



Indonesia's Policy Projection on Regional Security After The Formation of The National Defense Council

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Abstract. This study aims to project Indonesia's defense policy in response to security dynamics, especially in the Southeast Asia Region after President Prabowo Subianto formed the National Defense Council. The Study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive research type to describe the projection of Indonesia's defense policy in the region in responding to current security threats. Even though Indonesia is not directly involved in some cases, neighboring countries undoubtedly always take Indonesia's response into account due to its significant leadership role in the region. The results of this study describe the formation of a national defense council theoretically using the governmental politics model approach, which should be able to integrate foreign policy and defense policy in responding to security dynamics. The existence of the National Defense Council is expected to improve the relevance of Indonesia's defense policy, where, with its leadership in the region, Indonesia's foreign policies will always receive attention, especially on several issues, such as defense and regional security. However, it took more than two decades to realize this; these two decades of regional security have illustrated how necessary it is to provide comprehensive considerations when formulating policies to determine strategic responses in the field of national defense. Ultimately, this research answers a question about the potential for integration between Indonesia's foreign policy and defense policy. The impact of this research is to eliminate the gray area that often occurs when making foreign policy decisions and defense policies. Efforts to limit the gray area in the decision-making process will make the resulting policy more capable of providing strategic impact because it is compiled on comprehensive and adaptive rationality.

Keywords: Foreign policy, defense policy, regional security, National Defense Council, Prabowo Subianto.

1 Introduction

In addressing strategic issues, there is a need for synergy between policymakers in the foreign policy and defense policy sectors. This collaboration can pave the way for a more comprehensive and relevant foreign policy outlook for Indonesia. Systemic neglect can lead to what is conceptually referred to as a gray area. This occurs when the government has yet to establish a policy, such as a regulation, that provides a

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government has yet to establish a policy, such as a regulation, that provides a framework for integrating these two policies at the formulation and implementation stages [1]. Indonesia still has many obstacles to expanding its foreign policy, especially regarding external actor-related disputes such as the South China Sea or other issues escalated in Southeast Asia. The main potential threats facing ASEAN include infiltration by hostile foreign entities, disputes both within and between states, radical religious movements, human trafficking, drug and narcotics smuggling, and even cybercrimes [2]. The intentions of each actor involved do not show a cooperative or accommodative. Suppose the countries involved do not take this kind of condition seriously. ASEAN's role as a regional organization also appears powerless due to the thick institutional and political obstacles in this matter. One of these obstacles is governmental-politics, which makes policy integration, including foreign and defense policies, challenging. However, the establishment of the National Defense Council, tasked with developing strategic policies related to geostrategy, geopolitics, geoeconomics, and the deployment of state defense components, should reassure the audience about Indonesia's defense capabilities. Awareness of the importance of integration between foreign policy and defense policy has been a concern in Indonesia for a long time. Finally, President Prabowo Subianto has enacted Presidential Regulation No. 202/2024 to create the National Defense Council. Thus, this research will project Indonesian policy from the perspective of governmental politics, which has been considered a bottleneck in formulating integrated foreign policy and defense policy.

Several previous studies can be used as references and illustrate the significance of this study. The first is a study entitled "Making Europe Defend Again: The Relaunch of European Defense Cooperation from a Neoclassical Realist Perspective"[3]. This study uses logic to explore domestic political and ideational factors that can be the basis for foreign policy faced with regional dynamics. The study uses a comparative political scheme to describe the analysis that is built, but it is not too sharp in describing the detailed decision-making process. With this research, the process of making integrated foreign policy and defense policies can be seen not only at the policy outlet but also from the in-depth analysis carried out at each stage of the decision-making process. Furthermore, a study entitled "Is There a Public-Military Gap in the United States? Evaluating Foundational Foreign Policy Beliefs"[4]. This research studies civil-military relations and describes the "gap" between two fundamentally different perspectives and impacts on the foreign policy-making process. The study aims to evaluate the civil-military relations that have been built so far and have an influence on the foreign policy-making process. Rather than just conducting an evaluation, this study aims to describe the right model for integrating foreign policy and defense policy. The study entitled "Geopolitics of the South China Sea: Indonesia's Diplomatic Strategy in Maintaining the Political Stability of the ASEAN Region" [5] also illustrates the significance of this study. It is illustrated that Indonesia has a strategic role amidst geopolitical issues related to the South China Sea. This study analyzes further by providing an overview of the integrated decision-making process to increase the relevance of Indonesian policies amidst regional security dynamics. In addition, the importance of integration between foreign policy and defense policy is also shown by the study entitled "Patterns of Ratification of International Agreements in the Defense Sector in the Era of President Joko

