JOURNAL LA SOCIALE

VOL. 07, ISSUE 03 (835-849), 2026
DOI:10.37899/journal-la-sociale.v7i3.3295

Military Professionalism in Democratic Systems: A Comparative Study

Ramadhan Arifal[1]

[1]*Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Indonesia*

**Corresponding Author: Ramadhan Arifal*
Email: arifalr991@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:
Received 5 May 2026
Received in revised form 20 May 2026
Accepted 4 June 2026

Keywords:
Civil-Military Relations
Military Professionalism
Civilian Control
Indonesia
Japan

Abstract

This study analyzes military professionalism in democratic political systems through a comparative examination of Indonesia and Japan. It focuses on how military institutions in both countries implement key principles of professionalism, including political neutrality, civilian control, and the restriction of military involvement in politics. The research employs a qualitative comparative approach using a most-different systems design to capture variations across distinct historical and institutional settings. Data are collected through a literature review and in-depth interviews with a defense official and an academic expert, and are analyzed using thematic coding based on the selected indicators. The findings reveal that Japan demonstrates a more consolidated form of military professionalism, characterized by a clear institutional separation between military and political spheres, consistent civilian supremacy, and strong internalization of neutrality norms. In contrast, Indonesia has established formal democratic mechanisms to ensure civilian control but continues to face practical challenges due to the extensive involvement of the military in domestic affairs. This condition reflects a hybrid model of military professionalism, where formal subordination to civilian authority coexists with flexible roles beyond core defense functions. The study concludes that military professionalism is shaped not only by institutional design but also by historical legacies, state capacity, and the degree of normative internalization, which collectively influence the quality of civil-military relations in democratic systems.

Introduction

In democratic political systems, civil–military relations constitute a crucial dimension that determines political stability and the overall quality of democracy. Numerous studies indicate that the failure to effectively control military institutions often becomes a primary factor in democratic backsliding across various countries (Kaufman & Haggard, 2019; Meyerrose, 2020). A 2024 report by Freedom House highlights that, in several cases of democratic decline, the increasing influence of the military in politics serves as a key indicator of weakening civilian institutions. Similarly, the 2024 Democracy Index published by the Economist Intelligence Unit emphasizes that democratic stability is closely linked to the effectiveness of civilian control over state security institutions. In this context, democratic civil–military relations position the military as a defense institution that is subordinate to democratically elected civilian authorities (Burk, 2002; Naidoo, 2006).

However, imbalances in civil–military relations may generate significant consequences for democratization processes. When the military is not fully subordinated to civilian control, there is a potential for military intervention in political affairs, both directly and indirectly (Levy, 2016; Travis, 2019). Such interventions may manifest in decision-making processes, influence over public policy, or informal roles within power structures (Feaver, 1996; Wonka &

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Warntjen, 2004; Boivin et al., 2014; Fox-Rogers & Murphy, 2014). Furthermore, the politicization of military institutions risks blurring the boundary between defense functions and political interests, thereby undermining the principle of military neutrality (Janjua, 2021). This condition can weaken political accountability and disrupt democratic mechanisms that are expected to function through civilian institutions (Olsen, 2013). Consequently, the degree to which military institutions maintain professional boundaries becomes a key factor in sustaining democratic governance.

Historically, civil–military relations in Indonesia have been shaped by complex institutional dynamics. During the New Order era, the military played a dominant role not only in defense but also in politics through the Dwifungsi ABRI doctrine, which legitimized its socio-political function (Suntoro, 2019). This arrangement blurred the distinction between military and civilian roles within the political system. The 1998 Reformasi marked a critical turning point, initiating a series of security sector reforms aimed at reducing military influence in politics, including the abolition of the dual-function doctrine (Kosandi & Wahono, 2020). These reforms were further institutionalized through Law No. 34 of 2004 on the Indonesian National Armed Forces, which formally established the military's subordination to civilian authority.

Despite these reforms, contemporary civil–military relations in Indonesia continue to face significant challenges (Ng & Kurniawan, 2024; Kosandi & Wahono, 2020). The expansion of military involvement in non-war operations, the political engagement of retired military officers, and ongoing debates surrounding revisions to the TNI Law indicate that the boundary between civilian and military domains remains contested (Azwar & Suryana, 2021; Syahdi, 2024). In addition, reports from the Election Supervisory Body highlight allegations of neutrality violations involving state apparatus, including military personnel, during the 2024 elections (Nadzirin et al., 2025; Gusniar et al., 2026). These developments suggest that maintaining military professionalism and civilian supremacy remains a critical issue in Indonesia's democratic consolidation. One indicator that can be used to assess the position of military institutions in public perception is the level of public trust in state institutions.

