Geopolitics of Gili Trawangan: Identity, Boundaries, and Access to Resources and Modernization

Muhammad Fauzi Abdul Rachman [1], Yanyan Mochamad Yani [2]

[1]*Department of International Relation, University of Pertamina, Indonesia*
[2]*Department of International Relation, University of Padjadjaran, Indonesia*

A B S T R A C T

The use of Gili Trawangan, a small island located northwest of Lombok, has changed from a place where fishers from Sulawesi anchored their boats to become a tourist spot visited by tourists from various regions and countries, particularly for scuba diving. This article shows the dynamics of geopolitics on the island through a six-month field study on Gili Trawangan and direct interviews with early settlers and community leaders. The primary data was analyzed using the geopolitical concepts of borders and identities. From a geopolitical point of view, the fishermen, who were the island's first settlers, now lose control of the territory and find it difficult to access resources, culture, and the economy. Investors from outside the island and abroad have controlled this island geopolitically and created their own geopolitical identity. They use Western identities and cultures to dominate geopolitics in the strategic area of the island as the market wants.

A B S T R A K

Gili Trawangan sebagai sebuah pulau kecil di barat laut Lombok telah berubah dari pulau tempat berlabuhnya para nelayan dari Sulawesi menjadi tempat pariwisata yang didatangi wisatawan dalam negeri maupun mancanegara, terutama yang ingin menyelam skuba. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk melihat dinamika geopolitik di Gili Trawangan dengan metode enam bulan studi lapangan di Gili Trawangan melalui interview kepada para pemukim awal dan tokoh-tokoh masyarakat. Informasi yang didapat dari pengumpulan data, dianalisis menggunakan konsep geopolitik perbatasan dan identitas. Dari sudut pandang geopolitik, para nelayan yang merupakan para pemukim awal telah kehilangan kendali terhadap wilayahnya dan sulit untuk mendapatkan akses ke sumber daya, budaya, serta ekonomi. Investor dari luar telah mengambil alih pulau ini secara geopolitik dan mengambil alih identitas geopolitik Gili Trawangan. Mereka menggunakan identitas dan budaya "barat" dalam mendominasi geopolitik di tempat-tempat strategis di pulau tersebut sebagai pasar mereka.

Introduction

Gili Trawangan is an island with an area of ± 340 hectares next to Gili Air and Gili Meno. Around 1900 locals of 474 families and some expatriates live in Gili Trawangan.[1] In 1993, the island, which is part of West Nusa Tenggara Province, was a conservation area[2] but now is a tourism spot. The tourists mainly come from English-speaking countries.[3] There are around 750 business units ready to entertain approximately one million tourists who come each year.[4] This article looks at how investment inflows, especially from "the West" or Westernization, displacing or reshaping local culture with Western norms, ideas, institutions, values, and practices[5], as the beginning of a geopolitical change in this tourism island. Through the geopolitical concept of borders and identity, this article concludes that the foreign investors won the geopolitical contestation on Gili Trawangan by controlling the outer part of the island. The settlers who had lived earlier did not get the equivalent of what the West called tourism and development while slowly witnessing various aspects of the social life of its people changed.

Geopolitics has transformed from classical geopolitics which is a state-centric study into a more comprehensive term[6]. States have sovereignty and exclusive territory that are free from other state intervention and shape the geopolitical representation of a nation in a global contestation. However, with the development of globalization and the decline of military means, the presence of others is not only as material, such as the military, but also ideational things, such as notions, identities, cultures, and behavior. This evolution shows how the geography influences politics in its most obvious degree: the battle for territory.[7] Particularly, when the weaker states are being westernized or intervened by foreigners and generating "who controls a territory and its people" questions. The political contestation patterns between locals and foreigners positioned this Gili Trawangan research into an International Relations (IR) and critical geopolitics paper.

The history of Gili Trawangan was obtained from interviews with elders and first settlers, such as Haji Rukding and Haji Rohan in 2017-2018, and figures on the island, such as Haji Malik and Haji Rifai, who continue to correspond until 2021. Gili Trawangan was initially an empty island used as a temporary resting place for fishers from Sulawesi since the 16th century.[8] The fishermen then settled on Gili Air around the 1940s and later expanded agricultural land to Gili Meno in 1965.[9] Gili Trawangan began to be exploited in the early 70s when Haji

[1] Sonya Graci, "Accommodating Green: Examining Barriers to Sustainable Tourism Development," 2007.

[2] I Wayan Suana and Hilman Ahyadi, "Mapping of Ecosystem Management Problems in Gili Meno, Gili Air and Gili Trawangan (Gili Matra) Through Participative Approach," *Journal of Coastal Develpopment* 16, no. 1 (2012): 94–101.

