

Civil-Military Relations Dynamics in Indonesia: An Analysis of Integration Strategy and Accountability in Defense Governance

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Abstract : Twenty-first century security threats are increasingly hybrid and multidimensional, demanding defense governance that no longer rests solely on modernization of weapon systems, but on synergy between strategic leadership and accountable civil-military relations. Following the 1998 Reformasi, Indonesia laid the normative foundation for objective civilian control through Law No. 3/2002 and Law No. 34/2004; nevertheless, consolidation remains overshadowed by structural rigidities and sociocultural residues from the New Order. This article analyzes the urgency of synergy between strategic leadership and defense governance in constructing an ideal civil-military relations model in Indonesia, employing a narrative literature review that thematically curates and synthesizes literature by interrelated sub-topics. Findings indicate that defense governance effectiveness remains constrained by bureaucratic fragmentation, inter-service sectoral ego, and residual militaristic autonomy that impede substantive civilian control, even where the regulatory framework is adequate. As a resolution, the article recommends transitioning from coercive control toward collaborative security governance, with integration of joint civil-military leadership education at institutions such as Lemhannas and the Indonesian Defense University as a strategic instrument to build shared strategic language and cross-sectoral trust. The findings affirm that accountable civilian supremacy and military professionalism are absolute prerequisites for Indonesia's national defense resilience.

Keywords : Strategic Leadership; Defense Governance; Civil-Military Relations; Accountability; Security Sector Reform

Abstrak : Ancaman keamanan abad ke-21 semakin bersifat hibrida dan multidimensi, sehingga menuntut tata kelola pertahanan yang tidak lagi hanya bergantung pada modernisasi sistem persenjataan, melainkan pada sinergi antara kepemimpinan strategis dan hubungan sipil-militer yang akuntabel. Pasca Reformasi 1998, Indonesia telah meletakkan landasan normatif bagi pengendalian sipil yang objektif melalui Undang-Undang Nomor 3 Tahun 2002 dan Undang-Undang Nomor 34 Tahun 2004; namun demikian, konsolidasi tersebut masih terhambat oleh kekakuan struktural dan sisa-sisa sosiobudaya dari era Orde Baru. Artikel ini menganalisis urgensi sinergi antara kepemimpinan strategis dan tata kelola pertahanan dalam membangun model hubungan sipil-militer yang ideal di Indonesia, dengan menggunakan tinjauan pustaka naratif yang secara tematis mengkurasi dan mensintesis literatur berdasarkan subtopik yang saling terkait. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas tata kelola pertahanan masih dibatasi oleh fragmentasi birokrasi, ego sektoral antarpangkal, dan sisa-sisa otonomi militeristik yang menghambat kontrol sipil yang substantif, bahkan di mana kerangka regulasi sudah memadai. Sebagai rekomendasi, artikel ini mengusulkan peralihan dari kontrol koersif menuju tata kelola keamanan kolaboratif, dengan mengintegrasikan pendidikan kepemimpinan sipil-militer bersama di lembaga-lembaga seperti Lemhannas dan Universitas Pertahanan Indonesia sebagai instrumen strategis untuk membangun bahasa strategis bersama dan kepercayaan lintas sektor. Temuan-temuan tersebut

menegaskan bahwa supremasi sipil yang akuntabel dan profesionalisme militer merupakan prasyarat mutlak bagi ketahanan pertahanan nasional Indonesia.

Kata Kunci : Kepemimpinan Strategis; Adaptasi Strategi Pertahanan; Ancaman Multidimensi; Kapabilitas Dinamis; Keamanan Nasional

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic state situated at the strategic pivot of the Indo-Pacific, persistently faces escalating and multidimensional shifts in the security threat paradigm (Laksmiana, 2019). The 21st-century strategic landscape is no longer dominated exclusively by conventional military threats; it has transformed into a spectrum of hybrid threats, cyber interventions, and gray-zone tensions that demand a comprehensive recalibration of defense architecture (Arif et al., 2024; Laksmiana, 2017). This fundamental shift implies that force posture and the quantity of primary weapon systems (*alutsista*) are no longer adequate to guarantee sovereignty without being supported by robust institutional agility (Wangge, 2017). Modern defense systems require a holistic approach that integrates all elements of national power, in which military operational readiness is intertwined with civilian resilience in responding to global turbulence. Accordingly, Indonesia's defense transformation is not merely a modernization of military hardware, but a fundamental restructuring that demands adaptive, transparent, and integrated state governance (Mukherjee & Pion-Berlin, 2022).