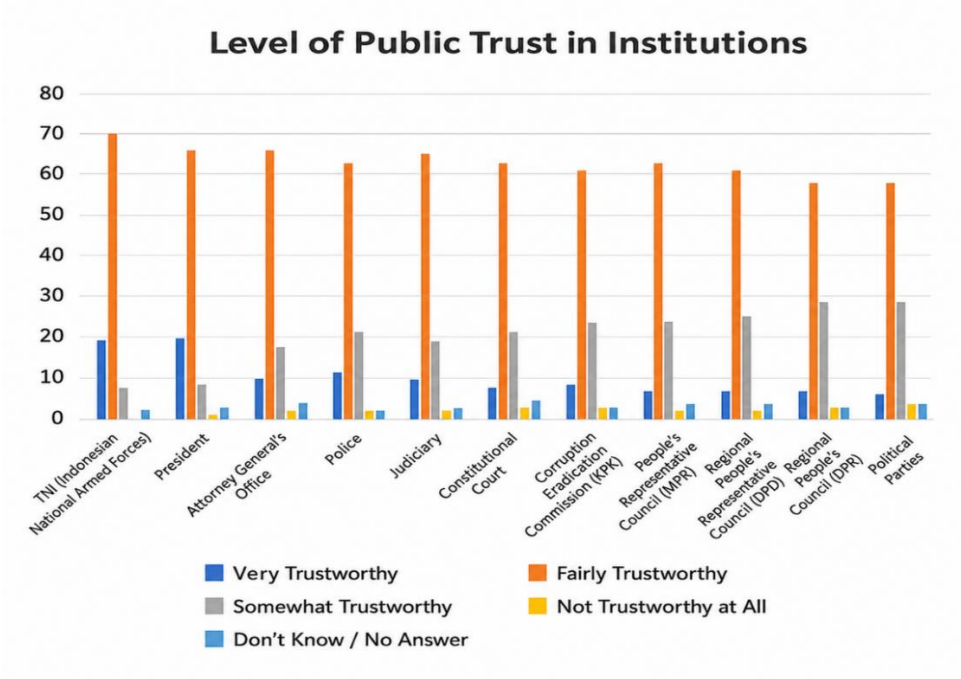

Figure 1. Public Trust in State Institutions

Source: Indonesian Political Indicators, 2024

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Based on Figure 1, the level of public trust in the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) is consistently ranked highest compared to other state institutions. This indicates that the military institution possesses strong social legitimacy in the eyes of the public. This high level of trust also raises important questions regarding how such a position influences the dynamics of civil–military relations within a democratic system. In this context, strong public trust in the military may reinforce its institutional role, making it essential to further analyze this phenomenon within the framework of military professionalism and civilian supremacy (Garb & Malešič, 2016; Bruneau & Matei, 2008; Brooks & Grewal, 2022).

Japan is often regarded as a model of strong civilian control over the military. Following World War II, Japan adopted the 1947 Constitution, particularly Article 9, which emphasizes pacifism and restricts the use of military force (Samuels, 2011). The establishment of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) was strictly placed under civilian authority and institutionally limited in its political role. Legal frameworks such as the Self-Defense Forces Act prohibit active personnel from engaging in political activities, fostering a strong institutional culture of political neutrality (Kawasaki, 2001; Corn, 2016). These arrangements have contributed to the development of a stable pattern of civil–military relations characterized by strong civilian supremacy and minimal military intervention in domestic politics.

According to Masitoh et al. (2026), While existing studies have examined civil–military relations in Indonesia and Japan separately, comparative analyses that specifically focus on military professionalism using a unified analytical framework remain limited. Most studies on Indonesia emphasize post-authoritarian reform and the depoliticization of the military, whereas research on Japan highlights institutionalized civilian control and constitutional constraints on military power. Few studies systematically compare the two cases to explain how different historical trajectories and institutional arrangements shape variations in military professionalism within democratic systems. This gap highlights the need for a comparative approach that can provide a more comprehensive understanding of civil–military relations across different political contexts

To address this gap, this study aims to analyze and compare military professionalism in Indonesia and Japan using a comparative research design. The study focuses on three key dimensions: political neutrality, civilian control, and the limitation of military involvement in politics. Through this approach, the research seeks to identify how variations in institutional structures, historical experiences, and political cultures influence the positioning of military institutions within democratic systems.

This study adopts a theoretical framework derived from Samuel P. Huntington, which conceptualizes military professionalism as a combination of specialized expertise, institutional responsibility, and corporate cohesion, accompanied by a clear separation from political activities (Nix, 2012). Within this framework, the concept of objective civilian control becomes central, referring to a condition in which the military maintains professional autonomy in defense affairs while remaining fully subordinate to civilian political authority. To operationalize this concept, military professionalism is examined through three analytical indicators: political neutrality, civilian control over the military, and the limitation of military involvement in politics. These indicators provide a structured basis for assessing how military institutions maintain their professional boundaries and contribute to democratic stability.

By applying this framework in a comparative analysis of Indonesia and Japan, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how different models of military professionalism emerge and how they shape the broader dynamics of civil–military relations in democratic systems.

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a comparative research design to analyze military professionalism within democratic political systems in Indonesia and Japan. A qualitative approach is used because this study seeks to understand institutional dynamics, historical legacies, and civil military relations in depth rather than measure them statistically. This approach enables the researcher to interpret meanings, patterns, and institutional practices within the research context (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The research design adopts the most different systems design proposed by Arend Lijphart. This design is appropriate because Indonesia and Japan have different historical and institutional backgrounds, yet both are analyzed through the same outcome framework, namely the implementation of military professionalism in democratic systems. Indonesia is selected as a case of post authoritarian democracy that continues to face challenges in civil military reform after Reformasi, while Japan is selected as a contrasting case because it represents a democratic system with stronger constitutional restrictions, clearer civilian control, and more limited military involvement in politics (Lijphart, 1971).

