THE ROLE OF THE INDONESIAN NAVY (TNI AL) AND THE ROYAL SAUDI NAVAL FORCES IN MARITIME SECURITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS

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Abstrak

Keamanan maritim telah menjadi isu strategis yang semakin menonjol dalam konteks pertahanan global dan regional. Laut, sebagai jalur utama perdagangan internasional dan logistik energi, sangat rentan terhadap eksploitasi oleh aktor non-negara seperti perompak dan teroris maritim. Indonesia, sebagai negara kepulauan terbesar di dunia, menghadapi tantangan serius dalam menjaga wilayah perairannya yang luas dan strategis, termasuk Selat Malaka dan jalur ALKI. Artikel ini menyajikan studi komparatif antara TNI Angkatan Laut dan Angkatan Laut Kerajaan Arab Saudi dalam menangani ancaman terorisme maritim. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan analisis doktrinal, penelitian ini menelaah peran operasional, kerangka strategi, dan respons kelembagaan kedua angkatan laut. Penelitian ini menemukan beberapa kesamaan, seperti penggunaan pasukan elit maritim dan koordinasi antar-lembaga, serta perbedaan dalam keterlibatan internasional dan penekanan doktrinal. Dari perbandingan tersebut, artikel ini mengidentifikasi praktik terbaik yang dapat diterapkan untuk memperkuat postur pertahanan maritim Indonesia, sejalan dengan visi strategis nasional seperti Asta Cita Presiden Prabowo Subianto. Penelitian ini diharapkan memberikan kontribusi terhadap diskursus akademik tentang keamanan maritim, serta menawarkan rekomendasi kebijakan untuk peningkatan kesiapan angkatan laut dan kerja sama lintas batas. Studi ini menegaskan pentingnya kemampuan maritim yang adaptif dan proaktif guna menjaga kedaulatan nasional di tengah meningkatnya ancaman transnasional.

Kata Kunci: terorisme maritim, TNI Angkatan Laut, Angkatan Laut Kerajaan Arab Saudi, keamanan maritim, studi komparatif, kebijakan pertahanan.

Abstract

Maritime security has become an increasingly strategic issue in the context of global and regional defense. The maritime domain, while serving as a key route for international trade and energy logistics, is vulnerable to exploitation by non-

state actors, including pirates and maritime terrorists. Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic state, faces significant maritime threats due to its vast territorial waters and its position along critical sea lanes such as the Malacca Strait and ALKI routes. This paper explores a comparative study of the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL) and the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) in addressing maritime terrorism. Drawing on qualitative methods and doctrinal analysis, the study investigates the operational roles, strategic frameworks, and institutional responses of both navies. The research highlights key similarities, such as the deployment of elite maritime forces and inter-agency coordination, as well as differences in their international engagement and doctrinal emphasis. Through this comparison, the article identifies best practices that could strengthen Indonesia's maritime defense posture in line with national strategic visions, such as the Asta Cita of President Prabowo Subianto. This research contributes to the academic discourse on maritime security and provides policy recommendations for enhancing naval readiness and cross-border maritime cooperation. The study underscores the need for adaptive and proactive naval capabilities to secure national sovereignty amid rising transnational maritime threats.

Keywords: maritime terrorism, Indonesian Navy, Royal Saudi Naval Forces, maritime security, comparative study, defense policy.

INTRODUCTION

Maritime security has become an increasingly crucial strategic issue in global dynamics. The sea not only functions as the primary route for international trade but also represents an open space vulnerable to exploitation by non-state actors such as terrorists, pirates, and transnational criminal networks. Maritime terrorism involving ship hijacking, arms smuggling, and attacks on ports poses a tangible threat to national and regional stability (Bateman, 2020).

As the world's largest archipelagic state, Indonesia faces major challenges in safeguarding its waters, particularly in high-risk areas such as the Strait of Malacca, the Sulawesi Sea, and border zones. The three Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes (ALKI)—vital routes for international navigation—are also prone to maritime-terrorism infiltration (Anwar, 2018). A clear example was the interception by KRI Siliman-848 of a Greece-flagged vessel hijacked in the Strait of Malacca in August 2024 (indonesiadefense.com, 2024).

Figure 1. KRI Siliman-848 securing a hijacked vessel in the Strait of Malacca (Source: Dispen Koarmada I via indonesiadefense.com, 2024)

This incident demonstrates that Indonesia's maritime domain remains a target for illegal activities requiring swift responses from the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL). Likewise, Saudi Arabia faces similar threats from armed militant groups such as the Houthis, who have attacked oil tankers and strategic ports in the Red Sea. One significant case was the attack on the cargo ship MV Tutor in June 2024, which caused severe damage and disrupted international shipping routes.

Figure 2. The MV Tutor attacked by Houthi militants in the Red Sea, reflecting the escalating maritime-terrorism threat in Saudi waters (Source: Al Jazeera, 2024)

The Royal Saudi Navy has responded through active participation in international coalitions such as the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and by strengthening sea-based defenses (Cordesman, 2020; IISS, 2021). Within Indonesia's Asta Cita vision under President Prabowo Subianto, maritime defense enhancement is a top priority—particularly the strategic role of the Indonesian Navy in detecting, preventing, and countering maritime threats (Ministry of Defense RI, 2024). Previous studies tend to analyze maritime

security in Southeast Asia and the Middle East separately. Research on the Indonesian Navy often emphasizes domestic operations, while studies on the Royal Saudi Navy focus on military alliances without detailed examination of national institutional responses. This reveals a gap in comprehensive comparative approaches between two navies operating within distinct geographic and strategic contexts.

