

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Indonesia has been independent for seventy-nine years, yet much of its historical legacy remains unexplored. The golden generation that fought for Indonesia's independence experienced pivotal moments that we must honor and remember. One of these key figures, Colonel A.H. Nasution, provided a profound reflection on the concept of Total People's Defense, a strategy we still employ today. In his writings, Nasution emphasized:

"We cannot claim to be fighting for the people's interests if, in practice, our actions disturb or, worse, wound the hearts of the people" (Nasution, 1965).

This statement underscores the importance of aligning national defense efforts with the well-being and trust of the citizens, a principle still relevant in maintaining the unity and strength of the nation today. Nasution reminds us that the struggle for the people extends beyond fighting colonial powers it also encompasses how a nation treats its citizens in maintaining sovereignty and security. Today, we must question whether the current Total People Defense System defense system truly embodies these principles. The government should conduct its governance and defense practices without harming or oppressing its people. However, in recent years, widespread distrust in the government has become apparent, as seen in various protests and criticisms of leadership behavior. This growing dissatisfaction risks weakening the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the people, making it difficult to implement total people defense strategies without public trust.

Despite these challenges, General A.H. Nasution's writings remain the foundation of Indonesia's total people defense system, which is still in

place today. The concept of “*semesta*” emphasizes that national defense is not only the responsibility of the military but also involves the people and natural resources. This reflects the engagement of all elements of the nation in safeguarding independence. Through this concept, we collectively defend the freedom we have achieved.

The defense strategies we designed in the past were often based on geopolitical, technological, and threat contexts that differ from today’s situation. Currently, we face more complex threats, both domestically and internationally. The rapid development of technology and the evolving global dynamics also add to the challenges we must address. Therefore, it is essential to adapt our defense strategies to remain relevant in the face of these new threats.

In response to these developments, the government has strengthened the legal framework supporting the total people defense system. According to Article 1, Paragraph 2 of Law No. 3 of 2022, the national defense system must be universal, involving all citizens, territories, and national resources. The government must prepare this system early and implement it comprehensively, in an integrated, focused, and sustainable manner, to uphold national sovereignty, safeguard territorial integrity, and protect the safety of the entire nation from various threats. This law underscores that, despite evolving challenges, the principle of total people defense remains a cornerstone of national security.

Border disputes between nations still present unresolved conflicts (Kemhan RI, 2015). Empirical evidence shows that territorial disputes are one of the main causes of war. Ongoing conflicts and crises can exacerbate traditional threats. As an archipelagic country with significant geographic exposure, Indonesia has twelve outermost small islands that require priority management.

The pattern of contemporary armed conflict has shifted significantly with the advancement of military technology. Territorial control is no longer achieved through direct confrontation but through indirect, nonlinear means, often taking the form of proxy wars. We see a trend toward the use of asymmetric warfare, as demonstrated by conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, and parts of the Middle East. Similarly, the rise of propaganda, fueled by rapid technological and informational advancements in cyberspace, poses an increasing challenge.

Contemporary conflicts also involve internal strife, such as separatist movements in regions with complex interests. The divide-and-conquer tactic, known as "*divide et impera*" is considered one of the greatest threats to Indonesian unity. According to Presidential Decree No. 8 of 2021, the rise of primordialism and regional egoism is seen as a social and cultural threat. The political dimension highlights the danger of national disintegration through anarchic democratic movements and separatist forces, especially amid growing public distrust of the government. This situation can create vulnerabilities to existing threats.

To protect the country's goals, as stated in the 1945 Constitution, and its national interests, a comprehensive national defense system has been established, known as the Total People Defense System or Total Defense System. This system integrates military and non-military defense efforts, building a strong and respected defense capability with a high deterrent effect. As mandated by Article 5 of Law No. 3 of 2002 on National Defense, the function of this defense is to realize and maintain the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia as a unified and comprehensive defense entity.

