



## The Contribution of Community Self-Reliance Facilitators to Strengthening National Defense in Indonesian Villages

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the contribution of Community Self-Reliance Facilitators to Indonesia's national defense by examining their role within the Total Defense System at the village level. Using a qualitative literature review, this paper explores the intersection of key concepts: community empowerment and non-military defense. The findings reveal that facilitators are pivotal agents who translate development outcomes into tangible defense contributions by fostering social resilience, promoting economic self-reliance, and enhancing local capacity. This research bridges the gap between civilian development initiatives and national defense strategy, offering a framework for integrated policies that leverage community empowerment as a cornerstone of national resilience.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's national defense architecture is built upon the Total Defense System (*Sistem Pertahanan Semesta*), a philosophy that mandates the involvement of all citizens and national resources in safeguarding the nation's sovereignty (Purwanto et al., 2020). This system is not solely the responsibility of the military; instead, it conceptualizes defense as a reciprocal relationship between the people and the state (Fathurrohman & Supriyadi, 2024). The framework comprises three key elements: the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) as the main component; trained citizens and the National Police as the reserve component; and all national resources, including human, natural, and artificial resources, as the supporting component (Purwanto et al., 2020). The legal foundation for this inclusive approach is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution, which stipulates that every citizen has the right and duty to participate in the defense of the state (Fathurrohman & Supriyadi, 2024).

The effectiveness of the Total Defense System is linked to the capacity and well-being of its populace, making community empowerment a critical pillar of national resilience (Purwanto et al., 2020). Strengthening defense is understood not as a return to military dominance but as a collective responsibility to the state, involving a multitude of actors. This is particularly crucial as threats to national security are no longer limited to military aggression but also encompass non-military challenges such as poverty, low education levels, and unemployment, which directly impact public welfare (Fathurrohman & Supriyadi, 2024). In peacetime, the empowerment of regions for defense purposes is synergized with development activities aimed at improving public welfare. In addition, the problem symptoms that arise include weak local capacity to respond to socio-economic vulnerabilities, limited integration between community empowerment and defense policy, and the absence of clear mechanisms to translate community development into defense contributions. These conditions highlight the urgency of examining civilian roles in supporting national defense.

At the forefront of this effort in rural areas are the Community Self-Reliance Facilitators (*Pendamping Lokal Desa*) from the Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration. These facilitators play a pivotal role in grassroots community development, working directly with villagers to address socio-economic challenges. By enhancing community capacity, they contribute to the supporting component of national defense, building a resilient society from the ground up that is better equipped to face diverse threats (Purwanto et al., 2020).

Despite the foundational principle of citizen participation in the Total Defense System, the specific contributions of civilian actors, particularly community development practitioners, remain underexplored. The concept of empowering regions for defense is established, yet the role of civilian facilitators in translating community development outcomes into tangible contributions to national security is not well-articulated in existing literature or policy (Fathurrohman & Supriyadi, 2024). Consequently, this causes a significant gap in understanding the precise mechanisms through which the work of Community Self-Reliance Facilitators reinforces the national defense system at the village level. Previous studies have tended to focus on the military, government policies,

or structural aspects of defense, but little research systematically addresses how civilian facilitators at the grassroots level contribute to resilience and non-military defense. This gap indicates the novelty and urgency of the present research.

To address this identified gap, this study is guided by the following central research question: *How do Community Self-Reliance Facilitators contribute to strengthening the national defense system within Indonesian villages?* To answer this question, this study aims to analyse and describe the various roles and activities of Community Self-Reliance Facilitators that support the implementation of the Total Defense System in rural areas.

The findings of this research are expected to provide significant insights for both the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration. By elucidating the connection between grassroots community development and national resilience, this study can inform the formulation of integrated policies that optimize the role of community facilitators. It will offer a practical framework for recognizing and leveraging community empowerment activities as a core component of the non-military defense posture. Ultimately, this research aims to bridge the gap between civilian development initiatives and national defense strategy, fostering a more cohesive and effective implementation of the Total Defense System that aligns with the dual goals of public welfare and national security.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Concept of the Total People's Defense and Security System*

The Total People's Defense and Security system, known in Indonesia as *Sistem Pertahanan dan Keamanan Rakyat Semesta* (Sishankamrata), is the foundational defense doctrine of the Republic of Indonesia (Manurung et al., 2023). This system serves as a conceptual and strategic pillar for building the nation's military power and is not merely a set of military guidelines, but a manifestation of historical experience, cultural values, and a national survival strategy (Saleh et al., 2025). Sishankamrata is defined as a universal system that involves all citizens, the entire territory, and all national resources to protect the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the safety of its people from any threat (Rusfiana, 2021).

