Talking about Ideal Civil-Military Relationship: Comparation Cases between Military in Indonesia and India in Dealing with Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The relationship between civil and military has many dimensions, and this relationship may be ideal. This article uses Huntington and Feaver’s preferences to explain the ideal civil-military relationship in India and Indonesia through case studies of handling the COVID-19 pandemic. The choice of the two countries was due to Indonesia and India showing the dynamics of the relationship between civilians and the military from being quite harsh to be ideal. The ideal civil-military relationship can be described as a military subject to civilian control. However, this does not mean that the civilian government has total power over the military; Instead, the control in question illustrates that the military is a professional institution and is ready to protect its citizens. Civilians no longer see the military as being in the position of who will guard the guardian, but how to control your guardian so that there is no escalation of conflict or coups between the military and civilians. Through these ideal civil and military relations, the military-assisted handling of the pandemic has yielded satisfactory results for both countries.

Key Words: civil-military relationship, handling pandemic, Indonesia, India.
INTRODUCTION

The military has many roles in the study of international relations, such as a driving factor in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, diplomacy, and world peace (Luerdi, 2021). The relationship between civil and military is also one of the studies in the International Relations discipline, especially in this modern era. Military acts as a national defense force to protect states from various security threats. In carrying out its duties and responsibilities, the military refers to the policies and decisions of the state or civilians. Its primary role is to maintain state sovereignty and territorial integrity. In addition, the military in national security has a role in security operations of a combat or non-combat operation (Irfansyah, 2019). Meanwhile, the military in the international system has more complex roles among the state. States with “mature” democratic systems like the United States have more complex dynamics in the relationship between the military and civilians than simply using the military as a means of national defense (Feaver 1999, 216).

In this article, the authors will discuss the military's role with civilians directly involved in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This article takes a case study of Indonesia and India. Indonesia and India are the two countries discussed because they are located in the same region, the Asian continent. According to the World Health Organization, Indonesia and India are the epicenters of spreading the Covid-19 virus on the Asian continent. The spike in Covid-19 infection cases in Indonesia and India reached 2.98 million and 31.25 million cases until mid-2021 (CNBC, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia and India has shifted the government's priorities in national activities and the dynamics of the two governments. The government has been focusing and mobilizing energy and costs to address public health issues during critical times like 2020. Governments in each country must take strategic measures, such as enacting large-scale social restriction policies and regional isolation (Ristyawati, 2020). The existing policies are expected to become anticipatory, preventative, and repressive measures in overcoming the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The Indonesian government has implemented policies about health issues as stated in Law Number 6 of 2018 about Health Quarantine. This policy is supported by forming a Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling Covid-19 collaboration with several stakeholders such as the Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian National Army (TNI). The TNI, as a military and state security force, participates in handling Covid-19 cases, which means that the military not only takes part in physical...
warfare activities but also participates in Military Operations Other than War or OMSP (Sukatri et al., 2021).

Indonesia and India have engaged the military to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak. However, this current condition also goes into the context of civil-military relations, which is the military participates in managing and 'intervening' in civilian affairs with a roadmap determined for the state’s national interest. In this condition, the military does not fully formulate policies or implementation but partially assists civilians, especially health workers overwhelmed in handling patients. There are many pros and cons arguments against this condition. We cannot leave the feeling of fear of the dual function or dwifungsi of ABRI as in the past or full military intervention in civilians, which reduces the work performance of each party, and many more. In this article, the authors will discuss civil-military relations, not only about the taking over of a civilian government by the military but also military-civilian relations, which are not marked by violence such as a coup d’etat.

**METHOD**

This article uses qualitative analysis in the discussion. The authors will analyze the qualitative data obtained and become supporting data in explaining the phenomena raised in this article. The author's design explanation is to explain the relationship between civilians and the military. Through this interpretation, the author obtains the dependent and independent variables that explain the civil-military relationship used in this article. Furthermore, this explanation will be strengthened by explaining the military's role in handling the pandemic in the pre-Covid-19 pandemic era to support the explanation of the military's role in handling the pandemic itself. By considering the descriptive model in article writing, the preparation of the article begins with an explanation of the relationship between civilians and the military, an explanation about the role of the military in the pandemic era, and then an explanation of how the military in India and Indonesia play a fairly active role in handling the pandemic.