In confronting the high complexity of this threat spectrum, the determination of strategic leadership in the defense and security sector constitutes a crucial institutional prerequisite. Strategic leadership within the defense governance ecosystem operates beyond managerial and tactical-operational competencies; it is rooted in the visionary capacity to synchronize the state's political objectives with long-term defense posture (Kuehn & Lorenz, 2011). Leadership at the strategic level plays a pivotal role in dismantling bureaucratic obstacles and sectoral silos that can degrade the effectiveness of civil-military relations in developing democracies (Nalle, 2026). Defense authority leaders are required to possess cognitive agility in orchestrating national resources, upholding managerial accountability, and stimulating a culture of innovation grounded in good governance principles (Buzan, 2003; P. Feaver & Desch, 2000). Without orchestration by transformative-visioned leadership, institutional strengthening risks structural stagnation; therefore, synergy between civilian authority and military command is the fundamental foundation for realizing a resilient defense system.

In building a defense posture adaptive to the dynamics of global threats, the capacity of strategic leadership must be operationalized through an inclusive, transparent, and accountable system of defense governance. Defense governance refers to the high-level institutional framework that regulates the mechanisms of security policy formulation, allocation of strategic resources, and implementation of democratic oversight (Dzhyhora et al., 2024). The implementation of good public governance principles within the security sector is an important instrument for preventing budgetary inefficiency and eliminating overlapping authorities that could degrade national defense capabilities (Mowery, 2012). Beyond mere administrative procedures, sound defense governance manifests a point of equilibrium between the need to preserve strategic secrecy and the imperative to fulfill public accountability within a democratic institutional climate (Rendon & Rendon, 2016). Institutionalizing processes such as weapon procurement and defense human resource management that are sterile from factional interests thus becomes a decisive pillar in sustaining sovereignty over the long term.

This contextualization of defense governance and strategic leadership becomes increasingly relevant when viewed historically through the evolutionary trajectory of civil-military relations in Indonesia. The political system's transformation from the centralistic New Order regime toward the Reformasi era in 1998 triggered a fundamental restructuring, marked by the abolition of the ABRI's Dwifungsi (dual-function) doctrine and the return of the military to a professional domain under the supremacy of civilian politics (Laksmiana, 2019). Although the contemporary legislative framework has laid a normative foundation for objective civilian control, the consolidation of civil-military relations in Indonesia in practice still confronts structural rigidities and residues of past patronage (Mietzner, 2011). This transitional dynamic frequently produces "grey areas" in the hierarchical and functional relationship between the Ministry of Defense as the representative of civilian authority and the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) as the combatant instrument. Discourse on the model of civil-military relations in Indonesia therefore demands a comprehensive examination of the extent to which the firmness of strategic leadership is capable of synchronizing professional military doctrine with a democratic defense governance architecture (Acharya, 1992).

Although the national regulatory framework has comprehensively elaborated the mechanisms of defense governance, on-the-ground implementation frequently displays substantial disparities between strategic policy formulation at the executive level and its operational execution. This institutional gap is rooted in bureaucratic fragmentation and sectoral ego that still reside in various sub-systems of national security, where cross-institutional decision-making processes often run asymmetrically (Croissant et al., 2010). This functional desynchronization not only hinders the optimization of defense posture but also generates inefficiency in the allocation of material and human resources, which in turn degrades overall military operational readiness (Peets, 2024). The most formidable challenge in realizing an ideal defense governance in Indonesia therefore lies not in the limitations of normative doctrine, but in the weakness of civilian control's institutionalization, which has not yet fully penetrated a compartmentalized bureaucratic culture (Kurniawan, 2022). This structural condition necessitates strategic leadership interventions capable of dismantling those institutional silos in order to facilitate integration of a nationally cohesive defense policy (Mietzner, 2011).

To unpack the complexity of civil-military relations and identify defense governance solutions, this article grounds itself in the classical theoretical discourse elaborated by Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz, subsequently contextualized within the contemporary security landscape. The objective civilian control model advanced by Huntington emphasizes the importance of professional military autonomy in the tactical-operational domain running in parallel with absolute subordination to civilian authority in the strategic political domain (Brooks, 2020). On the other side, the Janowitzian paradigm offers a more integrative sociological perspective in which the military is conceptualized as an institution that must remain aligned with the sociocultural values of democratic civil society to prevent institutional isolation (P. D. Feaver, 1996; Janowitz, 1964). Contemporary literature affirms that combining the strengthening of military professionalism with the convergence of democratic accountability values is a crucial instrument for designing functional defense governance (Holen, 2026). In the Indonesian context, this theoretical debate provides a comprehensive analytical framework for evaluating the extent to which synergy between civilian leadership and soldier professionalism can accelerate the maturation of civil-military relations amid the demands of military modernization (Chandra & Kammen, 2002).