The unit of analysis in this study is the military institution within each country's democratic political system, specifically the Indonesian National Armed Forces and the Japan Self Defense Forces. The analysis focuses on how these military institutions interact with civilian authorities and how far they uphold the principles of military professionalism in democratic governance. The study examines three main indicators, namely political neutrality, civilian control over the military, and limitation of the military's political role. These indicators are derived from the theoretical framework of military professionalism and objective civilian control.

Data were collected through library research and in depth interviews. Secondary data were obtained from academic journals, scholarly books, legal documents, policy documents, and official reports related to military professionalism, civilian control, political neutrality, and military involvement in politics. Primary data were collected through interviews with informants selected purposively based on their expertise and relevance to the research topic. One interview was conducted with an official related to Japan's defense sector on April 8, 2026, through an online platform. The identity of this informant is anonymized in accordance with confidentiality requirements. Additional primary data were obtained through an interview with Professor Jaehwan Lim from Aoyama Gakuin University, who provided expert insight into civil military relations and military professionalism in Japan.

To ensure data validity and credibility, this study uses triangulation. Triangulation was conducted by comparing and integrating data from interviews, academic literature, legal documents, policy sources, and official reports. This technique was used to strengthen the reliability of the analysis and to avoid dependence on a single source of evidence. Triangulation is commonly used in qualitative research to enhance validity by combining different data sources, methods, or perspectives (Denzin, 1978). Creswell also emphasizes that triangulation helps verify the consistency of findings through cross source comparison (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Data were analyzed using a comparative analytical method based on the framework of military professionalism. The analysis was carried out in several stages. First, the collected data were identified and categorized according to the three indicators of analysis. Second, the data from Indonesia and Japan were analyzed descriptively to explain the characteristics of civil military relations in each country. Third, a cross case comparison was conducted to identify similarities and differences in the implementation of military professionalism. Finally, conclusions were

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

drawn by relating the findings to the theoretical framework and the broader debate on democratic civil military relations (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and Discussion

Political Neutrality

Political neutrality constitutes one of the central indicators of military professionalism within democratic political systems (Larson, 1974). In Samuel P. Huntington's framework, a professional military is characterized by institutional separation from partisan politics, ensuring that the armed forces remain focused on national defense rather than becoming involved in political competition (Huntington, 1981). Political neutrality is essential for preserving electoral integrity, maintaining public trust in democratic institutions, and preventing the use of military influence for partisan political interests. In comparative civil–military relations studies, the extent to which this neutrality is consistently upheld reflects the maturity of democratic norms and the institutionalization of military professionalism.

In Indonesia, political neutrality has been formally institutionalized through post-Reformasi legal reforms, particularly following the abolition of the Dwifungsi ABRI doctrine and the enactment of Law No. 34 of 2004 concerning the Indonesian National Armed Forces. This legal framework explicitly prohibits active-duty military personnel from engaging in practical political activities, including endorsing political candidates or participating in electoral campaigns (Law No. 34 of 2004; TNI Headquarters, 2024). Normatively, these reforms marked a significant step toward democratic civil–military relations by reinforcing the principle that military institutions must remain detached from partisan political competition.

However, empirical evidence indicates that significant implementation challenges remain. During the 2024 electoral cycle, several allegations of neutrality violations involving military personnel were reported. The Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association documented an incident in Boyolali involving military personnel and civilian election volunteers, raising concerns regarding the impartiality of military conduct during the electoral process (PBHI, 2024). Additional reports indicated that allegations of neutrality violations were submitted to the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), which subsequently coordinated with TNI leadership for further institutional response. These incidents suggest that despite formal legal prohibitions, the practical enforcement of political neutrality remains vulnerable to inconsistency.

The persistence of such cases indicates that political neutrality within the Indonesian military has not yet been fully consolidated as a deeply institutionalized norm. Formal legal codification alone is insufficient without effective enforcement mechanisms, internal disciplinary consistency, and sustained oversight during electoral periods (Mantali, 2025; Nshindano & Mpundu, 2025). This pattern is consistent with Yabuki's characterization of Indonesian military professionalism as a form of hybrid professionalism, in which formal democratic subordination coexists with historical institutional legacies that continue to shape military behavior (Yabuki, 2024). This condition demonstrates that Indonesia continues to face challenges in institutionalizing electoral neutrality as a stable component of military professionalism.

Japan demonstrates a significantly stronger level of political neutrality institutionalization. The Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) operate under strict legal restrictions prohibiting active-duty personnel from engaging in partisan political activities, including endorsing candidates, participating in political campaigns, or expressing institutional political preferences. The only political right fully exercised by JSDF personnel is voting as individual citizens (Samuels, 2011; Self-Defense Forces Act).

