Corps.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a phenomenologic qualitative research approach. According to Creswell (2016:155-179), a qualitative research is a study of an individual or group's sense in dealing with social or humanitarian issues. It is relevant to this research which tries to analyze the social issues concerning VUCA environment and defense planning.

The sites of this research are the special places planned by the researchers to gather the research data by interviewing, documenting, and observing. Such places include: The Staff Office of IDMC, Marines Division 1 in Jakarta, Marines Division 2 in Surabaya, and Marines Division 3 in Sorong, West Papua as well as other places which the researchers consider could provide deep information about defense planning.

Research data are gathered from some sources, that is, participants, events, and documentations. Research is conducted by deep interview in order to obtain the understanding of "others' life experience and the value they obtained from that experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). Dealing with participants, the researchers ask open questions and listen to the responses in order to find out the basic sense and the process of experiencing, not merely explaining or analyzing, but emphasizing both intention and mind awareness based on the memory (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2006). These following steps are taken as the correct sequence of analysis to assess the phenomenologic experience of 10 participants: transcribing word by word, developing essential summary from phenomenologic experiences, and then interpreting the result of research relatively to the available literature.

3. RESEARCH RESULT

3.1 The VUCA of Strategic Environment in The Defense Planning of Indonesian Marine Corps

Military planning is a dynamic situation of facing problems to predict events in the future. The future events can not be predicted precisely, so that military planners must be ready to respond to any strategic environmental development which is considered VUCA. This is what we call dynamic planning because quick adaptation to volatility, uncertainty,



complexity, and ambiguity is a must. That is why planners must think about how to anticipate new threats in such VUCA environments.

One of the most important aspects in military planning is understanding the characters of strategic environments. Strategic environments are dynamic, uncertain, and complex so that they are so hard to be predicted. This make it difficult for IDMC to predict and plan their actions in these environments. The character of these environments is known as strategic environment, or in it's simple form, context. For a successful military campaign, planning staff must understand strategic environments and apply the effective strategy.

VUCA strategic environment which is so dynamic forces military as the main component of defense to identify and understand the potentials of threats and the risks they bring. In order to succeed in military campaign, planners must understand the VUCA of environments and apply the effective strategy. Four main characteristics of strategic environments are Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity which could potentially raise up conflicts (Zamani & Ait Soudane, 2022). These characteristics show that VUCA is so hard to be predicted. For instance, in dealing with VUCA, IDMC could raise up it's military budget without worrying being followed by other country's military. Besides, technology updates may run so fast in VUCA situation without worrying of slowing down of technological advancement.

Peaceful history never exists. There have been many wars and conflicts in the past. There are many factors which create continuously tensions among countries. Such factors include economy, religion, politics, and geography (Valigholizadeh., & Karimi, 2016). It turns out that war has been so common that it is not surprising anymore when it happens. Eventhough wars took place in any parts of the world, there are countries which involved in wars more than others, such as, The United States, Russia, China, and Germany. In this case, it is important to consider the factors which trigger wars and to analyze how such factors could change the situation to become better.

The environments which could trigger wars or conflicts nowadays maybe will not last long. On the contrary, that may change significantly when competing interests are trying to benefit from each other. During World War I, for instance, Austria has no option rather than taking over Serbia because of Germany's support (Neiberg, 2014). But later on, Austria lost the control over Serbia when Germany invaded France in World War I and shift the resources for the invasion. As a result, the war changed from initially a territorial conflict between Austria and Serbia into an international war in Europe and Africa. Eventhough some countries in the beginning stayed neutral, eventually they were also involved in the same war theater where resources became the trigger, for example, The United States who was initially neutral.