Accordingly, this article seeks to bridge that gap by presenting a comparative study of the roles of the Indonesian Navy and the Royal Saudi Navy in addressing maritime terrorism. Using a qualitative and doctrinal analysis, it integrates maritime-security perspectives from two strategic regions. The study aims to produce policy recommendations and adaptive maritime strategies responsive to contemporary threats and to support the realization of Indonesia's comprehensive maritime sovereignty.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Theoretical Description

This subsection explains the theoretical foundations used to analyze the role of the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) and the Royal Saudi Navy in addressing maritime terrorism. Previous studies emphasize the urgency of strengthening naval capacity to counter evolving non-traditional maritime threats in strategic regions (Bueger, 2020; Till, 2018; Kusuma, 2022). Four theoretical approaches—Role Theory, Maritime Security Theory, Maritime Counterterrorism Theory, and Comparative Legal Systems—are employed to construct a robust analytical framework (Bateman, 2020; Sulastri, 2021).

Role Theory in Maritime Security

Role Theory developed by Soejono Soekanto (2010) is useful for analyzing the multifunctional responsibilities of the Indonesian Navy. Contemporary scholarship affirms that modern navies must operate beyond conventional warfare, integrating diplomacy, law enforcement, and constabulary duties within national defense architectures (Rahman, 2019; Wilkinson, 2021). The mandate of MOOTW in Law No. 3/2025 aligns with global naval trends emphasizing early detection and prevention of maritime threats (Cordesman, 2020; Suwarto, 2022). These expanded roles reflect societal expectations for navies to secure maritime sovereignty amid escalating asymmetric threats (Fitriani, 2020).

As stipulated in Law No. 3 of 2025 on National Defense, the Indonesian Navy is mandated to conduct Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), encompassing early detection, prevention, enforcement, and recovery in response to maritime threats (Ministry of Defense, 2024). This demands an integrated role across multiple domains within a sustainable national defense and security system.

Maritime Security Theory

Maritime Security Theory outlines strategic measures to safeguard maritime domains from threats such as terrorism, piracy, illegal fishing, and marine environmental crimes (Bueger, 2015; Kamal, 2023). Research demonstrates that maritime security has become multidimensional, linking naval operations with legal governance and diplomatic coordination (Chalk, 2008; Kurniawan, 2021). The Indonesian Navy integrates advanced surveillance technologies and cooperative security frameworks to oversee strategic chokepoints, consistent with global best practices among maritime powers (Bateman & Ho, 2021; Chapsos & Kitchen, 2020).

The Indonesian Navy plays a pivotal role in maintaining maritime security by integrating policies and strategies to counter maritime threats in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. The use of advanced technologies such as radar, satellites, and patrol vessels has become vital for early threat detection and surveillance of strategic sea lanes, including the Strait of Malacca and the Natuna Sea (Cordesman, 2020). Furthermore, international maritime cooperation remains key to fostering stability and mutual understanding among nations in addressing transnational maritime terrorism (Bateman, 2010).

Maritime Counterterrorism Theory

Maritime Counterterrorism Theory examines the prevention and response strategies for terrorism at sea. Studies highlight that maritime terrorism increasingly targets critical energy infrastructure, shipping lanes, and offshore facilities (Pawlak, 2019; Lehr, 2022). Effective counterterrorism requires joint operations involving navies, coast guards, and intelligence agencies using a coordinated maritime governance structure (Raymond, 2020; Almutairi, 2023). Bateman (2020) also stresses multilateral cooperation to strengthen early warning, interdiction, and crisis response mechanisms across international waters.

Comparative Legal Systems and Counterterrorism Strategies

The comparative approach identifies institutional divergences between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Indonesia's democratic system emphasizes criminal law enforcement, civilian oversight, and multi-stakeholder deradicalization (Mietzner, 2020; Nurhasan, 2022), whereas Saudi Arabia applies a centralized, security–religious model with strong state control (Hegghammer, 2019; Qurtuby, 2019). Comparative legal studies show that political systems significantly shape counterterrorism practices, particularly in maritime governance (Albloshi, 2021; Yuliani, 2020). These structural variations influence how both countries operationalize maritime counterterrorism and institutional coordination.

According to Sumanto Al Qurtuby (2019), Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism approach is heavily influenced by regime interests and domestic stability concerns. The country enforces anti-extremism policies through social censorship and military intervention, with the state maintaining dominant control over counterterrorism execution. Conversely, Indonesia adopts a relatively participatory model, involving civil society and independent institutions such as the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) and Densus 88. As Qurtuby (2019, p. 128) notes: *"Saudi Arabia's strategy is state-centric and mostly top-down, while Indonesia engages with multiple actors including civil society, police, and religious groups, making the counterterrorism approach more pluralistic."*

This theoretical comparison highlights how political systems and legal traditions influence maritime counterterrorism strategies, ultimately shaping each nation's institutional response and operational conduct in ensuring maritime security.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method designed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the roles, strategies, and operational dynamics of the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) and the Royal Saudi Navy in combating maritime terrorism. The constructivist paradigm places maritime security as a socially constructed reality shaped by actors within defense, intelligence, and legal systems (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020; Chapsos & Hamilton, 2022; Yuliani, 2021). Data were collected through in-depth and semi-structured interviews with officials from BNPT, BIN, TNI-AL, Densus 88, and Saudi naval officers participating in Indonesian naval education programs. Secondary data were sourced from defense policy documents, national security law, the Indonesian Defense White Paper, peer-reviewed journals, and international reports (Raymond, 2020; Kamal, 2023). Purposive sampling ensured the inclusion of informants directly involved in maritime security operations. All qualitative data were coded thematically using NVivo 12 Plus, enabling the identification of patterns and inter-theme linkages relevant to naval counterterrorism (Rahman, 2019; Sunarto, 2022).