The history of Sishankamrata is deeply rooted in the Indonesian struggle for independence from 1945-1949 (Saleh et al., 2025). During this period, the nation faced a colonial power with superior weaponry and logistics, forcing it to rely on a "total people's war" that integrated guerrilla tactics, popular mobilization, and revolutionary diplomacy (Saleh et al., 2025). This formative experience established the core belief that national defense is the shared responsibility of all elements of society (Murfi & G., 2024).

The legal basis for Sishankamrata is firmly anchored in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Manurung et al., 2023). Specifically, Article 30, paragraph (2) mandates that the state's defense and security efforts are conducted through the Sishankamrata framework, designating the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the National Police (Polri) as the main forces and the people as the supporting force (Manurung et al., 2023). This

constitutional directive is further operationalized through specific legislation, including Law No. 3 of 2002 concerning National Defense, which codifies the universal and integrated nature of the system (Murfi & G., 2024).

The Sishankamrata doctrine is built upon three fundamental values: people-centered, territorial-based, and totality (Manurung et al., 2023). The people-centered value places the active participation and welfare of the populace at the heart of national defense. The territorial-based value emphasizes a defense posture that is independently prepared and leverages the unique geographical characteristics of the archipelago's various regions. Finally, the value of totality underscores the complete integration of all national components, military and non-military, to counter all forms of threats.

These principles are put into practice by organizing the nation's defense resources into three distinct categories: the Main Component (*Komponen Utama*), the Reserve Component (*Komponen Cadangan*), and the Supporting Component (*Komponen Pendukung*) (Murfi & G., 2024). The Main Component is the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), which is professionally prepared to execute primary defense tasks. The Reserve Component consists of national resources that have been trained and prepared to be mobilized to expand and reinforce the strength of the Main Component. The Supporting Component includes all other national resources, such as industrial infrastructure and natural resources, which can be utilized to enhance the capabilities of both the Main and Reserve Components.

While originating from experiences in conventional and guerrilla warfare, Sishankamrata is a dynamic doctrine designed to evolve in response to contemporary challenges (Saleh et al., 2025). The modern strategic environment is often described as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, featuring a spectrum of non-traditional and non-military threats (Manurung et al., 2023). These modern threats include cyber warfare, strategic disinformation, hybrid conflicts, economic warfare, and propaganda.

The philosophy of Sishankamrata remains highly relevant because it provides a framework for a holistic, whole-of-society response to these varied threats (Pratama & Khairunnisa, 2024). The principle of universality is now applied to non-physical domains, where citizen participation includes building moral and psychological resilience through *Bela Negara* (State Defense) programs and contributing to cyber and information defense (Rusfiana, 2021). This adaptability ensures that Sishankamrata continues to be a viable and effective national defense strategy in a complex and ever-changing global security landscape.

### ***Community Empowerment Theory***

Community empowerment is a foundational concept in development, understood as a deliberate and planned process designed to transform individuals or communities from a state of powerlessness to one of empowerment, with a primary emphasis on fostering independence (Malta, 2023a). It is an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community that involves mutual respect, critical reflection, and group participation, through

which people who lack an equal share of resources gain greater access to and control over them (Stoeffler, 2018). Fundamentally, empowerment is the process by which actors gain the power and decision-making capacity to mobilize resources and institutions to achieve specific goals (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

The theory is that empowerment is both a process and outcome. As a process, it encompasses the sequence of actions aimed at strengthening the capabilities of marginalized groups in society (Malta, 2023a). This often follows a phased approach that begins with awareness-raising and problem identification, moves to capacity building through learning and training, and then facilitates participation and collective action to co-create solutions (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). As an outcome, empowerment refers to the results of this societal transformation, where a community possesses the power, knowledge, and competence to fulfill its own needs, leading to self-sufficiency, confidence, and active participation in civic life (Stoeffler, 2018).

Empowerment theory encompasses three distinct yet interdependent dimensions: individual (self-empowerment), interpersonal (mutual empowerment), and collective (social empowerment). These dimensions are considered inseparable, as a singular focus on any one is insufficient for driving meaningful community change (Pigg, 2002).

