

The Indonesian Army's Dominance and its Consequences on Indonesia's Balance of Power in South China Sea

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the dominance of the Indonesian Army in fulfilling the Minimum Essential Force program in Indonesia from 2010-2021. As a country with a large territory and at the crossroads of international trade, Indonesia requires a strong defense posture, especially its maritime defense. The Indonesian government created the MEF program to improve the country's declining defense posture by bringing military strength to a minimum standard of deterrence capability. The existence of gaps in fulfilling the MEF program, which is dominated by the Army, is one of the obstacles to the success of the objectives of the creation of the MEF program. This study uses the concept of Strategic Culture and Balance of Power. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative method and data collection through literature study by reading and re-processing the literature review that is relevant to this research. The results of this study indicate that Indonesia's strategic culture significantly influences the sustainability of the MEF program and leads to the domination of the Indonesian Army, which then impacts Indonesia's defense posture in the South China Sea region.

Keywords: Army Domination, Indonesia, Minimum Essential Force, Strategic Culture

1. Introduction

Neorealism explains that security is the goal of all states. In the field of international relations, a nation's security can be attained through the effective utilization of its defense capabilities. In an anarchic international system, big countries will continue to increase their power to ensure their country's security. This assumption means that being a strong country is a way to avoid threats that will undermine national security (Waltz, 1988). Countries will continue to compete to improve their defense systems to maintain their country's security. In supporting state security, the military is an essential indicator of the defense system that every country must have. Strengthening a country's military is emphasized by increasing the country's primary weapons system (alutsista) instruments.

Referring to geographical data, Indonesia has a vast area of 7.81 million km², of which 3.25 million km² is the ocean, 2.01 million km² island, and 2.55 million km² is the Exclusive

Economic Zone (ZEE) (Pratama, 2020). In addition, Indonesia also has three archipelagic sea lanes (ALKI) located on shipping lanes that are included in Indonesian territorial waters. The determination of this ALKI requires Indonesia to open part of its territorial waters so that foreign ships and aircraft can freely cross it (Hutagalung, 2017). With the potential condition of natural resources and territory, Indonesia is vulnerable to various military and non-military threats. Moreover, it is vital for a country to improve its defense system to maintain its sovereignty and provide a sense of security to the people.

However, it can be said that Indonesia's current defense posture is far from ideal. This is because the defense equipment owned or operated by the TNI is quite old. Based on data from CSIS in 2014, 52 percent of all defense equipment operated by the TNI is over 30 years old. Even 28% of the TNI's Armaments System is over 40 years old. Meanwhile, only 19% of the TNI's defense equipment is 1-10 years (Tempo.co, 2015). The progression of the TNI's

streamlined defense equipment system over time has led to implications of technological obsolescence. It is not ideal that Indonesia's current defense posture is not only seen from the age of the leading defense equipment operated by the TNI. Another indicator is the operational readiness of the TNI's Defense Equipment System. Overall, according to the Ministry of Defense, in 2005, the operational readiness rate for the Indonesian Army was only 35%. The Indonesian Navy and Air Force only accounted for 30% of the total Armaments, which were operational ready (Syafputri, 2011).

Realizing that Indonesia's defense condition was getting weaker, until it finally started in 2010, the government of the Indonesian president at that time, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, created the MEF or Minimum Essential Force program which was aimed as a process to increasing Indonesia's defense strength, especially related to defense equipment. Based on the data in the graph above, it can be seen that from strategic plan 1 to 2021, MEF achievement has not reached the planned target (Deputi Bidang Koordinasi Pertahanan Negara, 2019; Fajarta, 2022).

The data on purchasing weapons in fulfilling the MEF program for each dimension presented in the SIPRI dataset shows that the percentage of the Army is the largest, and the Navy has the lowest percentage of purchasing weapons in fulfilling the MEF program. Purchase of weapons for the Army (AD) reached 39%, while the Navy (AL) and Air Force (AU) accounted for 24% and 37%, respectively (SIPRI, 2022). With the percentage of weapons purchased, there is also an imbalance in the achievement of MEF in each dimension. The percentage of achievement of the Indonesian Army in fulfilling the MEF program is always superior compared to the other two dimensions (Deputi Bidang Koordinasi Pertahanan Negara, 2019; DPR RI, 2022). These data prove that the MEF's sustainability is still not in accordance with the target it should be. There is a need to re-evaluate the progress of the MEF to create a state defense and security forces under the interests and conditions of the Indonesian state.