[3] Rachel Dodds, Sonya Rita Graci, and Mark Holmes, "Does the Tourist Care? A Comparison of Tourists in Koh Phi Phi, Thailand and Gili Trawangan, Indonesia," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 18, no. 2 (2010): 207–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580903215162.

[4] Stefan Partelow and Katherine Nelson, "Social Networks, Collective Action and the Evolution of Governance for Sustainable Tourism on the Gili Islands, Indonesia," *Marine Policy* 112, no. December 2018 (2018): 0–1, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2018.08.004.

[5] Tezenlo Thong, "'To Raise the Savage to a Higher Level': The Westernization of Nagas and Their Culture," *Modern Asian Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012): 893–918, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X11000412.

[6] Gearoid O Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, 2005th ed. (London: Routledge, n.d.).

[7] Michael Don Ward, ed., *The New Geopolitics* (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 2021).

[8] Rukding, Malik, and Rifai, interview with the author, 2017-2021

[9] Muhammad Fauzi Abdul Rachman, *Gili Trawangan: Cerita Dan Perjalanan Pada Senja* (PT Kanisius, 2018).

Rukding started making roads to make cultivation easier.

In 1974, Wasita Kusumah, Governor of West Nusa Tenggara for the period of 1968-1979, divided Gili Trawangan into 100 hectares in the eastern part of the island to CV Generasi Jaya, owned by his children and aides, 100 hectares in the south to PT Rinta, a jatropha plant company, and the rest 140 hectares in the west for the people of Gili Trawangan.[10] He sent seven to nine prisoners from Lombok to manage his family's area. One of them was Muhammad Munawar, usually called Haji Rohan.[11] Then, in 1995, Governor Warsito Soenarto gave Building Rights Title (Hak Guna Bangunan/HGU) of 65 hectares to PT GTI, 25 hectares each to Asep Kusuma, Kundang Kusworo, Sudarli BA, and Kusuma Chandra.[12]

Before that, tourism on Gili Trawangan began when Tony Wheeler came to the island in 1982 and wrote about the island in Lonely Planet in 1984.[13] Since then, circa the early 1990s, Gili Trawangan has already started to be known and visited by tourists from abroad, especially from Europe and around.[14] The tourists came along with their Western ideas and culture, such as the concept of investment, lodging, bars, food, scuba diving, language, music, and other notions that differ from what previously existed in Gili Trawangan. Subsequently, the University of Mataram adopted the scuba diving system and opened the Rinjani Diving Foundation in Gili Trawangan in 1987. Then, various scuba diving businesses emerged, such as Albatross, Gili Rinjani Dive, and Reef Seeker, owned by foreign nationals. Foreign investment began to boast when Simon Liddiard, who first arrived in Gili Trawangan in 1999, invested in and managed the Blue Marlin company previously owned by Rifai Heriyanto, a descendant of early immigrants from Sulawesi.

Since then, tourism on Gili Trawangan has begun to develop, especially diving tourism[15], which currently has at least 30 dive shops in Gili Trawangan.[16] 70% of the revenue of North Lombok Regency, where there are three Gilis (Gili Trawangan, Gili Air, and Gili Meno), comes from this sector.[17] Tourism and the coming of Western people caused rapid land sales in Gili Trawangan. This situation has economic and social consequences and degrades the environment.[18] From field research to Gili Trawangan, development has not been felt by all the people there, mainly locals. For example, to get clean water, the people of Gili Trawangan have to buy it from a foreign private company called PT Berkat Air Laut (PT BAL), directed by William John Matheson in collaboration with PT GNE.[19] The privatization of access to water contradicts the inclusive development concept and the Indonesia 1945 constitution article 33 section 3 that said the waters and the natural resources within shall be under the powers of the State and shall be used to the greatest benefit of the people. In the other environmental aspect affected by tourism, ecosystem damage in the three Gilis has

[10] Rifai, interview with the author, 2021

[11] Munawar, direct interview with the author, 2018

[12] Redaksi Lombok Post, "Di Bawah Bayang-Bayang PT Gili Trawangan Indah," December 2019.

[13] Rachman, *Gili Trawangan: Cerita Dan Perjalanan Pada Senja*.

[14] Partelow and Nelson, "Social Networks, Collective Action and the Evolution of Governance for Sustainable Tourism on the Gili Islands, Indonesia."

[15] Sonya Graci, "Collaboration and Partnership Development for Sustainable Tourism," *Tourism Geographies* 15, no. 1 (2013): 25–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2012.675513.

[16] Partelow and Nelson, "Social Networks, Collective Action and the Evolution of Governance for Sustainable Tourism on the Gili Islands, Indonesia."

