

THE (UN)SILENT ENEMY: HOW INDONESIAN PUBLIC OPINION IS UNDERMINING NATIONAL DEFENSE

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Abstract

The inadequate state of Indonesia's defense posture appears to be an open secret that has been known to the public for decades. Indonesia's weak defense posture is not only caused by the quantity of defense equipment owned, which is not aligned with the needs, but it is also caused by the large number of Indonesian defense equipment aged over 30 years. The fundamental cause of Indonesia's weak defense posture is a lack of adequate defense budget support. Referring to various studies, ideally, Indonesia allocates a defense budget above 1% of GDP. However, Indonesia has stagnantly allocated a defense budget of 0.7%-0.9% of GDP. The breakthrough that the government was trying to make through the discourse on a budget of 1,700 trillion for acquiring defense equipment failed to materialize because it was rejected. Through analysis using theories related to the determinants of the defense budget, this article concludes that the stagnation of the Indonesian defense budget is caused by low public support for increasing the defense budget. Lacking public support has resulted in the government choosing to allocate the funding to other, more populist sectors, such as infrastructure development and well-being. It is also intended that the political elite gain electoral support.

Keywords: Defense Budget, Democracy, Indonesia, Public Opinion

INTRODUCTION

The Neorealist perspective says that states can cooperate depending on the level of interest in state power. In Neorealism, power is seen as a means to an end. Neorealism believes that the structure of the international system is anarchic (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). Because of anarchy, states do what they want to increase their power (Mearsheimer, 2001). In expanding its power, Neorealism agrees that military strength is essential for power. For a country to be secure, it must build up its national armed forces to protect its borders from hostile military threats (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). A country then needs its defense budget to maintain an increase in its defense.

The budget, especially those allocated to the defense sector, is vital for the country. Without the support of an adequate defense budget allocation, a country's power capacity will not be substantial. This is because carrying out the acquisition of state weapons requires a budget. Until now, Indonesia has been included in the group of countries whose defense posture is not good enough, and the defense budget support is relatively minimal.

The minimal defense allotment owned by Indonesia impacts the low level of operational readiness of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI). Based on data published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in 2014, most of the defense equipment owned by the TNI (52%) is over 30 years old (Tempo.co, 2015). In fact, according to data from the Ministry of Defence, none of the TNI's 3 dimensions of combat readiness reached 40% (Supriyanto, 2005; Syafputri, 2011). The government is trying to deal with the low operational or combat readiness of the TNI through the MEF program. In practice, the government targets the defense budget allocation to reach 1% of GDP annually (Indonesian Ministry of Defense, 2015).

However, even though the target for the required defense budget is written, until 2021, this budget target has never been achieved. Until 2021 the proportion of the defense budget will never reach 1% of GDP (Gindarsah et al., 2021). Based on author data processed from IHS Jane's, Indonesia's defense budget from 2009 - 2021 has been 0.6 - 0.8% of GDP. This condition occurs when Indonesia's GDP has increased every year – except for 2020, which experienced a contraction due to the Covid-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2022). GDP growth every year indicates that the Indonesian economy is getting better. In addition, this condition also occurs when Indonesia has a target of achieving MEF 2024 (Indonesian Ministry of Defense, 2015). This raises an anomaly because theoretically, the stronger the economy, the greater the defense budget allocation to GDP will be (Anwar & Rafique, 2012; Bitzinger, 2015; Friedman & Logan, 2012; Goldsmith, 2003; Rehman, 2012).

Seeing that the defense budget is needed to improve national defense, several previous studies have addressed this issue. The previous studies can

be categorized into three categories, namely: (1) Defense, (2) Political-Economy and (3) Domestic Politics.

Previous research investigating the defense category explains that efforts to improve Indonesia's defense posture are hampered by the low available defense budget (Collin, 2015; Gindarsah et al., 2021; Schreer, 2013). Moreover, most of Indonesia's defense budget is used for routine operational budgets such as employee salaries (Laksmana, 2018). Apart from being caused by the low budget allocation, the increase in Indonesia's defense posture is increasingly not optimal due to the more dominant budget distribution for the Indonesian Army (Raymond, 2017).