The first dimension, self-empowerment, focuses on the individual and is often described as personal efficacy or personal power (Pigg, 2002). At this level, empowerment is concerned with developing an individual's sense of self, confidence, and capacity while undoing the effects of internalized oppression (Stoeffler, 2018). It is rooted in the psychology of power, addressing the feelings and perceptions of powerlessness that can lead to limited initiative or unproductive behaviors (Pigg, 2002). A key mechanism for achieving this is critical consciousness, in which individuals become aware of the forms of oppression impacting them and are moved to action through questioning and dialogue (Stoeffler, 2018). The goal is to furnish individuals with the resources, opportunities, knowledge, and competencies to shape their own future.

The second face of empowerment, mutual empowerment, emerges from interpersonal relationships within groups and organizations. It moves beyond the individual to the power with others, which comes from collective action, mutual support, and sharing (Stoeffler, 2018). Here, empowerment is often associated with enabling or strengthening others (Pigg, 2002). Community organizations are the central vehicle for this collective empowerment, providing a space where members can feel competent, gain influence, and act on those feelings (Stoeffler, 2018). The empowerment process, therefore, aims to strengthen not only the capacities of individual members but also the institutions within the community. This collective strength helps overcome individual insecurity and allows a group to impact the civic system with enough energy to overcome inertia (Pigg, 2002).

The third face of empowerment, social empowerment, addresses the structural nature of powerlessness, which is not just an individual problem but also a social and structural condition (Stoeffler, 2018). This dimension focuses on social action designed to gain access to power and remove the structural barriers

in political, social, and economic systems that prevent disadvantaged populations from gaining control over their destinies (Pigg, 2002). The goal is to make fundamental changes, including the redistribution of power and resources, and to give marginalized groups access to decision-making (Stoeffler, 2018). The structuralist perspective argues that true empowerment can only be achieved by eliminating systemic inequalities related to class, gender, or race (Malta, 2023a). This requires social and political collective action, which represents the largest-scale form of community empowerment.

Thus, it could be said that community empowerment is a transformative process designed to shift communities from powerlessness to a state of self-reliance, independence, and collective strength. This process is multi-faceted and requires an interdependent approach that builds individual capacity (self-empowerment), fosters group collaboration (mutual empowerment), and removes larger systemic barriers through social action (social empowerment). Ultimately, successful empowerment programs contribute to resilient and just futures by enabling communities to gain a sense of ownership and make informed decisions independently.

### ***Social Capital Theory***

Social capital theory provides a critical framework for understanding how community-level resources contribute to collective goals, such as national defense. At its core, social capital refers to the structure and quality of social relationships, which can be a source of significant benefits for individuals, groups, and society as a whole (Tsounis & Despoina, 2025). It is a multidimensional resource generated through interpersonal interactions, encompassing both network ties and shared values like trust and reciprocity that facilitate cooperation and collective action (Tsounis & Despoina, 2025). For this study, which focuses on community self-reliance, the collective approach to social capital is particularly relevant. This perspective views social capital as a public good, where the amount of trust and civic participation in a community facilitates cooperation from which all members can benefit (Tsounis & Despoina, 2025).

Social Capital can be broadly categorized into structural and cognitive dimensions. The structural dimension refers to the tangible configuration of social connections, the networks that link individuals and groups (Tsounis & Despoina, 2025). The core idea is that these social networks have inherent value; just as physical or human capital can increase productivity, social contacts affect the productivity and potential of individuals and groups (Sabet & Khaksar, 2024). Meanwhile, the cognitive dimension comprises the intangible aspects of social capital, such as shared values, beliefs, trust, and norms of reciprocity.

A complementary perspective reframes social capital through the lens of knowledge management, arguing that most of its core components are, fundamentally, forms of knowledge (McElroy et al., 2006). Trust, for instance, is a subjective belief an individual holds about the future actions of another, making it a form of factual knowledge. Similarly, norms and rules are forms of shared,

objective knowledge often expressed in language that specify how community members ought to behave.

This perspective is powerful because it implies that social capital is not merely a static feature of a community but an asset that can be purposefully created. McElroy et al. (2006) refer to this process as social capital constructivism. The most valuable form of social capital, from this viewpoint, is a community's capacity to learn and produce new, shared knowledge, what they term social innovation capital.