[17] Suana and Ahyadi, "Mapping of Ecosystem Management Problems in Gili Meno, Gili Air and Gili Trawangan (Gili Matra) Through Participative Approach."

[18] Rachel Dodds and Sonya Graci, *Sustainable Tourism in Island Destinations* (Routledge, 2010).

[19] Tim Koran NTB, "Dewan Kritisi GNE Soal Pungutan Air Bersih Di Gili Trawangan," *Koran NTB*, April 5, 2021.

reached 90%, of which 75% is caused by human activities.[20]

On Gili Trawangan, development focuses more on tourism funded by capital from outside the island. However, without harmony with the cultural and social conditions in its geographies, development or tourism will not succeed.[21] Of the various government officers or stakeholders in Gili Matra (Meno, Air, Trawangan), 45% do not even know about the importance of ecosystems for sustainable tourism.[22] This number shows the disharmony between the initial condition and the coming tourism system. Partelow and Nelson[23] wrote that the actors' views on the beach in Gili Trawangan are very different. Business people see it as a source of income, local people see it as a cultural identity, while tourists see it as a source of pleasure and social capital. These different viewpoints form the power hierarchy among the actors.

The emergence of tourism, which replaces the function of conservation, plantation and fishery areas in Gili Trawangan, is followed by Western ideas and concepts that shape a new geopolitical order on the island. This paper discusses the order based on the geopolitical point of view of Colin Flint's borders and geopolitics of identity. There was no previous research on Gili Trawangan that focuses on geopolitics on the island. The writings cited above focus only on environmental, governance, or tourism issues.

Fig 1: Gili Matra (Meno, Trawangan, Air) or Gili Indah, or Gili Islands and Lombok.

Source: processed from Google Maps.

Research Method

To obtain primary data and conclude the geopolitical situation, the author used direct observation during living for six months on Gili Trawangan in 2017-2018. In addition, the author interviewed residents, business people from inside and outside the island, local workers, and community leaders who are considered the early settlers on Gili Trawangan, namely migrants of Sulawesi Mandar ethnicity and migrants from Lombok. The data from a brief interview in March 2021 with youth figures of "native" descendants whose ancestors were first-generation immigrants to the island was also included. There are many simplifications in this article because it will be challenging to see every landholding status on the island for mapping the geopolitic's view from literally every people who lives on the island.

As a complement, secondary data is used to get another point of view about Gili Trawangan. By the acquired data, this paper examines those with the geopolitical concept that concerns who controls the territory and gets the most benefits. The geopolitical concept of boundaries or borders and identity is also used to analyse data obtained from primary and secondary sources. Besides, the received data was interpreted since it is qualitative research.

The state does not exclusively own geopolitics concepts since these can be applied and brought down until the micro-level analysis. In the geopolitics' lowest level of analysis, such as family, identity plays an

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[20] Suana and Ahyadi, "Mapping of Ecosystem Management Problems in Gili Meno, Gili Air and Gili Trawangan (Gili Matra) Through Participative Approach."

[21] Muhammad Fauzi Abdul Rachman, "The Reality behind the Rhetoric: An Examination of Saudi Vision 2030 Using Imminent Critique," *Journal of Islamic World and Politics* 3, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.18196/jiwp.3239.

[22] Suana and Ahyadi, "Mapping of Ecosystem Management Problems in Gili Meno, Gili Air and Gili Trawangan (Gili Matra) Through Participative Approach."

[23] Partelow and Nelson, "Social Networks, Collective Action and the Evolution of Governance for Sustainable Tourism on the Gili Islands, Indonesia."

important role to difference one another in critical geopolitics contestation. Identity is a perception of similarity among group members[24] and one key to geopolitics.[25] Practices of othering constructs identities[26], producing places enact identities[27], and conflict speed up the creation of national identity.[28]

Moving on to geopolitical concept of border, Konrad and Szary[29] said that "cultural turn" in international relations evolve our understanding of spatialities. Borders can be physical or non-physical (role of culture, idea, norms) and natural or artificial. Its function is to separate one geography from another, especially concerning sovereignty, which is, again, not an exclusive concept of state. The development of the border concept follows that of geopolitics into critical geopolitics. The study of boundaries has learned their influence on everyday life[30] to the micro-scale of socio-spatial activities.[31] Border studies highlight how and why boundaries produce certain spaces and emphasizing the importance of border activities to understand

political spaces[32]. Anderson[33] said that the main issue on boundaries is whether the use of boundary separates or unites cultural group. He divides boundaries into three classifications. First, physiographic boundaries that are drawn by the feature of landscape. Next, Boundaries drawn by straight lines created from fixed locations, latitude or longitude lines are known as geometrical boundaries. Last, anthropomorphic boundaries that are drawn based on cultural elements.