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Interview findings with a JSDF member further indicate that these legal restrictions are reinforced by deeply internalized professional norms. The respondent emphasized that political neutrality is widely understood as an integral component of military identity and professional ethics. Political engagement by active-duty personnel is considered incompatible with the institutional role of the JSDF. Furthermore, the respondent noted that prohibitions against military involvement in politics are deeply embedded within Japanese political culture, making direct political intervention by active-duty personnel highly improbable (Interview with JSDF Member, 2026).

As stated by the informant,

> *"Active personnel are not expected to participate in partisan political activities because neutrality is understood as part of military professionalism and institutional discipline"* (Interview with Defense Sector Informant, 2026).

This condition reflects a stronger normative and institutional consolidation of political neutrality. In Japan, neutrality is maintained not only through formal legal regulation but also through a deeply rooted anti-politicization military culture that emerged in the post-World War II period (Samuels, 2011; Hikotani, 2018). This cultural internalization reinforces the institutional separation of the military from electoral competition and strengthens democratic confidence in the impartiality of the armed forces.

A direct comparison between Indonesia and Japan reveals significant differences in the institutionalization and enforcement of political neutrality. Indonesia possesses a formal legal framework prohibiting military participation in partisan politics; however, repeated allegations of neutrality violations during electoral processes indicate persistent implementation challenges. In contrast, Japan combines formal legal restrictions with organizational discipline and deeply embedded cultural norms, producing a more stable and consistent pattern of neutrality.

The comparison demonstrates that while Indonesia has largely succeeded in establishing formal legal neutrality, Japan has achieved a deeper institutional consolidation of neutrality through the interaction of legal restriction, organizational discipline, and cultural internalization. These findings indicate that political neutrality depends not solely on legal prohibition but also on the effectiveness of institutional enforcement and normative internalization. While Indonesia has made substantial progress in formalizing military neutrality within democratic institutions, its implementation remains an ongoing process of democratic consolidation. Japan more closely reflects Huntington's ideal model of objective civilian control, where military professionalism is reinforced through sustained institutional discipline and a firmly embedded culture of political non-intervention.

Civilian Control over the Military

Civilian control over the military constitutes a central pillar of democratic civil–military relations. In Samuel P. Huntington's framework, democratic civil–military relations are maintained through objective civilian control, in which the military possesses professional autonomy in defense affairs while remaining fully subordinate to legitimate civilian political authority. The effectiveness of civilian control depends not only on formal legal arrangements but also on the institutional capacity of civilian authorities to direct, supervise, and constrain military power. This indicator is therefore essential in assessing how democratic states regulate the relationship between political leadership and military institutions (Huntington, 1981; Feaver, 1996).

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

In Indonesia, civilian control over the military has formally strengthened since the post-1998 Reformasi period through legal and institutional reforms. Law Number 34 of 2004 concerning the Indonesian National Armed Forces explicitly establishes the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) as a state defense instrument operating under civilian political authority. Constitutionally, the President serves as the supreme commander of the armed forces, while the House of Representatives (DPR) exercises oversight through legislative review, budget approval, and supervision of defense policy implementation. The Ministry of Defense is also formally responsible for formulating national defense policy and coordinating strategic military planning. These arrangements indicate that Indonesia has institutionally adopted democratic principles of civilian supremacy (Law No. 34 of 2004; Indonesian Constitution of 1945; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015).

However, formal legal provisions do not automatically guarantee effective civilian control in practice. One of the primary challenges lies in the limited institutional capacity of civilian defense governance. Parliamentary oversight often remains focused on formal budgetary approval rather than substantive strategic supervision of military operations and defense policy implementation. Similarly, civilian expertise within defense policymaking institutions remains relatively underdeveloped, creating continued dependence on military input in strategic decision-making processes. This condition reduces the effectiveness of civilian institutions in independently directing defense governance (Mietzner, 2018; Sebastian & Iisgindarsah, 2019; Lim, Interview, 2026).

The complexity of civilian control in Indonesia is further reflected in the broad operational scope of Military Operations Other Than War (OMSP), as regulated under Law Number 34 of 2004 and subsequent policy developments. OMSP authorizes military involvement in non-combat activities such as disaster response, counterterrorism, infrastructure rehabilitation, cybersecurity support, and assistance to regional governments. While these functions are legally recognized, their broad scope creates institutional overlap between defense and civilian governance. This overlap complicates the practical separation between military and civilian domains and raises concerns regarding the extent to which civilian authorities can effectively delimit military involvement (Law No. 34 of 2004; Mahkamah Konstitusi RI, 2025; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015).

Professor Jaehwan Lim emphasized in interview findings that effective civilian control requires not only formal legal supremacy but also strong civilian expertise, institutional accountability, and clear command boundaries between political leadership and military institutions. According to Lim, civilian supremacy becomes fragile when civilian institutions lack sufficient defense knowledge or become overly reliant on military actors for strategic policy direction. This observation is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where legal reforms have progressed significantly but institutional consolidation remains incomplete (Interview with Professor Jaehwan Lim, 2026).

Lim further explained,

> *"Civilian control becomes effective only when civilian institutions possess sufficient expertise and authority to supervise military policy without excessive dependence on military actors"* (Interview with Professor Jaehwan Lim, 2026).