This framework directly applies to the role of community self-reliance facilitators. These facilitators can be seen as agents of social capital constructivism, actively working to build trust, establish new cooperative norms (shared knowledge), and strengthen social innovation networks. By doing so, they enhance the village's collective capacity for effective action, thereby strengthening its self-reliance and contribution to national defense (McElroy et al., 2006).

### *The Concept of Community Resilience and State Defense*

The concepts of community resilience and state defense are deeply intertwined, representing two sides of the same coin in the pursuit of national security and stability. State Defense, known in Indonesia as *Bela Negara*, is defined as the attitude and actions of citizens rooted in a love for their homeland, an awareness of their national identity, a firm belief in the state ideology of Pancasila, and a willingness to sacrifice for the nation (Leksana et al., 2023). This framework is not merely a government or military duty but a comprehensive effort involving all elements of the nation, citizens, territory, and national resources, organized in a continuous and integrated manner (Rasji et al., 2024).

On a broader, global scale, community resilience is understood as the collective capacity of a geographically defined community to manage stressors and effectively resume the rhythms of daily life through cooperation following a crisis or shock (Akimova et al., 2025). This resilience is built upon several key pillars: effective governance, economic stability, security, and robust social capital (Akimova et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, the overarching goal of these efforts is to achieve National Resilience (*Ketahanan Nasional*), a dynamic condition of national tenacity and toughness that enables the country to overcome all threats, whether internal or external (Soepandji & Farid, 2018). While, state defense serves as the practical, systemic implementation of this national resilience strategy.

Currently, nature of threats to national sovereignty has evolved significantly. While conventional military threats remain a concern, nations now face a complex array of non-military threats, including economic crises, transnational crime, radical ideologies spread through digital media, and cyber-attacks (Buana, 2024). This shift demands a holistic defense approach that emphasizes non-military capabilities, including economic, social, and cultural resilience, as essential elements for national cohesion.

Consequently, the concept of state defense has expanded beyond its physical and military dimensions. While physical defense involves military

service, non-physical defense is enacted through channels like citizenship education and professional service, where citizens contribute according to their skills and professions (Leksana et al., 2023). Under Indonesian law, non-defense government institutions are designated as the primary actors in addressing non-military threats, supported by other national elements, including the community itself (Buana, 2024). This underscores that modern state defense is fundamentally about building a resilient society capable of withstanding diverse shocks.

The connection between state defense and community resilience is most evident in the principle of universal community participation. Indonesian law establishes that defending the nation is both a right and a duty for every citizen. This principle is legally enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Specifically, Article 27, Clause (3) establishes that every citizen possesses the right and obligation to participate in defending the state (Rasji et al., 2024). This is further reinforced by Article 30, Clause (1), which affirms the right and duty of citizens to contribute to national defense and security efforts (Rasji et al., 2024). This active involvement forms the bedrock of a universal defense system, that highlights how true resilience is built upon local ownership, capacity building, and a community-based approach to security (Akimova et al., 2025).

This is accomplished through various state defense strategies that directly build community resilience:

- a. **Social Capital:** State defense programs often foster social cohesion and cooperation (*gotong royong*), which are critical for collective action in a crisis (Soepandji & Farid, 2018). Strong social networks and trust are consistently identified as key determinants of high community resilience (Akimova et al., 2025).
- b. **Economic Resilience:** Strategies to improve the standard of living, enhance marketing skills for local products, and expand educational access are used as tools to foster state defense awareness (Leksana et al., 2023). A community with stable livelihood opportunities is better equipped to absorb economic shocks and resist negative influences (Akimova et al., 2025).
- c. **Ideological Resilience:** A core component of state defense is strengthening belief in the national ideology. This serves as a psychological and ideological fortress against divisive and radical narratives that threaten national unity (Soepandji & Farid, 2018).

In essence, state defense provides a comprehensive national framework for building community resilience. It transforms the abstract idea of national security into a tangible, participatory process where every citizen contributes to a strong, adaptive, and unified nation. Community resilience is, therefore, both the ultimate objective and the primary method of Indonesia's modern state defense strategy.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative literature review as its methodological approach. This method involves the systematic collection, synthesis, and critical analysis of existing scholarly literature to address the central research question

regarding the contribution of Community Self-Reliance Facilitators to Indonesia's national defense. A comprehensive search was conducted across academic databases, government publications, and relevant theoretical texts, focusing on key concepts such as Indonesia's Total Defense System, community empowerment theory, social capital, and community resilience.