Borders, nowadays, are regarded as socially constructed and it can be called as critical geopolitics[34]. Geopolitics focuses on no longer only who owns what but also who controls which areas and who has access to them. The configuration of actors, ownership, control and access to a place and resources continues to change over time as the ability of each actor to maintain their power does. External factors also significantly influence changes in the composition of ownership, control, and access to certain territories and resources, such as investment or economic power, politics, immigrants, natural disasters, military attacks, embedded laws, ideas, culture, et cetera, that come from outside a territory. The traditional concept of territory based on state sovereignty is disturbed by the struggle for space and networks based on economic, political and social interests.[35]

According to Glassner and Fahrer[36], the border must first be created through political

[24] Allen Chun, "On the Geopolitics of Identity," *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 3 (September 2009): 331–49, https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499609348245.

[25] Jason Dittmer and Daniel Bos, *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, and Identity* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

[26] Thomas Diez, "Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, no. 2 (July 2004): 319–35, https://doi.org/10.1080/0955757042000245924.

[27] Konrad and Szary, *Border Culture*.

[28] Taras Kuzio, "Russia–Ukraine Crisis: The Blame Game, Geopolitics and National Identity," *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 3 (March 16, 2018): 462–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1443643.

[29] Konrad and Szary, *Border Culture*.

[30] Alexander C Diener and Joshua Hagen, "Theorizing Borders in a 'Borderless World': Globalization, Territory and Identity," *Geography Compass* 3 (2009): 1196–1216.

[31] David Newman and Anssi Paasi, "Fences and Neighbours in the Postmodern World: Boundary Narratives in Political Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 22, no. 2 (1998): 186–207, https://doi.org/10.1191/030913298666039113.

[32] Jeppe Strandsbjerg, "Cartopolitics, Geopolitics and Boundaries in the Arctic," *Geopolitics* 17, no. 4 (October 2012): 818–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2012.660581.

[33] Ewan W. Anderson, "Geopolitics: International Boundaries as Fighting Places," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2–3 (June 1999): 125–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402399908437757.

[34] Henk van Houtum, "The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries," *Geopolitics* 10, no. 4 (2005): 672–79, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040500318522.

[35] Alexander B. Murphy, "Identity and Territory," *Geopolitics* 15, no. 4 (2010): 769–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650041003717525.

[36] Martin Ira Glassner and Chuck Fahrer, *Political Geography*, Third Edit (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2004).

agreement, war, or it can be determined by an external party who has the power to decide. When the actors have agreed upon it, they must put a visible boundary mark. This process is called demarcation. Among the demarcation lines are separation walls, check gates, rivers, forests, or lands guarded by the military. However, sometimes demarcations are not very visible so that people are often unaware of whose territory they are. Thus, to affirm or reaffirm the ownership of a place, actors need to control their territories and borders.

These boundaries or borders are often the sources of geopolitical conflicts. Flint[37] categorises four causes of border issues: identity, natural resources controls, unclear boundary markers, and security. In this article, we translate the concept into the existing geopolitical configuration of Gili Trawangan. The author classified actors into locals, the first settlers from Sulawesi and Lombok, and business people or investors from outside the island and abroad.

Border or boundary is a geopolitical feature of material and ideology.[38] Thus, boundaries are physical demarcation and fighting for ideas within a territory. According to Newman[39], physical boundaries apply not only to the border between countries. These boundaries can also separate domestic area that limits human interaction and movement in their daily activities. These boundaries can be physical boundaries, such as walls or fences, or non-physical boundaries, invisible but understood by the actors. This limitation will and, will be determined by the interaction, conflict, and cooperation between the actors. The territory's attributes, such as natural resources and identity politics, determine the

power and control relations between majority and minority or dominant and non-dominant actors.

The characteristics of a territory form through various processes and specific forces that make it different from other regions. The process and the motivation vary in each territory. Martinez[40], for example, classified them into four concepts: transnational interactions, otherness, separateness, areas of cultural conflict and accommodation, and places of international accommodation and conflict. Martinez defined the concept referring to the United States-Mexico border area, which he considered different from the centre of each country. Flint[41] then quotes it and uses the process and encouragement of territorial character building in the Korean border case study.

Based on the Martinez concept in the territory characteristics above, transnational interactions open the territory to foreign values that come, including ideas, traditions, institutions, tastes, and behaviour. As a result, they open up the possibility of the territory as a place of confrontation, adjustment, and cooperation between two different ideas from migrants and residents. Martinez calls this territory a place of international conflict and accommodation. Conflict and peace can be viewed from a social, economic and cultural perspective. The meeting of these two values can also produce a dichotomy relationship between "us" and "them" (otherness) and can lead to separation.