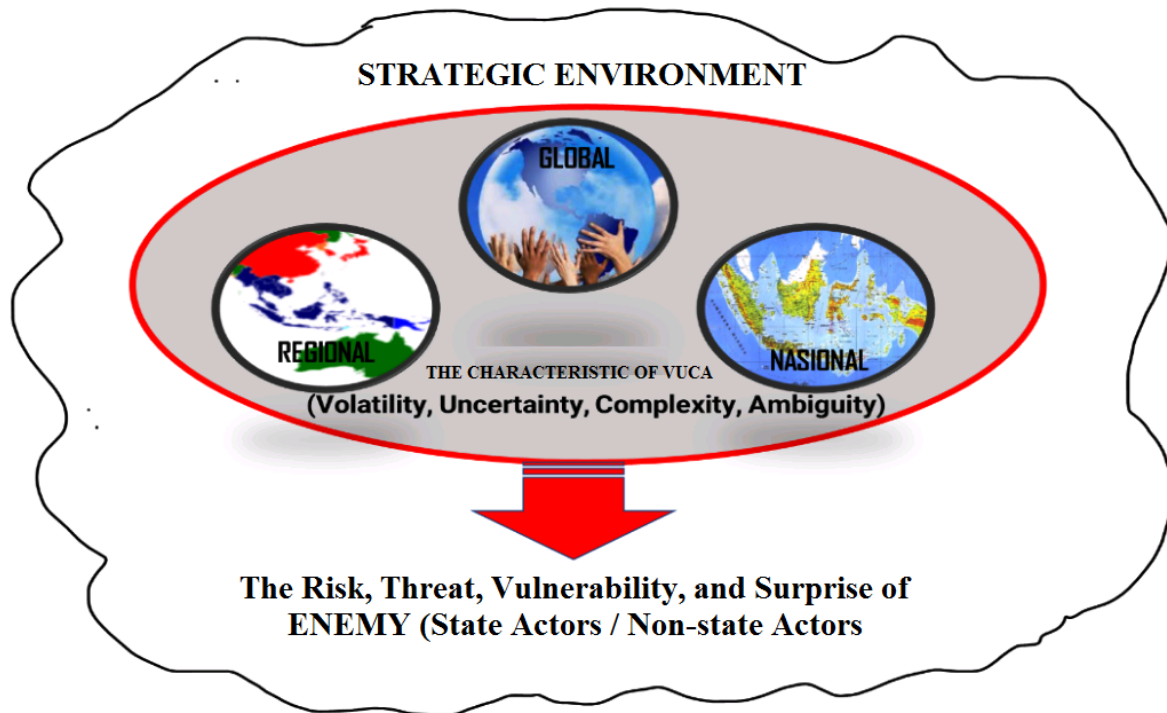
Some experts believe that war is a normal part of international life and is a way of countries interact to each other. There are several issues needed to be considered by military



leaderships while developing war plans. Recent incidents highlight that countries must cooperate in order to prevent incidents becoming world war. For instance, President Joko Widodo travelled to Russia and Ukraine. He is the first president of Indonesia who visited those two countries since President Soekarno landed in Moscow in 1959. That is the evidence of President Jokowi's diplomatic capability when making an effort to open the way to peace. During his visit, he discussed the strategy to promote the development of economy, democracy, and human rights with President of Russia, Vladimir Putin and President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky. This is critical because there are many criticism against the foreign policy of Indonesia under the administration of the current president. This travel shows that the government of Indonesia has a will and capability to strengthen the relationship with those two countries while showing how important they are in increasing bilateral relationship.

Eventhough war is a bad and terrible scenario in military planning, it could be a necessary measure to prevent even worse things. One of the factors where military planning may change is the potential of global threat which may switch the military planning in one area to another. For instance, after World War II, most countries focused on nuclear armament as the most effective way of defending their countries (Fink and Olga, 2020). Many countries switched their focus after India succeeded in testing it's nuclear bomb in 1974 (Mohan, 1998). As a consequence, many countries develop the plan of utilizing tactical nuclear bombs against certain military targets. Besides, some countries begin to develop the plan of decontaminating the nuclear contaminated areas. Nowadays, there are many countries which possess complicated strategy concerning how to respond to nuclear threats and this in turn will influence military planning.

There are many factors that influence military planning and such factors are so dynamic. *One*, military strategy changes if the situation changes. *Two*, unpredictable events create ambiguity to military planners. That is why, IDMC planning staffs must be ready to face any scenario and event. One of the ways of overcoming this complexity is by using the analogy of human life in general to plan and execute military actions. *First*, military planning must be dynamic along with the changes of situation. *Second*, during a war, military planning must consider the situation, time, and location. *Third*, military planning must consider enemy's plan and capability (vulnerability). *Fourth*, volatility changes the structure of military forces (military plan). *Fifth*, dramatic (surprising) change of strategic enviroment can ruin even a well arranged military plan. Basically, military planning is a way to manage risks (risks management). For example, weather can be a barrier to enemy's way or reinforcement which is not anticipated by military planners.