In contrast, Japan demonstrates a more institutionalized model of civilian control over the military. Following World War II, Japan established a defense system fundamentally constrained by the 1947 Constitution, particularly Article 9, which renounces war and restricts the use of military force. Within this framework, the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) operate under strict civilian authority through the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defense. Strategic

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

decisions regarding military deployment, defense policy, and operational authorization are subject to civilian political approval (Constitution of Japan, 1947; Samuels, 2011; Hikotani, 2018).

The institutional structure of Japanese civilian control is reinforced by parliamentary oversight through the National Diet, which exercises authority over defense budgeting, legal authorization for military operations, and broader defense policy scrutiny. The Ministry of Defense functions as a civilian-led institution responsible for coordinating defense administration, while operational command remains subordinate to political leadership. This chain of command ensures that military autonomy remains limited to technical defense execution rather than strategic political decision-making (Kawasaki, 2001; Samuels, 2011; Ministry of Defense Japan, 2024).

Interview findings with a JSDF member further confirm the strong institutional internalization of civilian supremacy. The respondent explained that civilian authority is understood as a fundamental and unquestioned principle within JSDF professional culture. Operational autonomy is exercised strictly within legal and administrative parameters established by civilian leadership, and military personnel perceive civilian political control as an integral component of professional military conduct rather than as an external institutional constraint (Interview with JSDF Member, 2026).

A comparative analysis between Indonesia and Japan demonstrates that both countries formally recognize civilian supremacy, yet they differ significantly in institutional effectiveness. Indonesia has successfully established democratic legal foundations for civilian control, but practical implementation continues to face challenges related to civilian expertise, parliamentary oversight limitations, and institutional overlap through OMSP. Japan, by contrast, benefits from constitutional restrictions, stronger civilian bureaucratic capacity, parliamentary scrutiny, and deeply institutionalized norms of military subordination (Huntington, 1981; Hikotani, 2018; Lim, Interview, 2026)

These differences indicate that the effectiveness of civilian control depends not solely on legal frameworks but also on historical legacies, civilian institutional capacity, and the degree of professional internalization within military institutions. Japan more closely reflects Huntington's ideal model of objective civilian control, whereas Indonesia remains in a process of democratic consolidation in which formal civilian supremacy has yet to be fully matched by equally robust institutional oversight capacity (Huntington, 1981; Croissant & Kuehn, 2020).

Limitation of the Military's Political Role

The limitation of the military's political role constitutes a central element of military professionalism within democratic political systems. In Samuel P. Huntington's framework, professional armed forces must restrict their institutional role to national defense and avoid expansion into political governance or civilian administrative domains. This principle is fundamental to objective civilian control, which requires a clear separation between military and civilian spheres of authority. The extent to which democratic states successfully maintain this boundary reflects the degree of military professionalism and democratic institutional consolidation (Huntington, 1981; Feaver, 1996).

In Indonesia, the formal limitation of military political involvement was significantly strengthened following the 1998 Reformasi period. The abolition of the Dwifungsi ABRI doctrine marked the formal end of military legitimacy in socio-political governance and represented a major step toward democratic civil–military reform. This institutional shift was further reinforced by Law Number 34 of 2004 concerning the Indonesian National Armed Forces, which explicitly defines the military as a state defense instrument operating under

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

civilian authority and prohibits active-duty personnel from engaging in practical political activities or occupying civilian political office (Law No. 34 of 2004; Mietzner, 2018).

Despite these formal reforms, the practical limitation of the military's political role remains contested due to the broad operational scope of Military Operations Other Than War (OMSP). Under existing legal frameworks and subsequent regulatory developments, OMSP authorizes military involvement in various non-defense sectors, including disaster management, territorial development, food security programs, cybersecurity assistance, infrastructure rehabilitation, and cooperation with regional governments. These functions significantly expand the military's presence in civilian domains beyond conventional defense responsibilities (Law No. 34 of 2004; Mahkamah Konstitusi RI, 2025; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015).

This institutional expansion has generated substantial criticism from civil society and academic circles. Public discussions organized by the Center for Democracy, Constitution, and Human Rights Studies of Universitas Gadjah Mada highlighted concerns that revisions to the TNI Law may legitimize broader military involvement in civilian governance. Wahyudi Djafar of ELSAM argued that post-Reformasi security sector reform should reinforce the military's role as guarantor of citizen rights rather than expand institutional influence within civilian affairs. Similarly, Yance Arizona emphasized that such regulatory expansion risks democratic backsliding by blurring institutional boundaries between military and civilian authority (PANDEKHA FH UGM, 2025).

Figure 2. Public Discussion by PANDEKHA FH UGM on Criticism of the Revisions to the TNI Law, the Police Bill, and the Prosecutor's Office Bill, March 18, 2025

Source: PANDEKHA FH UGM (2025)

These developments suggest that Indonesia's military professionalism reflects what Shinjiro Yabuki characterizes as hybrid professionalism. Although the military is formally subordinated to civilian authority, its continued institutional presence across multiple civilian sectors creates a more flexible boundary between defense and governance than Huntington's classical model of objective civilian control would prescribe. This flexibility reflects Indonesia's historical

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

legacy of military embeddedness within governance structures and demonstrates that the limitation of political role remains an ongoing process of democratic consolidation (Huntington, 1981).