This article draws this concept within the inner boundaries of Gili Trawangan that become the arena of struggle for space and economy network. Got data that gained from interviews were analyzed by the concept of border and boundaries, observed cultural element that shaped identity, and concluded on who controls what and where. Even though Gili Trawangan is an area within a

[37] Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics*, *Routledge*, 2006, https://doi.org/10.1080/00221340903434630.
[38] Flint.
[39] David Newman, "Conflict at the Interface: The Impact of Boundaries and Borders on Contemporary Ethnonational Conflict," in *The Geography of War and Peace: From Death Camps to Diplomats*, ed. Colin Flint (Oxford University Press, 2005), 321, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2006.352_3.x.

[40] Oscar J. Martinez, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (The University of Arizona Press, 1994).
[41] Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics*.

country that is not separated by other national borders, the power configuration resembles two nationalisms in one region. Like the case study that Martinez wrote, the configuration in Gili Trawangan is also determined by geographic identity and economic cooperation, without the basis of national borders. The boundaries on this island are formed by interactions between migrants and residents, not by national borders.

Result and Discussion

By identity, the geopolitics in Gili Trawangan are separated by the local and Western concepts that shape the geopolitical configuration of social life there. The identity of actors can be simplified into three: former residents from Sulawesi, former residents from Lombok, and investors from within and outside Indonesia who came later to develop tourism. Their land or business ownership clarifies this grouping in the territory or land in Gili Trawangan.

Early settlers from Sulawesi mastered the political aspects of Gili Trawangan. Since Gili Trawangan became one hamlet (*dusun*) in the division of Gili Indah Village on April 10, 1995, the village head of Gili Indah has always come from Sulawesi descendants.[42] Likewise, the hamlet head always comes from a Sulawesi family, except for the newest and still in office, from North Lombok. In addition, Karang Taruna, the youth organisation on the island, is always chaired by the descendants of Sulawesi. The "control" of governmental administration position shapes identity of the island that is attached to Sulawesi family identity and othering the other identity.

In annual events on the island, the committee chairman also comes from a population of Sulawesi descendants. For example, in a traditional yearly event such as *mandi safar*, offerings (*sesajen*) to the sea

was carried out by H. Rukding[43], one of the first settlers who opened the first road on Gili Trawangan Island. To prepare for Christmas and New Year, community leaders who came of Sulawesi descendants, with the permission of the village head, also toured each business place to collect funds to secure the island. The various activities above have never been carried out by other parties who are not of Sulawesi descendants. So, identity plays a vital role in controlling political matters in Gili Trawangan. It shapes the cultural elements, as Anderson's anthropomorphic, in their everyday life.

Most of the early settlers occupied the northern and eastern sides of the island of Gili Trawangan. Since their starting place was in Gili Air, an island to the east of Gili Trawangan, the east side of Gili Trawangan is the most accessible geographic entrance to reach. Meanwhile, the source of fresh water in the north made this area was chosen to be inhabited and causes coconut trees to thrive there. The south is considered too far from the jetty and has no source of fresh or brackish water. In this initial settlement, access and natural resources, as the determinant of power, were the main reasons for a geopolitical configuration.
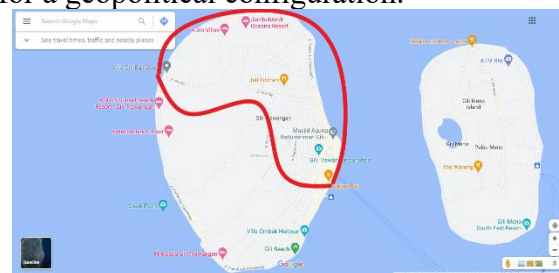

Fig 2: The initial settlement area of Sulawesi immigrants on Gili Trawangan is inside the red line area

Source: processed from Google Maps.

After tourism has developed, the east part has ports and terminals or ferry piers, points of arrival and departure of ships from and out of the island. The *cidomo* (horse wagon) also occupies the eastern side of the island as its terminal. The *cidomo* is the only

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[42] Fanwari, direct interview with the author, 2021

[43] Rachman, *Gili Trawangan: Cerita Dan Perjalanan Pada Senja*.

transportation mode of tourists in Gili Trawangan, apart from bicycles. These public places make the eastern area more dense, inclusive and often passed by people, while other areas are less crowded and more exclusive. Parallel to the east coastline, descendants of the early inhabitant's established inns and other places of business. There is also a straight line from the east of the island to the centre of the island, named Vila Kelapa Street. This street is the first road or access on the island, which was built by Haji Rukding. Until now, the street is inhabited mainly by residents from Sulawesi.
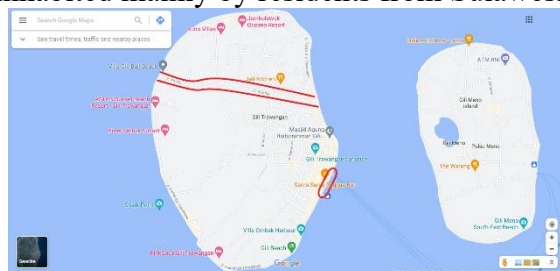

Fig 3: The first road opened on Gili Trawangan is on Vila Kelapa Street, marked in two red lines. Transportation points (terminal/port, ferry dock/jetty, *cidomo* terminal) are located in the red capsule

Source: processed from Google Maps.