The analytical process involved identifying recurring themes, comparing different conceptual frameworks, and integrating findings to construct a cohesive argument. By analysing this secondary data, the study explores the conceptual linkages between grassroots development activities and national security strategy, providing a theoretical foundation to understand how facilitators' roles reinforce the non-military aspects of national defense. This approach is particularly suitable for addressing the identified gap in the literature without requiring new empirical data collection.

## RESEARCH RESULT

### *The Roles of Community Self-Reliance Facilitators in Fostering Village Resilience*

Community Self-Reliance Facilitators, commonly known in Indonesia as *Pendamping Desa*, are pivotal figures in the architecture of rural development and empowerment. Positioned at the intersection of government policy and grassroots reality, their primary function is to guide and assist villages in becoming more independent, prosperous, and resilient (Laha & Dorohungi, 2021). Their role is not merely administrative but multifaceted, encompassing duties as a facilitator, mediator, agent of change, counselor, and partner to both the village government and its community members (Suswanto et al., 2018). The success of community empowerment programs is often directly determined by the effectiveness and creativity of these facilitators (Muhamad, 2025). Their responsibilities can be categorized into several key areas that collectively contribute to fostering village resilience.

However, these facilitators must execute their roles within a complex and often restrictive legal framework that presents significant challenges to achieving village self-reliance. There is considerable normative blurring regarding the concrete roles villages can play, as well as conflicting regulations between central, regional, and village governments (Rusdiana, 2023). For instance, authority over key village resources like forestry, maritime affairs, and mineral resources is divided between the central and provincial governments, not the village itself. This creates a long and complex bureaucracy for any party wishing to utilize these local resources, a process that facilitators must help the community navigate. Furthermore, regulations strictly define security as an absolute authority of the central government, which normatively limits the space for villages to formally and actively participate in broader national defense efforts (Rusdiana, 2023). Therefore, a crucial, unstated role for facilitators is to help villages operate effectively despite these legal ambiguities and limitations.

A fundamental role of the facilitator is to provide administrative and planning support to the village government. This involves direct assistance in the formulation of critical village governance documents, including the Village Medium-Term Development Plan, the Village Government Work Plan, and the

Village Budget (Laha & Dorohungi, 2021). This guidance is crucial for ensuring that village planning is participatory, transparent, and accountable. Furthermore, facilitators play an important part in overseeing the management of village funds, such as the Village Fund Allocation and the Village Budget, to ensure they are used appropriately and effectively to meet community priorities and prevent corruption (Suswanto et al., 2018).

Beyond administrative duties, facilitators are deeply involved in capacity building and community empowerment. They work to enhance the skills of village officials, for instance, by providing training in modern technology like computer applications for administrative tasks (Laha & Dorohungi, 2021). For the wider community, their role is to stimulate active participation and self-reliance. This is achieved through a structured process that begins with program socialization and the formation of community institutions like the Family Empowerment Post (Muhamad, 2025). Facilitators then guide the community through participatory assessments to identify key problems and aspirations, often using tools like village mapping and seasonal calendars to generate data (Muhamad, 2025). They organize community groups, such as farmer, fisher, and youth groups, and foster dialogue to build consensus and collective action.

Facilitating local economic development is another cornerstone of their work. Acknowledging that economic stability is vital for resilience, facilitators assist community groups in identifying and developing business opportunities based on local potential and resources (Muhamad, 2025). This involves helping groups create viable business plans and conducting basic business analysis to assess profitability and risk. They also support the development of Village-Owned Enterprises and other local economic ventures, thereby strengthening the village's economic base and creating local employment opportunities to discourage urbanization, particularly among the youth (Laha & Dorohungi, 2021).

Finally, facilitators act as crucial network builders and catalysts for collaboration. They connect the village to external resources and opportunities by building partnerships with government agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector (Suswanto et al., 2018). This networking function opens doors for further training, investment, and market access that the village might not be able to secure on its own. A key part of their long-term strategy is to develop local leadership and ensure the sustainability of empowerment initiatives. They achieve this by identifying and training local community members to become Community Empowerment Cadres (*Kader Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*), who can continue the development process independently, ensuring that resilience is not dependent on the permanent presence of an external facilitator (Suswanto et al., 2018). Through this comprehensive and participatory approach, facilitators help transform villages from passive recipients of aid into active, self-reliant communities capable of shaping their own futures.