Japan demonstrates a much stricter limitation of military involvement in civilian governance. Following World War II, Japan's defense system was institutionally designed under the constraints of the 1947 Constitution, particularly Article 9, which imposes substantial legal restrictions on military activity. The Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) were established with a narrowly defined mandate centered on territorial defense, disaster response, and strictly regulated security operations. Unlike Indonesia, the JSDF possesses highly limited institutional authority in broader civilian governance sectors (Constitution of Japan, 1947; Samuels, 2011).

Interview findings with a JSDF member confirm this institutional limitation. The respondent explained that military professionalism in Japan requires a strict separation between defense functions and civilian administrative responsibilities. In the respondent's view, military involvement in sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure development, or broader social administration would be considered inconsistent with professional military standards in the Japanese context. However, the respondent also acknowledged that national historical experiences and strategic environments shape different interpretations of professionalism across countries (Interview with JSDF Member, 2026).

The informant stated,

> *"In Japan, military professionalism means maintaining a clear boundary between defense duties and civilian administrative affairs, so involvement in sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, or social administration would not be considered appropriate for the JSDF"* (Interview with Defense Sector Informant, 2026).

These limitations are reinforced not only through legal regulation but also through deeply internalized anti-militarist political norms within Japanese society. The prohibition against military expansion into civilian governance is widely understood as a fundamental postwar democratic principle. This norm substantially reduces the likelihood of institutional expansion beyond defense responsibilities and reinforces civilian supremacy over military functions (Hikotani, 2018; Interview with Professor Jaehwan Lim, 2026).

A direct comparison between Indonesia and Japan reveals significant differences in how military political roles are institutionally bounded. Indonesia has successfully eliminated formal military participation in electoral and party politics, yet institutional flexibility through OMSP continues to allow substantial military involvement in civilian governance. Japan, by contrast, maintains a far more rigid separation between defense responsibilities and civilian administrative functions through constitutional restriction, legal limitation, and political-cultural internalization (Huntington, 1981; Samuels, 2011).

These differences demonstrate that limiting military political roles requires more than formal legal prohibition of partisan activity. It also depends on clearly defined institutional boundaries that prevent military expansion into civilian governance. Japan more closely approximates Huntington's ideal of objective civilian control, whereas Indonesia reflects an evolving hybrid model in which democratic reform has constrained direct political intervention but has not yet fully eliminated institutional overlap between military and civilian domains.

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Military Professionalism in Indonesia and Japan

Indicator	Indonesia	Japan	Comparative Interpretation
Political Neutrality	Formal legal neutrality exists, but recurring allegations during elections indicate inconsistent enforcement	Strict legal restrictions reinforced by deeply internalized anti-politicization norms	Japan demonstrates stronger neutrality due to effective institutional enforcement and normative internalization
Civilian Control	Formal civilian supremacy exists, but constrained by limited civilian oversight capacity and OMSP overlap	Constitutional restrictions, strong ministerial control, and effective parliamentary oversight	Japan exhibits more consolidated civilian control due to stronger institutional capacity
Limitation of Military Political Role	Hybrid professionalism with broad domestic involvement through OMSP	Narrowly regulated domestic role under constitutional limitation	Indonesia retains institutional flexibility, while Japan maintains clearer civilian-military boundaries

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that military professionalism in Indonesia and Japan develops through distinct historical trajectories, institutional arrangements, and political cultures, producing different patterns of democratic civil–military relations. Using Samuel P. Huntington's framework, the comparative analysis shows that Japan demonstrates a more consolidated form of military professionalism across the three examined indicators: political neutrality, civilian control, and limitation of military political roles. The findings reveal that differences in political neutrality are shaped not merely by formal legal prohibition but by the degree of normative internalization and institutional enforcement. While Indonesia has formally institutionalized military neutrality through post-Reformasi legal reforms, recurring allegations of neutrality violations indicate that implementation remains inconsistent. By contrast, Japan combines legal restrictions with deeply institutionalized professional norms and postwar anti-politicization culture, producing a more stable pattern of military non-partisanship. In terms of civilian control, both countries formally recognize civilian supremacy; however, their institutional effectiveness differs substantially. Indonesia has established democratic legal mechanisms placing the TNI under civilian authority, yet limitations in civilian defense expertise, parliamentary oversight capacity, and institutional overlap through OMSP continue to constrain effective supervision. Japan, in contrast, benefits from stronger constitutional constraints, ministerial authority, parliamentary control, and deeply internalized norms of military subordination. Regarding the limitation of military political roles, Indonesia reflects a hybrid model of professionalism in which formal democratic subordination coexists with continued institutional flexibility through military involvement in non-defense domestic affairs. Japan demonstrates a more rigid institutional separation between defense functions and civilian governance, reinforced by constitutional limitations and political-cultural anti-militarism.