Widodo" [6]. The study believes in the need for synergy between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense in ratifying international agreements in the defense sector. This study attempts to operationalize the initial idea in previous studies by projecting the pattern of policies that could potentially be taken during the administration of President Prabowo Subianto where previously the National Defense Council had not been formed as it is today. The last previous study is entitled "Willingness to Defend and Foreign Policy in Sweden and Finland from the Early Cold War Period to the 2010s"[7]. This previous study provides an overview of how the quality of foreign policy can be optimized when the country can position defense policies well and get support from civil society in its decision-making process. This previous study tends to focus on political debate, not on efforts to neutralize the political debate. This study provides a breakthrough in how the widespread political debate that sometimes occurs at the civil society level can be intervened through a model with patterns of interaction between certain actors.

In the post-Cold War world, the global strategic environment has changed, with inter-state conflicts decreasing while internal conflicts are gaining more attention [8]. The background of ASEAN integration is indeed complex, underscoring the urgent need for a deep understanding of the challenges that regional integration and cooperation, particularly in areas like foreign policy, politics, and security, will face [9]. The dynamics occurring in regional security do not indicate de-escalation after various efforts have been made by the countries involved. The escalation of tensions in the region also showed a significant increase in its complexities. Regarding the regional security context, this situation must be considered a threat, especially for Southeast Asian countries. The involvement of external factors can add complexity to the ASEAN integration that has been attempted both bilaterally and multilaterally through existing forums. The involvement of external factors further complicates the position of countries with 'free and active' foreign policy principles, such as Indonesia. Not to mention the involvement of Southeast Asian countries, ASEAN's role is being tested, and Indonesia's response is in the spotlight. Indonesia's leadership in the region is not just one of the determining factors, but a crucial one, considering that ASEAN is expected to be able to make a real contribution. The ASEAN Political-Security Community, for example, should be an instrument that can be useful instead of the ASEAN member countries involved using other channels due to ASEAN's inability to optimize its role. The ASEAN centrality concept has gained significant recognition and seems firmly established in the discourse of Southeast Asian and Asian international relations. However, its origins are uncertain, and its meaning remains ambiguous. Additionally, misconceptions and myths surrounding ASEAN centrality require immediate clarification and better understanding [10]. This centrality highly depends on the intention and interest of its member countries. As a country whose leadership is awaited, Indonesia's foreign policy must consistently and precisely respond to various regional security dynamics. It is important to maintain Indonesia's relevance in an outward-looking manner. However, being in this position is not a manageable condition. There are so many considerations that a country like Indonesia needs to consider, both in responding to domestic political dynamics and international political constellations.

With the background of previous research and studies that have been explained, this study is urgent, where the convergence of foreign policy and defense policy is needed to face the dynamics of contemporary global politics with potential threats that are increasingly difficult to predict. It is necessary to describe the decision-making process clearly and confront it with existing conditions so that the "disturbing" factors in the decision-making process of foreign policy and defense policy are illustrated.

2 Literature Review

The integration of foreign and defense policy can be examined through the lens of the decision-making process. From this perspective, researchers can identify the key factors influencing decision-making in these policy areas. By analyzing these factors, specific obstacles hindering the implementation of Indonesia's foreign and defense policies can be determined. This identification serves as a foundation for interventions, either partially or entirely, to facilitate the integration of these two policies from different leading sectors. This research will employ a governmental politics model to assess the initial conditions and conduct further analysis. Unlike rational actor models, which emphasize state entities as the primary decision-makers, the governmental politics model offers greater flexibility in examining foreign and defense policy factors. This approach considers a broader range of elements beyond cost-benefit calculations. Overlooking these factors—especially in a developing country like Indonesia, where the political landscape remains highly dynamic—would undermine the essence of the decision-making process itself [11].