**Civil and Military Relationship**

The state almost always begins with the formation of the group's needs. Plato's idea is that a state cannot emerge if its groups do not need to form a state (Hall 1981). In its development, Plato explains that everyone has their function; Producer, Helper, and Ruler. By not emphasizing Plato's thinking, we can say that it has groups or parts that each functions in its dynamics. Hall (1981) explains in his book that Plato had a tendency not to suggest democracy as an idealistic form of government, but that does not mean that democratic forms of government are not applied today.
Because of the evidence, the aristocratic state that Plato considered was the ideal form of state has thrown by the French Revolution, which wanted a democratic state form. Democratic states are built based on the people, by the people, and for the people, a basic idea to build based on groups.

As a democratic state, it is certainly not expected that people will develop and protect themselves to the point of tyranny, a form of state that is not ideal, according to Plato. It is necessary to be part of the community itself that has a protective function, especially those in the policymakers. The military is present in society as a functioning part, including democracy. The relationship between civilian and military is quite interesting; on the one hand, the military was formed to protect its constituents. On the other hand, the military must retain the power of coercion to provide protection (Feaver 1999, 214). Problems can arise when the military’s core values are not aligned with liberal democratic ideas (Burk 2002, 2). This idea is considered when explaining the relationship between civilians and the military in the dynamics of national life. Samuel Huntington’s thought is one of the popular thoughts in the study of International Relations, which discusses civil and military relations. Through his writings, Huntington asserts that professional military groups must grasp the demands of warfare and their oversight and be prepared to fight in the event of orders from superiors (Burk 2002, 13).

Traditionally, the relationship between civilians and the military is very typical with the show of power from the military to civilians. Therefore, many explanations of civilian-military relations are described by coups as a form of describing how the military applies its power to civilians (Feaver 1999, 217). However, we can describe civilian-military relations not only through a coup. Feaver (1999) explains that the coup is one of the dependent variables in explaining civilian-military relations. Adapted from Desch’s (1999) article, Feaver explains at least five kinds of dependent variables when explaining the relationship between civilians and the military, namely: coups, military influence, civil and military friction, military compliance, also delegation and supervision. It is also important to pay attention to how the independent variables work in this phenomenon to determine how the civil-military relationship is in a particular case or state. For example, the phenomenon of military involvement in civilian activities, such as the handling of Covid-19, has an independent variable that affects one of the dependent variables used as the basis of analysis in this article.

The independent variable that can be seen in the military’s involvement in handling Covid-19 in Indonesia and India is the military’s influence which is still large among the civilians, even though civilians are still holding the reins of government. It is
undeniable that both Indonesia and India are countries that practice democracy in their system of government. However, the military’s position is irreplaceable and the military is seen as a professional institution that is expert in its field. Both India and Indonesia have military strength that can not be doubted at the international level. This condition drives the fourth dependent variable, military compliance, as described by Feaver in his writings, which can explain why the military has a prominent role in handling Covid-19 in those two countries. Compliance with the military can explain the phenomenon of military-civilian relations at the level of a democratic state, when civilian needs must still be considered. When military officials can have a good position in policymaking, then civilian interests can be controlled through a military interest mechanism following the needs of the state. It should also be understood that the ideal military position is when the military remains under civilian control (Kardi 2014, 235).