This unified defense is the design of a national defense system based on strategies that reflect the strength, capabilities, and deployment of defense forces (Kemhan RI, 2015). It needs to be interpreted through an analysis of Indonesia's strength and capabilities as an independent nation within a historical framework. Dewey, as cited by Mann, Gordon, and

Macleod (2009), emphasized the importance of reflection as an active, continuous, and careful consideration of beliefs or knowledge that supports actions for the future.

Reflection, as a higher-level thinking process, helps form new beliefs or knowledge to face similar future situations. In simpler Latin terms, "reflection" means "to bend" or "to turn back," a metacognitive process that delves into defense strengths. In this context, "to turn back" is a practical way to reflect on Indonesia's defense capabilities in shaping a cohesive and comprehensive defense system.

In the Total People Defense System defense context, Indonesia's strength can be seen through the evolution of its defense doctrines from past to present. These doctrines not only provide strategic guidance for the military but also ensure a framework that integrates all elements of the nation in efforts to defend state sovereignty. In Indonesia, defense doctrine has evolved in response to changing threat contexts and geopolitical dynamics.

Indonesia's defense doctrine transformation has been shaped by the complex interaction between strategic thought development and various influencing factors. Between 1945 and 1965, the doctrine underwent significant changes, leading to the emergence of the "defense circle" concept. This laid the foundation for a defense and security system known as the Total People's War (Widjajanto, 2010).

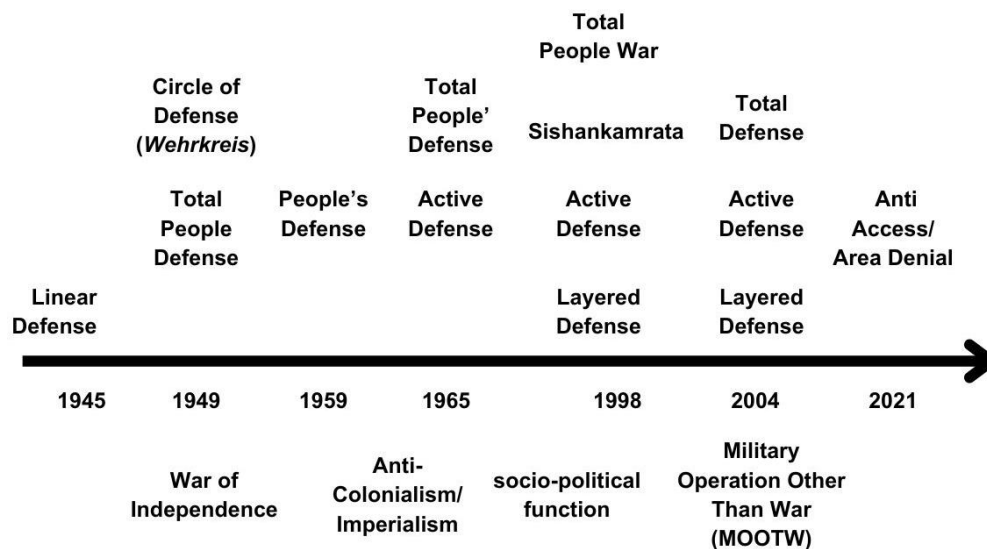


Figure 1.1 Evolution of Defense Doctrine in Indonesia  
Source: (Widjajanto, 2010)

The emergence of the Total People's Defense concept aligns with the development of the circle of defense or Wehrkreise between 1945 and 1949. The roots of this universal defense strategy stemmed from deep strategic thinking during Indonesia's circle defense or Wehrkreise, a tactic reinforced by General A.H. Nasution's writings, in which he stated that guerrilla warfare is essentially Total People's War (Nasution, 1965). This period marked the peak of Indonesia's guerrilla war, inspiring the modern concept of Total People's Defense, as referenced in Presidential Regulation No. 8 of 2021, which acknowledges the influence of guerrilla warfare in shaping the current national defense strategy.

