

Military Reflections: The Struggle of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and Its Implications for the Total People's War Strategy

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Abstract— Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa was one of the important figures in the resistance against colonialism in the archipelago. His strategy in facing the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) not only reflected his military powers but also contributed to the broader concept of defense in the history of the nation's struggle. This article analyzes Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's strategy of struggle against the VOC and its relevance to the fundamentals of the Indonesian Total People's War. This research uses a qualitative approach with historical methods, examining primary and secondary sources to describe the dynamics of the struggle of the Banten Sultanate. The results of this research show that the strategies implemented by Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, such as guerrilla warfare, diplomacy with external forces, and people's mobilization, are important elements in the concept of total defense applied in modern Indonesia. By understanding the patterns of past struggles, this article seeks to provide new insights into the continuity of resistance strategies in maintaining national sovereignty.

Keywords— Military Reflections, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Total People's War Strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The total people's defense system is a comprehensive defense strategy employed by Indonesia to uphold state sovereignty. According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia (UU RI) Number 3 of 2002 regarding State Defense, Article 1, paragraph (1) states: "The state defense system is a universal defense framework that involves all citizens, regions, and other national resources. This system is prepared from an early age by the government and is organized in a total, integrated, directed, and continuous manner to safeguard state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the safety of all citizens against various threats" (DPRRI, 2002). With a total people's defense system, all components of the nation participate in fighting for the integrity and enforcement of the territorial sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as the safety of the nation in their own ways and capabilities.

The warfare that took place in Indonesia led to the development of an effective defense strategy known as the total people's war strategy (Nurhuda, 2021). The struggle of the people of Banten, under the leadership of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, exemplified this concept of total people's war from universal, populist, and territorial perspectives. In this conflict, the involvement of the population, with their distinct roles across various regions, aligned with their respective capabilities. At that time, the social structure included a royal government led by a Sultan, kyai/ulama, who played significant roles in religious and social matters, and both rural and urban communities that contributed to production and trade (Nugraha, 2008).

On the other hand, the existence of Banten Kingdom, before the entry of the VOC, was an Islamic kingdom that had a great influence on trade and politics in West Java and its surroundings. The Banten Kingdom, which was founded in the 16th century by Sunan Gunung Jati, was one of the largest Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago in the 17th century. This kingdom had a great influence on trade and politics in West Java and its surroundings and was led by a Sultan who had authority in the government [4]. Banten maintained strong relations with the kingdoms of Java and Sumatra, including Aceh and Mataram. It also engaged in intense trade with other regions in the archipelago, such as Makassar and Palembang. In addition to its close diplomatic and trade ties with local kingdoms, Banten also established connections with foreign countries, including Britain, Spain, and the Dutch (Harry, 1980).

Trade relations between Banten and the Dutch began in the 16th century when the VOC started its operations in Asia. Initially, the VOC conducted business by exchanging goods with local traders. However, in 1602, they established a fort in Banten to support their trading activities. In 1682, the VOC solidified its presence in Banten by constructing a larger fort. Despite these developments, the trade relations between Banten and the VOC were often strained. In 1682, a conflict arose as the VOC attempted to dominate the Banten market and maximize their profits from trade. This struggle ultimately contributed to the collapse of the Banten Sultanate in 1683 (Reid, 1988).

After the VOC entered the Sultanate of Banten in the 17th century, they implemented several strategies to strengthen their influence in the region. The first notable change was in the political arena, where the VOC established its own government to exert control over the local administration. They introduced a more efficient system of governance, which solidified their position in the political landscape. Secondly, significant changes occurred in the economy. The VOC promoted trade and introduced new products to enhance Banten's economy. They also implemented a more efficient trading system, further strengthening their economic influence. However, this led to conflict with the local community. Many residents became dissatisfied with the VOC's policies, which monopolized economic activities and exerted control over local governance. This dissatisfaction sparked a struggle among the local population to fight for their rights and to demand that the VOC reduce its influence in the Sultanate of Banten [7].

The conflict between the VOC and the local community shows how government policies can affect the conditions and lives of local communities. Overall, the VOC tried to disrupt the order of life in Banten through various ways, ranging from introducing a new system of government, strengthening their position in regional politics and economy, to causing conflicts with the local community. This condition causes chaos and unity becomes divided [7]. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa decided to resist the aggressive actions of the VOC after observing their increasing influence and control over the local government in Banten. According to Blusse, he took the initiative to lead the local community in their struggle against the VOC, aiming to diminish their power. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's decision to confront the VOC illustrates how leaders can advocate for and defend the rights of their communities [7].