### ***The Contribution of Facilitator Activities to Non-Military Defense Components***

The activities of community self-reliance facilitators contribute directly to strengthening the components of non-military defense by transforming villages into resilient, self-sufficient, and cohesive social units. In the context of national security, non-military defense is crucial for addressing threats that are not strictly military in nature, such as poverty, social inequality, internal conflict, and the impacts of natural disasters (Szpucha & Pokorski, 2024). The disempowerment and underdevelopment of communities, particularly in border regions, are themselves considered potential non-military threats that can compromise national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Setiawati, 2016). Therefore, empowerment is not merely a development strategy but a form of state defense, constituting a key aspect of state defense by building the nation's deterrent capability from the grassroots level.

A primary contribution of facilitators is the cultivation of social resilience and cohesion. A community's ability to withstand shocks and internal pressures is fundamental to its defense capacity. Facilitators promote participatory approaches and inclusive leadership, which are proven to build social capital, interpersonal trust, and a strong sense of collective identity (Wanty & Utami, 2025). This enhanced social cohesion is vital for preventing and managing internal conflicts, which can arise from ethnic, religious, or cultural heterogeneity in border areas (Putra et al., 2024). By fostering mutual respect, maintaining harmony, and encouraging open communication, facilitators help communities develop organic, informal mechanisms for problem-solving and cooperation (Putra et al., 2024). This social fabric ensures that communities can mobilize for collective action, whether for development projects or in response to crises like natural disasters.

Facilitators also bolster non-military defense by fostering economic self-reliance and innovation. Economic disparity and poverty are significant vulnerabilities that can be exploited, making economic empowerment a critical defense strategy (Setiawati, 2016). Facilitators act as catalysts for social innovation, encouraging communities to develop novel, bottom-up solutions to their specific challenges (Nurlukman et al., 2025). This process empowers local communities by fostering entrepreneurship, creating sustainable job opportunities, and bridging the economic gap between rural and urban areas (Nurlukman et al., 2025). By helping communities become the subjects, rather than the objects, of development, facilitators enable them to manage their own resources effectively and reduce dependency on external parties, a core principle of a resilient non-military defense posture (Setiawati, 2016).

In the long run, the work of facilitators directly enhances community capacity and proactive participation. A key goal of empowerment is to improve a community's ability to help itself and become independent (Setiawati, 2016). Facilitators achieve this through capacity-building efforts and by ensuring that development processes are participatory, inclusive, and community-driven (Nurlukman et al., 2025). When communities are actively involved in planning, implementing, and monitoring their own development, it fosters a strong sense of ownership and ensures that outcomes are sustainable (Wanty & Utami, 2025).

This heightened capacity and active engagement make the community a more effective partner for local government in executing defense-related tasks and responding to emergencies (Szpucha & Pokorski, 2024). By strengthening these social, economic, and human capacities, community self-reliance facilitators play an indispensable role in building villages that serve as a foundational pillar of Indonesia's national defense system.

## DISCUSSION

### *Community Empowerment as a Cornerstone of the Total Defense System*

The Indonesian national defense system is fundamentally structured as a total defense system, which involves the participation of all national components, not just the military (Yusnaldi et al., 2022). This framework's effectiveness is contingent upon the active involvement of its citizens and communities, making community empowerment a strategic necessity rather than merely a social development goal (Samego, 2015). Empowerment, defined as a planned effort to transform a community from a state of powerlessness to one of empowered independence, thus becomes a cornerstone of national resilience (Malta, 2023b).

This synergy is particularly evident in the context of preventing non-traditional threats, such as terrorism. Terrorism poses a serious threat to national stability, and community empowerment is considered a crucial preventive action (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). An empowered community possesses a greater understanding of threats, an enhanced capability for early detection, and increased resilience to anticipate and manage crises. In this role, communities act as vital frontline observers, providing grassroots intelligence that can help identify emerging threats before they escalate (Sapkota, 2024). This approach aligns with the modern understanding that the battleground for national security has expanded beyond physical warfare (hard power) to include ideological and social domains (soft power) (Samego, 2015).