Departing from the geopolitical background and theoretical discourse outlined above, this article is composed with the principal aim of undertaking an in-depth literature analysis of the

urgency of synergy between strategic leadership and defense governance in constructing an ideal model of civil-military relations in Indonesia. Specifically, this article seeks to unpack how leadership at the strategic authority level can be functionalized as a main catalyst for bridging bureaucratic gaps while also strengthening a security governance architecture grounded in the principles of democracy and public accountability (Croissant et al., 2010). By tracing various prior empirical and conceptual studies, this writing projects a synthesis that positions military professionalism and civilian control not as two mutually negating entities, but as fundamental elements that complement one another in confronting the complexity of asymmetric threats (J. Liu, 2025). The results of this analysis are expected to contribute in a twofold manner: theoretically enriching the epistemology of defense studies concerning civil-military relations models in transitional democracies, and practically providing an argumentative basis for policymakers in the Ministry of Defense and TNI Headquarters to eliminate sectoral ego and strengthen the institutional cohesion of transparent and accountable governance.

RESEARCH METHOD

To achieve the analytical objectives above, this study applies a narrative literature review approach as its principal methodological instrument for dissecting the phenomena of civil-military relations institutionalization and defense governance. The literature approach in this article is implemented narratively and thematically, whereby the tracing and elaboration of references are arranged to flow dynamically in alignment with the framework of principal sub-topics that have been established, namely the paradigm of strategic leadership, the architecture and bureaucratic obstacles of defense governance, the construction and sociocultural residues of civil-military relations, and integration strategy through joint education.

Reference selection is carefully curated by prioritizing scholarly articles from reputable international journals in the fields of security studies, strategic leadership, and defense governance. This aims to ensure that every argument developed on each discussion topic has a strong epistemological foundation, tested empirical validity, and high relevance to contemporary security and governance constellations. The literature review process focuses on efforts to elaborate, compare, and synthesize various discourses from prior studies in order to dissect the obstacles to implementing strategic leadership in democracies undergoing consolidation. Through this theme-based literature approach, this study seeks to construct a solid, argumentative, and scientifically defensible conceptual understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion in this section is arranged into four logically flowing sub-topics, namely the paradigm of strategic leadership in the security sector, the architecture and bureaucratic obstacles of defense governance, the construction and sociocultural residues of civil-military relations, and integration strategy through joint education.

a. The Paradigm of Strategic Leadership in the Security Sector

Discourse on strategic leadership within contemporary security literature occupies a central position as the principal determinant of the success of a nation's defense governance. In contrast to the conventional managerial paradigm, strategic leadership in the defense sector is defined as the high-level cognitive and visionary capacity that functions to align instruments of national power with the state's essential political objectives amid a global environment saturated with uncertainty (Selivanovskikh et al., 2025). Leaders at this level are required not only to respond reactively to security threats, but also to project the future defense architecture through the orchestration of

strategic resources, defense diplomacy, and institutional innovation. Recent literature affirms that strategic leadership essentially operates at the macro level, where the complexity and ambiguity of policy become a daily constellation that must be managed, thereby requiring intellectual agility that transcends the rigidity of traditional military doctrine (Posen, 2016). Accordingly, the fundamental essence of strategic leadership lies in the capacity to build institutional cohesion and formulate an adaptive and sustainable security blueprint.

A comprehensive understanding of strategic leadership requires a clear demarcation from tactical-operational models that focus on short-term mission execution (Grier, 2012). Strategic leadership operates at the intersection of civilian political authority and military hierarchy in order to create structural stability, while simultaneously preventing the distortion of macro policy into merely technical matters through the phenomenon of "tacticalization of strategy" (Brooks, 2020; Graham, 2012). The essential capabilities that distinguish it are mastery of future vision and cognitive flexibility (Hoffman, 2025). Amid contemporary security volatility, anticipatory vision guides the formulation of long-term posture, while cognitive flexibility enables rapid recalibration of military doctrine in response to hybrid threats innovatively, without losing institutional cohesion and free from historical confirmation biases of the past.

Mastery of strategic vision and cognitive capacity must ultimately be operationalized through the leader's dexterity in managing organizational change management on a massive scale (Ferede et al., 2024). Military institutions and defense ministries in various countries are sociologically often characterized as bureaucratic entities with high hierarchical rigidity and cultural inertia that tend to be resistant to structural transformation (Farrell, 2005). Strategic leadership therefore functions as a catalytic agent tasked with dismantling that bureaucratic stagnation by facilitating cross-sectoral dialogue between civilian technocrats and military officers. Leaders at this level must possess the competence of strategic communication to articulate the urgency of institutional rationalization to all layers of command, in order to build solid internal consensus (Lewńska, 2016). Success in leading such defense governance change is not merely measured through the enactment of new regulations or restructuring of organizational charts, but by the extent to which values of adaptability, transparency, and innovation are permanently internalized as a deeply rooted institutional culture.