Source: Processed by the Researchers

Figure 6.1 Strategic Environment

VUCA strategic environment is not included in epistemic or ontologic category related to the prediction to obtain knowledge. At the same time, however, it obtain the characteristics of problem itself, not in the process of obtaining knowledge. In order to identify various problems in VUCA strategic environment, the analysis will be as follows:

3.1.1 The first cause of VUCA, volatility, is a non-linear dynamical system. Non-linear means that the cause-and-effect relationship creates an imbalance. For instance, when IDMC focuses on the activities programmed, a sudden change of situation forces a decision to be made. Volatility means changes of decisions which are unpredicted before and the analysis system can not accomodate such changes. For instance, IDMC defense planners have considered many factors when making strategies for defense planning.

Some of important factors necessary to be considered are the development of technology and natural resources. Military planners must consider how fast the situation of both of them may change. Volatility is natural in many situations. For example, IDMC defines volatility as changes of informations which are accelerated by technology. This make it difficult for military planners to plan for the future and making long-term decisions becomes impossible. In some phenomena, information volatility may cause economic mess and as the consequence, disaster. Besides, volatility also complicate the defense planning of IDMC in

preparing to face conflicts in the future. There are factors which become information volatility in military planning which are caused by technological development:

- 1) The change of political conditions often make planners not able to predict the conflicts they are going to deal with in the future. That makes preparing certain situations and making general plans become impossible.
- 2) The change of economical condition also make long term planning becomes impossible. It will be extremely difficult for military planners to effectively make defense strategies, which in turn leads to totally bad strategic decisions.
- 3) Adapting strategies in order to remain competitive. IDMC defense planners realize that volatility is beneficial in forcing planners to make correct decisions.

If planners do not adapt fast and correctly, the strategies of IDMC may become obsolete and lost their effectivity totally. By using the tool like the analysis of future orientation, planner staffs could use volatility for the benefit of competition in turbulent situations. Defense planners must continuously evaluate decisions in order to make sure they fulfill the demand of national defense in the development of technology in order to secure the natural resources of Indonesia (Octavian, 2019). As a country with abundance of natural resources, Indonesia becomes a war target. War is conducted in order to obtain the access to natural resources, industry, and communication system. That is why IDMC defense planners must be able to consider the aspect of technology development and natural resources as strategic environments.

3.1.2 The second cause of VUCA – Uncertainty. Situated in uncertainty makes defense planners must be extra careful in planning the building of defense force structure. IDMC planners are always not sure about threats and what opportunity to avoid strategic risks. This way reduce operational **effectivity** and even wastes the resources. Avoiding risks makes it difficult for IDMC planners to make correct decisions and reduces the capability of defense. Even a small issue of uncertainty of strategic environment can give a great impact on IDMC force posture. For example, the change of political policies gives a great impact on IDMC force posture.

In international system context, Indonesia lies in the region of Indo-Pacific. The region of Indo-Pacific is an open area and also very strategic and become the center of global economic growth and global power exchange. Besides, this region also inherit so many unsolved political and security issues from Cold War era. At least, there are two great powers that project their foreign policy to Indo-Pacific region: China with their concept of *New maritime Silk Road and Economic Belt* and The United States with their policy of *Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)*. As a result, there comes an anxiety about how this issue could influent the future of our country.



On the other hand, the region of ASEAN becomes strategic in the matter of economy and military because it connects Pacific and Indian Ocean. During the last two decades, ASEAN countries also develop their military forces specially the navies and airforces. Like South East Asia, East Asia also have territorial disputes and regional conflicts. Such disputes may be multi-lateral like North Natuna Sea or bilateral between ASEAN countries with their own national interest. Related to this, ASEAN keeps the effort of developing their modality and internal relationship in order to accomodate the big powers in that region. This is closely related to globalisation which refer to the integration and inter-dependency of politic, social, culture, economy, technology, etc into strategic interactions.