Then, previous studies in the political-economic category saw that the defense economy plays a role in increasing security resilience through military spending and security spending (Saputro et al., 2020). By examining Indonesian data between 1964 and 1985, it was concluded that there was a reciprocal relationship between defense and economic growth (Chairil et al., 2013; Frederiksen, 1989). Because the defense economy plays a role in increasing security stability, it is recommended that the government pay attention to the defense and security budgeting, especially the sufficiency of allocations, priority levels, and interrelationships between other components (Saputro et al., 2021) Defense budget policies must impact the national economy, such as increasing production by developing the defense industry to meet the needs of domestic defense equipment (Kennedy, 2017).

Meanwhile, previous studies in the category of domestic politics said that in determining the defense budget, domestic political conditions also had an influence. Apart from being caused by the low allocation of the defense budget, as quite a lot has been highlighted in the literature on the defense category, efforts to improve Indonesia's defense posture are not optimal due to the more dominant distribution of the budget to the Indonesian Army (Raymond, 2017). In addition, there is literature stating that the involvement of the TNI in politics, especially when setting the budget in the DPR, will help the defense budget obtain a higher portion (Nugroho & Bainus, 2018).

Analytical Framework: Public Acceptance as a Determinant of the Defense Budget

A strong defense posture is necessary for every country to achieve in an anarchic international system. The state is required to have an armed force with qualified personnel, doctrine and weapons technology capable of dealing with various threats. Therefore, support for the defense budget is vital. The availability of the defense budget is one of the keys to developing each country's defense posture. Without a budget, the state will not be able to acquire new weapons technology (Fernandez-Osorio et al., 2019; Prezelj et al., 2015).

However, even though the defense budget is vital for all countries, the defense budget allocation for each country varies. Several determinants influence variations in the state defense budget allocation. The determinants of state defense budget allocation include: 1) threat perception, 2) military ambition, 3) economic capacity, 4) alliances, and 5) form or system of government (Widjajanto et al., 2022).

Although there are several determinants of a country's defense budget allocation, as mentioned earlier, this research will only focus on the determinants of the form or system of government. In various studies, the form or system of government of a country is believed to have an influence on national defense policy. In the context of defense innovation and transformation, countries with a democratic government system are believed to have a better probability of carrying out defense transformation than authoritarian countries (Millett, 1996; Rosen, 1988). The form or system of democratic government can also influence the organizational character of the armed forces. Countries with a democratic form of government tend to build defense forces with a heavy mechanized character and rely on destructive power as a centre of gravity (Caverley, 2010). This contrasts with the military character of non-democratic countries, which tend to prioritize massive troop mobilization (Asal et al., 2017).

In the context of the defense economy, countries that implement a democratic political system are seen by many experts as having a low defense budget allocation, especially compared to authoritarian countries. Several things cause this. First, a domestic political competition that places defense in the face of uncertainty over the continuity of political office has pushed leaders – especially leaders with large coalitions – to allocate a relatively low defense budget. Therefore, the country's leaders prefer to invest in economic development and welfare, which gives a faster electoral impact (de Mesquita et al., 1999; Fordham & Walker, 2005; Garfinkel, 1994). Second, the experience of living in an authoritarian system also causes democratic countries to tend to have low defense budgets (Russett & Neal, 2001).

Third, there is influence from the tendency of the public or constituents in a democratic country to prefer the government to develop economic infrastructure and welfare (Demarest, 2017; Eichenberg & Stoll, 2003, 2017; Harold & Sprout, 1968). In a liberal-democratic country, public perception has long influenced the government's decision-making process (Ostrom & Marra, 1986; Page et al., 1987). In the context of defense budget allocation in a democracy, public perception also plays an important role. In fact, public acceptance is an enabler in determining defense budget allocations (Demarest, 2017; Rundquist & Carsey, 2002; Widjajanto et al., 2022).