The most fundamental impact of implementing strategic leadership is not only reflected in the formulation of macro policy, but also manifests in the transformation of organizational culture within the defense institution itself. Military culture has traditionally placed heavy emphasis on strict hierarchy, absolute command obedience, and rigid procedural standardization — characteristics crucial for maintaining discipline on the battlefield (Wlnslow, 1998). However, in a contemporary security landscape marked by threat asymmetry, that cultural rigidity risks degrading into a bureaucratic obstacle if it is not balanced with room for critical thinking and tactical innovation. Herein lies the crucial role of strategic leadership in re-engineering organizational culture, transforming it from an entity oriented solely to instructional compliance into an agile and adaptive learning institution. Strategic leaders at the national level are required to be capable of internalizing a collective value system that permits measured initiatives to emerge from lower layers of command (Carter & Greer, 2013). This cultural transformation becomes the primary foundation for creating a shared frequency and language between civilian and military entities, so that functional collaboration can be built upon a foundation of mutual trust.

Furthermore, the institutionalization of progressive organizational culture by strategic leadership authority has a strong linear correlation with improving the quality of civil-military relations and defense governance comprehensively. When the values of transparency,

accountability, and openness to constructive criticism have been encoded into institutional identity, structural friction that frequently occurs between civilian policy formulators at the Ministry of Defense and combatant operators at Military Headquarters can be significantly reduced. Effective strategic leaders utilize this instrument of organizational culture to persuade the entire military corps that submission to the supremacy of objective civilian control is not a form of weakening or degradation of soldier professionalism, but an absolute institutional prerequisite for achieving defense effectiveness in a mature democratic state (Terriff, 2006). Synergy of leadership thus no longer halts as political rhetoric at the elite level, but is manifested in a solid, cohesive operational system that persistently upholds the principles of good defense governance.

b. Architecture and Bureaucratic Obstacles of Defense Governance

The architecture of Indonesia's defense governance in the modern era cannot be disentangled from the historical momentum of the 1998 Reformasi, which triggered a fundamental restructuring of national security posture and doctrine. The deconstruction of the militaristic supremacy of the New Order, previously institutionalized through the ABRI's Dwifungsi doctrine, demanded the formulation of a new regulatory framework grounded in the principles of democracy and civilian control (Laksmiana, 2019). The initial foundation of this modern governance was manifested through the enactment of Law No. 3 of 2002 on State Defense, which reconstructed the institutional hierarchy by placing the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) under the political authority of the civilian government through the Ministry of Defense. This regulation explicitly demarcates a precise division of authority: the Ministry of Defense holds the exclusive mandate to formulate macro policy, defense strategy, and budgetary governance, while TNI Headquarters is focused purely on the functions of execution and military operational readiness (Mietzner, 2011). This functional separation was designed as an essential mechanism of power limitation to prevent the centralization of military strength, while simultaneously ensuring that all national defense instruments are orchestrated accountably and in alignment with the direction of foreign and national security policy.

Complementing the defense architecture, Law No. 34/2004 on the TNI expressly prohibits the military from engaging in practical politics and business in order to sever chains of past patronage, restoring it as a professional instrument of state defense (Sebastian & Gindarsah, 2013). Institutional reality, however, is often not linear with that normative framework due to bureaucratic rigidity and residues of military autonomy (Sebastian & Arifianto, 2020), so that harmony between regulation and execution depends heavily on the effectiveness of strategic leadership. On the other hand, the pillars of modern defense governance categorically demand accountability of budgeting and weapon procurement in order to eliminate rent-seeking practices that frequently shelter behind the justification of state secrecy (Demir, 2005). The realization of good defense governance in Indonesia requires synchronization of long-term posture planning with transparent fiscal space, in which military modernization must be dictated by objective threat analysis and closely supervised by parliament to guarantee real effectiveness of operational capabilities.

Beyond material and budgetary dimensions, another substantive aspect of defense governance that frequently encounters structural obstacles is human resource management, both at the layer of civilian technocrats and military combatants. Institutional reform inherently demands a shift from a patronage system inherited from the past toward a meritocratic system institutionalized in the processes of education, placement, and promotion of senior military officers (Mamshae, 2025). Within the Ministry of Defense structure, functional integration between civilian apparatus with expertise in macro security policy and military officers who master tactical

doctrine is an essential institutional prerequisite. However, empirical reality in many transitional democracies shows that civilian authority often remains marginalized due to the domination of the hierarchical culture of assigned military personnel, thus impeding the creation of discursive equality in policy formulation (P. D. Feaver, 1996). Strengthening the intellectual capacity of civilian defense human resources through sustained strategic education therefore becomes an important catalyst, so that civilian authority possesses sufficient scientific legitimacy in comprehensively controlling the direction of defense governance policy.