Reflecting on the considerable importance of efforts to modernize weapons, especially in the MEF program, many researchers have

conducted previous research. The previous research was then divided into four categories, namely: (1) Defense, (2) Domestic Politics, (3) Political-Economy, and (4) argumentative papers. The relevant previous research will be reviewed again to become the author's new reference in this study.

In the defense category, previous literature describes the MEF fulfillment process as a program to build Indonesia's defense posture by increasing the domestic defense industry (Djarwono, 2017), focusing on the modernization of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) weapons (A. F. Rahman et al., 2015), as well as by carrying out defense diplomacy through strengthening relations between domestic military civilians and foreign-domestic militaries (Iskandar et al., 2019). From these studies, it can be concluded that the Indonesian government created the MEF program intending to increase military strength through the defense industry and defense diplomacy. However, trying to increase Indonesia's defense, especially at sea, is not optimal because of Indonesia's strategic culture, which is dominated by the Indonesian Army (Arif & Kurniawan, 2018).

Then in the previous literature, which is included in the category of domestic politics analyzing problems in the MEF program, which is expected to be the Indonesian government's efforts to modernize the navy military are hampered due to the domination of the army military (Raymond, 2017) and considered less on target given the condition of Indonesia's territory with waters that quite broad (Sarjito et al., 2018). Existing research also explains that the ineffectiveness of Indonesia's state defense policy, especially the MEF policy, affects the effectiveness of the MEF fulfillment program (Gunawan, 2022). Previous research in the political-economic category explained that Indonesia's efforts to modernize weapons through cooperation with other countries were hampered by brokers among these collaborations, impacting Indonesia's national security (Darmawan et al., 2020).

In addition to the studies mentioned above, the authors also found other studies that became a review of the literature for this research, which fall into the category of argumentative papers. The main focus of research in this category is the

discussion of the weakness of the Indonesian Navy's military. The MEF fulfillment program is expected to increase the strength of the naval military (Collin, 2015) and reduce Indonesia's dependence on weapons-producing countries (Wardhana & Soediantono, 2022). However, due to an imbalance in fulfilling the MEF in the Navy (Jannah et al., 2021), this country is vulnerable to maritime threats in the outer islands of Indonesian territory (Al Fajrin, 2016).

Then the writer concluded that the different approaches used and the research focus on the previous studies described above could be the author's gap in this study. The author uses a strategic cultural approach as the primary focus for analyzing the problem of the domination of the Army in the continuity of fulfilling the MEF carried out by Indonesia as an effort to increase the country's defense power which will then have an impact on Indonesia's balance of power in the South China Sea region. The author uses the explanation of the literature review to explain that there has been no previous research discussing the dominance of the Indonesian Army in MEF compliance programs that use a strategic cultural approach.

1.1 Strategic Culture

The concept of strategic culture first appeared in studies related to modern security, especially regarding the use of nuclear weapons between the United States and the Soviet Union. This concept began widely used as literature in the 1970s and 1980s. Snyder as a strategic cultural thinker, explains several factors that can influence strategic cultures, such as military culture, historical heritage, and the role of the military in the political process, including cultural aspects that need to be taken into account when analyzing a country's behavior from a strategic cultural perspective (Snyder, 1977). Therefore, strategic culture reflects the national defense capability with regional uniqueness, national characteristics, and state form. One of the characteristics of a nation is born from the history of the nation.

Jeannie L. Johnson also explained the concept of strategic culture regarding the various elements of a country's national strategic culture that are most prominent and influence state

security policies which will eventually form a unique strategic culture. Johnson sees strategic culture as a set of beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors based on shared experiences narrated both orally and in writing and then shapes collective identities and relationships with other groups and defines goals and appropriate means to achieve security goals (Johnson, 2006). In making decisions, a country must consider the opportunities of the domestic environment and culture so that the decisions taken can be balanced. When viewed through an approach to strategic culture, it plays an essential role in shaping Indonesian military security and defense practices.