Research Method

This research utilizes public chat data on various social media. Data information was taken based on a one-month grace period from 1 June 2021 to 30 June 2021. The length of the grace period took into account the development in the amount of news on social media following the emergence of discussions regarding the defense system procurement budget. Data retrieval from social media is carried out by mapping all public discussions related to the issue of the 1,700 trillion rupiah budget for the purchase of defense equipment. In addition, this article will also sample 10 uploads with high engagement on several social media platforms, namely Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, and Facebook, to present a more in-depth analysis.

Researchers classify the data into three narratives, namely pro, neutral, and contra to the policy. The pro-policy narrative refers to statements that explicitly support or provide positive responses to policy discourse. A neutral narrative refers to statements that do not lead to positive statements, nor do they provide negative statements. Meanwhile, the negative narrative focuses on statements that reject and/or criticize the discourse on the defense system procurement policy by the Indonesian Ministry of Defense.

Figure 1. Keywords Categorization

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
“Kemandirian”	“Rapat”	“Geger”
“Dukung”	“Rencana”	“Utang”
“Keniscayaan”	“Mencari Oknum”	“Dipersoalkan”
“Maju Terus”	“Respons Isu”	“Keterlaluan”
“Kebutuhan-kebutuhan”	“Tindak Lanjut”	“Tolak”
“Dibutuhkan”	“Ga Berani Mengkritik”	“Misteri”
“Diterima”	“Dana”	“Korupsi”
“Lancar”	“Tersebar”	“Ngaco”
“Kekuatan Militer”	“Libatkan”	“Lemahnya”
“Prosedur yang Benar”	“Mendapat Arah”	“Kisruh”

Source: Authors own elaboration

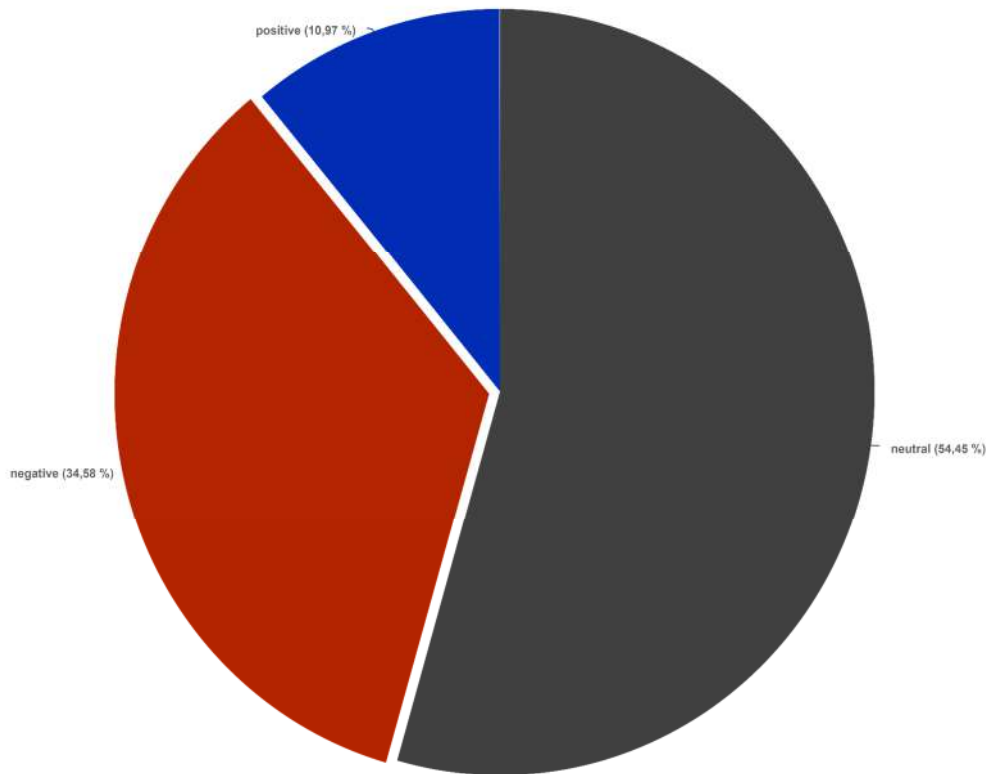
In order to be able to determine the position of the narrative that appears on social media to have positive or negative, or neutral sentiment, the author of this article first determines keywords. Determining these keywords is very important because they become the basis for mapping public sentiment, which will later become the main findings of this research. Table 1 above shows examples of keywords in each category used by the author in this article.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned, this research will utilize social media and online conversation data. In this section, the author will first present the findings of