Efforts to realize the principles of good public governance in the defense sector are in reality consistently obstructed by bureaucratic intricacies rooted in the overlapping functional authorities between security institutions. Although the Ministry of Defense is jurisdictionally the civilian representative that holds the highest authority in formulating defense posture, its execution is frequently degraded by the strong culture of operational autonomy within the headquarters of the military institution itself (J. Liu, 2025). This bureaucratic complexity creates informational asymmetry between policy formulators and implementers. The cultural obstacle of residual military autonomy is further amplified by the structural design of a bureaucracy that still nurtures inter-service sectoral ego, thus triggering obstacles in policy execution. The polarization of soldiers' sociological loyalty, which is more absolutely directed toward the corps and its command commander than toward the civilian ministry, creates sharp dissonance in defense governance (Cunha et al., 2026). Owing to this hierarchical condition, the Ministry of Defense frequently confronts a deficit of coercive authority to ensure that macro strategic posture planning and weapon procurement can be implemented without distortion from military headquarters (Croissant et al., 2011). Furthermore, institutional inertia — the instinctive tendency of an organization to preserve the status quo in order to protect past sectoral privileges — transforms into a cultural obstacle that systematically sidelines the essence of managerial transparency values (Mietzner, 2011). Failure of leadership to unravel this structural gap ultimately not only triggers budget overlaps, but also systematically paralyzes the orchestration of solid national power, degrades the state's strategic deterrence at the regional level, and impedes the achievement of long-term modernization targets in defense architecture.

Simultaneously, the intricacies of bureaucratic restructuring are confronted with the existential dilemma of the urgency to accelerate the modernization of military capabilities amid the increasingly unpredictable geopolitical turbulence of the Indo-Pacific region. The demand to respond to escalating threat dynamics, such as instability in the South China Sea region and the proliferation of asymmetric threats, compels the defense apparatus to act exponentially, which ironically is often used as political rationalization to take shortcuts around democratic oversight mechanisms deemed sluggish (Laksmiana, 2019). This structural dilemma places Indonesia's security architecture at a fragile equilibrium point between the imperative of catching up on weapon system technology and the necessity of preserving the integrity of defense governance (Laksmiana, 2021). Contemporary defense literature discourse indicates that the massive acquisition of military technology, without being balanced by the maturity of fiscal and operational oversight systems, will only reproduce an illusion of force posture vulnerable to inefficiency (Croissant et al., 2010). Synergy of leadership at the macro level therefore becomes the essential solution, whereby defense authority leaders must be able to institutionalize the paradigm that democratic accountability is not the antithesis of the pace of modernization, but the rational foundation that guarantees the long-term durability of state sovereignty.

c. Construction and Sociocultural Residues of Civil-Military Relations

Discourse on security governance in countries undergoing democratic consolidation cannot be separated from theoretical debate on the most relevant civil-military relations (CMR) model to implement. Within classical defense governance literature, the most dominant analytical framework was proposed by Samuel Huntington through the concept of objective civilian control, which advocates a clear operational separation between political and military authorities in order to maximize military professionalism (Croissant & Kuehn, 2024). This objective control demands that the military submit absolutely to civilian supremacy in matters of the state's strategic policy, while the military is granted full autonomy in the domain of operational command and tactics (Snyder, 1984). As an antithesis, the subjective civilian control model seeks to integrate the military institution directly into the dominant political structure — a model historically practiced extensively in Indonesia through sociopolitical engineering during the New Order government (Laksmmana, 2019). The transition from a centralized subjective control system toward the ideal of institutionalizing objective control in the post-Reformasi era is a highly complex process, given the characteristics of Indonesian politics that remain colored by intersections between networks of retired military officers and civilian power elite circles (Mietzner, 2011). Contemporary literature evaluation therefore shows that the implementation of civilian control theory in Indonesia cannot be adopted wholesale, but requires structural adjustments that take into account these historical realities.

In the effort to reconstruct the civil-military relations model in Indonesia, the relational dynamics between the Ministry of Defense as the representative of civilian authority and TNI Headquarters as the combatant entity become the crucial epicenter of analysis. Constitutionally, the ministry is mandated as the sole formulator of strategic policy and administrator of the budget in order to translate the president's political vision, while tactical operations are entirely entrusted to the authority of military headquarters (Motseki *et al.*, 2020). However, literature reviews persistently show that this policy deliberation process is frequently colored by functional asymmetry and bureaucratic resistance due to the unfinished demarcation between the domain of strategic policy and tactical decisions (Acharya, 1992), which empirically is exacerbated by the phenomenon of institutional bypass in which military elites frequently retain direct political access to the presidency (Arif *et al.*, 2024). This practice of informal command dualism inherently degrades the oversight capacity of the Ministry of Defense, reduces the role of civilian technocrats to that of subordinate administrators, and indicates that civilian supremacy remains trapped in elite compromise (Laksmmana, 2019). This fragile condition not only weakens the institutional dignity of the civilian side in orchestrating defense, but also potentially reopens gaps for military intervention into the vortex of practical politics. To bridge this functional friction, a paradigm of strategic leadership is needed that not only rests on legal-formal hierarchy, but focuses on building deliberative capacity and mutual trust through sustained cross-sectoral dialogue forums, so that national security governance can transform organically into a whole, cohesive, and integrative framework (Laksmmana, 2011).