The VOC's monopoly on political and economic aspects historically led to societal conflicts, a situation that remains relevant today as it poses a threat to Indonesia's sovereignty and overall control over its political and economic affairs. The implications of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's struggle against the Total People's War strategy can be traced through various historical events that followed. The principles of popular resistance employed in the battle against the VOC share similarities with the strategies used during Indonesia's war of independence in the 20th century. This illustrates that the concept of total people's war is not new; rather, it has been part of the archipelago's tradition of resistance for centuries. Examining the military strategies employed by Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa offers a fresh perspective on how maritime and land power can be synergistically utilized in asymmetric warfare [8]. The Sultanate of Banten, as a maritime power, had advantages in logistics mobilization and cross-regional communication, both of which are crucial for a successful total people's war strategy. However, maintaining internal stability and confronting more modern enemy forces presented significant challenges that ultimately influenced the outcome of the resistance.

Therefore, this research will discuss in depth how the struggle of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa can be used as a reference in the study of total people's war strategy. By analyzing the various aspects of this struggle, it is hoped that we can gain new insights into the role of society in war, as well as how these strategies can be adapted in the context of modern military life.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Reflection

Reflection is a way of thinking about what we just learned or thinking backward about what we have done in the past. A person views newly learned information as a new information structure that is a version of previous information. Reflective learning is considered important because the learning model can resurface the form of an experience, manage emotions and feelings, and evaluate an experience (Rusman., 2011). This allows people to understand what is considered a mistake and hopefully can correct it in the future. People can learn from past events and then how to improve or predict future events. Reflection is a form of learning that helps us to gain an understanding of an event that already happened.

Reflection theory or reflective theory is a theory developed by Donald Schön in his book entitled "The Reflective Practitioner" in 1983. This theory states that a practitioner can learn and develop their abilities by reflecting on the practical experience that they have experienced (Schön, 1983). In the context of research, reflection theory can be used to help researchers understand and develop their understanding of the research methods and processes they use.

Some reflection strategies that can be used in research include the following.

- Reflect on research experiences regularly, both in writing and verbally to help clarify understanding of the research process and how research practice can be improved.
- Conduct reflective discussions or interviews with colleagues or research associates to help broaden perspectives and get input from different points of view.
- Apply more formal reflection methods, like reflective learning and experiential learning, to help deepen understanding and identify ways to improve research practice.

By applying reflection theory to research, researchers can develop a better understanding of the practice of a study and identify ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of that research.

B. Strategy

Strategy comes from the Greek, namely "strategos" which is a combination of "Stratos" which means military, and "Ag" which means to lead (Purnomo, 1996). According to Steiner (1984), a strategy also means "generalship" or something that war generals do in making plans to win the warfare. In general, strategy is a long-term plan for important activities needed to achieve goals.

Many strategists argue that the essence of strategy lies in the connection between ends, means, and ways. These three key elements are interdependent. Achieving the desired ends relies on optimizing the use of resources (means) and ensuring the effectiveness of those means (ways). Any inconsistency in this connection cannot truly be considered a strategy, as it results in a deviation from the intended goals. (Lykke, 1997). The explanation is as follows:

- Ends are a desired goal of the strategy. At the highest level, goals are expressed as national interest. Interests are the wants, needs, and concerns of a nation. National interests typically involve four main areas: survival and security, political and territorial integrity, economic stability, and well-being.
- Ways are the actions needed to achieve the strategy. Military objectives then provide the basis for the identification of specific ways to achieve that goal. The selection of one of these sets of actions and its further development resulted in a strategic concept that embodies the key components of the military strategy that's been chosen.
- Means are resources that can be deployed to achieve a major goal. All instruments of power such as diplomatic, economic, military, and information must be brought to bear and exploited to the fullest in achieving the strategy.

C. Total People's War

A war requires a total attack strategy that maximizes the enemy's forces to declare defeat despite the suffering that occurs during the war. In Indonesia, the Total People's war strategy is the basis for preparation for state defense which is embodied in the Total People's defense and security system (Sishankamrata) (Supriyatno, 2014). The concept was created on the basis of voluntary and fighting spirit in defending the country based on consideration of threats faced by Indonesia as a whole. In the past, the total people's war had a popular characteristic, which was the participation of all people to overcome every threat throughout the region, manifested by arming the people psychologically and physically with state defense skills utilizing the TNI with all Indonesian people as a source of strength. People are at the forefront of direct contact with the enemy. Due to limited weaponry, armed forces move guerrilla in forests and mountains, observing the opponent's movements and looking for the opponent's weak points, while occasionally descending the mountain to destroy the opponent's defenses (Defense, 2020).