public sentiment on social media regarding the discourse on the defense equipment procurement budget of 1,700 trillion Rupiah.

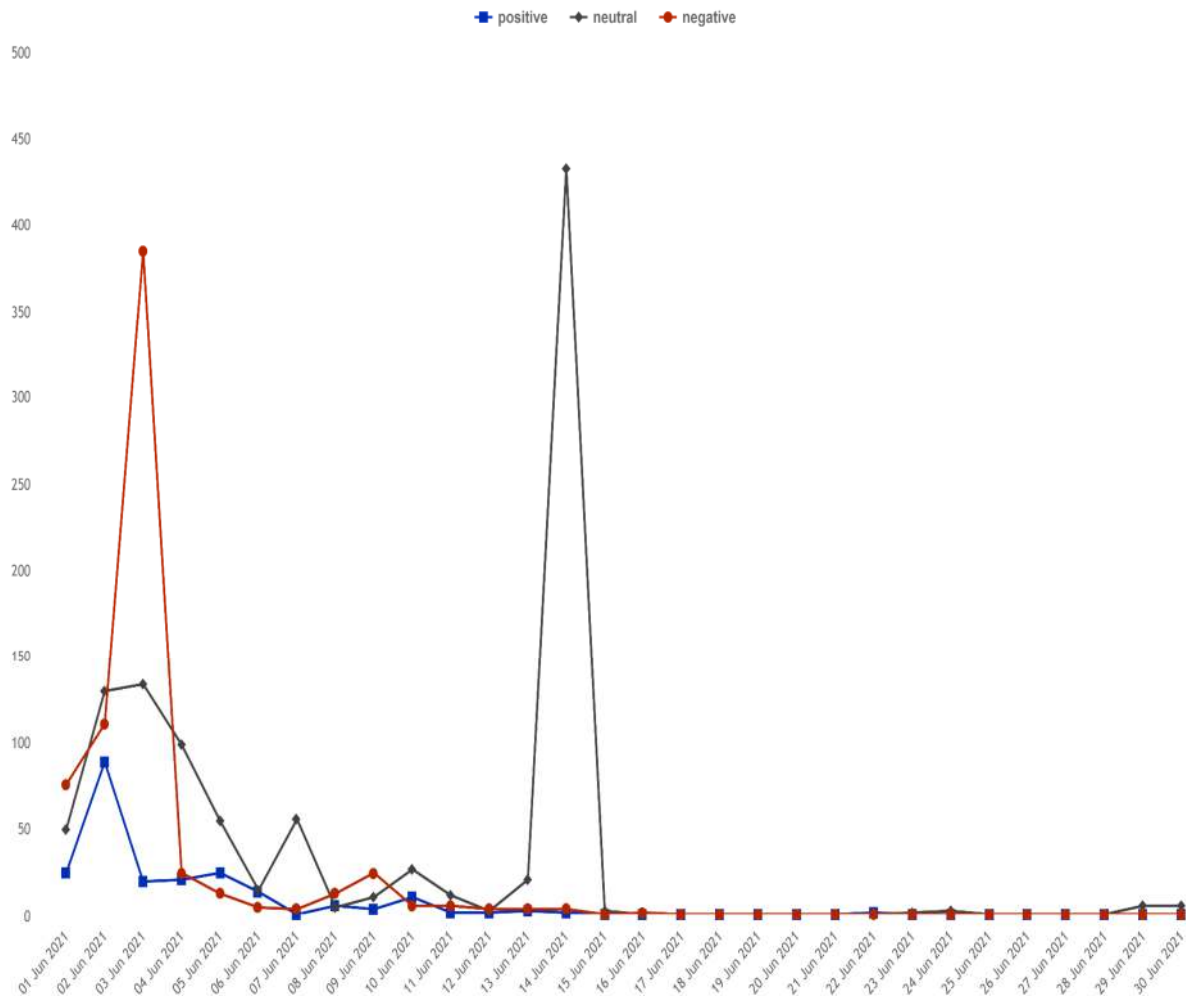
Figure 2. Public on Twitter Sentiments



Source: Authors own elaboration

Based on the author's findings, public sentiment on Twitter social media shows that the majority have a neutral sentiment. The public issuing neutral statements or tweets - neither rejecting nor supporting - the discourse on the 1,700 trillion defense equipment procurement budget reaches 54.58%. Meanwhile, the % of tweets that were negative or rejected the 1,700 trillion budget discourse was in second place, namely 34.58%. The proportion of tweets that support or are pro towards the 1,700 trillion budget discourse is the lowest, only 10.97%.

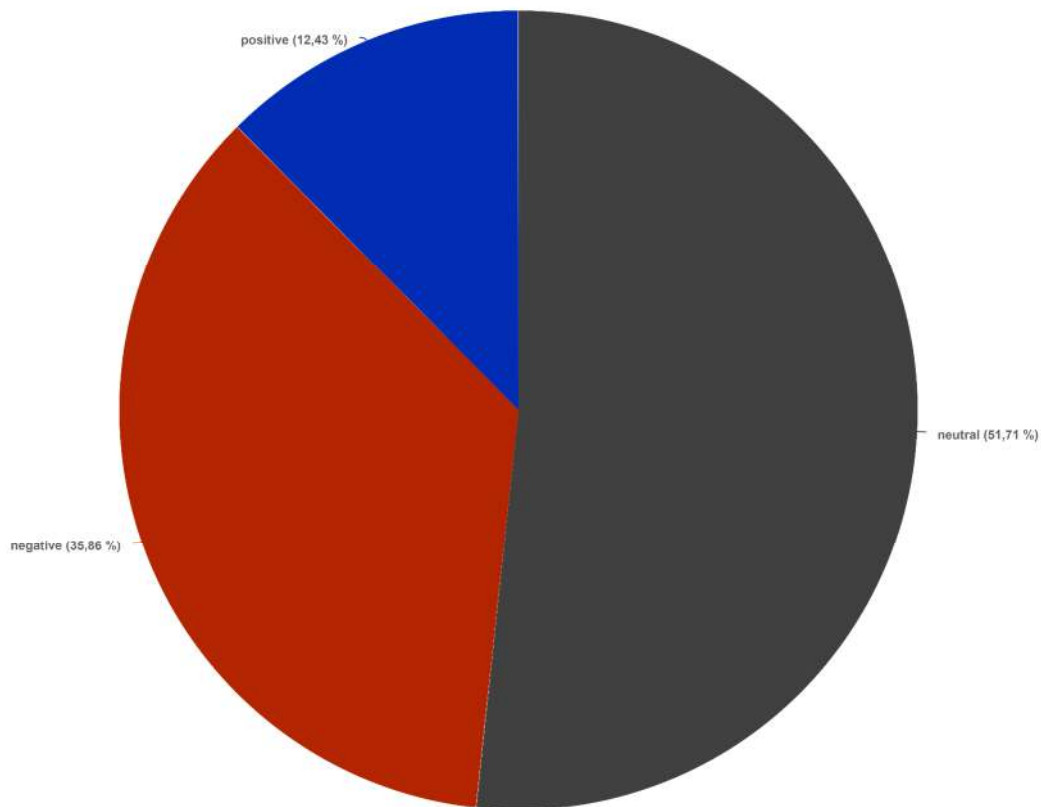
Figure 3. Public Sentiments on Twitter Trendline



Source: Authors own elaboration

In addition to mapping the sentiments of tweets conveyed by the public on Twitter social media, the author also traces the timeline of the tweets submitted by the public. Based on the findings, public attention to the discourse on the 1,700 trillion-rupiah defense equipment procurement budget appeared to become an explosive issue in the first week of June. However, public attention decreased drastically when entering the second week of June. Public discussion about the 1,700 trillion rupiah budget discourse began after the information was circulated on June 1, 2021. The peak of public discussion on social media Twitter occurred on June 3, 2021. There was a sudden increase on June 14, 2021, dominated by tweets with neutral sentiment.

