

The Role of the Indonesian Army in Maintaining the Sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the Indonesian Border Area With Timor Leste

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian Army (TNI AD) is responsible for maintaining security and defense in border areas, as well as preventing threats that could undermine the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). This research aims to analyze the role of TNI AD in safeguarding the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the border areas with Timor Leste. The research employs a qualitative method with descriptive analysis. The findings of this study indicate that the role of TNI AD in safeguarding the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the border areas with Timor Leste encompasses various aspects, including border security, military operations, defense diplomacy, infrastructure development, and community empowerment. TNI AD plays a crucial role in safeguarding the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in border areas through routine patrols, maintaining territorial integrity, and supporting infrastructure development. Additionally, TNI AD also contributes to ensuring the security and welfare of the communities in these border areas through community empowerment programs, including skills training, education, and economic assistance.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world with a very wide border area. One of Indonesia's border areas which has a strategic position is the border with Timor Leste. This region has an important role in maintaining the sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) because it is in direct contact with neighboring countries. Therefore, security and defense in border areas is a top priority for the Indonesian government.

Geographically, Indonesia's border area with Timor Leste is located on Timor Island, which is the 14th largest island in Indonesia. This area stretches for around 268 kilometers, crossing Belu Regency, Malaka Regency and Kupang Regency in East Nusa Tenggara Province (Rangkuti, 2021). Even though Timor Leste is a country that only became independent in 2002, bilateral relations between Indonesia and Timor Leste have been established for a long time, both in social, economic and security aspects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the main problems is that the border area is very wide and difficult to access (Arifin, 2022). The Indonesia-Timor Leste border region has diverse terrain, including mountains, wilderness, rivers and swamps. This makes it difficult for the Indonesian Army to carry out effective patrols and surveillance, especially in areas that are difficult to reach and prone to illegal activities such as smuggling of goods and people, as well as the movement of armed groups.

Second, problems related to infrastructure and resources. Some areas in border areas may lack adequate transportation and communication infrastructure, making it difficult for the Indonesian Army to provide a quick response to emergency situations or security threats. Apart from that, limited resources such as personnel, equipment and logistics can also limit TNI AD's operational effectiveness in border areas.

The third problem is social and cultural problems related to communities in border areas. Some border areas have unique social structures and beliefs, which can influence interactions between the Indonesian Army and local communities. Efforts to build good relationships and mutual trust between the Indonesian Army and the community are still considered insufficient to support operational success in border areas.

TNI AD is responsible for maintaining security and defense in border areas, as well as preventing threats that could threaten the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia (Djuyandi, 2018). The role of the Indonesian Army in maintaining the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the border area with Timor Leste covers various aspects, including security in the border area, military operations, defense diplomacy, infrastructure development and community empowerment.

The role of the Indonesian Army in maintaining the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the border area with Timor Leste is very important considering the difficult geographical conditions and potential threats that exist. With reliable military capabilities and good cooperation with related parties, TNI AD is expected to be able to maintain security and defense in border areas, as

well as prevent threats that could threaten the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia.

This research aims to analyze the role of the Indonesian Army in maintaining the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the border area with Timor Leste, as well as identifying challenges and efforts made to overcome them. Thus, it is hoped that this research can contribute to improving security and defense in border areas, as well as strengthening the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia.

The role of the Indonesian Army in maintaining sovereignty in the Indonesia-Timor Leste border region, with several existing challenges, needs to be carried out optimally. The problem formulation in this writing is: "What is the role of the Indonesian Army in maintaining the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia in the Indonesian Border Area with Timor Leste?"

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method which is a method. Qualitative research is a type of research that involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences. It focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the underlying reasons, motivations, and meanings behind particular phenomena. Qualitative research often involves methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and analyses of texts or visual materials. The author can ascertain the Indonesian Army's role in upholding the Republic of Indonesia's sovereignty in the Timor Leste border region by employing qualitative research methods. The first steps in creating a research design for a qualitative study conducted by researchers are deciding what will be investigated, selecting the best data collection technique, and locating the appropriate sources. Qualitative research could explore the historical and cultural factors that shape the relationship between Indonesia and Timor Leste, as well as the broader context of border disputes and territorial claims, to better understand the army's role in maintaining sovereignty.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Indonesian Army or TNI AD serves as the land warfare branch of the Indonesian National Armed Forces. With a rich history deeply rooted in the struggle for independence and the subsequent development of the nation, TNI AD plays a pivotal role in safeguarding Indonesia's sovereignty, maintaining internal security, and supporting national development efforts. To elucidate the multifaceted function of TNI AD, it's imperative to delve into its historical context, organizational structure, operational roles, and contributions to national security and development.