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Suggestion

Based on the findings, Indonesia needs to strengthen the institutional implementation of military professionalism beyond formal legal reform. First, civilian oversight should be improved by strengthening the capacity of the House of Representatives and the Ministry of Defense in supervising defense policy, military deployment, and budget implementation. Civilian institutions should not only approve military policies administratively but also develop sufficient expertise to evaluate their democratic and strategic implications.

Second, the scope of Military Operations Other Than War should be clarified more strictly to prevent excessive military involvement in civilian governance. Military participation in non-defense sectors should be limited to urgent and clearly defined situations, such as disaster response or national emergency, and should remain under explicit civilian authorization. This is important to maintain a clear boundary between defense functions and civilian administrative responsibilities.

Third, the enforcement of military neutrality during elections should be strengthened through clearer monitoring, disciplinary procedures, and public accountability mechanisms. Allegations of neutrality violations involving military personnel should be handled transparently to ensure that political neutrality becomes not only a formal rule but also an internalized professional norm.

Fourth, future research should expand the comparative scope by including additional democratic countries with different civil-military traditions. Further studies may also involve more informants from both Indonesia and Japan to provide a more balanced empirical comparison between legal frameworks, institutional practices, and professional norms within military organizations.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who contributed to the completion of this research. In particular, the author extends deep appreciation to Dr. Yusa Djuyandi, S.IP., M.Si, Department of Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran, as the research supervisor for his guidance, critical insights, and continuous support throughout the research process. The author also wishes to thank the examiners, Dra. Mudiyati Rahmatunnisa, M.A., Ph.D., Dr. Ratnia Solihah, S.IP., M.Si., and Mustabsyirotul Ummah Mustofa, S.IP., M.A., all from the Department of Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran, for their constructive feedback and valuable academic input, which significantly improved the quality of this study. The author is also grateful to an anonymous member of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) for participating in an in-depth interview and providing important empirical insights into military professionalism in Japan. Furthermore, the author expresses sincere appreciation to Professor Jaehwan Lim of Aoyama Gakuin University for his valuable perspectives and expertise in comparative politics and civil–military relations, which greatly enriched the analysis of this research. The author would also like to express heartfelt gratitude to his beloved mother, Mrs. Linda, his late father, his elder brother Yuda Aldiansyah, his younger siblings Fakhril and Falisha, and Mr. Sugiharto Hadi Wibowo for their prayers, guidance, and unwavering support, which enabled the author to complete this research in Japan. The author also sincerely thanks Siti Nurrazizah for her steady support and encouragement throughout the research process, as well as Muhammad Aldy Mulyadi for his companionship and valuable discussions during the research period in Indonesia. Special appreciation is also extended to Ucu Aulia and Ahmad Muhibbudin for their companionship, thoughtful conversations, and emotional support throughout the research journey, particularly during moments of reflection and academic challenge. The author is equally grateful to the students

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

of the Political Science Program, Class of 2022, Universitas Padjadjaran, for their solidarity, shared academic journey, and support from the beginning of university life until the completion of this research. The author acknowledges Aoyama Gakuin University and Universitas Padjadjaran, particularly the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, for their academic support and institutional facilities. Finally, the author extends sincere thanks to all parties who directly or indirectly contributed to this research. Their support has been indispensable to the successful completion of this study.

References

Azwar, A., & Suryana, M. J. (2021). Dwifungsi TNI dari Masa ke Masa. *Jurnal Academia Praja*, *4*(1), 154–179. https://doi.org/10.36859/jap.v4i1.182

Boivin, A., Lehoux, P., Burgers, J., & Grol, R. (2014). What are the key ingredients for effective public involvement in health care improvement and policy decisions? A randomized trial process evaluation. *The Milbank Quarterly*, *92*(2), 319-350. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12060

Brooks, R., & Grewal, S. (2022). "Twice the citizen": how military attitudes of superiority undermine civilian control in the United States. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *66*(4-5), 623-650. https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027211065417

Bruneau, T. C., & Matei, F. C. (2008). Towards a new conceptualization of democratization and civil-military relations. *Democratization*, *15*(5), 909-929. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340802362505

Burk, J. (2002). Theories of democratic civil-military relations. *Armed forces & society*, *29*(1), 7-29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X0202900102

Corn, G. P. (2016). Should the Best Offense Ever Be a Good Defense: The Public Authority to Use Force in Military Operations: Recalibrating the Use of Force Rules in the Standing Rules of Engagement. *Vand. J. Transnat'l L.*, *49*, 1.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. London: Sage publications.

Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0 <sup/>. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *6*(2), 80–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812437186

Feaver, P. D. (1996). The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control. *Armed Forces & Society*, *23*(2), 149–178. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9602300203

Fox-Rogers, L., & Murphy, E. (2014). Informal strategies of power in the local planning system. *Planning theory*, *13*(3), 244-268. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095213492512

Garb, M., & Malešič, M. (2016). The causes of trust and distrust in the military. *Defense & Security Analysis*, *32*(1), 64-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2015.1130316

Gusniar, A., Maryanah, T., & Kurniawan, R. C. (2026). Strategies For Preventing Vote Buying And Enforcing Village Apparatus Neutrality In The 2024 Elections. *Journal of Social Politics and Governance (JSPG)*, *8*(1), 209-226. https://doi.org/10.24076/bqh1vw61

Hikotani, T. (2018). The Japanese Diet and defence policy-making. *International affairs*, *94*(4), 791-814.