Data analysis proceeded inductively using a descriptive-narrative approach to interpret findings contextually and holistically. Analytical stages included data reduction, thematic coding, and contextual interpretation referencing maritime security theory, strategic intelligence frameworks, and international maritime law (Cordesman, 2020; Almutairi, 2023). A SWOT analysis was applied to categorize insights into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, forming the basis for strategic policy recommendations (Suwarno, 2021; Fitriani, 2020). The research

process was carried out in three stages: pre-field (design, permits, instrument preparation), field (interviews, observation, documentation), and post-field (data processing, triangulation, validation, and reporting). This methodological design ensures analytical rigor, empirical credibility, and the production of actionable policy insights for enhancing Indonesia–Saudi Arabia collaborative maritime security.
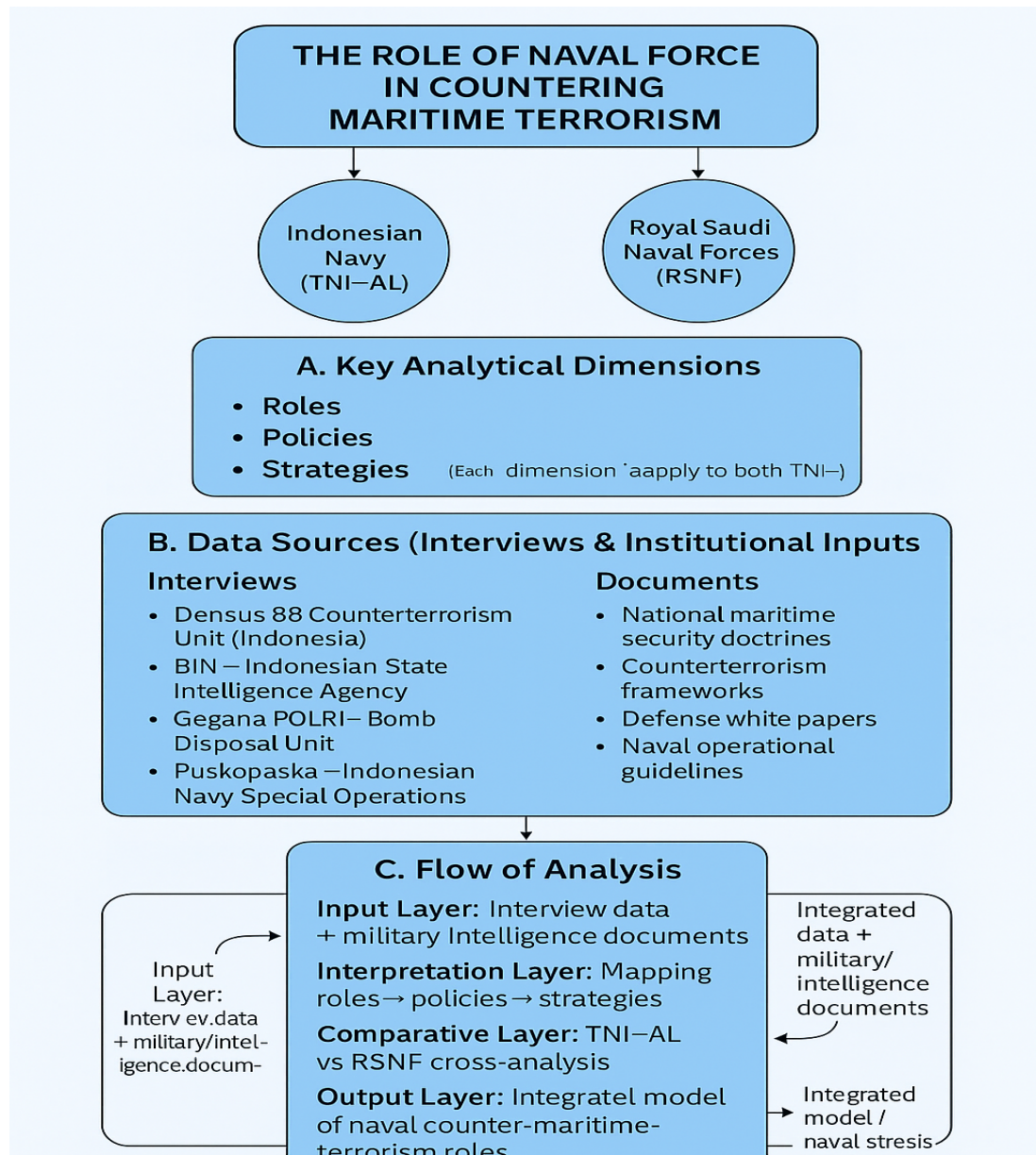

Figure 2. Interview Coding Structure
(Source: Author's analysis, 2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
The Role of the Indonesian Navy in Countering Maritime Terrorism

Based on the formulated research problem, the role of the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) in combating maritime terrorism encompasses strategic and multidimensional characteristics. The Navy implements a comprehensive territorial approach emphasizing prevention, early detection, and rapid response to maritime terrorism threats (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). This orientation is in line with recent studies highlighting the importance of integrated naval capabilities and inter-agency collaboration to counter transnational maritime threats (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020; Bateman & Ho, 2021; Kusumawardhana, 2023). The approach extends beyond the use of military force, incorporating collaboration with multiple state institutions to strengthen national maritime security—a strategy consistent with global maritime governance practices (Rahman & Tsamenyi, 2020; Till, 2022).