To deal with this, a Minimum Essential Force (MEF) was formed, which later became an effort made by Indonesia to strengthen its defense. However, in practice, until 2021, the Indonesian Army dominates the fulfillment. When viewed based on Indonesia's geography, this is contrary to most of Indonesia's territory, namely waters. To explain this, several indicators of Indonesia's strategic culture cause the Army to dominate, namely (1) Historical Operations, which consist of the character of TNI operations and sources of threats, that the development of a dynamic strategic environment can influence the implementation of national defense and significantly affect multidimensional threat patterns and forms. (2) Defense Doctrine, namely regarding the development of threats faced by various adjustments, which include renewal of military doctrine and changes to the organizational structure of the TNI. (3) Elite Politics, where a small group of people with wealth or political power will still influence Indonesia's defense policy.

2. Balance of Power

Waltz explained that there are two strategies in the theory of balance of powers that a country can use to respond to threats that will be faced, namely balancing and bandwagoning. Balancing is a self-defense strategy by balancing the enemy's strength. There are 2 forms of balancing. First, internal balancing refers to increasing domestic military power to balance

other countries. Moreover, the second external balancing refers to the alliance of countries to fight against a stronger country. Meanwhile, bandwagoning is done by allying with a stronger country or group of countries (Waltz, 1979).

Kenneth Waltz observed that the system of anarchy and shifts in relative distribution indicate that the balance of power has occurred repeatedly in international relations. In the bipolar distribution of power (two great powers), the state will balance its power through internal military development. Whereas in the multipolar power distribution (more than 3 significant powers), the state will balance its power through the formation of alliances (Nexon, 2009).

Based on the concept of balance of power, countries will continue to strive to have greater power compared to their potential rivals to maximize profits and survive. The main focus of the state is not to maximize power but also to try to maintain its position in the international system. Balance of power is a strategy pursued by a country because its rivals are trying to increase their power to change the distribution of power in the international system (Waltz, 1979).

Although basically, the concept of strategic culture is contrary to the balance of power theory, Michael C. Desch's article entitled "Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies" states that according to Kenneth Pollack, cultural theory can rationally complement existing theories by not replacing existing theories (Desch, 1998). In the theory of balance of power, it is believed that the behavior of a country is based on the international system (Hinton, 2020). However, according to Snyder, after seeing the conflicts that occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union during the cold war, America's failure to predict the Soviet Union was caused by America ignoring the strategic cultural aspects of the Soviet Union and only focusing on the international system. It was concluded that the importance of the influence of strategic cultural aspects for Indonesia in policy-making, strategy, and state structure. To maintain national security by paying attention to the behavior of other countries, Indonesia cannot only focus on the international system but there are other influencing factors.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Geographic Location and Strategic Environment of Indonesia

The objective reality of Indonesia's geography can give rise to potential strategic vulnerabilities. This is because the more complex the conditions of the country's strategic environment in the international world, the emergence of new sources of threats will increase. As Indonesia owns most of its territorial waters, where this situation has brought Indonesia threats based on the 2008 Indonesian Defense White Paper, these threats are multidimensional, both physical and non-physical originating from within and outside the country (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2008). (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2008). The threats faced by Indonesia includes border security, transnational crimes, radicalism, as well as foreign infiltration and intervention (Direktorat Jenderal Strategi Pertahanan, 2008).

Based on its geographical location, Indonesia is a country with a strategic position in the Asia region, including the Asia-Pacific as a crucial trade route and international transportation corridor. In terms of security, the Asia-Pacific region holds complex potentials, challenges, and threats that can create issues between nations (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015). Given this situation, the developments in this region can generate strategic environmental dynamics.

Not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but another significant area influencing Indonesia's strategic environmental dynamics is the Strait of Malacca. The Strait of Malacca is the busiest trade route in the world, traversed by a minimum of 50 thousand vessels annually (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2014). These conditions unequivocally state that Indonesian waters serve as a strategic zone for international trade. Its strategic location prompts hegemonic nations to actively participate in the defense of the Strait of Malacca (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2008).

Based on the dynamic strategic environment and strategic geographical location, the most significant threats to Indonesia are in its waters

or maritime threats, both present and future. To respond to a dynamic strategic environmental situation, Indonesia must make system and strategy adjustments to create a favorable domestic situation and ensure the security of the entire Indonesian nation (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2008). In this case, Indonesia must also maintain a robust maritime defense posture in line with the government's vision of making Indonesia a Global Maritime Fulcrum (PMD). This condition clearly states that Indonesia's current priority is strengthening the Navy's military to improve maritime security.