In the discourse of lifting Gili Trawangan territorial status from a hamlet to a village, Zaini Bassok, a descendant of the early settlers from Sulawesi, is strongly predicted to become the first Village Head of Gili Trawangan. He is now the chair of the Gili Trawangan Employers' Association. Thus, identity plays a significant role in Gili Trawangan political configuration. However, the case is unique in terms of economic control of the strategic area. The first settlers have to compete with investors from outside the island and abroad. The struggle for space and network entered the new phase and "us" versus "them" has been started.

Most of the business establishments along the east coast of Gili Trawangan cooperate with foreign and island investors, especially for diving courses or dive shops. The locals could not resist the demand for scuba diving activity on the island. They need to learn from Western people in

business to learn about the scuba diving system. In this situation, there are transnational interactions and cultural adjustments between the early settlers from Sulawesi, who usually dive traditionally without equipment or technology, and investors from abroad who are more modern and expert on scuba diving activities. The way of diving becomes an arena of identity as a cultural element shapes the border between locals and Western.
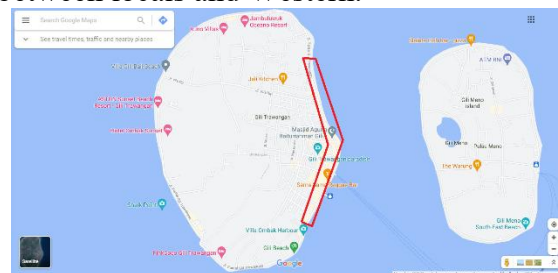

Fig 4: The dive shop area in Gili Trawangan is centered on the site marked in red

Source: processed from Google Maps.

There were international adjustments on the west, northern, and southern ends of the island, since those sides are owned mainly by business owners from outside the island and abroad. Those areas are attractive to investors because of these adjoining beaches. The beaches on Gili Trawangan are valuable resources because of their nature tourism, one of the main economic activities on the island. These areas are quieter, less traveled, and exclusive. The average price of lodging in these regions is more expensive than in the central and eastern areas. Hence, a geographic identity is formed: the west coast is more exclusive and costly than other areas in Gili Trawangan.
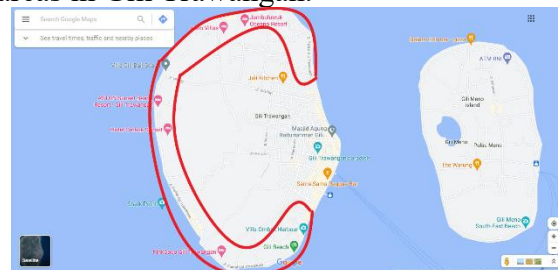

Fig 5: Locations that are already owned by foreign and foreign investors are inside the red line. This area is more exclusive and expensive than other areas in Gili Trawangan

Source: processed from Google Maps.

The native Lombok and migrants arriving after the Sulawesi people lived on the deeper side of the east coast. This place is not facing the beach directly and is more apart from tourism activities, although various inns are in the island's centre. This area does not have direct access to the beach. Therefore, in terms of geography and access, the central region is not as strategic and attractive as the area directly next to the coast.

These geopolitical configurations were very different when the people from Sulawesi arrived before there was tourism. International interactions, especially the arrival of foreign investment and the tourism business have made Gili Trawangan switch its function from a farming island to a tourism island. Resources are no longer trees or other plants but strategic location, view, and access to the beach or sea. Before the West came to this island, people lived more sustainably because they only relied on farming and fish hunting. Their environment remained sustainable because there was no deforestation, massive land conversion, and activities that damaged the marine ecosystem. The presence of tourism-based development transforms farming and gardening spaces into spaces to accommodate tourism. This phenomenon inline with the concept that geopolitics is about battle of territory. As a result, geopolitical boundary issues formed.