In this study, qualitative analysis using NVivo software was applied to deepen the understanding of expert perceptions and informant experiences regarding the roles, policies, and strategies of the Indonesian Navy in addressing maritime terrorism. The Word Cloud feature in NVivo facilitated the identification of dominant terms and themes emerging from interviews, providing a clearer depiction of the Navy's main policy focus and operational practices within the maritime security framework (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Similar analytical approaches have been applied in recent security studies utilizing NVivo to map strategic behavior and inter-organizational cooperation (Alhababi et al., 2022; Putra et al., 2021; Alshammari & Evans, 2023).

Accordingly, NVivo-based qualitative analysis not only enhanced data validity but also mapped the complexity and dynamics of maritime defense policy implemented by the Navy in confronting diverse, transboundary threats. The Node Coding and Tree Map visualizations revealed that international joint exercises and the role of special operations units in counter-terrorism emerged as the dominant themes. This reflects a strategic orientation toward strengthening interoperability and tactical capability to counter transnational threats in Indonesia's maritime domain—a finding consistent with global naval cooperation trends (Zhao & Sun, 2022; Cordner, 2019; Germond, 2020). The study underscores the Navy's critical role in maintaining Indonesia's maritime security and sovereignty—particularly in regions vulnerable to international terrorist threats targeting strategic sea lanes such as the Malacca Strait and the Natuna Sea (Bateman, 2020). Recent empirical work also reinforces the

strategic vulnerability of Southeast Asian chokepoints to maritime terrorism (Jones & Rahman, 2021; Raymond, 2020).
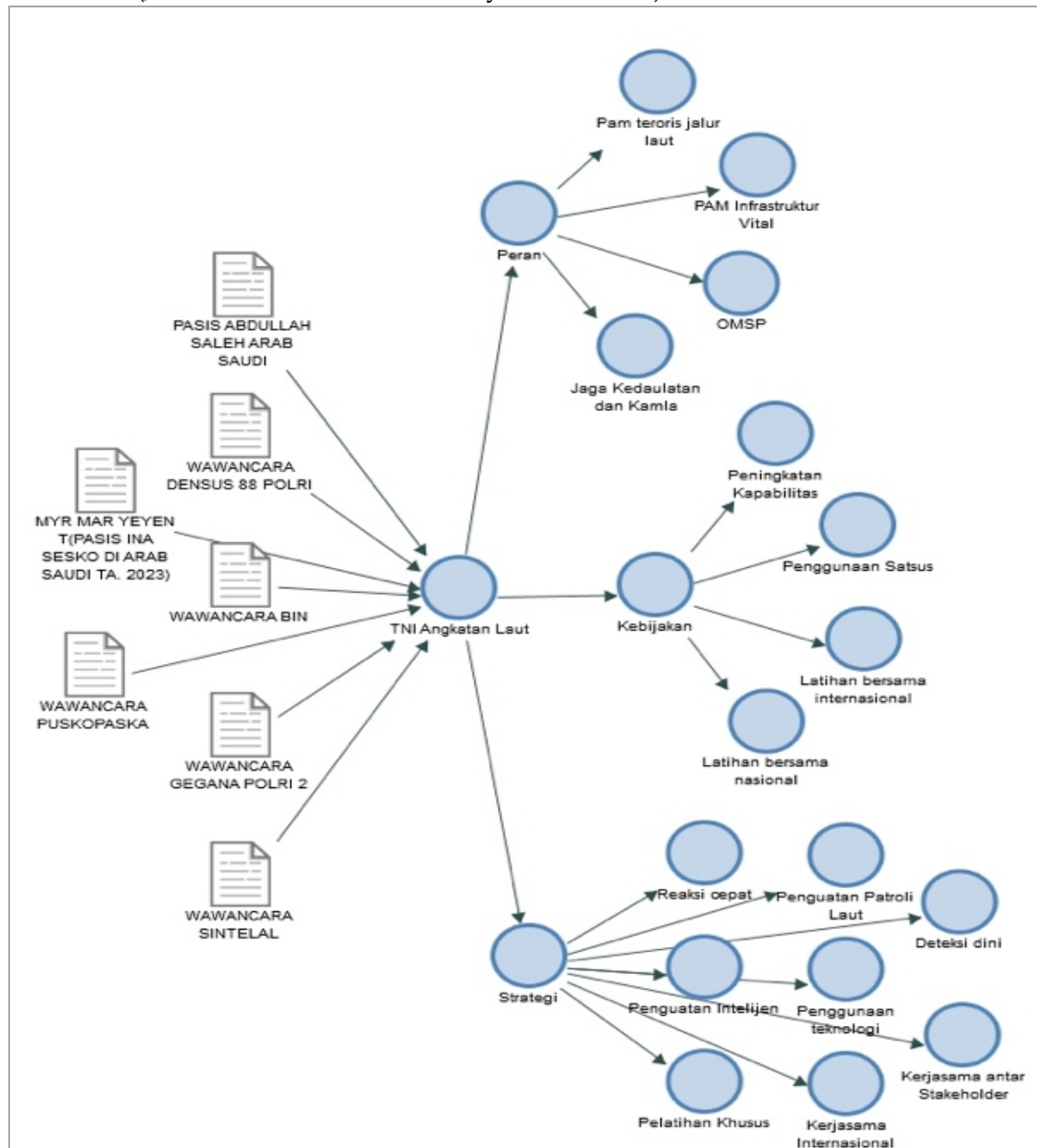

Figure 3. Explore Diagram of the Roles, Policies, and Strategies of the Indonesian Navy (Source: Author's NVivo analysis, 2025)

Under Law No. 3 of 2025, the Navy's mandate encompasses not only combat operations but also law-enforcement authority at sea. Its core strategies include integrated maritime patrols and intelligence operations supported by the Total People's Defense and Security System

(Sishankamrata), which unites military forces, civilian institutions, and coastal communities. This model aligns with recent scholarship on whole-of-nation maritime security approaches (Munoz et al., 2021; Ridwan et al., 2022; Satria & Yamin, 2023). Overall, TNI-AL applies a collaborative and adaptive approach, enhancing inter-agency and regional cooperation to build a comprehensive, responsive maritime security network, as visualized through the NVivo data diagram below. Such adaptive frameworks are also recommended by maritime defense studies addressing emerging hybrid and asymmetric threats (Khalil & Abdullah, 2022; Liss, 2021).

