MOLDING A STRATEGIC AND PROFESSIONAL INDOONESIAN MILITARY: POLICY OPTIONS FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION

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INTRODUCTION
This article addresses the strategic gap between Indonesia's increasingly complex domestic, regional, and global security environment, and the country's inability to fully reform its national military—generally known as the Indonesian Defense Forces or TNI (Tentara Nasional Indonesia). Furthermore, while not neglecting the vast literature on Indonesia's military reform, as well as key reform policies, this article looks at two fundamental problems—the military's education and training system, and the strength of the civilian defense community—that must be addressed if we wish to create a strategic and professional military, one that could tackle the country's increasingly complex security environment without usurping basic democratic principles in the long-run. This article also suggests that the President himself, instead of the Defense Minister, should be directly and personally involved in pushing any reform policies within those two areas. Finally, this article tries to move away from the current Security Sector Reform (SSR) parlance and discourse that has thus focused on the military's politics, business, and accountability—and their accompanying regulations.

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1 For a brief discussion of such gaps, see for example, Evan A. Laksmana, Spoilers, Partners, and Pawns: Military Organizational Behaviour and Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia, RSIS Working Article No. 161 (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2008)
for a conventional external aggression, but more importantly, to safeguard our maritime waters from both illegal poaching and incursions by foreign militaries. In addition, we are also expected to play a more proactive role in international peacekeeping—where we have actually excelled thus far—and increase our capacity to tackle national and regional disaster relief efforts. And, at a time when regional tension is close to fever pitch, increasing the military’s operational readiness, while ensuring that any internal security function would not reignite old fears about TNI’s old habit of political dominance, remains one of Indonesia’s most difficult strategic challenges today, and for the foreseeable future.

Thus, Indonesia needs a strategic and professional military, who would not only be in good terms with the political leadership and society at large, but would also be effective in tackling day-to-day security challenges effectively and efficiently while continuing to maintain a state of readiness to face: a conventional war, peacekeeping missions, and disaster relief efforts simultaneously—what this article calls a “three war” doctrinal orientation. Thus far, pundits and scholars had proposed several policy recommendations to this effect, including: (1) legal regulations about the TNI’s role, mission, business activities, and tribunal laws, (2) a review of defense posture, doctrine, and strategy along with force support and deployment, (3) a reinstatement of defense management accountability and budgetary efficiency and transparency—all of which are supposedly underpinned by civilian supremacy and parliamentary oversight. These efforts however are merely short and medium term solutions. To address the complexities of what we are facing today would require us to move beyond these institutional policies, and instead address the military’s basic mindset and culture while exploring long-term options to ensure a harmonious civil-military relations.

Therefore, this article makes the following two basic policy recommendations to complement previous and existing policies. First, the President should support and play a decisive role in reforming and re-integrating the military education and training system as well as revamping operational missions. Second, the President should support the creation and strengthening of a civilian defense community to assist defense policymaking and facilitate communication between the military leadership, the administration, and general public at large. The following sections will elaborate each of these recommendations, highlight the basic problems, and propose several policy options to address them.

**BACK TO BASICS: OVERHAULING MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

It should be noted here that the overhaul and re-integration of the military education and training system is a crucial prerequisite to prepare the military to operate successfully in a variety of security environments. Considering TNI’s previous curricula and teaching methods whereby officers were prepared to play a socio-political role other than its defense and internal security role under the ‘dual-function’ (dwi fungsi) doctrine, efforts to ‘re-militarize’ the military to its ideal defense function is sorely needed. Two key factors are especially relevant here: (1) the military education and training system itself, and (2) the subsequent use of that training, that is, the military’s operational missions. Addressing these areas would not only enable officers to obtain the critical thinking and strategic perspectives needed to eventually reformulate new defense doctrines, posture, and strategy, but such efforts could provide a window of opportunity to instill professional norms within the officer corps.