Indonesia's Military Operation History

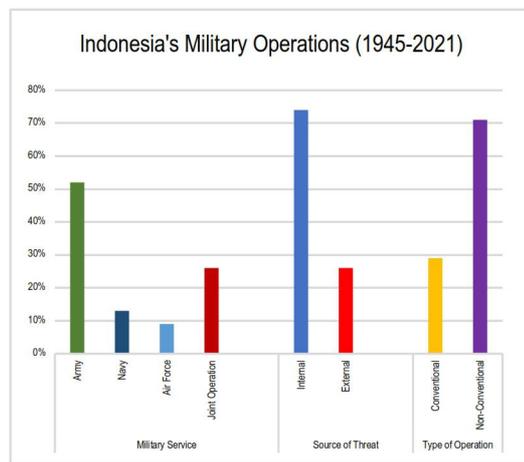


Figure 1. Indonesia's Armed Forces (TNI) Military Operations

Source: Laksmana, et al., 2020

The history of previous military operations can impact the future implementation of military operations. Data presented in the book "75 Tahun TNI: Evolusi Ekonomi Pertahanan, Operasi dan Organisasi Militer Indonesia 1945-2020" show that there have been 370 military operations over 75 years, with an average of 4.93 activities per year (Laksmana et al., 2020). Data on TNI military operations will shape the character of TNI operations. Several indicators can be used to see the character of the TNI's operations. The first indicator is based on the military force used. Most TNI operations (52%)

are land defense or those carried out by the Indonesian Army. While the operations of the Navy and Air Force are mostly carried out in joint operations activities (Widjajanto et al., 2022). Furthermore, the second indicator, namely by looking at the source of threats to TNI operations, the overall results show that the majority (74%) of TNI operations are carried out to deal with threats originating from within the country (Laksmana et al., 2020).

The third indicator pertains to the types of warfare in TNI operations. In its implementation, the military operations conducted by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) are classified into two main categories: conventional and non-conventional. Conventional warfare involves actions or measures employing standard military instruments carried out by a nation to engage in armed conflict with another nation, essentially representing overt interstate warfare (House, 2008; Janos, 1963). On the other hand, non-conventional warfare entails actions that utilize non-standard military instruments, undertaken by both state and non-state actors to confront their adversaries, essentially representing covert or low-scale maneuvers (Gray, 2007; House, 2008). Typically, the strategy employed in non-conventional warfare is guerrilla warfare or clandestine operations aimed at diverting the enemy's focus and subsequently attacking their weak points (Mao, 1961). Overall, the majority (71%) of the military operations conducted by the TNI involve conflicts with non-state actors of a non-conventional nature (Laksmana et al., 2020). These conflicts predominantly consist of domestic insurgency movements and separatist actions, such as the Free Aceh Movement, Free Papua Movement, and the South Moluccas Republic (Widjajanto et al., 2022).

It can be seen from the data that there is a link between the history of TNI operations and the progress of the MEF program from 2010 to 2021. The Indonesian Army's dominance in completing the MEF program has its roots in TNI operations characterized by land warfare with unconventional threats from within the nation. The domination that occurs is not only contrary to the objectives of the MEF program creation but also to Indonesia's geographical conditions and strategic environment. With the

history and character of these operations, it makes sense that the government and TNI prioritize the interests of the Indonesian Army as the first and foremost defenders of the Indonesian state. In contrast, the Indonesian Navy and Air Force are positioned as supporting instruments. With the character of the TNI's operations, efforts to strengthen the TNI Navy's military will always be under the shadow of the domination of the Army (Arif & Kurniawan, 2018) so that the achievements of the military strengthening of the Navy will not match or even exceed the achievements of the military strengthening of the Army.

4. Indonesia's Defense Doctrine

State defense doctrine is the basic foundation for deploying defense to achieve state security interests. The development of a defense doctrine is based on observations of the threats that the state faces. In other words, doctrines are not dogmatic but must adapt to changing circumstances (Hananto & Daud, 2020). Since 1945, Indonesia's defense doctrine has undergone several changes in response to the country's threats. Until then, the Total Defense Doctrine, or Sishanta, was developed as a renewal concept of the previous doctrine, namely the Universal People's War, or Perata (Widjajanto, 2010).