Today, TNI AD's organizational structure reflects its evolution over the decades into a modern, professional military force capable of addressing diverse security challenges. At its core, TNI AD comprises several specialized units and commands, including infantry, armored, artillery, engineering, and specific operational roles. Moreover, TNI AD operates within a broader framework of joint military operations, collaborating closely with the Indonesian Navy (TNI

AL) and Air Force (TNI AU) to ensure comprehensive defense capabilities across land, sea, and air domains.

In terms of operational roles, TNI AD is tasked with a wide array of responsibilities aimed at safeguarding Indonesia's territorial integrity, preserving internal stability, and supporting national development initiatives. One of its primary functions is territorial defense, which involves maintaining a credible deterrence posture to deter external aggression and defend Indonesia's borders against potential threats. This role encompasses a range of activities, including border patrolling, surveillance, and readiness exercises conducted in collaboration with other branches of the armed forces.

Additionally, TNI AD plays a crucial role in upholding internal security and stability, particularly in regions affected by insurgency, separatism, or other forms of internal unrest. Through counterinsurgency operations, counterterrorism efforts, and support for law enforcement agencies, TNI AD contributes to maintaining peace and order within Indonesia's borders, thereby safeguarding the well-being of its citizens and promoting national unity.

TNI AD plays an active role in responding to disasters and providing humanitarian aid. It utilizes its logistical resources and manpower to offer relief and support to communities impacted by natural calamities like earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis. This dual responsibility of safeguarding the nation and assisting its citizens during times of crisis highlights the TNI AD's dedication to addressing the needs of the Indonesian people and promoting resilience in the face of adversity.

TNI AD embodies the principles of national defense, internal security, and socio-economic development, serving as a steadfast guardian of Indonesia's sovereignty, stability, and prosperity. Through its multifaceted functions and unwavering dedication to duty, TNI AD remains a cornerstone of Indonesian society, embodying the spirit of patriotism, professionalism, and service to the nation. As Indonesia continues to navigate the complexities of the modern world, TNI AD stands ready to confront emerging challenges, uphold democratic values, and safeguard the aspirations of future generations.

The role of the Indonesian Army (TNI AD) in the Indonesia-Timor Leste border region has very important significance in maintaining security, state sovereignty, as well as supporting the development and welfare of the people in the region.

Security Situation at the Indonesia - Timor Leste border

The historical border formation resulting from Portuguese and Dutch colonization is inextricably linked to the border areas between Timor-Leste (RDTL) and Indonesia (Seran, 2018). The Portuguese established Timor-Leste as their colony in 1701 with the signing of the Contract of Paravinici, and the Dutch made similar claims to West Timor at about the same time. This marked the beginning of the conflict over this territory. Since then, a line has been drawn dividing the eastern portion of Timor, known as the Democratic Republic of

Timor-Leste, from the western portion, which is a part of Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province.

When Indonesia occupied East Timor (now Timor-Leste) in 1975, the history of relations between the two countries began. This occupation led to a protracted conflict characterized by multiple violent incidents and violations of human rights. Timor-Leste voted in favor of independence in a referendum conducted under UN supervision in 1999, which served as the catalyst for the growth of bilateral relations between the two nations.

Security problems emerged following Timor-Leste's independence, mainly with regard to borders, economic problems, and political stability. Given the possibility of conflict over maritime borders and natural resources, the lengthy border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste is an important issue. The primary goal of efforts to uphold stability and avert possible bilateral tensions is now border security.

Indonesia is dedicated to fostering positive and productive relations, as seen by its foreign policy towards Timor Leste. The two nations have made an effort to improve bilateral cooperation in a number of areas, such as the economy, health, and education. Multilateral platforms for greater communication and collaboration are created by Indonesia and Timor Leste's membership in regional groups like the East Asian Democratic Community (EAS) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Sahudiyono, 2019).