In terms of military education, one of the main problems is the content of the curriculum. Research have shown that the curriculum in the military academy have not significantly changed since the 1960s, where 53% covers socio-political subjects, 22% military subjects, and

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4 For an overview of these policy recommendations, see Andi Widjajanto, eds. Reformasi Sektor Keamanan di Indonesia (Jakarta: The Pro-Patria Institute, 2004); Rusdi Marpaung, et. al, eds. Dinamika Reformasi Sektor Keamanan (Jakarta: Imparsial, 2005); T. Hari Prihatono, eds. Pengembangan Regulasi Keamanan Nasional (Jakarta: The Pro-Patria Institute, 2006), Kusnanto Anggoro and Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, eds. Rekom Jejak Proses SSR di Indonesia 2000-2005 (Jakarta: The Pro-Patria Institute, 2006), T. Hari Prihatono, ed. Keamanan Nasional: Kebutuhan Membangun Perspektif Integratif versus Pembentukan Politik dan Kebijakan (Jakarta: The Pro-Patria Institute, 2006).

5 For a strategic need to “re-militarize” the TNI, see Evan A. Lukmana, “Clausewitz, Strategic Theory, and the Indonesian Military,” *The Indonesian Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2008): 86-106.
15% physical exercise. In addition, throughout the New Order, indoctrination in patriotism and the importance of regime maintenance has been integrated into the military training structure. Moreover, it appears that there has been an overall decline in the quality of the officer corps, especially when we consider the fact that younger officers were only average students in their respective senior high-schools (with an average grade of 6.5), compared with the high quality students in the early 1970s and 1980s (whose average grade was 8.0). Furthermore, while the quality seems to decline, the number of intake continues to rise—which not only further burdens the budget, but it might also foster stronger internal rivalries and entrench a conservative and less-open minded world view.

Although there is some progress, especially in the realm of human rights training and courses—which the TNI administers with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)—the fundamental issue is the fact that the Military Academy (Akmil) does provide an academic degree. Recently, the TNI began expanding its intake of university graduates and "greening" them through an abbreviated curriculum at the Akmil, but the percentage of these men are relatively small. Finally, the entire military education and training system remains a "closed" system in the sense that civilian experts asked to teach relevant courses are very few—making the graduates ensconced in their own little world and are less exposed to their natural surroundings; contrary to the ideal of a "people's army".

With these problems in mind, several policy options are proposed here. First, increase and further refine core military subjects, such as geopolitics and modern warfare, while further improving existing key non-military subjects, such as history, humanitarian law, and international relations. This would not only lay a stronger intellectual foundation for officers by exposing them to critical thinking, but it could also pave the way to civilianize the teaching staff as those courses could be taught by numerous qualified civilian instructors—who are more readily available compared than those who could teach core military subjects.

Second, existing recruitment policies needs to be revamped and tightened. Not only would increasing admission standards increase the quality of future military leaders, but this could also unblock the current promotional logjam due to the shrinking military posts after the end of the New Order. Finally, provide more scholarships and send more officers abroad for further education. This would not only provide them a broader strategic perspective, but this experience would expose them to military counterparts from all over the world—which is crucial to build strong bonds and ties as well as possibly preparing them to play a significant role in joint international missions in the future.

These overall policies however would be difficult to implement without the direct personal involvement of the President. For one thing, based on our constitution, the President remains the Commander-in-Chief that could give direct orders to the TNI Commander. Such orders, especially if done publicly, would certainly be followed through—lest the TNI wants to suffer the wrath from the Parliament and public. For another, leaving the matter to the Defense Minister, which has generally been rather accommodating to military pressure, might be counter-productive as institutional resistance from within the TNI could prove to an over-whelming force—not to mention the fact that the DoD is staffed with military officers.

**OPERATIONAL MISSIONS: THE QUEST FOR EQUILIBRIUM**

Following the fall of Suharto, the then-ABRI decided to abolish the dual-function doctrine and its affiliated functions. Today, the DoD (Department of Defense) defines the military's operational mission...
as consisting of: Military Operations for War and Military Operations Other Than War.\(^{13}\) This last mission suggests that some of its domestic operations, such as "territorial nurturing", remain, although now under the pretext of preparing "local resilience". Given the low military budget and domestic economic problems, such efforts to assist the people is commendable, not to mention the possible ramifications of continued 'idle capacity' problems. However, given the history where such 'civic missions' were misused by former President Suharto for his own political purposes, a continued persistence on domestic operations might raise concern about possible excesses in the future.\(^{14}\)