This does not imply disregarding existing norms or procedures in the decision-making process. However, policies formulated solely based on normative aspects often fail to capture implicit factors that can significantly impact decision-making. While normative elements are present in the process, they often remain theoretical rather than practical. In reality, competition among actors and sectoral legos also play a crucial role and must be considered [11]. In the context of this research, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense each have their own interpretations of the President's vision regarding foreign and defense policy and overlapping issues between them. Their interactions and engagements within their inner circles shape new preferences. These preferences should be examined by analyzing potential outcomes if one of the actors was not part of the decision-making process.

Five key characteristics implicitly define the governmental politics model: separate institutions sharing power, the power of persuasion, bargaining within established processes, power measured by its impact on outcomes, and the interplay of intranational and international relations. From the standpoint of traditional systems theory, public policy is shaped by internal and external inputs. Additionally, intranational and international dynamics are crucial in integrating foreign and defense policies. Domestic political dynamics alone are insufficient to shape the decision-making process; global power relations must also be considered when formulating foreign and defense policies. This highlights the importance of foreign policy stakeholders, particularly in defense,

possessing the capability to analyze contemporary global political landscapes within the broader strategic environment.

3 Methodology

This research employs a specialized qualitative design, qualitative research is based on the paradigms of interpretivism and constructivism [12]. It follows a linear qualitative approach while incorporating a multidimensional research perspective. This flexibility allows the methodological framework to evolve alongside the research problem, a common characteristic in international relations studies. The chosen research strategy is a case study [13], which is essential for examining the decision-making process in foreign and defense policies. Additionally, this approach enables a more in-depth analysis of interactions among stakeholders involved in these policies. These interactions occur across various events, shaping and influencing the decision-making process. The relevance of a qualitative design in this research lies in its investigative nature, allowing for a gradual understanding of social phenomena. The researchers' identities, viewpoints, and positions must be disclosed in the study [14].

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Conceptualizing Indonesia and Its Defense Policy

Defense policy is a set of actions or guidelines established by senior executive leadership to shape and guide decisions, actions, and other aspects of military affairs in alignment with the nation's security strategy. Put another way, Indonesia's defense policy represents efforts to protect the country from threats, especially in the region. These efforts can be understood as a structured approach designed to fulfill the public's security needs. Understanding Indonesia's defense policy is closely linked to the broader concept of general policy, particularly in defense and military affairs, which serves two main functions. First, it involves utilizing available resources to achieve strategic objectives. Second, it defines the necessary means for the country to address future challenges and threats. Emphasizes that defense policy focuses on both ends and means, with the drive to achieve objectives resulting in sufficient strength [15]. Moreover, defense policy extends beyond its domain and, as Viotti describes, operates in an interconnected and interchangeable manner with other policy areas.

From the researcher's perspective, the term interchangeably refers to the relationship between defense policy and security dynamics. On the one hand, defense policy is formulated in response to security conditions, while on the other, the policy itself influences those very dynamics [16]. Based on this definition, Indonesia's defense policy is exclusively a state function, as it controls military resources to achieve objectives that other actors cannot. Each nation, such as Indonesia, implements its defense policy differently, depending on its capabilities, resources, and strategic goals. Indonesia's defense planning must be executed appropriately to ensure national security as a crucial component of defense policy decision-making. emphasizes that defense planning

serves as a means of securing peace by ensuring a nation's preparedness for war. While defense planning is often overlooked during peacetime, it is precisely in such periods that it should be prioritized to anticipate potential crises. This proactive approach conducted by Indonesia is essential for developing a well-structured and measurable defense policy [17].

It must be recognized that in Indonesia the defense policy decision-making process is highly complex and influenced by numerous factors. A country's historical experiences, national characteristics, and the political elite play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of this process. Additionally, Indonesia's unique political structure, military institutions, cultural factors, and the empirical nature of civil-military relations contribute to a distinctive approach to implementing national defense.