The strategic interaction in the region of Indo-Pacific potrays competitions among many countries, whether asians or super powers. Indonesia with the navy as the main component of maritime defense must be ready to face the uncertainty caused by the international systems and strategic interactions in the region of Indo-Pacific. Since the international systems and strategic interactions create VUCA as the third oncologic source of strategy, the difficulty predictions in this level makes VUCA becomes important opportunity because it will obviously influence military planning.

3.1.3 The third cause of VUCA – Complexity. Complexity shows that the pattern in the past could be known in real (ex-post) but cannot be predicted. Since the pattern is only one of several possibilities (ex-ante), probably will be an intentional action because of complexity. Complex means overlapping of **rules** of individual components and links or relationships among planning staffs. In a complex situation, individuals are not able to understand the whole result of decisions. A very complex defense planning contains many inter-related factors. Complexity appears from the co-working of many planner staffs in developing such plans. However, complexity may give both advantageous and disadvantageous information to stabilize strategic risk patterns. Complex plans cause multi-interpretation and so difficult to be implemented. That is why, understanding the factors deeper is so important to ensure defense planning.

The complexity of defense planning is how to identify threats and enemies. There are at least two threats which are needed to be considered in defense planning, that is, military and non-military threats. This is a complexity. On one hand, military agression threat is still possible to happen. On the other hand, non-military agression is also often used. Non-military agression can take the form of internal conflicts based on ethnics, religions, and terrorism sponsored by state and non-state actors. The state and non-state actor threats could escalate into enemies which are able to surprise. Enemy has a powerful element of surprise in increasing it's forces which in turn could influence the strategic environment.



As a result, VUCA strategic environment in defense planning must be able to analyze the complexity of threats and enemies precisely. A mistake in identifying threats and enemies could result in a weak national defense, especially the navy.

3.1.4 The fourth cause of VUCA – the ambiguity of strategic environment from the real threat. IDMC must ready to take actions if the situation changes (escalates) to be more dangerous than predicted. IDMC often have no idea whether it's actions trigger or prevent tensions. It is hard for IDMC to predict which action that will create conflicts and which one that will prevent them. Deciding which action that is really necessary and which one will worsen the problem may be hard. Even military decision makers who have good intention may make mistakes and accidentally rise up the tension.

The ambiguity of obtained information accuracy and validity may lead to failure of managing information which in turn has the impact of wrong defense planning decision making (Berthet, 2022). That is why, eventhough The Indonesian Navy is supported by Intelligence in clandestine operation of gathering strategic data and information, they must still pay attention on data accuracy and validity in order to avoid deceptive data. The deceive includes changing of data and information into observable ones as if they focused on state defense.

Information and data obtained from the intelligence services are processed concerning their cognitive, mental, psychologic, or physical capacity in order to be included defense planning. One of the obstacles in organizing and managing is that some of the staffs have limitation in cognition, mental, psychology, or physic. This limitation may be caused by several factors. However, the most important point in avoiding cognitive, mental, psychologic, or physical obstacles is that by mapping the information into several categories, that is, the difference between planning and pre-planning and then between strategic planning and operational planning.

Thus, IDMC defense planning is a dynamic situation in facing the problem of predicting of future events. Future events can not be predicted accurately, so military planners must respond to every development in strategic environment which is VUCA. This is what we call dynamic planning because keep adapting with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. VUCA strategic environment could result from the enemy, threat, cognitive, mental, and psychological limitation, international systems, strategic interactions, intelligence and deception, resources, and technology.

3.2 CONCLUSION

VUCA strategic environment in the defense planning of Indonesian Marine Corps is a dynamic situation in facing the difficulty of predicting future events since the main characteristics of strategic environments are volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, dynamic,



and full of conflicts. These characteristics define VUCA which are hard to be predicted. Since future events can not be predicted accurately, military planners must be able to identify the cause in order to respond every development of strategic environment which is VUCA. The causes of VUCA strategic environment are cognitive limitation, resources, international systems, strategic interactions, intelligents, deceptions, and technology. The dynamic of such factors make strategic environment hard to be predicted and included in defense planning. But the accuracy in analyzing VUCA strategic environment can make defense planning easier optimumly.

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