The native tribes of Timor Island are related by genealogical heritage. The close ties that bind the two communities that live on either side of the border give rise to a local interpretation of the border demarcation that is somewhat different from the political interpretation that the state authorities have created. The land border between Indonesia (RI) and Timor-Leste (RDTL) presents at least a number of challenges, such as the mental health of the populations in both countries, the introduction of cross-border passes (PLB) for locals, the delegation of authority in border management among different agencies, such as the Indonesian military (TNI), police (Polri), quarantine, customs, and immigration services, and the overlap of the national and regional governments' jurisdictions. This problem can be explained as follows: Firstly, the concept of a border is more relevant when viewed from a political lens, but it holds less significance when viewed from a socio-cultural perspective due to the socio-cultural connections between the tribes in Timor-Leste and West Timor, who share the same lineage. This can be interpreted as an absence of socio-cultural barriers between the West Timorese and East Timorese people. The socio-cultural relations of communities along the border (Oepoli-Oecussi) are characterized by the frequent cross-border movement of residents attending each other's traditional ceremonies held in both Amfoang-Kupang and Oecussi-Timor Leste (Sabaat, 2017).

Residents from both Indonesia and Timor-Leste do not use passports when crossing the border. Instead, they obtain certificates from their village and sub-district heads, which are then submitted to the border security task force (Satgas Pamtas). Secondly, there is an issue regarding the mental preparedness of both the Indonesian government and its people to accept the reality that East Timor is no longer part of Indonesia's unified territory since 1999. The government failed to adequately prepare for the circumstances that would arise if East Timor seceded from Indonesia. As a result, they seemed unprepared to handle the impact of East Timor's secession, such as the influx of refugees from East Timor to East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province. During the initial period of displacement, NTT residents were not ready to accept the presence of these refugees, and conversely, the displaced East Timorese were also unprepared to live in refugee camps and to become foreigners in NTT (Indonesia). Thirdly, there is a matter concerning the Cross-Border Pass (PLB), which has not yet been implemented. Considering the close socio-cultural and economic ties between the two communities, the PLB is seen as a solution for local residents who wish to visit their relatives or engage in trade with local residents across the border.

In this context, there are concerns about the potential infiltration of former militia members into Timor-Leste and the creation of political instability by exploiting the Cross-Border Pass (PLB). Border communities often question the notion of legality when they are accused of breaking the law for bringing in their own garden produce without proper documentation.

The border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste still faces several issues, one of which is economic underdevelopment, low human resource quality, limited public service infrastructure, and inadequate security force supervision, resulting in rampant violations occurring in the border area, such as smuggling and illegal cross-border activities that threaten Indonesia's national security. Resolving these problems certainly requires proper involvement from the government, institutions, and society.

Two organizations have been directly in charge of managing the border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste: the Ministry of Home Affairs-coordinated Indonesia-Timor-Leste Joint Border Committee (JBC) and the Ministry of Defense and Bakosurtanal-coordinated Indonesia-Timor-Leste Border Demarcation and Regulation Technical Sub-Commission. The Belu Regency, North Central Timor, Kupang Regency, and Malaka Regency are the four districts in East Nusa Tenggara Province that are crossed by the 268.8 km land border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. This border is divided into two sectors: the West Sector, located in Kupang Regency and North Middle East Regency, directly borders the Oecussi District, an enclave area of Timor-Leste, for 119.7 km, and

the Eastern Sector, or main sector, in Belu Regency and Malaka Regency, directly borders Covalima District and Bobonaro District in Timor-Leste for 149.1 km.

Most of the land boundaries between the two countries are natural boundaries in the form of watersheds and thalwegs (deepest parts of rivers). Crossing the Indonesian border with Timor-Leste on Timor Island refers to the agreement between the Dutch East Indies Government and Portugal in 1904, the Permanent Court Award (PCA) in 1914, and the agreement between the Indonesian government and Timor-Leste on April 8, 2005.

The first meeting of the Indonesia-United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET) Technical Sub-Committee on Border Demarcation and Regulation (TSCBDR) marked the beginning of border talks between Indonesia and Timor-Leste in 2001. The Provisional Agreement, which was signed in Dili on June 8, 2005, by the foreign ministers of the two countries, establishes 907 coordinate points as the state boundary between the Republic of Indonesia and Timor-Leste. The survey teams from both countries have not yet finished measuring or surveying all of the unresolved segments.