4.2 Generating The Ideas

From an International Relations perspective, defense policies formulated through decision-making must consider transnational factors. This highlights the intersection between foreign and defense policy, forming a continuous spectrum where a balance must be established. Consequently, Indonesia must adopt a multidimensional approach to policymaking, avoiding a singular perspective and accounting for various determining factors. The security dynamics occurring in the Southeast Asian region are a strategic environment that Indonesia needs to consider in creating a defense policy, either as an initiative or a response to inevitable security escalations. This is the closest international system, in which there is competition between the world's great powers, considering Southeast Asia one of the regions that cannot be underestimated. The existence of a potential future powerhouse in the fields of politics, security, and economics in this region means that countries such as China and the United States should not hesitate to expand their policies in this region. A paradox also occurs, further complicating Indonesia's position. Despite being created to counter China's threat, the ASEAN has engaged with China through dialogue and partnership [18].

As with other countries, defense policy is crucial for Indonesia as a guiding framework for planning, implementing, and overseeing the national defense system. It encompasses efforts to build, sustain, and develop all components of national defense in an integrated and strategic manner. These efforts aim to ensure the successful realization of the national defense vision, mission, and agenda.

However, there are latent problems that can hamper the process of managing defense policy in Indonesia. One of them is the civil-military relations factor, which is heavily influenced by past track records and, of course, recent developments. Indonesia still has obstacles in the context of civil-military relations, both institutionally and societally, which are directly related to public perception of the armed forces.

Indonesia's defense policies and strategies are developed based on fundamental considerations aligned with national goals and interests. Defense policy reflects the government's vision and mission, implemented in a proportional, balanced, and coordinated manner. To achieve this vision, a national defense strategy has been formulated, outlining objectives, strategic targets, methods to achieve these targets, and the allocation of defense resources. This strategy aims to build a strong, effective, resilient national

defense capability. Indonesia's defense policy follows a capability-based approach [19], which is often criticized for not adequately considering past, present, or potential future threats.

Building national defense is like a continuum, between focusing on welfare aspects and national defense. This is undoubtedly a difficult choice for developing countries like Indonesia. As a result, it is difficult for defense policy to optimize its role to achieve relevant and even urgent national interests measurably. Therefore, a wise perspective from decision-makers is essential. Not only does it rely on wisdom, but it also needs to be balanced by an absolute mechanism.

Law No. 3 of 2002 on National Defense, Indonesia adopts the principle of active defensive. This means the country's external defense is neither aggressive nor expansionist unless national interests are threatened. This principle is reflected in defense policies aimed at developing appropriate capabilities to address potential future threats. However, Indonesia appears hesitant to explicitly define these threats, making capability-based planning a more fitting approach to its defense strategy than threat-based planning [19].

The lack of integration between foreign and defense policy is not always evident through explicit differences; it can also stem from conceptual misunderstandings among stakeholders in each field. For instance, Indonesia's free and active foreign policy principle does not necessarily prevent the country from defining threats concretely within its defense policy. Instead, alternative formulations can be explored by interpreting "free" not as neutrality but as a flexible approach that prioritizes national interests in decision-making.

4.3 What Might Change?

In the age of globalization, a country faces threats beyond just military concerns. Non-military threats in domains also demand attention, requiring awareness and vigilance from all government institutions, not just the military [20]. National defense policy is implemented through various efforts to manage resources and national infrastructure to address different types of threats. Formulating policies and strategies is a crucial step in establishing national defense policies, emphasizing the achievement of strategic objectives. The key principles of national defense policy, which may evolve in their operational context following the establishment of the National Defense Council, will inevitably impact the effectiveness of these policies. Indonesia's defense development is needed to build a strong defense force that has deterrence capabilities as an archipelago and maritime country so that Indonesia has a bargaining position in maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as the safety of the entire Indonesian nation. Sometimes related to this, Indonesia often needs to coordinate across ministries and institutions. For example, Indonesia is a maritime country, and to maintain maritime security, several institutions must coordinate at the policy and operational levels. With proper management, maritime countries like Indonesia will enjoy economic development from their waters [21]. The existence of the National Defense Council certainly gives hope for a more productive coordination path. In the context of Indonesia's defense empowerment, the existence of