Figure 4. Public Sentiments on Twitter, Youtube, Tikok and Facebook



Source: Authors own elaboration

Conditions that are not much different are also recorded in the mapping results when combining public sentiment on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Facebook. Based on mapping the five social media platforms that are popularly used by the community, it was found that there was an increase in the proportion of negative or contra sentiment towards the 1,700 trillion-rupiah budget. The rejected or negative public sentiment reached 35.86% of the total discussion regarding the budget allocation of 1,700 trillion rupiahs on the five social media platforms. The figure increased by 1.28% compared to the proportion of negative public sentiment on the Twitter platform alone. Meanwhile, positive or pro sentiment towards the discourse on a budget of 1,700 trillion rupiah only reached 12.43%. Although positive sentiment has increased, the proportion is still much lower than the public's negative sentiment towards the 1,700 trillion-rupiah budget discourse.

To further deepen the findings and strengthen the argument of this article, the researchers took ten uploads on social media with the highest engagement results. Of these ten uploads, eight are occupied by uploads on the Instagram platform. At the same time, the two uploads are spread over one Tiktok and one Youtube upload. From the sample taken by the researchers, the trend of uploads with significant engagement is mainly done by news portal accounts on social media, followed by personal accounts that actively conduct conversations on social media regarding the discourse on the procurement of Alutsista by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia.

In eight monitoring of uploads on social media Instagram, there are six uploads with neutral narratives. On the other hand, there are two uploads with negative narratives in response to the issue of the defense equipment procurement. @kompascom¹ uploads opened six neutral uploads. In this upload, the discussion focuses on a nominal value of 1.7 Quadrillion Rupiah as the budget that will be issued for the Alutsista procurement policy. Also, the spotlight on Instagram is on @bisnis.com² posts. This account focuses on the nominal budget to be issued and the payment scheme related to the procurement of Defense Equipment. Another highlight was the upload made by the @pinterpolitik³ account, with infographic uploads which included information related to the procurement of defense equipment, statements from the Director General of Defense Strategy of the Indonesian Ministry of Defense, Rodon Pedrason regarding the draft Perpres Alpahankam, as well as the responses of IEISS researchers regarding the impact of the procurement of defense equipment on Indonesia's GDP.

Another neutral upload on Instagram was made by the @kompastv account⁴. Uploads on this account highlight a closed meeting with discussions regarding the procurement of defense equipment which Prabowo Subianto and Commission I of the Indonesian Parliament attended. A sample

¹ @kompascom's post on the Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CP3JMWIFwt4/>

² @bisniscom's post on Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQDERswIkEr/>

³ @pinterpolitik's post on the Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPk6e0FhTjR/>

⁴ @kompastv's post on the Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPnERB4tcCr/>

neutral upload was also done on Instagram by @kompascom⁵, which highlights a budget of 1.7 Quadrillion Rupiah attached to the Draft Presidential Regulation (Raperpres) concerning Meeting the Needs for Defense and Security Equipment for the Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian National Armed Forces for 2020-2024. The last neutral post went to the one made by @defencereview⁶, with a focus on the nominal budget plan related to the procurement of Alutsista and the impact generated by the budget plan.

On the negative upload side, the @kumparancom⁷ account highlighted the high tone of Prabowo Subianto's statement after receiving a request regarding the nominal defense equipment budget during a closed meeting with Commission I of the DPR RI. In addition, the upload includes a statement by Member of Commission I DPR RI from the Golongan Karya party faction, Dave Laksono, regarding the impact of the planned defense equipment procurement on debt. Another negative upload was made by the @opiniid⁸ account, which uploaded information related to the leak of the Raperpres draft related to Alutsista.