The Roles, Policies, and Strategies of the Royal Saudi Navy in Countering Maritime Terrorism

The Royal Saudi Navy (RSN) holds a strategic position within both national security and the broader security architecture of the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, aligning with recent research highlighting the increasing securitization of critical maritime chokepoints such as Bab el-Mandeb and Hormuz (Alhashmi & Basahel, 2023; Khalifa, 2021). The RSN adopts an integrated approach encompassing sustained maritime patrols, enhanced maritime intelligence, and multilateral cooperation—an operational pattern consistent with modern maritime security frameworks in the Gulf region (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020; Fraihi, 2022). This research analyzed the RSN's roles, policies, and strategies using a qualitative approach supported by NVivo, following methodological conventions in security research utilizing digital qualitative analysis tools (Miles et al., 2014; Rahman & Al-Ghamdi, 2022). The Word Cloud feature identified key terms frequently mentioned in expert interviews, providing insight into the strategic posture adopted by the Saudi Navy in responding adaptively to maritime terrorism (Al-Qahtani & Al-Saidi, 2023).

Subsequent analysis through Node Coding and Tree Map visualization clustered dominant themes based on frequency and intensity of discussion. International cooperation—particularly the adoption of advanced surveillance systems, UAV-based maritime monitoring, and early-warning technologies—appeared consistently as a top strategic priority (Bensahel, 2020; Petrelli & Caputo, 2021). This mirrors global trends in naval modernization across the Middle East, where hybrid threats require integrated defense-technology ecosystems (Hameed & Khan, 2022; Al-Suwaidi, 2020). Saudi naval policy also involves upgrading combat capabilities, strengthening cyber-maritime defenses, conducting joint exercises with partners such as the United States and France, and deploying Special Naval Forces for counter-terrorism missions—an approach aligned with contemporary counter-terrorism doctrines in high-risk maritime

corridors (Ridha & Al-Ghamdi, 2021; Abunafeesa, 2022). The RSN's strategic priority is safeguarding critical national infrastructure—including offshore oil terminals in Ras Tanura and Yanbu—and securing strategic shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait (Hegazy, 2023; Al-Hussein, 2021).
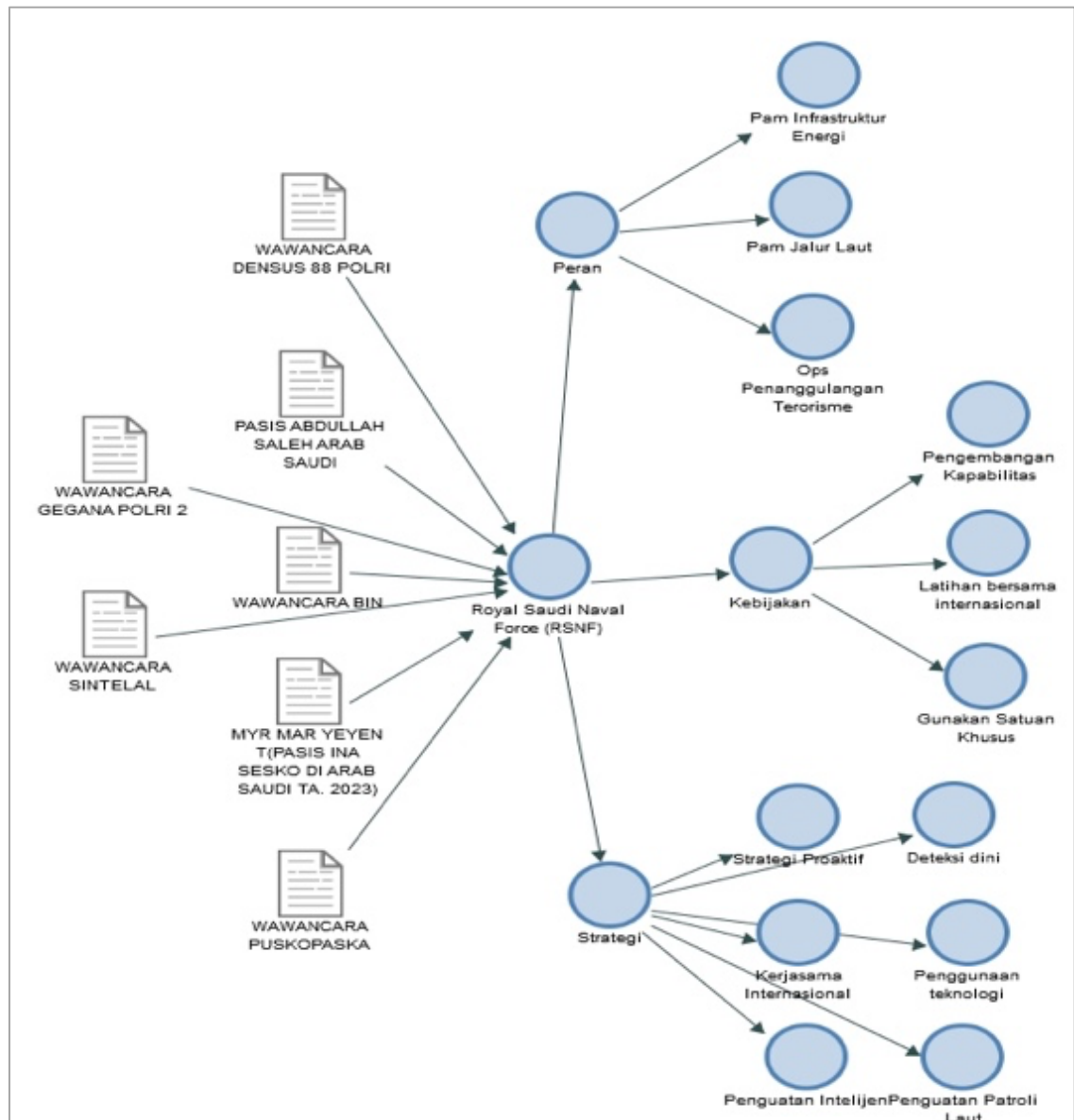