the National Defense Council will undoubtedly lead to the maintenance and development of all national defense strength and potential in an integrated and directed manner involving all citizens, utilization of all national resources and national infrastructure as well as all regions of the country to always be operationally ready. This is certainly not just the responsibility of one or two institutions. Moreover, involving all elements of society also means talking about Indonesia's readiness to face a broad spectrum of threats, especially non-traditional security threats, which are very dynamic in Southeast Asia, such as natural disasters, terrorism, and transnational crime.

In Indonesia, state defense forces are deployed by statutory provisions to deal with threats to state defense and specific conditions in the national interest. This does not necessarily make the Ministry of Defense the leading actor. Procedurally, other civil institutions have a significant and influential role; if the impact is projected to cross national borders, synergy with ministries or other state institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is necessary. The National Defense Council is a collective and collegial forum for realizing targeted deployment. It is worth waiting to see how far the credibility of the National Defense Council will be when faced with a security-related testing mechanism.

The existence of the National Defense Council is projected to impact the regulatory sector. Regulatory policy in the defense sector is directed at accelerating the process of forming laws and regulations that are in line with the National Legislation Program through the ratification of draft laws and regulations regarding national security, state secrecy, management of national defense resources, revision of the Law on the National Army, as well as other laws and regulations whether delegated by the National Defense Law, the Law on the Indonesian National Army, the Veterans Law, the Law on the Defense Industry, and the Law on Military Discipline, or those formed out of necessity. This series of laws will help construct the perception of neighboring countries in the Southeast Asia region regarding defense governance in Indonesia, which is increasingly integrated and consistent.

Another policy that is sometimes forgotten in the defense sector but is the most important is that related to the budget. No matter how good policies are revealed in principles, strategies, and operations, they will not have any impact if they are only discourses on paper. Globally, there is a trend of increasing the average defense budget in each country. This trend is undoubtedly an alarm, and it will alert many countries about potential security threats in the future. Within the structure of the National Defense Council, like in several other countries, there is a Minister of Finance who has in-depth information about the state budget and its priorities. This forum will certainly be a productive solution that provides optimism about the synergy of ideas and a more measurable budget. The national defense budget policy is directed at meeting the needs of defense administration, including increasing the budget to achieve the strategic objectives of national defense, non-military defense budget support provided by each ministry or state institution and regional governments, as well as the availability of budgets at the central and regional levels to meet the needs for handling emergencies in the administration of national defense. In preparing defense policy related to this budget,

synergy is also needed between ministries or state institutions from both civil and military elements, about mature civil-military relations in supporting the process of making good defense policies is indeed necessary [22].

Finally, the National Defense Council has a strategic role in supervisory functions. The supervisory function is carried out through internal and external supervision, both in the implementation of military and non-military defense. Basically, defense policy is not just about the military domain; it is a discourse for all citizens based on civilian supremacy and an understanding of the military as a tool of the state, which is sometimes not yet understood objectively. Moreover, from a policy and planning perspective, Tier Two and Three countries, like Indonesia, are likely to face significant challenges in implementing transformational strategies [23].

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

Establishing the National Defense Council marks, a significant step in strengthening Indonesia's defense policy by enhancing coordination, integration, and strategic planning. Of course, not much has changed at the policy input and output level because everything depends on the contemporary political constellation, both at the domestic and international levels. However, the existence of the National Defense Council will significantly impact the decision-making process, which can optimize policy input as a consideration material that is processed optimally. This will undoubtedly impact optimal policy output and positively impact efforts to achieve Indonesia's national interests. As a maritime nation, Indonesia must develop a strong deterrence capability while addressing a broad spectrum of threats, including non-traditional security challenges. The Council's role extends beyond military matters, fostering synergy between civil and military institutions, ensuring regulatory consistency, and optimizing defense budget allocation. Importantly, it plays a crucial role in maintaining Indonesia's national sovereignty, reinforcing its regional security leadership in facing Southeast Asia's regional security challenges.

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