The logical consequence of authority fragmentation in policy formulation is the emergence of a defense posture that frequently runs asymmetrically and out of sync with threat projections and the state's fiscal capabilities. When the military institution possesses excessively wide discretion in dictating the direction of hardware modernization without being balanced by strict civilian oversight, defense policy tends to be reduced to an aggregation of sectoral interests of each service, rather than representing a holistic national security vision (Raska & Bitzinger, 2023). Confronting such structural dysfunction, strategic leadership plays a crucial role in enforcing institutional discipline and ensuring that military operationalization remains within the corridor of state policy

(Griffin, 2017). This transformation demands the presence of civilian leaders who not only hold political legitimacy but are also equipped with deep defense literacy expertise in order to build rational authority before the corps of professional officers (P. Feaver & Desch, 2000). Harmony in modern civil-military relations is therefore essentially not about unilateral subjugation of the armed institution, but the creation of a deliberative space where civilian strategic direction converges perfectly with military tactical expertise (Croissant *et al.*, 2011).

A crucial dimension in the deconstruction of civil-military relations in Indonesia demands the reconceptualization of military professionalism, which is now measured not merely by tactical proficiency, but by the extent to which the principle of democratic subordination is internalized in order to preserve cohesion and core competence (Mietzner, 2011). Although the reduction of the military's political role has strengthened the resilience of democracy, this consolidation is still shadowed by tug-of-war over the involvement of the armed institution in domestic security (Honna, 2013), thereby requiring reciprocal commitment from civilian leadership to guarantee transparency of the welfare and weapon-modernization budgets in order to prevent the military's financial autonomy. Furthermore, the institutionalization of professionalism supported by objective civilian control has been proven to enhance defense effectiveness comprehensively; with the military freed from political burdens, they can focus on operational readiness in responding to a multidimensional threat spectrum (Taş, 2024). This definitive division of labor facilitates strategic orchestration, in which civilian authority navigates geopolitical diplomacy and fiscal allocation, while the command chain executes operationalization sharply (Brooks, 2025), which ultimately affirms that consummate defense governance is not the manifestation of hegemony, but a solid collaboration between civilian strategic leadership and the professional dedication of soldiers.

Institutionalizing the synergy of civilian strategic leadership with defense governance in Indonesia empirically frequently collides with cultural obstacles that have taken deep root. The Indonesian military institution has a complex historical record as an extremely dominant political-security entity in the past — an epoch that sociologically bequeaths a cultural residue in the form of a persistent sense of institutional autonomy and superiority (Laksmiana, 2019). This sociocultural residue frequently manifests as latent resistance or psychological reluctance toward the oversight mechanism of civilian authority that has only recently been consolidated in the post-Reformasi era. Contemporary literature reviews reveal that some elements within the military command structure often still harbor skepticism, viewing the supremacy and managerial intervention by civilian technocrats in the Ministry of Defense as amateur interference that risks degrading operational readiness and endangering national security (Mietzner, 2011). This asymmetric perception directly creates silos of isolation, reduces mutual trust, and impedes the creation of egalitarian cross-sectoral collaboration between civilian authority stakeholders and professional military officers.

In addition to bureaucratic rigidity, the effectiveness of governance is also significantly reduced by communication asymmetry and epistemological differences in perceiving security risks, where the military is doctrinally oriented toward worst-case scenario readiness, while civilian authority uses political, diplomatic, and macroeconomic calculations (Crane, 2014). This gap of perception frequently triggers strategic impasses and cross-entity suspicion — such as accusations of civilian bureaucratic sluggishness versus the military's tendency to exaggerate threats (threat inflation) — culminating in policy siloization as well as destructive information asymmetry under the guise of tactical secrecy (Brooks, 2025). Resolution of this dissonance therefore demands the presence of strategic leadership capable of formulating a universal defense language, so that the understanding of national security between civilian and military entities can be cohesively recalibrated in order to restore the dignity of governance that fully submits to the principles of

civilian supremacy and public accountability. As an analytical comparison instrument, the literature review of the trajectory of security sector reform in various developing democracies shows that failure to manage these structural and cultural obstacles consistently leads to aggregate stagnation of defense architecture. Transitional dynamics in Southeast Asia as well as Latin America empirically display an identical pattern of institutional vulnerability, in which conservative military factions frequently exploit domestic political instability or civilian bureaucratic incompetence to gradually reclaim their autonomy concessions (Heiduk, 2011). The absence of strategic leadership possessing the resilience to dismantle those institutional privileges ultimately produces a defense governance system trapped in a paradox: possessing a democratic regulatory apparatus formally on paper, yet still operating using the logic of covert militaristic autonomy in the field (Croissant & Kuehn, 2024).