Figure 4. Explore Diagram of the Roles, Policies, and Strategies of the Royal Saudi Navy (Source: Author's NVivo analysis, 2025)

Using the Explore Diagram feature in NVivo, this study mapped interconnections between maritime patrol operations, regional

1582

collaboration, intelligence integration, and defense modernization. These findings correspond with GCC maritime cooperation trends emphasizing joint situational awareness and shared counter-terrorism frameworks (GCC Security Report, 2022; Al-Tamimi, 2021). Data analysis, enriched through expert interviews and regional security documents, demonstrates that Saudi maritime defense increasingly blends military diplomacy, strategic deterrence, and technological innovation—reflecting broader Middle Eastern defense transformations responding to transnational maritime threats (Karasik & Shadid, 2023; Al-Rumaihi, 2020). Overall, the integrated approach adopted by the RSN reinforces its role not only as a national security instrument but also as a regional stabilizer within the evolving maritime security landscape.

Similarities and Differences in the Roles, Policies, and Strategies of the Indonesian Navy and the Royal Saudi Navy in Countering Maritime Terrorism

Within this context, the Comparison Diagram feature of NVivo played a crucial role in presenting a systematic, data-based comparative analysis. The tool visualized relationships, similarities, and differences among nodes—representing themes or categories coded from interviews, policy documents, and field observations—in an interactive graphical form. In this study, the Comparison Diagram helped compare how both navies address key issues such as shipping-lane security, international cooperation, and counter-terrorism strategy. It also enabled the identification of thematic frequency and varying emphases across data sources, visually represented through connecting lines and node clusters.
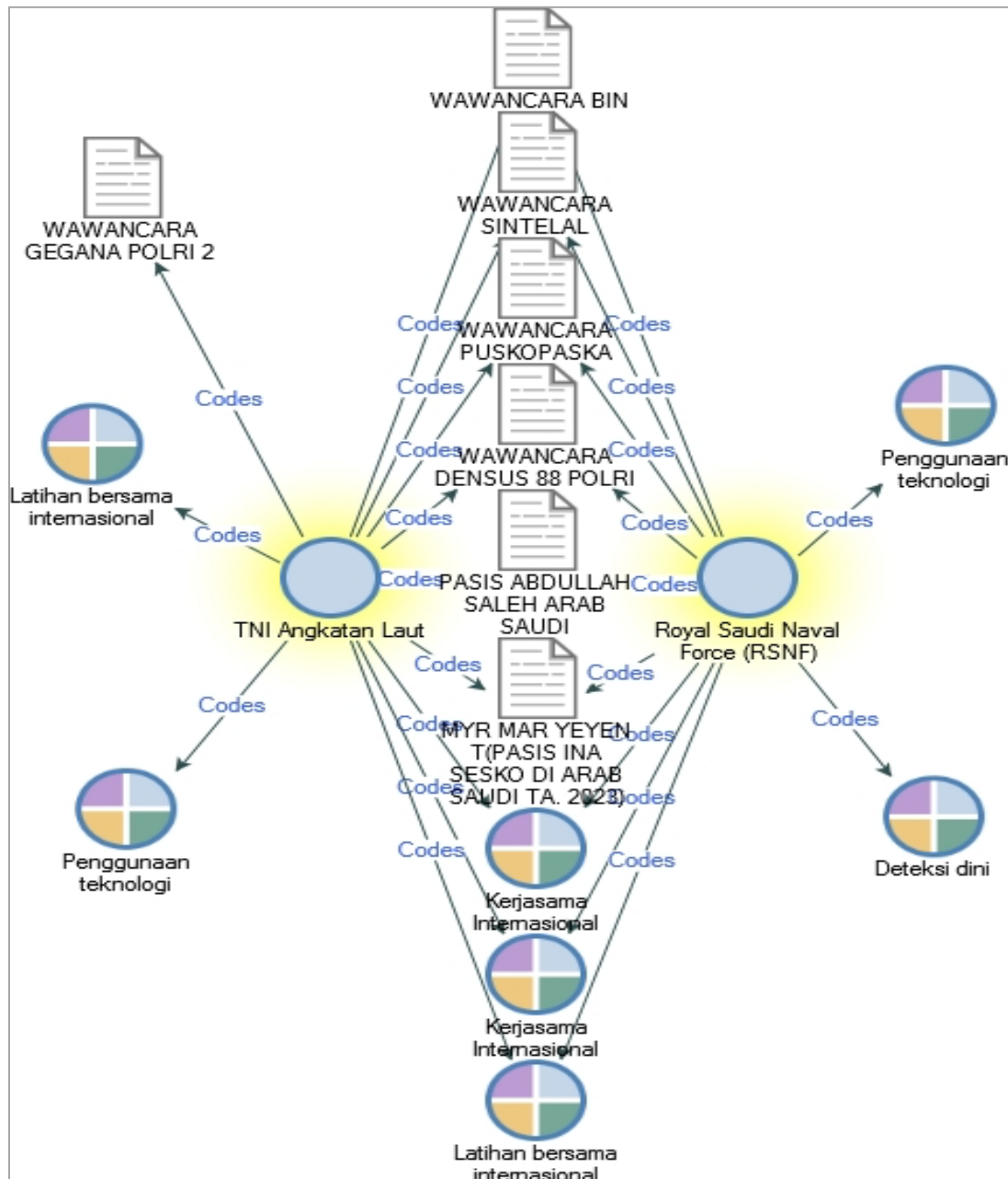
Figure 5. Comparison Diagram of the Roles, Policies, and Strategies of the
Indonesian Navy and the Royal Saudi Navy
(Source: Author's NVivo analysis, 2025)