Effective community empowerment for national defense is not a unilateral process but a collaborative one, requiring an integrated partnership. This partnership forms a triple helix of the government (both central and local), the military, and the people (Yusnaldi et al., 2022). This collaborative model, which also includes the National Police, is essential for mobilizing all national resources to strengthen the country's defense posture (Yusnaldi et al., 2022). The foundation of this partnership is trust, which enables the timely exchange of information and fosters a shared sense of responsibility for national security (Sapkota, 2024). This collaborative framework must be supported by various methods, including direct outreach, public campaigns, and ongoing dialogue to ensure alignment and active participation (Simanjuntak et al., 2023).

The practical implementation of this combined effort is clearly demonstrated through programs like the TNI Service Operations (*Bakti TNI*) (Salsabilla & Sarjito, 2021). These operations are designed to create tough "space, tools, and fighting conditions" (*Ruang, Alat, dan Kondisi Juang - RAK Juang*) that support national defense while simultaneously contributing to community welfare (Salsabilla & Sarjito, 2021). For instance, the construction of roads and bridges serves the dual purpose of boosting the local economy and providing tactical approach routes for military operations in times of need. These activities

exemplify an integrated approach where defense and development are not mutually exclusive but are mutually reinforcing, ultimately strengthening the unity between the TNI and the people (Salsabilla & Sarjito, 2021). By building national resilience from the ground up, this bottom-up approach ensures that Indonesia's defense system is not a fragile, top-down structure, but a robust one rooted in the collective strength and vigilance of its empowered citizens (Sapkota, 2024).

However, translating this synergistic vision into practice is fraught with challenges that must be addressed. A primary obstacle is the persistence of sectoral egos among government agencies, which hinders the integrated, whole-of-nation approach required for a total defense system (Samego, 2015). Partnerships between government bodies and community organizations, while crucial, are not always synergistic; local governments can sometimes marginalize the very communities they are meant to empower, undermining trust and cooperation (Simanjuntak et al., 2023).

Furthermore, socio-economic disparities and poverty can act as root causes of conflict, creating vulnerabilities that extremist groups may exploit, thereby complicating empowerment efforts (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). There is also a significant gap in the legal framework. At the same time, laws mandate the existence of reserve and supporting components; the specific regulations needed to properly organize, train, and mobilize these citizen-based resources are still underdeveloped, leaving a disconnect between policy and implementation (Samego, 2015). Overcoming these institutional, social, and legal hurdles is essential to moving the concept of community-based national resilience from a powerful ideal to a functional reality.

### *Strengthening Policy Synergy between Village Development and National Defense*

A resilient national defense is not built on military strength alone; it requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that permeates all levels of governance, extending to the village level. Strengthening the synergy between village development policies and national defense objectives is crucial for creating a resilient nation. This approach moves beyond a narrow, militaristic view of security, embracing a holistic framework where community welfare and national resilience are mutually reinforcing.

The need for this synergy is underscored by the evolving nature of threats to national security. Modern defense challenges are not exclusively military; they increasingly manifest as non-military threats in the social, economic, and environmental sectors (Muslikhatin & Supriyadi, 2024). Problems at the village level, such as poverty, social inequality, and environmental degradation, can undermine national stability and security (Muslikhatin & Supriyadi, 2024). Therefore, policies aimed at empowering village communities and improving their welfare are not merely developmental goals but are also integral components of non-military state defense. This reframes village development as a direct contribution to national resilience.

Historically, defense policy has been perceived as the exclusive domain of the central government. However, this centralized paradigm is insufficient to

address localized, non-military threats. A more effective strategy involves decentralizing defense efforts, empowering local communities to become active participants (Sriyono, 2018). The implementation of village funds presents a significant opportunity to operationalize this synergy. These funds, while primarily intended for infrastructure and economic empowerment, can also be strategically allocated to enhance community security and stability. For example, village funds could support programs for socialization and early prevention against the spread of radical ideologies or other internal security threats (Sriyono, 2018). By doing so, defense policy is transformed from an abstract national concept into a tangible, community-driven practice at the village level.

The key to achieving this policy integration lies in leveraging existing village-level institutions and participatory mechanisms. The Community Empowerment Institution (*Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* or LPM) is identified as a critical actor in this process. As a partner to the village government, the LPM is tasked with absorbing community aspirations and mobilizing participation in development planning and implementation (Akibu & Djafar, 2025). The LPM can act as a facilitator and mediator, ensuring that national defense awareness and resilience-building initiatives are discussed and integrated into village development plans during forums like the development planning deliberation. This participatory approach ensures that defense-related programs are aligned with local needs and receive community ownership. Such, policy integration is essential for designing rational policies by reconciling the diverse interests within a society (Akibu & Djafar, 2025).