The Total Defense is all universal defense efforts involving all aspects of life, such as citizens and other national resources, to maintain the security of the entire nation and state (Abdurochman, 2014). Sishanta is positioned as the Indonesian state defense doctrine or the fundamental doctrine that overshadows the TNI's primary doctrine, namely Tridarma Ekakarma or Tridek. Ratification of the Tridarma Ekakarma doctrine is a follow-up to Law No. 3 of 2002 concerning National Defense and Law No. 34 of 2004 concerning the Indonesian National Armed Forces. As the two laws state, the TNI is the main component or computer in Indonesia's state defense affairs. The TNI is the country's first line of defense in facing various military threats through War Military Operations or OMP and Military Operations Other than War or OMSP (Undang-

Undang No. 3 Tahun 2002 Tentang Pertahanan Negara, 2002; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia No.34 Tahun 2004 Tentang Tentara Nasional Indonesia, 2004).

In practice, until now, Sishanta and Tridek have had some drawbacks. First, Sishanta and Tridek tend to adopt several tactics used in the military operations of the Indonesian Army, such as guerrilla warfare tactics, territorial war, and people's war and layered defense (Nasution, 1953; Widjajanto, 2013). Furthermore, forming territorial commands is also a weakness of this doctrine. Establishing a territorial command creates close relations between the TNI and the people, facilitating TNI operations with guerrilla tactics during a war (Kasim, 2005). The territorial command rests on land defense operated by the Indonesian Army. The existence of a territorial command increasingly shows that these two doctrines are oriented toward the Indonesian Army (F. Rahman, 2018).

The existence of a Total Defense system and territorial command will be detrimental to Indonesia in situations of conflict or war because, with this system, resistance will be deployed when the enemy is already in the third or final layer of Indonesian defense (F. Rahman, 2018). In this case, the third layer of defense relies on the strength of the Indonesian Army as the leading force (Widjajanto, 2010). In addition, during an anarchic world situation and dynamic strategic environmental conditions, the national defense doctrine must see threats from abroad. However, in its implementation, the Indonesian state defense doctrine is centered on internal or domestic threats (F. Rahman, 2018).

The strength of the Indonesian Army, which serves as the primary line of defense for the Indonesian state, is essential to the universal defense system and the Tridharma Ekakarma doctrine. Then the systems and strategies in the doctrine also show that the Indonesian Army has a more critical role than the other two dimensions. This shows that with this doctrine, efforts to strengthen Indonesia's defense posture through the MEF program will prioritize strengthening the Indonesian Army as the front line of Indonesia's defense.

5. Military Elite Politics

The political elite is a group of people with a position or position in a political institution or wealth power (Bottomore, 2006). Wendt (1999), stated that the elite's political character can shape a country's strategic culture (Wendt, 1999). A country's political elite has an essential role in shaping the country's policies. The political elite referred to in this case are military organizations, parties, and domestic coalitions (Johnson, 2006). Based on the theoretical hypothesis, a country's civilian government officials have a significant share in efforts to develop the country's military, so often, the results of these efforts are not following the required military strength (Farrell & Terriff, 2002; Posen, 1984; Rosen, 1988).

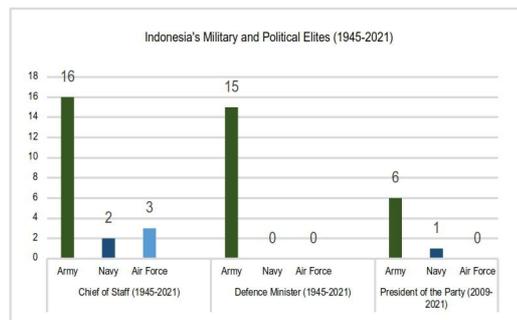


Figure 2. Indonesia's Military and Political Elites

Source: Author's own elaborations

In this study, the political elite in Indonesia has an essential role in forming Indonesian defense policy, to be precise, in the sustainability of the MEF program. After looking at the Indonesian political elite in several related political institutions, it appears that since the MEF program took place (2010) until 2021. within the Indonesian military organization or TNI, the TNI commander is mostly (67%) occupied by the Indonesian Army (Fajarta, 2022; Widjajanto et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Minister of Defense officials from 2010-2021 who are retired TNI officers come from the Army (Yuniarto, 2020). Then, the position of General Chair of Political Parties, who are retired TNI officers, mostly comes from the Army (Isabela, 2022). Thus, military

modernization efforts are dominated by strengthening the Army's leading defense equipment in fulfilling the MEF program.