Researchers of traditional civil-military relations illustrate that the relationship between the two entities is thick with the nuances of professionalism from the military that is related to the control by the civilian government (Ringgi 2014, 307). Nevertheless, Huntington has not seen many countries that are not like the United States in of country background. Thus, there is a gap in explaining the relation between civil and military for democracies that have their origins in monarchies or countries such as the former Soviet Union. This fact is the basis for the explanation of the intended independent variable. Because civil and military relations are described professionally, plus military capabilities are "more capable in the field" compared to civilians, the relationship between these two can be more harmonious than the narrative provided by Huntington throughout his book (Kardi 2014, 241). Despite putting aside the "harmonious" relationship, military professionalism can be relied on in handling the pandemic. Like what happened in West Africa when Ebola broke out, the military’s role can be relied on to deal with the outbreak. Scott et al. (2014) mention that as a professional, the military tends to continue to learn and participate in the dynamics that occur in society.
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Indonesian Military**

Indonesia has a long history of developing military forces. The military's track record has been filled with much political turmoil since independence day, as a result of this, the military considers itself as the only force that capable of ensuring order and stability of the state (Lee, 2000). The military was fully involved in politics in the Old Order and New Order eras. The incident was known as the dual function or *dwifungsi* of ABRI, in which the military was involved in the role of defense and security as well as in the state's political affairs.

Throughout the Orde Lama era, when the Indonesian government began, the military had played a role in the nation’s struggle. However, the military moves with politics, so leadership is duality. The Indonesian National Army (TNI), which was formed automatically, took on defending independence after a long journey of the struggle for independence, the proclamation of independence to guarding the government running at that time (Leni, 2013). In the Orde Baru era, the military also enlivened the state’s political order. The military is involved in various activities, such as being part of the House of Representatives (DPR), participating in executive institutions for those who are still actively serving in the military and those who are retired, participating in modernization functions through ABRI entering villages or *masuk desa* and other activities. As a result, the military holds great power in politics and government as a power elite (Leni, 2013).

In its actions in politics, the government began to use the military to carry out terror for security reasons, for example, in the shooting of criminals in the 1980s by a mysterious shooter known as *petrus*. This action allegedly involved the Yogyakarta Military District Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Hasbi. The military also has a track record of violence due to being involved in silencing the New Order opposition movement, which students and the press mostly fill. The protest by the opposition related to the economic policy implemented by the Order Baru government, namely foreign investment. The government, which rejected protests, asked the military and police to reduce the conflict, resulting in many casualties and property losses (Tirto.id, 2020).

After that, during Reformasi era, the military moved under the civilian control of the Indonesian government as a democratic state. As a result, civilian officials will decide all government decisions, including national security, starting from determining strategy, operations to be carried out, defense tactics, and so on.
Indian Military

The Indian military has experienced many conflicts with the government and civilians. Like what happened in the Kashmir conflict. In 1996, India was in the year of parliamentary elections. Militant groups fighting for independence in the disputed territory have vowed to boycott the election. Indian security forces play a role in fighting militant groups, tightening guards, and executing militant leaders. Members of the military forces in this incident caused fear and concern due to the cases of gross violations of human rights, torture, executions, and so forth (Human Rights Watch, 1996).

The military and armed militant groups exist in two different camps, causing prolonged conflict, and the victims are civilians. General elections at that time increased the occurrence of conflict. Even the military as the party proven to have committed violations – of human rights – in carrying out their duties were not prosecuted or executed in court. The Indian government as the authorities also did not do much to address the cases of violations by the army and security forces. The heaviest penalties are generally limited to dismissal or suspension from duty. The Indian military often tries to close the continuation of cases by offering bribes to threatening victims and their families (Human Rights Watch, 1996).

In different periods, the role of the Indian military has also been in a position of conflict. India's 61st anniversary of independence and democracy in August 2008 was celebrated with the 50th anniversary of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). This law gives the broad military powers to shoot, kill, make arrests or searches without a warrant, and so on, causing unrest in the society. Military work under this law lasted for decades, with the emergence of crimes without accountability. India continues to be pounded by the issue of human rights violations by applicable laws, and even this case has attracted international attention. The military's role in Indian society was not well developed but instead spawned many violent incidents with no way out. In the end, the civilians as victims did not get security and justice from the military and the government (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Military records in both countries have drawn many pros and cons arguments until today. People are in a state of fear due to past trauma but are also beginning to open themselves up to the military's role in the present. The militaries in Indonesia and India currently focus on national security and defense in all sectors. The military can operate in war or non-war activities. The state's existence and military power...
can be used to approach the community, especially in health crises such as the global Covid-19 pandemic.