After the first Dutch military aggression in 1947, there were clear indications of a possible second military offensive. This forced Indonesian defense leaders to think critically about how to counter future Dutch forces. One of the most pressing concerns was that the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) were severely outgunned compared to the Dutch. In response, a strategic approach was developed to form defense pockets, known as the Wehrkreise strategy. This strategy was adapted from a similar system used

by Germany during World War II, with its primary objective being to prevent Indonesia from suffering a total defeat. While the strategy risked territorial losses, its advantage lay in buying time for the TNI to regroup and consolidate its forces (Nurbantoro et al., 2022).

The Wehrkreise strategy was chosen because the TNI was not in a position to launch a frontal assault or maintain a linear defense, as demonstrated by the First Dutch Military Aggression, which significantly weakened Indonesia's defense capabilities. This revealed the gap between conventional territorial defense expectations and the realities on the ground, necessitating guerrilla warfare and more flexible tactics. To restore morale and consolidate military strength, a territorial defense strategy involving civilian participation was adopted.

Tactical Order No. 1 of 1948, issued on November 9, 1948, outlined Indonesia's defense strategy, which included:

1. Not implementing linear defense as seen during the First Dutch Military Aggression.
2. Attempting to slow down every enemy advance, conducting total evacuation (involving escorts and civilians from areas to be occupied by the enemy), and implementing total scorched-earth tactics.
3. Creating pockets of resistance in every military sub-district.
4. Assigning migrating troops to infiltrate back into their areas of origin and form resistance pockets.

To achieve this goal, several conditions must be met. First, leadership must be completely in the hands of regional heads. Then, the Military District Command (KODM), the Military District Command (KDM), the Military Governor, and the Commander of the Island Commander (at that time, Java and Sumatra) were formed. The National Defense Council and the Regional Defense Council were abolished. In addition, the military's

political stance is one of the firm non-cooperation and non-contact with the Dutch government.

To implement this order, the tactical order attachment details the experience of the Siliwangi Division during the First Dutch Military Aggression in West Java. The conclusion was that the Dutch invasion could not be stopped, and the most feasible approach would be to slow or deter it through harassment and scorched earth tactics, buying as much time and space as possible for the evacuation of troops, equipment, officials, and civilians into pockets of internal resistance. The essence of this resistance, according to the appendix, is guerrilla warfare. This war is aggressive against the enemy and constructive in building the de facto authority of the Republic of Indonesia, both military and civilian, by creating as many pockets of resistance as possible.

The basic basis of Tactical Command No. 1 was the implementation of Total People's War. In principle, this war involves the active participation of the people and directs all the energy and wealth of the people to achieve victory. The destruction of the enemy is not only intended to eliminate its military power but also to annihilate all its political, social, and economic organizations and institutions.

This concept was initiated by the National Defense Council through the issuance of Defense Council Regulation No. 19/1946. This regulation regulates the accommodation of the people's militia to organize themselves into the Reserve Corps. The explanatory part of the regulation states that the Reserve Corps is required to participate in the defense against the Netherlands by implementing the strategy of "Total and Organized Defense." The concept of involving the people as a reserve force was reinforced in the Defence Council Decree No. 85/1947 on People's Defence. This decision defines "Total People Defence" as "all levels of society, both civil servants and individuals or private entities throughout

Indonesia, must participate in the resistance to the maximum extent possible, each in their own work and duties" (Widjajanto, 2010).

Indonesia has adopted a defense system based on the No. 1 Martial Law, which incorporates total elements such as populism, territoriality, and completeness. This system has been a strong foundation to strengthen Indonesia's defense to date. However, questions arise about how these basic concepts remain relevant in developing defense models in an era where warfare is increasingly taking place in non-traditional forms.