6. Balance of Indonesian Power in the South China Sea

The dominance of the Indonesian Army in the MEF program will affect Indonesia's defense in the external environment. In this case, the South China Sea area is an area that can affect Indonesia's security stability, especially with the existence of conflict disputes in the region. Various actions were taken by the countries involved to maintain their ownership of the South China Sea area. Several countries took provocative actions in the region, such as sending fishing boats and warships to areas claimed by other claimant countries, leading to diplomatic tensions (Prabowo, 2013). This then triggers a significant escalation of the conflict so that it does not only involve claimant countries. Various military actions carried out by countries in this region will undoubtedly affect the defense and security of other countries. Indonesia is one example of a country affected by the dynamics of regional dispute conflict. Although Indonesia is not a claimant country, based on its geographical location, Indonesia is one of the ten countries bordering the South China Sea region. The problem of territorial disputes can raise potential maritime threats, which will then disrupt the defense and security of the Indonesian state (Tandy et al., 2021).

Since the New Order era until now, Indonesia's foreign policy has established the Southeast Asian region as an essential region for Indonesia by explaining that the stability of the Southeast Asian region will positively impact Indonesia in safeguarding its national interests. The South China Sea territorial dispute would affect the balance of security in the Southeast Asian region because four of the six claimant countries are Southeast Asian. As a result, territorial dispute conflicts impact the stability of the Indonesian state (Prabowo, 2013).

China's claim to the Natuna waters is one example of the impact of the South China Sea territorial dispute conflict faced by

Indonesia. This is because Natuna Island is directly adjacent to the South China Sea. The Natuna island claim is basically due to a map marked with nine-dashed lines or the Nine Dashed Line, which overlaps with Indonesia's ZEE in the North Natuna islands. Another impact that Indonesia will face is that if the conflict over the South China Sea territory escalates into an open conflict or war, it is highly likely that the war will spread to the territory of the Indonesian state and then will become a significant military threat. Not only that, other things that contribute to the South China Sea conflict have the opportunity to threaten the stability of the Indonesian state because the actors or countries involved in the conflict and have interests in the region are strong countries in the Asia Pacific region, such as America and China. From this example, the disputed conflict will significantly impact Indonesia's security.

The dynamics of the conflict over the South China Sea region, with various military actions that have taken place, show that the conflict has become a real traditional threat to Indonesia. The Indonesian state government also saw that the conflict would create regional security imbalances and affect the Indonesian state. In addition, most Indonesian scientists stated that the rise of China, especially in the South China Sea region, would pose a physical and ideological threat to Indonesia. With China's assertive actions in the South China Sea region and the ZEE of the Natuna islands, it creates the view that China is a threat to Indonesia (Fitriani, 2018). Thus, Indonesia is required to handle the conflict because it will affect Indonesia's security balance if the conflict does not end well. In this case, Indonesia is interested in being firm regarding its ownership of Indonesia's ZEE in the region. It is vital to have appropriate policies and strategies to avoid the impact of the disputed conflict (Buntoro, 2011; Ras, 2001).

The various impacts Indonesia faces due to these disputed conflicts require Indonesia to have a strong defense posture, especially its maritime defense. To analyze Indonesia's balance of power in this region, it is necessary to see and compare the military strength of the Navy and Air Force of influential countries such as China and America with Indonesia's military strength. Apart from China, America, and

Indonesia, this research will also describe the military strength of countries that are in alliance with America and can influence the dynamics of the South China Sea region, i.e., AUKUS. AUKUS is a defense pact agreed upon by three countries, namely America, Australia, and Britain, aiming to procure and develop nuclear submarines for the Australian Navy (Prakoso, 2021). This will affect the stability of the South China Sea region because AUKUS is believed to be America's means of fighting China's hegemony in Asia, including in the South China Sea region (Perdana et al., 2021). In addition, it will threaten Indonesia if there are more sophisticated submarines than those owned by Indonesia that freely cross the sea lanes of the Indonesian archipelago.