**Indonesia’s Military Corps: Getting Closer to the Society**

The TNI as a state defense force, participates in carrying out security duties related to many people. The security here means health security during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Indonesian government involving the TNI in OMSP or operations other than war was the government’s first effort during a pandemic (Menko & Fitri, 2020). This idea is based on Military Aid to The Civil Authority (MACA). The threat of state security and defense that continues to evolve and transform allows the military to step down in a civilian policy. Military Operations Other Than War (OMSP) Subject to Constitution No. 34 of 2004, Article 20 paragraph 2 states that the purpose of OMSP is to support the national interest under statutory regulations.

According to Sari, Sulistyani, and Pertiwi (2020), there are several roles of the TNI in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

**Health sector**

The TNI has reallocated a budget of Rp 196,8 billion to help Covid-19 issues. This budget comes from the budget needs of the Indonesian National Armed Forces Headquarters (TNI Headquarters), the Indonesian Army National Army (TNI AD), the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL), and the Indonesian Air Force (TNI AU). The budget is used to procure Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), health kits, personal protective equipment (PPE), swabs, smart helmets, isolation rooms, vitamins, incentives for health workers, and other types of equipment.

Besides that, the TNI also participated in providing Covid-19 referral hospitals such as the Gatot Subroto Army Hospital and Mintoedra Hospital. TNI hospitals will also be provided medical equipment to expand the scale of routine checks of Covid-19 patients. In addition, the TNI also provides tents and a standby post for isolation for infected people so that initial treatment occurs quickly and swiftly. Furthermore, it provides a proper place to help with the pandemic. Finally, it provides medical personnel and support personnel to treat Covid-19 patients, such as general practitioners and specialists, nurses, and additional health workers to non-medical personnel.

One of the difficulties experienced by health workers and the government in handling this pandemic is distribution. The help, especially the distribution of
personal protective equipment (PPE) is very much needed by health workers in tracing Covid-19 sufferers and also handling them. The TNI is a tool that helps the government to distribute PPE to many areas that have limited medical equipment. The distribution is carried out by land to be done quickly. Recorded in April 2020, 352,450 PPE was successfully distributed to 34 provinces in Indonesia. Not only that, the TNI also participates in tracing and tracking, quarantining, and research & development (R&D) with universities in terms of making massive vaccines at the Military Health Laboratory.

**Security Sector**

The TNI has established 4 Integrated Joint Task Forces or Kogasgabpad in 4 areas consisting of (1) Wisma Atlet Jakarta COVID-19 Emergency Hospital led by Pangdam Jaya, (2) Kogasgabpad Natuna led by Pangkoopsau I, (3) Kogasgabpad Sebaru Island led by Pangkoarmada I, (4) Kogasgabpad Special Hospital for Galang Island Infection led by Pangdam 1 Bukit Barisan. The TNI has formulated the worst-case scenario in the security sector and how to handle it if the created scenario occurs. In this condition, the TNI estimates that if the pandemic does not end or if the curve does not decrease, then there is the possibility of socio-economic chaos in society that will lead to violent acts such as demonstrations. So, there is a treatment scheme that has been prepared if the worst-case scenario happens.

The security sector will continue the role until the Indonesian government declares a new normal condition. The government deployed 340,000 TNI and Polri troops in 4 provinces and 25 regencies/cities in West Java, DKI Jakarta, West Sumatra, and Gorontalo to supervise the implementation of health protocols in the society. For example, TNI and Polri troops will be placed in markets, terminals, bus stops, shopping centers, and so on with the hope that the civilians will be disciplined and still productive and safe from the transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

**Socio-Economic Sector**

In the social and economic sector, the TNI plays a role in distributing food and social assistance to people in need, such as those affected by the termination of employment (PHK) and those laid off without income. The TNI, in collaboration with the National Police, also provides public kitchens in several locations such as Tamansari, Kota Tua, South Tambun, Tanjung Priok, Kemayoran, and several other areas in the Jakarta area. Provided communal kitchens are prepared by TNI and Polri officials for needy residents. The TNI is also involved in the rice ATM program to help the civilians during the pandemic. This program is good because it is
intended for people affected by Covid-19 but not registered as recipients of government assistance.