Strategic Similarities in Combating Maritime Terrorism

Both navies exhibit fundamental strategic convergence in their
approach to maritime terrorism, consistent with recent findings

emphasizing the centrality of sea-lane security in countering transnational maritime threats (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020; Hegazy, 2023; Mustofa & Rachmawati, 2022). Each prioritizes the security of strategic sea lanes, which are vital not only for national interests but also for global trade stability. For Indonesia, safeguarding the Malacca Strait, Sunda Strait, and Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes (ALKI) represents a national imperative, supporting previous studies noting Indonesia's vulnerability to non-state maritime actors (Yulianto, 2021; Setiyono, 2020). Similarly, Saudi Arabia maintains strategic interests in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Red Sea — areas highlighted in recent research as high-risk maritime chokepoints (Khalifa, 2021; Alhashmi & Basahel, 2023).

Both navies also regard international cooperation as a key pillar in addressing transnational threats, reflecting a global pattern of multilateral maritime security cooperation (Karasik & Shadid, 2023; Al-Tamimi, 2021). The Indonesian Navy actively participates in forums such as the ASEAN Navy Chiefs' Meeting and multilateral exercises like the Komodo Exercise (Irawan, 2022), while the Royal Saudi Navy strengthens collaboration through IMX and Red Wave drills (Fraihi, 2022). Moreover, both forces share commitments to operational modernization, early-warning capabilities, and human-resource development, aligning with regional defense-modernization trends (Hameed & Khan, 2022; Petrelli & Caputo, 2021).

Contextual Differences Based on Geopolitics and Operational Doctrine

Geopolitical context and operational doctrine are the primary differentiating factors, consistent with theories emphasizing geo-strategic determinism in maritime security (Till, 2018; Sukma, 2022). The Indonesian Navy operates within Southeast Asia, one of the busiest global maritime corridors, facing challenges such as piracy, smuggling, and cross-border militant movement — issues highlighted in recent regional security studies (Rahman & Al-Ghamdi, 2022; Ramadhan, 2020). Its maritime defense doctrine aligns with the Jalesveva Jayamahe doctrine (TNI-AL, 2023) and emphasizes joint sea control strategies to support national interests (Santoso, 2021).

Conversely, the Royal Saudi Navy operates in the Middle East, where the primary concern involves protecting energy infrastructure and offshore oil facilities — an issue widely recognized in Gulf maritime security literature (Kechichian, 2020; Al-Hussein, 2021). Its doctrine is more defensive and asset-oriented, reflecting the geopolitical pressures of a region marked by political tension and asymmetric warfare (Cordesman, 2020; IISS, 2021). These differences demonstrate that maritime doctrines are

1585

inherently context-dependent and shaped by state priorities and political systems (Al-Rumaihi, 2020; Sukma, 2022).

Differentiation in Strategic and Tactical Approaches to Threats

In addressing maritime terrorism, both navies adopt strategic and tactical approaches aligned with their national contexts. The Indonesian Navy prioritizes defense diplomacy and regional cooperation, consistent with ASEAN maritime-security trends (Mustofa & Rachmawati, 2022; Setiyono, 2020). The Navy's rapid-response concept is designed to counter diverse contingencies such as illegal foreign vessels and non-state armed groups operating along maritime borders (Ministry of Defense RI, 2024; Purnama, 2021).

In contrast, the Royal Saudi Navy applies a proactive, intelligence-driven strategy emphasizing Special Naval Forces involvement in counter-terrorism, supported by advanced technologies such as coastal radar systems, maritime reconnaissance aircraft, and armed patrol vessels — reflecting Gulf states' technological modernization trends (Bensahel, 2020; Hameed & Khan, 2022). Joint exercises with strategic partners such as the United States further reinforce Saudi Arabia's deterrence posture (Cordesman, 2020; IISS, 2021). These differences illustrate how national threat landscapes and logistical capacities shape operational maritime strategies (Karasik & Shadid, 2023; Sukma, 2022).

Comparative Analysis Based on Legal Comparison Theory and Role Doctrine

A comparative analysis between the Indonesian Navy and the Royal Saudi Navy can be deepened using legal-comparison theory and role doctrine, which explain variations in defense institutions across political systems (Mahfud, 2021; Abdillah, 2020). Legal comparison identifies differences in legal foundations and institutional structures shaped by national law and political authority. Meanwhile, role doctrine clarifies how navies define mandates and strategic functions (Soekanto, 2010; Al-Rumaihi, 2020).