A.H. Nasution tried to apply the total people's war strategy based on Clausewitz, and also the conditions in Indonesia into a very comprehensive strategy. By involving all levels of society to merge in implementing Guerrilla warfare tactics. Guerrilla movements are carried out in groups, separately, and coordinated. Putting continuous pressure on the opponent to exhaust and weaken it, and the guerrilla battlefield must be carried out as widely as possible, including by conducting infiltration operations in all directions, to divide the opponent's strength. The involvement of all the people in facing the total war is a responsibility that needs to be shouldered together so the problems that they face can be prevented as early as possible (Anwar, 2020).

A.H. Nasution described the guerrilla movement as follows: "All Battalions gradually regrouped back to their base areas, creating guerrilla enclaves with civilians and villagers that the enemy could not control". Guerrilla enclaves were the initiative of their respective regional commanders (Pauker, 1966). Nasution's experience during his tenure as Siliwangi Division Commander provided a basis that influenced his thoughts and views both in his personal life and career, as well as in thinking about national strategy, military strategy, socio-political development, regional development, and upholding the identity of the national struggle and the Indonesian National Army (Nurbantoro, 2022).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

Research methods are one of the most important elements in writing to develop science to achieve maximum and objective results. A research method is a set of ways or steps taken by researchers to solve problems. The method used by researcher in this study uses a descriptive qualitative method, namely by exploring or photographing the social situation to be studied thoroughly, broadly, and in-depth, which in this case is during the struggle of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa against the VOC.

The reason for choosing a descriptive qualitative method is that it is suitable for addressing the research problem at hand. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research methodology produces non-numerical data that emphasizes the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of the subjects involved. In this context, it is not appropriate to isolate individuals or organizations into variables or hypotheses; instead, they should be viewed as part of a larger whole. This research aims to provide an overview and description of the characteristics of the subjects or phenomena under investigation by analyzing the data. Therefore, the approach used in this research is descriptive [9].

A descriptive approach in qualitative research can provide a more detailed and in-depth description of the characteristics of the subject or research phenomenon, which can be the basis for conducting further research or decision-making. According to Sugiyono (2016), the descriptive approach is a research method aimed at detailing or explaining the features of a population or phenomenon by systematically collecting and analyzing data [10]. In research, various data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and instrument development are commonly utilized, particularly within qualitative research methods and descriptive approaches. These techniques may include literature reviews, observations, and interviews. After gathering the data, it can be processed by condensing the information, which can then be presented through detailed descriptions.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa was a leader who successfully mobilized the Banten citizens to participate in the war against the VOC. One of his key strategies was to involve the community directly in battle by empowering them to become fighters. At that time, sultans and rulers typically relied on an elite army made up of cavalry soldiers and palace guards. However, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa recognized that an elite army alone was insufficient to confront the VOC, which possessed more modern weapons and a larger troop presence. As a result, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa organized a people's army that included farmers, fishermen, and traders, encouraging them to join the fight against the VOC. These troops were trained and equipped with traditional weapons such as spears, daggers, swords, and bows. They were strategically positioned on the front lines to protect the elite forces from enemy attacks [11].

In addition, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa also empowered the people of Banten by building a defense system consisting of forts and city walls. The Banten citizens were invited to participate in the construction of this defense system and were given the responsibility to guard and maintain the forts. The empowerment of the community in the battle of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa shows that he has an inclusive policy and has succeeded in mobilizing all levels of society to fight against the Dutch. It also shows that community empowerment can be an effective strategy in strengthening the defense of a country or region from enemy attacks.

In terms of weaponry, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa developed specialized arms to combat the VOC forces. Among these were firearms known as "punt guns," which were large rifles with a caliber greater than that of ordinary rifles. These weapons were highly effective at short ranges, and capable of injuring multiple enemy troops with a single shot. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa also commanded cavalry troops armed with spears, swords, and bows, in addition to soldiers trained for both close and long-range combat. The troops were provided with armor to shield them from enemy attacks. Furthermore, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa introduced modern weaponry, including rifles and cannons, into his army. The implementation of these modern arms aimed to enhance the effectiveness and capability of his forces against a stronger, more modern adversary. With superior weaponry, Banten's troops became more resilient and better equipped to confront larger enemies. This advanced armament provided a strategic advantage during battles, ultimately aiming to increase combat effectiveness and reduce casualties [12].