The activity that most demonstrates the role of the TNI in handling the pandemic, according to the author, is the participation of the TNI in the implementation of vaccines. Vaccines are an effort made by the international community in dealing with Covid-19 to establish group immunity or herd immunity so that viruses that mutate very quickly can be controlled by the immune system in the human body. In this case, the government has targeted the provision of vaccines to 181 million Indonesians, or about 70 percent of the total population of Indonesia.

The number of troops deployed by the TNI to run the vaccine program is 9,176 health workers. This program is followed by training of trainers (ToT) by health workers; even 164 TNI military officers who have specializations in the health sector were appointed to participate in the field implementing the vaccination program. Many troops were deployed in the hope that the target would be reached quickly. The TNI also helps oversee the distribution process of the Covid-19 vaccine so it can arrive safely. However, even though this program has good performance, the implementation in the field still reaps many misleading counter-narratives so there are obstacles in reaching the vaccination target within the specified timeframe. So, the TNI must also inform the civilians about the vaccine disinformation and the vaccination program.

**India’s Military Corps: Building the Infrastructure in Handling the Pandemic**

Since the first wave of the pandemic occurred and was followed by the potential of the second wave in India, the state's government has deployed military forces to take part in handling Covid-19. One of them is the establishment of several emergency field hospitals. With the number of infected patients increasing every day, India is experiencing a shortage of medical facilities such as space in hospitals, oxygen, and medical and non-medical assistance. Army military officers thoroughly handle the war against this virus. 1.5 million trained and vaccinated personnel are deployed across the country. However, according to General Deepak Kapoor, as a former Army Commander, the existing military officers were not optimally deployed by the government. This issue has impacted Covid-19 cases in India for a long time.

The Indian military has a role in setting up the health infrastructure quickly; they even turned a stadium into an emergency hospital. A Signal Corps unit was also
formed to manage the latest information, such as setting up an emergency command and control room. The Indian military also distributes medicines to areas in need and keeps track of medical supplies. The Movement Control Office (MCO) was deployed to assist in planning, coordinating, and controlling military movements in operations, training, and dissemination of health kits throughout the region. The army in other areas was mobilized to set up places that produced new oxygen as a supply for the civilians. The armed forces have around 13,000 officers, including doctors, nurses, and support workers. However, only 600 medical personnel were deployed to deal with this Covid-19 problem. The military also built 4 Covid-19 referral hospitals in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, and Varanasi. Defense scientists from Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences or INMAS have also developed an anti-Covid therapeutic application of 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG).

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between civilians and the military is relatively rigid through civilian control, as stated by Huntington. Huntington’s emphasis that needs to be understood in this article is how the military works professionally through an idealistic civilian control mechanism. Both Indonesia and India have a long history of civil and military relations, but that does not mean the military can take over civilian power. Instead, the separation of powers between the military and civilians gave the view that the military is a professional institution that is ready to carry out its duties, whether related to violence or not.

Indonesia and India are both aware that cases of Covid-19 transmission in their countries have soared. Since the first three months, Indonesia and India have been overshadowed by the potential for a second wave of Covid-19. There are different responses between the Indonesian and Indian governments in the two comparisons or case studies above. The Indonesian government mobilized many military troops to contribute in various sectors under the government policies to fulfill the national interest – health –. However, with so many counter-arguments from the civilians, the Indonesian government continues to provide the best efforts to handle it, like a comprehensive vaccination program in Indonesia.

The description of the military institution’s role in both countries related to handling the pandemic depicts the ideal civil-military relationship and how the military operates professionally. When the civilian government is having difficulty dealing with a pandemic that requires much energy, the military is present as an institution supporting the state without involving politics. The military's
involvement in handling the pandemic should be a turning point in the depiction of the ideal civil-military relationship, showing military compliance in the right place.

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