These challenges illustrate a significant gap between the ideal defense doctrine, which demands the effectiveness of total people's defense, and the reality, where available resources are often insufficient to address these threats. This gap reflects weaknesses in military planning and resource management and logistics. Even a well-formulated doctrine will not be effective without adequate infrastructure and a robust logistics system. This central issue must be addressed in order to achieve effective and resilient national defense.

Therefore, modernization of military infrastructure, increasing logistics capacity, and adaptation to non-conventional threats should be prioritized in the national defense strategy. These are important steps to bridge the gap between ideal expectations and realities on the ground, ensuring that the Total People's Defense system functions effectively in addressing increasingly complex and dynamic threats. In addition to developing military bases on small islands, improving surveillance and communication technology, and strengthening logistics systems to operate in challenging geographical and weather conditions are part of the necessary solutions (Arreguín-Toft, 2001).

Currently, Indonesia's defense doctrine remains focused on the military aspect, often ignoring social and cultural factors that can influence community mobilization and support for defense strategies. The gap

between expectations and reality in fully involving the public in national defense efforts demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive approach. Although the concept of Total People's Defense aims to involve all elements of the nation, in practice, civilian participation is often limited to formal activities organized by the military. This can weaken the effectiveness of strategies, especially in the face of unconventional threats that require broad and flexible mobilization.

A defense strategy that takes into account local significance and cultural context will ensure that it has the support and active participation of all levels of society (Hofstede, 1984). An ideal defense strategy should accommodate and organically mobilize support from all components of society, not just through formal military channels. This is important to strengthen national resilience, especially in the face of non-conventional threats that may arise from various directions, both domestic and international.

The revolutions that occurred in Indonesia have similarities with some major global revolutions, such as the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the American Revolution (1775-1783). Both revolutions showed that strong leadership and collective action by the people played a key role in the success of the revolution. The principles of freedom, equality, and fraternity that emerged from the French Revolution, as well as America's struggle against British colonialism, have similarities with Indonesia's struggle for independence. During the revolution, the quality of Indonesia's troops and armaments was far inferior to that of the enemy. However, public support and strategic leadership are able to compensate for these shortcomings, even in challenging conditions.

However, the modern context requires adjustments to traditional strategies such as Wehrkreise. The Indonesian Revolution succeeded in mobilizing all components of the nation through this strategy, but to overcome contemporary threats, the Total People's Defense strategy must

be combined with modern technology, cyber capabilities, and effective diplomacy. Reimplementing this strategy must take into account the new dynamics of asymmetrical and multidimensional threats, which require not only physical strength but also preparedness in non-physical domains such as cyber and intelligence.

Recent studies show that the implementation of air defense systems in Russia and the United States, divided into several defense zones, has facilitated efficient command and control, as demonstrated by Sayadyan & Gevorgyan (2023). Their research shows that the division of strategic command zones in Russia and the United States operates optimally, highlighting the potential benefits of such a system.

Subsequent research, such as that conducted by Herlina et al. (2023), specifically investigates the success of the Wehrkreise during the Indonesian revolution, focusing on the involvement of civilian and military leaders in key events. Saefudin et al. (2023) explore narrative arguments using the Toulmin model and lexical-grammatical features to delve into the conditions of the 1945-1949 revolution. Their findings highlight feelings of inferiority and superiority in warfare due to the involvement of irresponsible parties, including Allied forces supporting the Dutch. Although these challenges caused difficulties, they ultimately contributed to the formation of national identity and strategic achievements.

Considering past research and future warfare trends, including the use of gray zone tactics identified by Morgan & Cohen (2020), the potential relevance of the Wehrkreise strategy and the Total People's Defense system as a whole remains. Murray (2011) emphasizes the importance of studying military and strategic history to understand human behavior in the past and present. In the context of defense, leveraging the strengths of the past is crucial in preparing for future challenges.

The history of warfare and the evolution of defense strategies provide valuable insights into how to address threats and conflicts. By understanding how strategies and technologies have developed over time, more effective and adaptive defense systems can be designed. Additionally, learning from the past can help anticipate and adapt to changes in the form and nature of warfare, such as the transition from direct confrontation to non-traditional threats. Therefore, leveraging the strengths of the past is not only important but essential for building strong and resilient defenses in the future.