The Indonesian Navy emphasizes synergy between military power and civilian participation under the Total People's Defense System, consistent with democratic defense norms (Siregar & Widodo, 2021). Conversely, the Royal Saudi Navy prioritizes a protective, technology-oriented approach supported by elite units — reflecting centralized monarchical authority (Qurtuby, 2019; Al-Saidi, 2022). These differences reflect distinct legal characteristics and defense cultures, as also noted in recent comparative-security studies (Karasik & Shadid, 2023; Mustofa & Rachmawati, 2022).

Table 1. Comparative Aspects of the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) and the Royal Saudi Navy (RSN) in Countering Maritime Terrorism

Aspect	Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL)	Royal Saudi Navy (RSN)
National Legal System	Mixed system (civil law + customary law); the military operates under the Constitution and Law No. 3 of 2025.	Based on Islamic Sharia and Royal Decree (M/6/2017); the military operates directly under the authority of the King.
Legal Basis for Engagement	Law No. 3 of 2025 on the Indonesian National Armed Forces; Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) include maritime counter-terrorism.	Anti-Terrorism Law (2017); directives issued directly through the Ministry of Defense and State Security Authority.
Role Doctrine	Dual-role doctrine: military power and civil empowerment (*Sishankamrata*); adaptive and inclusive in nature.	Protective military force; primarily focused on enforcement and securing strategic vital assets.
Counter-Terrorism Approach	Collaborative and community-based maritime defense; synergy among the Navy, National Police, and Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla).	Top-down militaristic approach; operations dominated by high-end technology and elite special forces.
Operational Domain	Operates within ALKI (Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes), Sulawesi Sea, Natuna, and the Malacca Strait; faces multipolar maritime challenges.	Operates in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Arabian Gulf; focuses on securing global energy distribution routes.
International Cooperation	Engages in ASEAN, EAS, Komodo Exercise, and BIMPT-EAGA; emphasizes multilateral and diplomatic collaboration.	Participates in international coalitions such as CMF, Red Wave, and IMX; maintains strategic alliances with

		the U.S. and GCC partners.
Defense Philosophy	People's sovereignty and sea mastery (*Jalesveva Jayamahe*).	Power projection and protection of national resources.
Threat Characteristics	Asymmetric, non-traditional, network-based threats involving multiple armed civilian actors.	Primarily focused on militant groups such as the Houthis; direct threats to strategic infrastructure.

Beyond comparing legal frameworks and doctrinal roles, this study also identifies a strategic gap in operational cooperation between the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) and the Royal Saudi Navy (RSN). To date, there have been no bilateral exercises or joint maritime patrols conducted between the two navies—either in the form of joint warship operations or interoperability of special forces. In contrast, the Indonesian Navy's elite unit, Kopaska, possesses extensive experience in joint exercises with the U.S. Navy SEALs, RIMPAC, and other multinational operations focusing on maritime counter-terrorism. Meanwhile, the Royal Saudi Navy has advanced technological capabilities and direct operational experience in responding to militant groups such as the Houthis in the Red Sea.

Given this background, a strategic policy initiative is proposed to establish bilateral joint exercises and joint maritime patrols between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. This cooperation could focus on securing vital shipping routes, strategic ports, and offshore critical national infrastructures, while also enhancing rapid response capabilities to non-traditional maritime attacks. Such collaboration would not only strengthen regional maritime defense posture but also support Indonesia's defense diplomacy vision under the Asta Cita framework of the President of the Republic of Indonesia—aiming to build a resilient, independent, and adaptive maritime power capable of addressing transnational threats.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that maritime terrorism represents a non-traditional and transnational threat with substantial potential to disrupt national stability, maritime sovereignty, and the continuity of global logistics routes. In addressing this challenge, both the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) and the Royal Saudi Navy (RSN) employ distinct yet complementary approaches, aligned with their respective geopolitical contexts and national legal systems. Based on the comparative legal analysis, the Indonesian Navy operates within a constitutional and

democratic framework under Law No. 3 of 2025, which outlines its mandate in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), including maritime counter-terrorism. Conversely, the Royal Saudi Navy functions under an absolute monarchical system, where centralized royal authority—through royal decrees—grants direct command flexibility in responding to strategic threats such as the Houthi insurgent group.

From the perspective of the role doctrine, the Indonesian Navy adopts a dual-role approach grounded in the philosophy of the Total People's Defense and Security System (Sishankamrata), emphasizing the integration of military power, civil institutions, and coastal community participation. Meanwhile, the Royal Saudi Navy applies a protective and high-tech-oriented strategy, characterized by the dominance of armed capabilities and regional power projection. Despite these differences, both navies share a commitment to international cooperation, maritime intelligence enhancement, and defense modernization to address transnational threats effectively. The use of NVivo-based qualitative analysis strengthens the validity of the study's findings. The Indonesian Navy demonstrates comparative strength in regional cooperation networks and coastal empowerment, while the Royal Saudi Navy excels in technological superiority and rapid-response operations through its Special Naval Forces. These findings highlight the necessity for flexible maritime defense strategies that adapt to the unique threat structures and geopolitical conditions of each nation.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the scholarly field by integrating legal, defense, and intelligence dimensions within a unified analytical framework, offering novelty through its data-driven evaluative model and NVivo-assisted thematic mapping. In alignment with the Asta Cita vision of President Prabowo Subianto, the findings support the development of a resilient, self-reliant, and regionally respected maritime power for Indonesia. Therefore, the Indonesian Navy must continue strengthening its strategic role, not only in safeguarding national waters but also as a principal actor in maritime defense diplomacy and a deterrent force against transnational maritime threats. The policy and strategic recommendations outlined in this study provide a concrete foundation for enhancing Indonesia's position as a sovereign maritime axis responsive to the dynamics of global security.

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