This constellation of interlocking obstacles deductively confirms that institutional regulatory engineering alone does not have sufficient significance if it is not supported by radical cultural transformation from within the institution itself. The synergy of strategic leadership must be positioned as the icebreaker instrument to deconstruct the walls of isolation that psychologically have long separated the rationality of civilian technocrats from the operational pragmatism of soldiers (P. Feaver & Desch, 2000). Defense authorities at the executive level are required not to react to bureaucratic resistance, but must proactively redesign the curriculum and inter-institutional interaction mechanisms in order to cultivate collective awareness that the escalation of asymmetric threats today can no longer be eliminated unilaterally by combatant forces. Institutional failure to neutralize residual cultural autonomy and sectoral ego not only risks exposing the state budget to large-scale procurement inefficiency, but will also place the national security posture in a highly vulnerable position (Heiduk, 2011). Therefore, the melting of functional silos between civilian authority and military command is the starting point that must be resolved before formulating a more advanced model of relational integration in the future.

d. Integration Strategy Through Joint Education

Responding to the various structural obstacles and cultural resistances outlined above, the urgency of formulating a solid integration framework between strategic leadership and defense governance becomes an institutional imperative. Transformation toward a synergistic and accountable civil-military relations (CMR) model in Indonesia demands a fundamental paradigm shift, namely from a coercive civilian control approach toward the concept of collaborative security governance. Within the framework of this integration model, civilian strategic leadership is no longer positioned solely as an external overseer searching for administrative faults, but acts as a proactive facilitator that orchestrates all military capacities into the state's policy architecture comprehensively. This integration requires the institutionalization of a system in which the process of formulating macro security policy within the Ministry of Defense environment is undertaken deliberatively, involving the expertise of professional military officers inclusively without sacrificing the principle of democratic subordination. Through this functional synchronization, the orchestration of national power can be executed in a far more cohesive manner, in which political legitimacy and fiscal rationality managed by civilian technocrats are interwoven with the precision of operational command carried out by military headquarters (Croissant & Kuehn, 2024).

The implementation of this collaborative governance model must in practice be consolidated through a comprehensive institutionalization process, both at the level of architectural regulation and at the level of operational doctrine. This institutionalization demands the formation of formal and informal communication mechanisms of a permanent nature between ministerial authority and combatant institutions, in order to ensure that no strategic policy is formulated in a vacuum or

alienated from the tactical reality in the field. Furthermore, the institutionalization of this synergy must be able to reconstruct the internal perception of the military corps toward the urgency and meaning of public accountability itself. Instead of viewing budget transparency and democratic oversight mechanisms as bureaucratic obstacles that slow down weapon modernization, an ideal integration system will position that accountability as a vital instrument that in fact strengthens the legitimacy and sociopolitical support of society toward the defense institution (P. Feaver & Desch, 2000). When strategic leadership succeeds in internalizing these clean governance values into military culture, civil-military relations are no longer construed as an arena of power-sharing contestation, but manifest as an ecosystem of solid strategic partnership to secure state sovereignty.

A crucial long-term integration strategy for realizing collaborative defense governance is the optimization of joint civil-military leadership education. Curriculum segregation in the past was proven to trigger cultural friction and differences in perception between the two entities. Therefore, the functionalization of integrated discursive spaces such as Lemhannas and the Indonesian Defense University becomes essential for melting these sociological silos. This pedagogical process does not merely transfer knowledge, but constructs a universal strategic language comprehensible cross-sectorally. Through this cohesive education, mutual trust will grow organically, rendering policy collaboration a natural synergy rather than a hierarchical imposition. The projection toward a future defense governance architecture demands the implementation of a civil-military relations model that possesses a high level of resilience in responding to the volatility of 21st-century hybrid threats (Heiduk, 2011), in which the synergy between civilian strategic vision and military operational expertise transforms into an absolute prerequisite for the state's survival.

In alignment with the strengthening of joint education, civilian authority is required to provide a transparent framework of technology procurement and diplomacy, while the military institution is granted room for tactical innovation under the corridor of measurable oversight (Croissant & Kuehn, 2024), in order to produce deterrent power that positions Indonesia as a security entity of global standard. However, the implementation of this collaborative integration requires revitalization of the oversight mechanism from mere procedural compliance audits into an instrument for evaluating strategic effectiveness through the institutionalization of capability-based planning dictated by objective threat analysis, not by the aggregation of sectoral ego. Synergy of leadership at this point plays a crucial role in reconstructing the internal military perception — positioning budget transparency and parliamentary oversight as instruments of political legitimacy as well as guarantors of continuity of fiscal support, which ultimately ensures that the pace of military modernization runs harmoniously with the maturity of democracy in order to minimize the risk of authoritarian regression (Croissant & Kuehn, 2024).