This collaborative model aligns with the concept of polycentric governance, where multiple centers of authority, including central and local governments, military units, and community institutions, work together to achieve common goals (Wibowo & Juwono, 2023). This is already practiced to some extent, as the military's regional command units often collaborate with local governments and community components to carry out regional empowerment programs (Wibowo & Juwono, 2023). By formalizing and strengthening this collaboration within the village development framework, a more effective and sustainable synergy can be built.

Sequentially, this integrated approach creates a virtuous cycle. Empowering a defense area is not exclusively for wartime preparation; during peacetime, these efforts are rightly oriented towards development activities that increase public welfare (Wibowo & Juwono, 2023). For instance, a new village road built to improve economic access can simultaneously be designed to support logistical needs in a defense scenario. A prosperous, educated, and socially cohesive village is inherently more resilient and less susceptible to the non-military threats that jeopardize national security. By strengthening policy synergy, village development becomes the frontline of national defense, building a secure and sovereign nation from the ground up.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study aimed to analyze and describe how Community Self-Reliance Facilitators contribute to strengthening the national defense system in

Indonesian villages. The research concludes that these facilitators are pivotal agents who bolster Indonesia's Total Defense System by reinforcing its non-military dimensions at the grassroots level. Their contribution is not through direct military engagement but by building the foundational resilience of villages, which constitute the supporting components of national defense. The facilitators' activities directly translate community development outcomes into tangible defense contributions.

By fostering social resilience and cohesion through participatory planning, they strengthen social capital and trust, which are essential for preventing internal conflicts and mobilizing collective action during crises. By promoting economic self-reliance through the development of local enterprises, they address vulnerabilities like poverty and inequality, which are recognized as non-military threats to national security. Furthermore, their focus on capacity building and creating local leadership cadres ensures that communities become self-sufficient, proactive partners in their own development and security, rather than passive recipients of aid.

The work of these facilitators operationalizes the concept that community empowerment is a cornerstone of the Total Defense System. They bridge the gap between civilian development initiatives and national defense strategy, demonstrating that a prosperous, cohesive, and empowered village is inherently a more secure one. Their role exemplifies how national resilience is built from the ground up, aligning the dual goals of public welfare and national security.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a. **Strengthen Policy Integration:** The Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration and the Ministry of Defense should formalize a collaborative framework to integrate community resilience indicators into national defense planning. This will help overcome the "sectoral egos" that can hinder a whole-of-nation approach.
- b. **Develop Clear Operational Guidelines:** The government should create specific regulations that formally recognize and define the role of community empowerment activities as a core component of the non-military defense posture. This would provide a clearer legal basis for facilitators to align their work with national security objectives.
- c. **Enhance Facilitator Training Curriculum:** The training programs for Community Self-Reliance Facilitators should be updated to include modules on non-military defense concepts and community-based resilience. This will equip them with the knowledge to consciously and more effectively embed state defense principles into their village development plans.

## ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study is subject to certain limitations inherent in its methodological approach. As a qualitative literature review, the research relies exclusively on the analysis of existing secondary data, including academic journals, policy documents, and theoretical frameworks. Consequently, it does not incorporate

primary empirical data gathered from direct engagement with Community Self-Reliance Facilitators, village officials, or community members.

The findings, therefore, provide a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the facilitators' contribution to national defense but lack the granular, context-specific insights that could be derived from fieldwork. The scope of the analysis is also quite broad, offering a national-level perspective without delving into the unique socio-economic and cultural variables that may influence the effectiveness of these facilitators in different regions of Indonesia, such as border areas compared to more central regions.

Building upon the foundation of this research, several future investigations are recommended to deepen the understanding of this topic. Future studies should employ empirical methodologies to validate and expand upon the conceptual framework presented here. A comparative case study approach, examining villages in different provinces, could provide valuable insights into how regional contexts shape the role and impact of facilitators.

Quantitative research could be designed to measure the correlation between specific facilitator activities and key indicators of community resilience, such as economic growth, social cohesion, and reduced internal conflicts. Furthermore, longitudinal studies would be beneficial for tracking the long-term impact of community empowerment programs on a village's contribution to the Total Defense System. Finally, interviewing facilitators and community members directly would offer a rich, ground-level perspective on the challenges they face and the specific strategies that prove most effective in strengthening national resilience.

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