Given these phenomena and previous studies on the Wehrkreise strategy in the Total People's Defense system, its effectiveness, and future warfare patterns to exploring the factors of the Wehrkreise strategy and the Total People's Defense system in the past to face the contemporary and future conflict and revolution scenarios. This study is expected to contribute significantly to the development of more effective and adaptive national defense strategies in response to modern threats.

## **1.2 Research Focus and Sub-Focus**

This study comprehensively analyzes determinants that contributed to the success of the Wehrkreise strategy during the Indonesian National Revolution (1945-1949) and explore how these factors can be applied to the implementation of the Universal People's Defense System in the modern era. It also discusses how the historical success of the Wehrkreise strategy can inform the Indonesian People's Total Defense System to deal with modern unconventional threats in order to reflect on the defense strength for the defense unity in Indonesia.

The sub-focus framework relates to the Wehrkreise strategy within the context of Total People's Defense and the elaboration of determinant factors from strategy, human resources management, leadership, communication, and strategic fit for its success. The study also discusses the relevance of the Wehrkreise strategy in addressing modern non-

conventional threats, including cyberattacks, terrorism, and maritime infiltration.

The research sub-focuses on several key aspects. It identifies the impact of the Wehrkreise strategy during the Indonesian National Revolution, examining how the Army's successfully implemented a decentralized defense strategy and guerrilla tactics involving active civilian participation. The analysis concludes that the strength of the Total People's Defense System remains capable of effectively enhancing Indonesia's defense system.

### **1.3 Problem Formulation**

The formulation of the research problem is how the determining factors greatly influence the success of the Wehrkreise strategy in the Indonesian revolution War and its influence on the implementation of the Total People's Defense System in Indonesia. To address the research problem, the study formulates research questions that encapsulate its objectives. The research questions are as follows:

1. How did the determining factors shape the Wehrkreise strategy during the Indonesian Revolutionary War?
2. How do these factors affect the implementation of the Total People's Defense System in Indonesia?

### **1.4 Research Objective**

The struggle for independence in Indonesia during the revolutionary war against the colonizers laid the foundation for the defense system in Indonesia. This is the result of mature thinking that involves the right resources and struggle strategies to be applied in Indonesia. The success in achieving strategic objectives at that time has now become a solid foundation for Indonesia's defense today. While appreciating the contributions of past heroes, the objectives of this research are formulated as follows:

1. Analyze the factors that influence the Wehrkreise strategy during the Revolutionary War in Indonesia.
2. Analyze how these factors influence the implementation of the Total People's defense system in Indonesia.

## **1.5 Research Benefits**

### **1.5.1 Theoretical Benefits**

Theoretically, this research is expected to be a source of information and reference for further research in the development of defense science, especially related to the effective defense system applied in Indonesia. The defense system currently implemented is the Total People's defense system which can accommodate various needs and challenges arising from defense threats in Indonesia. However, a study based on history and past struggle experiences, it is expected to have a positive impact on strengthening confidence in the defense system.

### **1.5.2 Practical Benefits**

Practically, this research is expected to be useful for leaders and policymakers as input and consideration in the process of determining the policy of the Indonesian state defense system in the future. Historical studies play an important role in promoting better and smarter policies. By understanding the historical roots of the nation's struggle, leaders and policymakers will have a broader view of the values of nationalism, loyalty, and fighting spirit that form the identity of state defense.

Experiences and lessons from the past, especially in the context of defense, provide valuable insights into strengthening, anticipating, and responding to current and future threats. By observing successes and challenges, policymakers can identify effective strategies and apply more appropriate solutions in developing defense plans. The information and insights generated will help in formulating defense policies that are adaptive, responsive, and in line with the continuously changing world developments.