To date, demarcation efforts have involved installing 42 boundary pillars in the Eastern Sector and 8 boundary pillars in the Western Sector. Meanwhile, approximately 95% of the total boundary length has been delineated (traced). Additionally, Cross-Border Demarcation and Regulation Facility (CBDRF) activities and joint mapping have been conducted along the boundary lines. The issue with the Indonesia-Timor-Leste border is the discrepancy between the agreement stated in the legal basis (1904 treaty and 1914 Permanent Court Award) and the reality on the ground, as well as the understanding of the people residing around the border area. Some indigenous people have different opinions about the border, and the explanations given by locals near the border between the two countries occasionally contradict one another. They traditionally see borders as established by various tribes within border communities, passing down knowledge from one generation to the next. However, the claims made by these tribes are unsupported by the available data and cannot be discussed at the table between the two nations. The Western sector, particularly the regions of Manusasi and Naktuka, is where this issue is most noticeable.

Security Supervision on the Indonesia - Timor Leste border

TNI AD is responsible for supervision and security in the Indonesia-Timor Leste border area. This includes routine patrols, monitoring illegal activities, law enforcement, and addressing security threats in the area. The following is a report on TNI AD operational activities in border areas related to monitoring and important activities in maintaining the sovereignty of the Indonesia-Timor Leste border:

1. Routine Patrol

The Indonesian Army carries out routine patrols along the border to prevent smuggling of prohibited goods, illegal trade and other criminal activities. For example, TNI AD operational data can show the number of patrols carried out each month, patrol routes, and patrol results such as the arrest of illegal perpetrators.

2. Law enforcement

TNI AD is also involved in law enforcement in border areas. They can provide assistance to authorities in apprehending cross-border criminals. Data on the number of arrests and trials of criminals in border areas will reflect the effectiveness of the Indonesian Army in law enforcement.

3. Overcoming Security Threats The Indonesian Army has an important role in overcoming security threats in border areas, including the potential for infiltration by armed groups and terrorist activities. Data on efforts to prevent and overcome security threats, such as raids on armed group bases, can provide a concrete picture of TNI AD's efforts to maintain border security.

4. Distribution of Logistics Assistance

Data regarding the amount of logistical assistance distributed, including food, clean water and other emergency equipment, can show the positive impact that TNI AD has achieved in helping communities affected by disasters.

5. Medical Services

The Indonesian Army often provides medical services to victims of natural disasters in border areas. Data on the number of patients received and the type of medical services provided can illustrate TNI AD's contribution to saving lives and restoring public health.

TNI AD Efforts in Regional Cooperation and Military Diplomacy

TNI AD plays an important role in strengthening regional cooperation and military diplomacy with neighboring countries, including Timor Leste. This includes the exchange of intelligence information, joint military exercises, and cooperation in handling cross-border security issues. The following are some of TNI AD's activities in carrying out its duties in protecting the sovereignty of Indonesia's border with Timor Leste:

- a. Carrying out joint military exercises between TNI AD and the military forces of Timor Leste and other neighboring countries can demonstrate TNI AD's commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and building mutual trust.
- b. TNI AD is also involved in exchanging intelligence information with military forces in neighboring countries to monitor illegal activities in border areas. Data on intelligence information shared and actions taken as a result of intelligence cooperation can illustrate the effectiveness of TNI AD regional cooperation.
- c. Conduct bilateral negotiations and joint patrols to resolve unresolved land and sea boundary issues.
- d. Build and modernize the infrastructure of border posts and patrol roads, including improving mobility facilities and surveillance sensors.

- e. Carrying out socialization and empowerment of border communities so that they are not involved in illegal cross-border activities.

Apart from that, TNI AD also plays a role in infrastructure and social development in border areas, which aims to improve community welfare and strengthen state sovereignty. The Indonesian Army is often involved in building public infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools and health facilities in border areas. TNI AD also carries out community empowerment programs, including skills training, education and economic assistance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Indonesia's border region with Timor Leste is located on Timor Island, which is the 14th largest island in Indonesia, which has various challenges in safeguarding its sovereignty. TNI AD, as TNI AD, plays an important role as guardian of the sovereignty of the country's borders, needs to increase routine surveillance and patrols, maintain territorial sovereignty, and provide support for infrastructure development. With this, TNI AD not only maintains the sovereignty of the country's borders but also plays a role in ensuring the security and welfare of the people in the border areas. TNI AD also carries out community empowerment programs, including skills training, education and economic assistance.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

In writing this article the researcher realizes that there are still many shortcomings in terms of language, writing, and form of presentation considering the limited knowledge and abilities of the researchers themselves. Therefore, for the perfection of the article, the researcher expects constructive criticism and suggestions from various parties.

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