On the other hand, the strategic challenges facing Indonesia today is larger than ever before. Not only do regional tensions in Southeast Asia remain a simmering problem that occasionally burst into fever high pitch—making preparation for an eventual use of force an imperative—but the intertwining web of non-traditional security challenges, especially disaster relief and management, and the need to further contribute to international peacekeeping operations, has forced the TNI to find ways to confront this three-front challenge. Thus, the quest for equilibrium—between maintaining and improving operational readiness across the full spectrum of challenges and ensuring that any domestic missions will not lead to excesses—should remain the next fundamental step of any revamped military education and training system discussed previously.

With these issues in mind, several policy options are recommended here. First, Indonesia’s international peacekeeping operations should be expanded and prioritized. Not only is the TNI’s track record excellent in this regard, but such operations has the potential to replace domestic operations as a key consideration in career promotions while boosting Indonesia’s international image.\(^{15}\) In addition, this external focus would increase further professionalism due to the high demand

\(^{13}\) For an overview of TNI’s operational missions, see Department of Defence, Defending the Country Entering the 21st Century (Jakarta: Department of Defense, 2004).

\(^{14}\) For a discussion on Indonesia’s internal security operations and missions, see Lowry, The Armed Forces, 147-150; Leonard C. Sebastian, Realpolitik Ideology, 67-176.


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upon the officers' intellectual and technical skills to be able to operate in international joint operations while moving them away from domestic politics—but at the same time maintaining TNI’s respected edge of “cultural awareness”. This was the success story of the recent contingent working in Lebanon.\(^{16}\)

Second, more emphasis should be made on Joint Tri-Service Operations. This could be done domestically by increasing National Joint Exercises or internationally by increasing participation in regional/international training exercises. This option however might not be readily available due to budgetary constraints as well as the underdeveloped joint military operations doctrine along with the history of inter-service rivalry.\(^{17}\) Although efforts to improve this predicament by establishing the Joint Forces Staff College as part of the newly-established Indonesian Defense University might improve ‘jointness’, but the budgetary constrains, uneven treatment and prestige, as well as differing overall operational readiness, means that such unity might not be seen in the near future. Third, legal operational mechanisms should be further outlined in the event that military forces need to be deployed domestically. It should regulate when, how, under whose authority, and for how long could military forces be deployed in domestic emergency situations (such as natural disasters or insurgencies) to assist the police. Such stipulations could prevent future excesses where the military becomes entrenched in local political and economic issues. This issue was recently debated again following the 17 July 2009 bombings in Jakarta.

That said however, a modification of the military’s basic doctrine of Total People’s Defense (sishanta) might also be needed to complement any educational and training efforts.\(^{18}\) One could argue that an archaic formula assuming the TNI to be underdeveloped to face an external attack, and therefore needs to ‘prepare’ the people for guerilla warfare, could hamper the dynamic and critical thinking necessary to

\(^{16}\) For a discussion of the Lebanon contingent, see Haseman and Lahica, The Next Step, 87-90.


\(^{18}\) For a discussion of TNI’s doctrine, see Sebastian, Realpolitik Ideology, 273-313.
tackle more complicated security challenges, especially in the realm of non-traditional security.

In the case of these missions, as it involves budgeting aspects—an increase in peacekeeping operations for example, would need extra cost—the Indonesian parliament cannot but be involved in the process. However, given the fact that many who sits in the DPR’s Commission I overseeing defense and foreign affairs are by nature politicians, they might not find it politically-expedient to go against the TNI’s institutional interest. The push from the President therefore remains a crucial part in implementing these policies. Not just in terms of pushing the military forward, but also because the President’s control over the majority of seats in the parliament might make it easier to pass through any controversial initiatives.

CIVILIAN DEFENSE COMMUNITY: THE ‘FORGOTTEN’ PILLAR OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

Now that we have addressed the fundamental long-term problems from the military side, we must move on to the civilian side of the equation. In this respect, efforts to address the intellectual challenge of reforming the military education system and altering its operational mission could not be sustained in the long-run without addressing the role of the political leadership, or more precisely, the legally constituted civilian authority. However, considering Indonesia’s history of turbulent civilian-military relationship, this challenge is perhaps the least clear cut. Therefore, a new initiative is needed beyond efforts to find a middle ground between the two parties based on legal stipulations.