In launching his strategy against the VOC, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa used guerrilla warfare tactics. The purpose of guerrilla warfare was to reduce the weakness of the troops and take advantage of the difficult geographical conditions in fighting a stronger enemy. This tactic involves a surprise attack and an attack behind the enemy [13]. With this tactic, Banten troops can slowly destroy the enemy's strength and reduce the enemy's strength. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa chose the guerrilla strategy as the right strategy. This is in accordance with the main purpose of guerrilla warfare, which is to fight a larger and stronger enemy with different tactics and impose losses on the enemy.

The sabotage strategy was also carried out by Sultan Ageng in his efforts against the VOC. According to Merriam-Webster, sabotage is a destructive or destructive act carried out by civilians or enemies, aimed at obstructing a country's war efforts by destroying equipment, weapons, or buildings. In practice, Sultan Hasanuddin carried out acts of sabotage against VOC equipment and buildings, including:

- Small raids on VOC ships
- Sabotage of VOC-owned factories
- Burning of the VOC defense camp

The success of this strategy was inseparable from the cleverness of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa in leading and fighting the VOC. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa analyzed the situation and conditions carefully before starting the war against the VOC. He realized that the military power of the Banten Sultanate was still weaker than that of the VOC, so he chose to build alliances with several neighboring kingdoms and take advantage of the geography of his territory to make it difficult for the movement of VOC troops. Through the superiority in the number of soldiers and the use of Madura and Makassar soldiers also supported by his people, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa was able to fight the VOC by using guerrilla tactics.

The attitude of not wanting to submit to the VOC is his effort to launch his guerrilla movement, especially in the Angke-Tangerang area which has long been at the forefront. This was also strengthened by Tjandrasmita who stated that in 1652 AD, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa sent a number of his soldiers to attack the VOC in Jayakarta. Several small incidents often occurred at various guards where the two sides met, therefore, the VOC became worried and then blockaded the port and prohibited foreign ships from trading and docking in Banten. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa was known as a strategist, retaliating with small-scale raids and the seizure of VOC ships. At that time, the VOC wanted to impose a monopoly on trade in Banten but it did not happen because Banten always fought persistently to restore its position (Galba, 2006).

In 1655, two VOC ships were damaged, forcing the VOC to close its trading office in Banten. This closure allowed Banten to enhance its economy, aided by the presence of French locomotives in the city. In 1656, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa conducted large-scale guerrilla operations in the Angke area. The Banten army sabotaged and destroyed the sugarcane mill and its crops, burned villages that served as VOC defense sites, and intercepted patrolling soldiers. They even intercepted a letter from the Governor-General of the VOC to Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa; the Banten army seized the letter and tore it up. Alongside the battles in the Angke-Tangerang region, frequent skirmishes occurred in the waters near the important ports of the Banten Sultanate. The Banten navy, using small ships, successfully repelled larger VOC vessels armed with heavy weaponry (Galba, 2006).

The Sultan ordered his troops to maintain guards both on land and at sea. In the Angke-Tangerang area, 5,000 Banten soldiers, led by Ranga Warsita, were stationed and prepared to await further orders from Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa to commence fighting. On Monday, in 1657 AD, the Banten army readied itself to advance to the battlefield after Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa commanded them to attack the VOC. The guerrillas prepared to move forward on foot. The battle was fierce, with the Banten army employing "manuk dadali" tactics (spread formation) and "slab" tactics (circular yet united formations). Ultimately, the Banten forces emerged victorious. Their success against the VOC was not limited to land; they also managed to destroy VOC ships at sea.

In addition to employing guerrilla tactics and sabotage, there were several key moments in the history of the struggle led by Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa that can be described as a total people's war. One notable instance was when Sultan Ageng invited religious scholars (ulama) and the general populace to join the fight against VOC. Sultan Ageng's political stance, which leaned towards being pro-British, garnered support from both the people and the scholars, enabling individuals from various backgrounds to participate in the struggle against the VOC according to their abilities [15]. One significant figure in this movement was Sheikh Yusuf, a scholar from Makassar. The introduction of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa to Sheikh Yusuf was motivated by shared religious beliefs and aimed at strengthening Banten's position against the VOC, ensuring that Sultan Ageng's government could operate smoothly and safely. Sheikh Yusuf agreed to stay and support Banten after learning about its strong resistance against the VOC at that time. Although Sultan Ageng was captured in 1683, the fight continued under the leadership of Sheikh Yusuf, Prince Purbaya, and Prince Kulon [13].

Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa ruled the Banten Sultanate from 1651 to 1683 and led numerous resistances against VOC. During his reign, the VOC implemented a trade monopoly, enforced economic blockades, and created divisions within the sultanate, particularly through conflicts over power with his son [16]. These tactics were detrimental to Banten. In response, Sultan Tirtayasa rejected the VOC's agreements and transformed Banten into an open port. He aspired to establish Banten as the largest Islamic kingdom. To improve the welfare of his people, Tirtayasa focused on expanding agricultural production by creating new rice fields and enhancing irrigation systems. Politically, he established diplomatic relations and developed trade and shipping with other nations, primarily trading spices. As a result, Banten flourished and became a major port during its peak.

During the challenging period of the blockade, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa employed a strategy that remains relevant today. His ability to understand the context was exceptional. He assessed the external environment by analyzing the competitive landscape among traders operating at the Port of Banten. To ensure the smooth continuation of trade, the Banten Sultanate formed cooperation agreements with both neighboring kingdoms in the archipelago and foreign merchants, while also fortifying its defenses with a capable military. Additionally, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa recognized the importance of understanding the internal context. He acknowledged the kingdom's natural resources, notably being the largest producer of rice and pepper, as well as its strategic geographical position [17]. This understanding led to the optimization of these natural products for the welfare of the community.

As a military reflection, there are important points that can be taken as lessons from the struggle of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa:

- Effective leadership can bring an organization or country to its prime, and strong and strategic leadership is essential in achieving great goals. As shown by Sultan Ageng in leading the Banten Sultanate by using an effective strategy to optimize existing resources.
- Strengthening relations with other regions, determining the position to advance the sultanate, and establishing good relations with various regions and countries can strengthen the position and maintain the security of a region. Sultan Ageng succeeded in building cooperative relations with various regions and countries in Asia and Europe to strengthen the Banten Sultanate and avoid enemy attacks.
- Choosing the right people is essential for achieving goals and building success. Sultan Ageng successfully selected those closest to him to tackle problems and advance the sultanate.
- Having a never-give-up attitude is essential when facing various challenges. Sultan Ageng demonstrated remarkable determination when confronting adversities from the VOC and Sultan Haji. This illustrates the significance of strong resolve and spirit in achieving one's goals.

Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's struggle against the VOC is seen as a symbol of the Indonesian people's resistance to colonialism. He is recognized as a champion for the rights of the people and for fostering peace among the kingdoms in the West Java region. His birthday, December 25, is celebrated as Banten's Glory Day and is a national holiday in Banten Province. The cultural heritage of the Banten people, along with the values that have emerged from their historical struggles, continues to be regarded as a valuable legacy. This research aims to reflect on the strategies, leadership, and concepts of universal warfare that were employed, which can help strengthen the foundations of Indonesia's collective struggle.

V. CONCLUSION

Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's struggle against the VOC serves as a clear example of a people's resistance strategy that involved various elements of society. This resistance was not solely reliant on traditional military strength, but also on the mobilization of the populace in confronting colonialism. This approach highlights that victories in war are not always determined by technology or weaponry alone; they also depend on social resilience, strategic coordination, and a widespread spirit of resistance among the people. The strategy employed by Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa aligns with the concept of Total People's War, which emphasizes the involvement of the entire community in defense efforts. Although this resistance ultimately faced setbacks due to internal factors, such as the betrayal by Sultan Haji and the intervention of the VOC, this struggle provided valuable insights for future people's war strategies. The principles from this struggle were later reapplied in various forms of resistance throughout Indonesia, including during the fight for independence in the 20th century.

In addition to military strategy, this struggle highlights the importance of internal stability in maintaining a country's sovereignty. The Sultanate of Banten experienced weakness due to dynastic conflicts, which the VOC exploited to strengthen its control over the archipelago. This serves as a valuable lesson: external threats often find easier entry points when there is a significant internal divide. From a historical perspective, the efforts of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa illustrate that resistance to colonialism is not merely a physical conflict; it also encompasses political, economic, and social battles. The VOC relied not only on military might but also on strategies of division and economic control to weaken its adversaries. Therefore, in facing similar threats, it is crucial for a nation to have not only a robust military strategy but also a strong sense of national unity.

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