As a conclusion to this entire framework of structural and cultural integration, the projection of an accomplished civil-military relations model for Indonesia in the future is an ecosystem of defense governance that stably rests upon the point of equilibrium between the supremacy of civilian authority and the autonomy of military professionalism (Travis, 2019). Synergy of strategic leadership is no longer reduced in meaning to a rigid division of jurisdictional authority on paper, but manifests as the fusion of technocratic capacity and combat expertise exclusively dedicated to the achievement of the national interest. When civilian leadership is able to prove its reliability in navigating geopolitical turbulence through measured macro policy, and simultaneously the military voluntarily dedicates its loyalty purely as a guardian of sovereignty without practical political tendencies, the national security architecture will attain a high level of resilience (Garcia, 2014). Ultimately, the success of this defense governance transformation will

place Indonesia in a decisive bargaining position in the Indo-Pacific region, represented by a defense system that is not only robust materially and in kinetic capability, but also recognized for its democratic accountability and integrity by the global community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the comprehensive literature analysis explored in this article, a fundamental conclusion can be drawn that efforts to realize a resilient state defense posture amid the escalation of asymmetric threats in the 21st century can no longer rest exclusively on the rationalization of military hardware modernization. Indonesia's defense transformation in the post-Reformasi era has indeed succeeded in laying a robust normative-juridical foundation through the constitutional demarcation of authorities between civilian authority at the Ministry of Defense and combatant entities at TNI Headquarters. Nonetheless, empirical review persistently shows that the regulatory framework is insufficient without being animated by the institutionalization of transparent, integrative, and accountable defense governance. The presence and determination of strategic leadership therefore hold a highly important role as the instrument of institutional engineering tasked with manifesting integration between the political vision of democratic security and the operationalization of professional military doctrine.

Critical examination in this study specifically finds that the process of deconstruction and transition toward an ideal civil-military relations model in Indonesia is still persistently colored by various residual obstacles, both of a structural and cultural dimension. The shadow of militaristic autonomy from the past frequently manifests in the form of strategic informational asymmetry, the flourishing of sectoral ego in each service branch of the armed forces, and precedents of institutional shortcuts that latently distort the oversight capacity of civilian authority. On the opposite pole, civilian leadership is frequently confronted with a deficit of defense expertise that directly implicates the failure of strategic communication and the polarization of perception in gauging the urgency of security modernization. This institutional dysfunction systematically paralyzes the objectivity of weapon budgeting, triggers defense bureaucracy inefficiency, and widens the sociological segregation between technocratic policy formulators and field commanders.

To break through the deeply rooted institutional impasse, this article's literature synthesis offers a conceptual resolution through the transition toward the application of an integrative and collaborative security governance model. This updated model projects a defense ecosystem in which civilian strategic leadership no longer positions the armed institution as merely a subordinate instrument that must be regulated coercively, but embraces it as an egalitarian strategic partner whose tactical expertise is highly relied upon in the cycle of macro security policy formulation. The most rational step to realize this functional convergence is through the intensification and revitalization of joint leadership education institutions that deliberately fuse civilian and military entities into a single space of intellectual discourse (H. Liu, 1998; Suchman, 2023). The institutionalization of such a pedagogical interaction space has been proven capable of eliminating historical prejudice, reconstructing a national strategic language that can be understood cross-sectorally, and cultivating social capital in the form of mutual trust that is the determinant of the standing of civilian supremacy.

Based on these findings, this article recommends three mutually complementary policy steps. First, permanent integration of civil-military leadership curricula at strategic education institutions such as Lemhannas and the Indonesian Defense University needs to be strengthened as a sustained arena for shaping strategic language and cross-sectoral trust, rather than merely an incidental program. Second, the Ministry of Defense needs to institutionalize a permanent

mechanism for policy communication and deliberation with TNI Headquarters, in order to close the gap of institutional bypass and ensure that the formulation of strategic policy is always aligned with operational reality in the field. Third, the revitalization of the oversight mechanism for budgets and weapon procurement needs to be directed from mere procedural compliance audits toward the evaluation of strategic effectiveness based on capability-based planning, so that public accountability can run in alignment with the needs of defense modernization. The attainment of a precise equilibrium between accountable civilian supremacy and military professionalism is an absolute prerequisite for the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. Visionary and transformative synergy of leadership will not only eliminate bureaucratic stagnation, but also manifest a national defense posture that is adaptive, deterrent, and possesses strong sociopolitical legitimacy, so that Indonesia is capable of navigating the geopolitical turbulence in the Indo-Pacific region without reducing the integrity of its democratic values.

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