The contents uploaded from the @metro_tv⁹ on Tiktok platform becomes the uploads with the highest engagement on social media. The upload highlighted Prabowo Subianto's presence at a closed meeting with Commission I of the DPR RI with a discussion regarding the plan to procure the Alutsista. This upload is neutral because there are no points of criticism or praise for the policy plan highlighted by the upload.

Bang Arief's account on Youtube¹⁰ is the final sample in social media monitoring. This upload has a negative tendency towards the defense system procurement policy plan, shown in the caption that alludes to Prabowo Subianto, which has received criticism from the buzzer. The criticism referred

⁵ @kompascom's post on the Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CPp31_gnFjA/

⁶ @defencereview post on the Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CPPr_CDmp1Bi/

⁷ @kumparancom post on the Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CP3JMWIFwt4/>

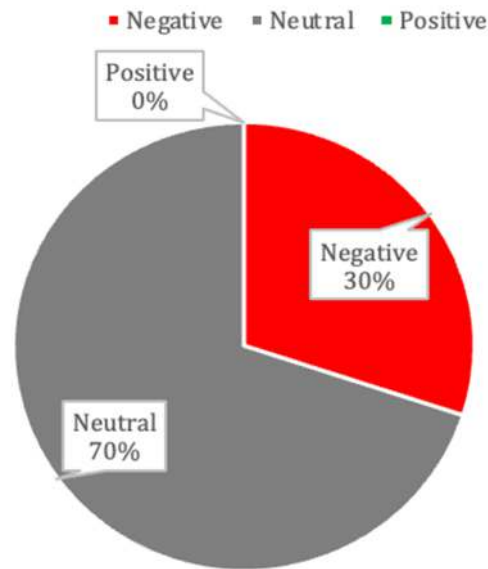
⁸ @opiniid's post on the Instagram. 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPnmVH-hLGv/>

⁹ @metro_tv's post on the Tiktok. 2021. Retrieved from https://www.tiktok.com/@metro_tv/video/6969144927565450497

¹⁰ Bang Arief's post on the Youtube. 2021. Retrieved from https://www.tiktok.com/@metro_tv/video/6969144927565450497

to in the video upload was addressed by criticism conveyed by an influencer, Denny Siregar, regarding the plan for the Alutsista procurement policy.

Figure 5. Social Media Posts with the Highest Engagement Sentiments



Source: Authors own elaboration

The mapping of the 10 social media posts with the highest engagement shows results that align with previous findings. Of the 10 posts, neutral sentiment towards the Rp 1,700 trillion budget discourse became the dominant one, with a proportion reaching 70%. While the proportion of negative sentiment ranks second, reaching 30%. The exciting thing in the findings of this in-depth study is that there is not a single social media post that has positive sentiment or supports the discourse on a budget of 1,700 trillion rupiah for purchasing defense equipment which is included in the top 10.

The findings show that the public narrative is dominated by a neutral view of the 1,700 trillion rupiah budget for defense equipment procurement. In other words, the public perception that rejects the budget discourse is still lower than the neutral sentiment. However, this does not necessarily undermine this article's main argument, which states that public perception is a stumbling block to developing Indonesia's defense forces. There are at least two reasons underlying this argument. First, the domination of neutral public views is dominated by news that media offices primarily issue on their

social media accounts. An example is the coverage by CNN Indonesia, Voice of Indonesia and Kompas. For example, the discussion raised by Kompas contained descriptive information regarding the 1,700 trillion budget discourse for the procurement of defense equipment and news regarding the meeting between the Minister of Defense and Commission 1 of the Indonesian Parliament.

Second, public support recorded from public sentiment on various social media collected shows low public support for allocating the 1,700 trillion rupiah defense equipment procurement budget. Even though empirical data shows neutral sentiment dominates, this does not necessarily negate the significance of public views that reject or are against the 1,700 trillion-rupiah budget. This is because the proportion of public discussions with contra sentiment or rejection of the 1,700 trillion-rupiah budget allocation is significant and is even 3x larger than public opinion supporting the government's discourse.