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Huntington, S. P. (1981). *The soldier and the state: The theory and politics of civil–military relations*. Harvard University Press.

Janjua, R. W. (2021). CIVIL-MILITARY CONCORDANCE IN PAKISTAN. *ISSRA Papers*, *13*, 101–115. https://doi.org/10.54690/issrap.v13iXIII.90

Kaufman, R. R., & Haggard, S. (2019). Democratic decline in the United States: What can we learn from middle-income backsliding?. *Perspectives on Politics*, *17*(2), 417-432. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592718003377

Kawasaki, T. (2001). Postclassical realism and Japanese security policy. *The Pacific Review*, *14*(2), 221–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/09512740110037361

Kosandi, M., & Wahono, S. (2020). Military Reform in the Post-New Order Indonesia: A Transitional or a New Subtle Role in Indonesian Democracy? *Asian Politics & Policy*, *12*(2), 224–241. https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12534

Kosandi, M., & Wahono, S. (2020). Military reform in the post-new order Indonesia: a transitional or a new subtle role in Indonesian democracy?. *Asian Politics & Policy*, *12*(2), 224-241. https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12534

Larson, A. D. (1974). Military professionalism and civil control: a comparative analysis of two interpretations. *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, 57-72.

Levy, Y. (2016). What is controlled by civilian control of the military? Control of the military vs. control of militarization. *Armed forces & society*, *42*(1), 75-98. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X14567918

Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method. *American Political Science Review*, *65*(3), 682–693. https://doi.org/10.2307/1955513

Mantali, R. (2025). Assessing the Effectiveness of the Enforcement Mechanisms for Electoral Offenses in Indonesia. *Estudiante Law Journal*, *7*(3), 709-721. https://doi.org/10.33756/eslaj.v7i3.31251

Masitoh, Y. T., Timur, F. G. C., & Perwita, A. A. B. (2026). A Comparative Analysis of Indonesian and Australian Military Deployment and Strategy. *Social Science Studies*, *6*(1), 070-083. https://doi.org/10.47153/sss61.23472026

Meyerrose, A. M. (2020). The unintended consequences of democracy promotion: International organizations and democratic backsliding. *Comparative Political Studies*, *53*(10-11), 1547-1581. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019897689

Mietzner, M. (2018). Fighting illiberalism with illiberalism: Islamist populism and democratic deconsolidation in Indonesia. *Pacific Affairs*, *91*(2), 261–282.

Miles, M. B. , H. A. M. , & S. J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.). *Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.*

Nadzirin, A., Sukmariningsih, R. M., & Mashari, M. (2025). Does the State Civil Apparatus Violate Neutrality During Elections?. *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, *3*(2), 400-433. https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v3i2.112

Naidoo, S. (2006). The role of the military in democratic governance in Africa: The need to institutionalise civil-military relations. *Policy research and capacity building challenges. Monograph*, *122*(2006), 33-48.

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)

Ng, J., & Kurniawan, Y. (2024). The parliament and cooperative oversight of the Indonesian armed forces: Why civil–military relations in Indonesia is stable but still in transition. *Armed Forces & Society*, *50*(3), 683-709.

Nix, D. E. (2012). American civil-military relations: Samuel P. Huntington and the political dimensions of military professionalism. *Naval War College Review*, *65*(2), 88-104.

Nshindano, K. P., & Mpundu, M. (2025). Ensuring Electoral Integrity: A Comprehensive Study of the Legal Framework and Independence of Zambia's Electoral Management Body. *African Quarterly Social Science Review*, *2*(1), 133-147. https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.2.1.11

Olsen, J. P. (2013). The institutional basis of democratic accountability. *West European Politics*, *36*(3), 447-473. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2012.753704

Samuels, R. J. (2011). *Securing Japan: Tokyo's grand strategy and the future of East Asia*. Cornell University Press.

Suntoro, A. (2019). The Military and Civil Supremacy in Indonesian Democracy: Towards an Ideal Model in Siyāsah Shar'iyyah Perspective. *Al-Risalah*, *19*(2), 159. https://doi.org/10.30631/al-risalah.v19i2.488

Syahdi, I. (2024). Kajian Yuridis Peran Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) Dalam Operasi Militer Selain Perang (OMSP) terkait Penanggulangan Tindak Pidana Terorisme. *Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences (IJoMS)*, *3*(2), 236-260. https://doi.org/10.59066/ijoms.v3i2.1039

Travis, D. S. (2019). Pursuing civilian control over the military. *Armed Forces & Society*, *45*(3), 546-560. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18781539

Wonka, A., & Warntjen, A. (2004). The making of public policies in the European Union: Linking theories of formal decision-making and informal interest intermediation. *Governance in Europe The Role of Interest Groups*, 9.

Yabuki, S. (2024). Professionalism Of The Indonesian Armed Forces: New, Old, Or Hybrid Professionalism?. *JWP (Jurnal Wacana Politik)*, *9*(2), 7.

ISSN 2721-0960 (Print), ISSN 2721-0847 (online)