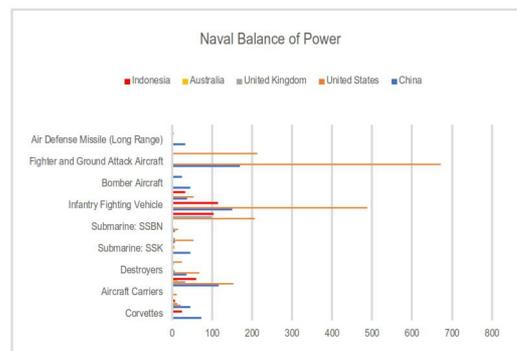


Figure 3. Naval Balance of Power in South China Sea

Source: Author's own elaborations

Figure 3 above shows that the primary defense equipment owned by the US Navy is the most numerous among the other three countries, such as, tactical bomber fighters, infantry fighting vehicles, armored personnel carrier, troop landing craft, destroyers, nuclear submarines (SSN & SSBN), cruisers, and aircraft carriers. As for the other half of the Navy's defense equipment, most are owned by China, such as corvettes, diesel-electric submarines, frigates, bombers, self-propelled artillery, long-range anti-air attack missiles, fighter aircraft, nuclear submarines, long-range anti-air attack missiles, and short and ballistic missile submarines. Then Indonesia does not have one for the destroyer-type defense equipment, yet 4 other countries have

destroyers. (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021, 2022a, 2022b).

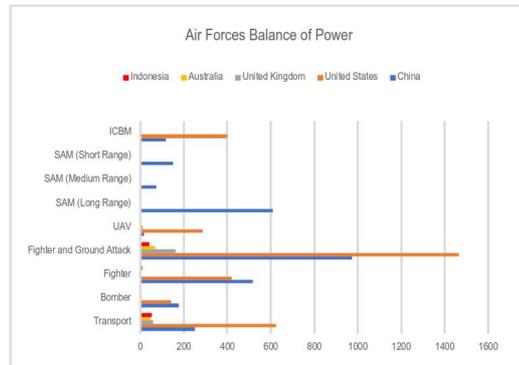


Figure 4. Air Force Balance of Power in South China Sea

Source: Author's own elaborations

Then, in Figure 4 shows a comparison of the military strength of the Chinese, American, British, Australian, and Indonesian Air Forces in 2021. In the graph, it can be seen that there are three types of defense equipment that the United States has the most in number compared to the other three countries, namely, transport aircraft, fighter and ground attack aircrafts, and UAVs. Intercontinental nuclear missiles are only owned by China and America. However, there are also several pieces of defense equipment that China has the most, such as fighter aircraft, bombers, short-range anti-air attack missiles, long-range anti-air attack missiles, and medium-range anti-air attack missiles (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021, 2022a, 2022b).

Based on these data, it can be seen that the military strength of the Indonesian Navy and Air Force is still far behind compared to influential countries in the South China Sea region in 2021. If we look at Indonesia's situation in the South China Sea region, it is essential to increase and even try to balance the military power of countries that influence the region. However, the MEF program, implemented in 2010, has not provided a significant increase. The MEF program has been carried out mainly to strengthen the Indonesian Army's military. With the dynamics of the conflict in the South China Sea and the impact that Indonesia can face, it requires this country

to have a strong military force, the Navy, and the Air Force. The gap that occurs, which the Indonesian Army dominates, will disrupt the defense and security of the Indonesian military, especially in maintaining maritime security in this region.

7. Conclusion

Security is the primary goal of a country. The state needs a robust defense to fulfill these security interests. The stronger the military of a country, the stronger the country's defense will be. So that amid an anarchic international system, having a strong military is the main goal of all countries. In order to achieve security goals during an uncertain or changing international world situation, Indonesia must have a strong defense posture, especially concerning procuring its defense equipment. In 2010 the Indonesian government created the Minimum Essential Force (MEF) program as Indonesia's effort to improve Indonesia's increasingly weak defense posture. However, in practice, the fulfillment of this program is dominated by the Indonesian Army. In this matter, the strategic culture of a country influences the behavior of the country, including the making of national defense policies. Indonesia's strategic culture influences the progress of the MEF program and triggers the dominance of the Indonesian Army in the program. The gap that occurred in the MEF program resulted in the military forces of the Indonesian Navy and Air Force being left behind, which Indonesia needs as the front line of defense in the South China Sea region.

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