Local people were bound to adapt to this new configuration, from planting and gardening to Western model tourism development, from a fishing and farming community into a tourism-based community. The interests of capital also create shoreline regulations, from public spaces into private places for business. Business establishments directly adjacent to the coast capitalized on this area charge people who want to enjoy the public space. Anyone who wants to play in the beach area must buy food or drink provided by the business place on the beach. Here, the boundary is not physical, but only the installation of chairs that convey a message that the area belongs to their respective places of business. The capitalization of the common area makes the demarcation invisible but is insisted on by the staff/officers who require visitors to order something. This business system makes the community and environmental security more vulnerable. If they cannot adapt to the changes from the West, local people will lose more control of their territories.

Communities that previously depended on nature did not recognize property rights. When the state gave Governor Wasita Kusumah the right to "own" the island and allowed Governor Warsito to grant Building Rights Title to entrepreneurs, it created demarcation and control by the state that formed a new geopolitical configuration on Gili Trawangan. The demarcation is visible because it appears in the form of ownership law. It entitles a territory to an actor while causing other actors to lose their rights to use a particular land. The creation of rules and ownership laws in Gili Trawangan has changed a space that used to be accessible for anyone to plant and anchor fishing boats to become narrower because the state allows restrictions and controls. Granting geographic rights to certain actors in a particular area of Gili Trawangan creates a geopolitical separation between owners and non-owners. This separation is emphasized further when the territorial owner builds walls or physical boundaries. Demarcation and re-demarcation continue when investors from outside keep buying land in Gili Trawangan. Domestic investors from outside the island may purchase land in Gili Trawangan, while foreign investors do business by cooperating with the locals. Therefore, in this ownership rule, the stronger the capital, the easier it will be to dominate geopolitics in Gili Trawangan.

This domination continues to the area of ideas/cultural power, which later forms its identity. For example, in the Gili Trawangan case, Western-style SCUBA diving and food are the ideas or cultures that dominate the island. The early settlers on Gili Trawangan,

the majority of whom were the Mandar tribe from Sulawesi, were traditional coastal communities. Diving is part of their traditional activities.[44] The ability to dive without equipment for a few minutes is always passed down from family or relatives[45]. However, since foreign tourists visited Gili Trawangan, SCUBA diving tourism has dominated diving tourism there. Western-style diving with safety requirements, equipment, training, certificates, and required fees to do so is a prima donna for foreign tourists.

Consequently, the Mandar traditional diving style was abandoned, and their descendants in Gili Trawangan no longer possess the ability their predecessors once had. The idea of SCUBA diving that dominates the way and practice of diving in Gili Trawangan creates a view that SCUBA diving is the right, safe, advanced, and modern Western version or style of diving. Meanwhile, the traditional way of Sulawesi divers is ancient, unsafe and unhealthy. The difference in the diving system creates a separate identity among those who do the SCUBA diving and those who do not.

Correspondingly, food may identify a community or group.[46] The Mandar traditional foods such as bolu paranggi, bau peapi, jepa cakes are more difficult to find on Gili Trawangan. Even during the six months of direct observation on Gili Trawangan, the author never found them existed. Western specialities such as steaks, spaghetti, burgers, pizzas, and others are easier to find on Gili Trawangan. The restaurants that serve those foods are in strategic locations, especially business premises directly next to the beach. The price of those foods is also higher, range from Rp. 50,000 to Rp. 300,000 compared to Indonesian foods, ranging from Rp. 5,000 to Rp. 45,000. This price difference makes Western food more exclusive than local food.

The dominance of these ideas and culture makes strategic places in Gili Trawangan, on the east coast, are filled mostly with SCUBA diving businesses and restaurants selling Western-style food. Contrarily, there is not a single restaurant that sells typical Mandar or Sulawesi food. There are Indonesian food small restaurants, yet the only strategic place to eat Indonesian food is in the night market in the east part of the island. The other businesses that sell Indonesian specialities, such as food stalls with cheap food (*warung tegal*/*warteg*), are located in the central area of Gili Trawangan, which is less strategic than the outer area. So, Western ideas have won the geopolitical contestation on Gili Trawangan in the geopolitics of identity, or terms of tourism activities and daily food. This Western notion dominates the strategic area of the island, while the local idea or culture is in a less strategic area. Like SCUBA dive shops or western restaurants, Western-style businesses are owned mainly by the investors from abroad and outside the island. Also, people of Sulawesi descent own most of the strategic eastern territory, so some of these investors rent land to residents, and some also use a profit-sharing system with the people who own the land.

These differences are fighting over territory, create a them-versus-us situation and a clear separation between one idea and another. The domination of western ideas and culture on this island forms its own different regional identity from the local one. It says that many local people live in poverty.[47] One of the causes is the defeat in identity contestation. Sustainable tourism embraces local people[48], and the impoverished locals' condition in Gili

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[44] Kresna Febriyanto, Ainur Rachman, and Ferry Fadzlul Rahman, "The Contribution of Human Error Related to Occupational Accident among Traditional Divers," *Gaceta Sanitaria* 35 (2021): S27–29, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gaceta.2020.12.008.