A new balance should be made therefore, which not only consists of the political and military leaderships, but also civil society elements. This triangular balance would then create what scholars call a “concordance civilian-military relationships” where the government, officer corps, and civil society have a cooperative relationship stressing dialogue, accommodation, and shared values.19 Thus, the creation and strengthening of a civilian defense community—which at the very least consist of the media, NGOs, specialist think-tanks, and defense academics—is a crucial policy challenge as this community would not only inject more critical thinking into the defense policy formulation process, but they could also provide political legitimacy in conjunction with Indonesia’s democratic setting.

The fundamental problem here unfortunately is that there are only a handful of civilians, academics or activists, who are qualified and trained in advanced strategic and military studies or defense planning. This is even more the case with the bulk of Indonesia’s NGOs who has thus far been the tipping point in democratic or human rights movement. Ironically however, theoretically at least, the inclusion of various national and regional civil society organizations is a key prerequisite to strengthen the civilian defense community.20 Moreover, retired military officers with the sufficient intellectual capacity to jumpstart the formation of such a civilian defense community is scarce, especially when most of them are more involved in business and politics.

With these in mind, several policy options are proposed here. First, Indonesian civilian academics should be given scholarships to study at defense academies in the United States, Europe, and Australia, in order to create a new generation of civilians with expertise in defense studies. Such civilian defense community could provide an alternative, outside-of-the-box thinking and consequently, would serve to further improved public debate and inform the policymaking community on defense and security issues. More importantly, they could also act as a checks-and-balances mechanism among key actors in the defense sector while facilitating communication between them.21

Second, the government should also re-educate the public regarding defense affairs so that NGOs, and to some extent, the public at large, could move away from their indiscriminate anti-military syn-

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drome. This could be done through various public events, ranging from seminars to training to trips to military facilities. This long-term policy initiative might see more civilians, and even perhaps the “cream of the nation” (those among the best) to be interested in defense affairs, or even enlisting themselves. More importantly, archaic practices of media supervision and surveillance of critical NGOs should be abandoned. This would effectively opened up the political space needed for any kind of civilian defense community to expand and flourish as it serves its key function to inform the public on defense and security issues. The current discussion to pass a State Secrecy Bill that would classify almost all aspects of military life as state secrets would certainly kill off our nascent civilian defense community.

Once again, the role of the President is irreplaceable here. Not only would the President have the absolute authority over the TNI and could further control the parliament—at least enough to pass new funding for educational policies—but the President would also be in a unique position to oversee the entire government agencies and ministries that could and should be involved in such expansion of the civilian defense community. This could include the Departments of Education, Home Affairs, Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Finance. Put it differently, not only is the President required to have “the big picture” mindset, but he is also in a place to draw that picture. Based on our political system the President holds the authority to appoint ministers and direct policies—making these people accountable to him alone and not to the Parliament.

CONCLUSION

Despite commendable efforts to bring the military out of politics and business activities, without a long term strategy to revamp military education and strengthen a civilian defense community, the history of military interventions and conflicting civil-military relations will always repeat itself in the future. As one scholar has argued, “Generals who speak English, communicate regularly with international col-leagues, read up-to-date contributions on defence studies, and have travelled widely are more likely to be interested in reforms than those who are inward-looking and isolated from international affairs.”

Moreover, to solve our problem of repositioning the military in a new democratic setting, the role of the civilian defense community is also of crucial significance. These two variables—military education reform and civilian defense community—however are necessary conditions to create a future strategic and professional military, but they are by in itself are insufficient. In this respect, our preceding analysis has shown that the role of the President is indispensable should we want to move the process forward. Therefore, given the fact that President Yudhoyono was recently elected once again with an overwhelming mandate, one would be able to fully fathom therefore should he fail to at least consider exploring the policies proposed in this article.


24 Mietzner, The Politics of Military Reform, 69