Departing from the author's explanation of the meaning of the findings of this article, the writer argues that public opinion or perception and views are a major stumbling block to Indonesia's defense. This is aligned with the theoretical view previously presented that in a democratic country, the defense budget will be relatively low because people prefer the government to focus the budget on the public welfare sector (Demarest, 2017; Eichenberg & Stoll, 2003; Harold & Sprout, 1968). Then, it encourages the government or leaders of democratic countries to provide a larger budget to populist sectors in the eyes of the community in order to gain electoral advantages (de Mesquita et al., 1999; Fordham & Walker, 2005; Garfinkel, 1994).

In the context of this study this can also be seen easily. Along with the growing public rejection or negative views of the 1,700 trillion rupiah budget discourse, political figures from both the government and opposition coalition parties also expressed their rejection (Chaerul Umam, 2021; Iyud Walhadi, 2021; Voice of Indonesia, 2021). An example is the official stance of the National Mandate Party (PAN) faction in the DPR RI, which firmly rejects this government discourse (Chaerul Umam, 2021). In addition, the Chairperson of

the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) DPP, Tsamara Amany, known to be very loyal to the government, also openly voiced her rejection on social media. This refusal was even linked explicitly to demands for the government to focus more on the health and public welfare sector: "I feel that the trillions are more useful for subsidizing staples for the poor, small-medium scale businesses, increasing Covid-19 testing & vaccines". Even PSI also voiced the hashtag #PSITolak1700T which explicitly shows rejection of government discourse (Iyud Walhadi, 2021).

The wave of public rejection, as described in the findings of this article, was able to make the government cancel the discourse on a budget allocation of 1,700 trillion rupiah. Since this issue spread to the public in 2021 until now, when this article was written in 2023, the 1,700 trillion rupiah budget has never really been realized. The government, in this case, the Ministry of Defense, in various statements, has never discussed the 1,700 trillion rupiah budget for the purchase of defense equipment. Indonesia's defense budget has never experienced a significant increase. Indonesia's defense budget allocation to GDP remains stagnant in the range of 0.7%-0.8% of GDP (Gindarsah et al., 2021).

This again strengthens the author's argument in this article, which states that public opinion is very influential on Indonesia's defense forces. With the wave of rejection, the government prefers to close the 1,700 trillion budget allocation plan meetings and again chooses the budget allocation for the populist sector. This is because the government increasingly understands the people's wishes in general and chooses to issue populist policies that are more appreciated by the people and gain electoral advantages. Appreciation from the public for infrastructure development during President Joko Widodo's leadership was confirmed through various survey results. Several survey institutions issued releases stating that most of the public viewed President Joko Widodo's infrastructure development as appropriate and beneficial. Several survey institutions later stated in their publications that there is a close relationship between the satisfaction and benefits felt by the community from massive infrastructure development to the level of

satisfaction of the community in general and also the electability of President Joko Widodo ahead of the 2019 Presidential Election (JPNN.com, 2017; Rachman, 2018; SMRC, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Developing a defense posture by each country is one of the most critical elements to ensure the survivability of the state in the international system of anarchy. Indonesia, whose defense posture is currently not in an ideal position, has made efforts to increase its defense strength. However, unfortunately, the government's efforts to build Indonesia's defense posture are not supported by the availability of an ideal defense budget. Indonesia's defense budget is relatively meager at only 0.7%-0.9% of Indonesia's GDP. In the end, the government's efforts to take breakthrough steps by allocating a budget of 1,700 trillion rupiahs for the procurement of defense equipment could not be realized. The rejection conveyed by the public was the reason behind the government's cancellation of this bold step. This condition is commonplace in democratic countries like Indonesia, where public opinion or perception influences government policy. However, unfortunately in the context of this research, public opinion has become a silent enemy of Indonesia's defense because it is a factor that makes it difficult to provide an ideal defense budget.

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