

Fortifying Indonesia and National Defense Strategic Challenges

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Fortifying in the sense of protecting and defending the nation is both an enduring responsibility and strategic aim of national defense, and to realize that requires not only strategic vision, but also consistent implementation and policy continuation, coupled with continuous reviews and revisions. Seventeen years have passed since Indonesia embraced a newly democratic era in 1998, and seven years have elapsed since Indonesia reconstructed her grand strategy of national defense according to Dr. Juwono Sudarsono's 2008 Defense White Paper, Strategy, Doctrine, Posture and Minimum Essential Force. As Indonesia celebrates its National Armed Forces Day (1945 – 2015), it is important to reflect on the legacies and future directions of Indonesia's national defense, and identify challenges moving forward.

The first pivotal person responsible for today's policies was Dr. Sudarsono, who served as Minister of Defense from 2004 – 2009. An intellectual pioneer and politico-military scholar, Dr. Sudarsono played a historically significant role in constructing a new blueprint of Indonesian national defense architecture in 2008. One distinct mark of his defense policies was the smart combination between hard and soft power, by integrating all instruments: military; information; diplomatic; economic and financial; law enforcement; and intelligence. Various competing national security institutions, such as the Indonesian National Military (TNI), Police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and National Intelligence Agency, were also united under the 'bridging umbrella' of his policies. This strategy articulated by Dr. Sudarsono was comprehensive and overarching enough to be used as a reference for all national elements of power of that time.

This foundation served as a launching pad for his successor, Dr. Purnomo Yusgiantoro, who occupied the office from 2009 – 2014. As a hard scientist, engineer and businessman, Dr. Yusgiantoro was uniquely positioned to implement his predecessor's "defense-101" architectural blueprint through more corporate-style leadership. Building on Dr. Sudarsono's 'Minimum Essential Forces' principle, he accelerated development of the national defense industry, defense procurement system, and notably the Indonesian Defense University. This institution, supported by the premier National Defense University in Washington, D.C., was founded as a national center of academic excellence dedicated to educate, at the strategic level, future Indonesian national leaders.

After Indonesia's 2014 Presidential elections, General (Ret) Ryamizard Ryacudu was appointed as the Minister of Defense for 2014 – 2019. Minister Ryacudu, an ex-Army Chief of Staff (2002 – 2005) with a number of previous operational commanding positions, is known for leading the Army during a period where TNI was under international pressure to conduct doctrinal, organizational, and professional reforms. However, how has Minister Ryacudu handled Indonesia's national defense during the last one year in his office, and in which areas is development still crucial? Having observed his leadership style, policies and working programs for nearly a year now, we might conclude that there are at least four distinct policies that he seems to underline.

First, Minister Ryacudu stresses the importance of international security cooperation, worldwide defense diplomacy and strategic communication. Visits to his counterparts, the Ministers of Defense across Asia, Europe and America, were supplemented with robust defense procurement agreements, such as the Q2-2015 agreement with the Pentagon to acquire a number of strategic weapons systems (i.e. Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopters). Given Indonesia's free-and-active foreign policy, the Ministry of Defense under his leadership also continues to seek procurements from other friendly, foreign countries. There is no country in the world, including the United States, that is fully independent in acquiring its defense weapons systems.

Second, he stresses the importance of intangible defense power, such as the intellectual development of professional national security and military officials, as well as the sense of patriotism and love-of-the-country of Indonesian people. This includes expansion of global educational opportunity programs to a number of foreign countries covering strategic, operational and tactical education with both military and civilian academic institutions overseas.

Third, he stresses the importance of counter-terrorism efforts against violent religious radicalism at the global level, as well as the reorganization of Indonesian national defense institutions to increase flexibility as we deal with complex global challenges. An ongoing strategic change is the effort to place Indonesian defense attaches throughout the world under the Ministry of Defense, instead of under the TNI Commander.

Fourth, he stresses the importance of developing the defense-industrial sector and encouraging procurement innovation, in order to better match the real-foreseeable threats and unforeseeable but likely threats within the range of military operations for war and for other than war.

These are positive directions that will strengthen Indonesia's place vis-à-vis other nations in the global context. In my view, however, there are also five major challenges facing Indonesian national defense ahead, which Minister Ryacudu will have to contend with. The time is short—only four years away from the 2019 election—and his tasks are monumental.

First, Indonesia needs top national leadership that understands overarching national strategy legacies and strategic threat assessments in the five mediums of engagement (land, sea, air, cyber, and space). As a nation, we must recognize that our national security interests extend far beyond our domestic homeland and our immediate neighbors and be keen in comprehending political phenomena not only in the Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific, but also in the equally-important Middle East that could affect the Indonesia's core national security interests.

Second, Indonesia's national defense sector must continually push for capacity development, an element which encompasses future national security leaders able to operate in the multinational, intergovernmental, interagency and inter service environment; joint capability and doctrine development; the combination of threat assessment capability, defense posture development and procurement innovation; and defense civilian manpower development.

Third, Indonesia needs to treat national security as a socio-politico-economic integrative system of the country, of which national defense is a fundamental pillar. For the Minister of Defense, understanding and guiding the complex nature of national security system and why all elements of national power are the integral part of the equation is crucial. As a senior military leader, Minister Ryacudu should use this advantage to reconstruct a culture of synergy, whole-of-government approach in order to facilitate an improved unity-of-effort and cooperation between military and non-military counterparts.

Fourth, as national security is meaningless without a significant and effective military capability, Indonesia must ensure the quality development of military power elements that cover manpower, firepower, mobility, staying power, integrating factors, and overarching imperatives – political will and leadership- affecting Indonesia's military capabilities. This necessitates a close working relationship with the current TNI Commander, General Gatot Nurmantyo, who previously served many years as Minister Ryacudu's direct subordinate.

Fifth, from the strategist's point of view, the incumbent Minister of Defense must know how to shape the strategic environment, and not merely react to it. The charisma and mastery

needed to manage the global, regional and national security environment is crucial for any Indonesian Minister of Defense. Every leader has his/her own strength and weakness. However, Minister Ryacudu has potential at his disposal, and he needs to be assisted, well-advised and supported, domestically and internationally.

Overall, the future of Indonesia's national defense prospect looks secure, especially as the incumbent Minister has enthusiasm to build on the strategic vision and architectural blueprint that has already been laid out by his two predecessors. Having a strong and effective national defense force is fundamental for the nation, and with constructive domestic and global support this fortification of Indonesia can be achieved. In the end, one thing is certain: a stable, democratic, and prosperous Indonesia with an effective national security establishment will definitely be a strategic asset in the complex global security environment.

Caveat: The opinion is the author's own, and does not necessarily reflect the view of any governmental institutions.