[45] Febriyanto, Rachman, and Rahman.

[46] Muhammad Fauzi Abdul Rachman, "Makanan," in *Isu Nonkonvensional Dalam Hubungan Internasional*, ed. Muhammad Fauzi Abdul Rachman (Salatiga: Griya Media, 2020), 190–223.

[47] Graci, "Collaboration and Partnership Development for Sustainable Tourism."

[48] Dodds and Graci, *Sustainable Tourism in Island Destinations*.

Trawangan opposes it. Embracing does not mean only making cooperation from a business perspective but also building together so that Gili Trawangan does not become an area of conflict or a place for international competition.
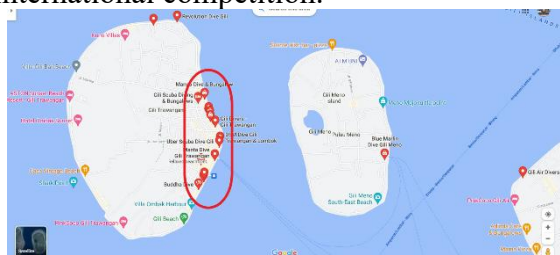

Fig 6: On the west coast, in the red line/capsule area, SCUBA diving businesses and Western-style food restaurants dominate the strategic territory

Source: processed from Google Maps.

After the Western idea and culture dominated the geopolitics east of the island, demarcation began to appear. The boundary is in the form of building walls that separate one area from another. People outside the wall become separated from the area inside the wall. This wall emphasises geopolitical separation as well as affirms the control of an actor over the territory. Other actors who cannot control this strategic area can be said to be the ones who lose in the struggle for the existing space. They should live or move in the inner part of the island. From the geopolitical configuration described above, borders, as quoted from Diener and Hagen[49], affect the community and tourists and create products from particular group identities that generate asymmetric power and wealth.

The central part of Gili Trawangan is not too ideal compared to the coastal area because Gili Trawangan makes the charm of the beach and the sea as its tourism charm. The east coast is the area for SCUBA diving shops, western restaurants, and essential transportation spots. Therefore, this territory is crowded. Tourists can find a quieter and exclusive environment in the west coast area of the island.

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[49] Alexander C Diener and Joshua Hagen, "Theorizing Borders in a 'Borderless World': Globalization, Territory and Identity," *Geography Compass* 3 (2009): 1196–1216.

Conclusion

In Gili Trawangan, the struggle for space and economic, political and social networks, both visible and invisible, directly or indirectly, is determined by the geopolitics of identity and borders. This setting is due to the arrival of external actors, such as investors and tourists, who eventually configure new ideas and identities. Locals had to be mixed or compete with something from outside, which ultimately made Gili Trawangan an area of cultural and international conflict or accommodation. This difference ultimately creates the character of the Gili Trawangan territory in separateness and otherness between residents and investors or migrants. From this point, the border forms, highlighted by the constructions of physical and non-physical demarcations. This formation illustrates an actor's control over certain territories in the Gili Trawangan region. Since Gili Trawangan is a tourist island, then whoever controls tourism socially, culturally, politically, and economically, is the one who wins the geopolitical contestation on Gili Trawangan. From the above analysis, this article concludes local people lost geopolitical control of Gili Trawangan. Ideas and capital from outside the island controlled geopolitics in Gili Trawangan. As Dittmer[50] argues, geopolitics can at one point form a hierarchy of regions and actors. For Hall[51], tourism is a symbol of neoliberal hegemony and the project of Western hedonistic cultural imperialism.

However, this article has many simplifications because of anomalies, such as residents who are not early immigrants can also get good access because they work together with the early residents. There are also areas directly adjacent to the coast that

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[50] Dittmer and Bos, *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, and Identity*.

[51] Derek Hall, "Bringing Geopolitics to Tourism," in *Tourism and Geopolitics: Issues and Concepts from Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Derek Hall (CAB International, 2017), 3–14, https://doi.org/10.3917/her.127.0015.

residents still control. Then, there are also exclusive areas in the middle of the island, although the majority are inclusive. Few businesses on the east side have private infrastructure compared to those on the west side. Likewise, Lombok migrants do not absolutely live in the island's central area because North and Central Lombok residents also own several business establishments on the east coast.

It is suggested for further research to examine the ownership of land or areas in Gili Trawangan one by one to describe the geopolitics in Gili Trawangan in detail. Research on how the sustainability of tourism and the environment on the island is related to existing geopolitical contestations may follow afterwards.

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