



Indonesia's Commitment to the Contribution of Indonesian Military Troops to UN Peacekeeping Missions under President Joko Widodo's Administration

By

Yokie R. Isjchwansyah

Master's Student in International Relations, Faculty of Philosophy and Civilization,
Paramadina Graduate School of Diplomacy
yokie.isjchwansyah@students.paramadina.ac.id

Introduction

In pursuit of the mandate of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945), specifically in Part IV, Indonesia is expected to actively participate in implementing world peace. One of the implementations is the deployment of Indonesian Military (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, hereinafter TNI) troops in the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission program.

In its mission, the Indonesian peacekeepers are called the Garuda Contingent (*Kontingen Garuda*, hereinafter KONGA). KONGA I was the first contingent dispatched to Egypt in 1957 under the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) mission.¹ Since the dispatching of KONGA I, the mission has included missions in Congo, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Lebanon.²

Indonesia has always expressed its commitment to continue increasing its contribution to the UN peacekeeping forces, both in terms of quantity and quality. According to data from the UN, as of 30 April 2023, Indonesia ranked as the 8th most contributing country in UN peacekeeping missions with a total of 2,711 personnel distributed in 9 missions. Meanwhile, the TNI consisting of military troops, observers, and military staff are stationed in 4 UN peacekeeping missions.³

Based on the mandate of the 1945 Constitution and Indonesia's historical legacy, the author asserts that Indonesia's commitment to contributing military personnel to UN peacekeeping missions needs to be evaluated by the next President, considering that President Joko Widodo administration will end in 2024.



Legal Basis of the TNI on UN Peacekeeping Missions

One of the country's objectives is to participate in implementing the world order.⁴ For this objective, Indonesia established Law Number 37 of 1999 on Foreign Affairs, which is also used as guidelines for the Indonesian government in deploying UN peacekeepers. The deployment of the TNI in UN peacekeeping missions is a form of defense diplomacy conducted by Indonesia. In UN peacekeeping operations, there are at least two forms of participation that can be conducted by a country, which are fund contribution and troop deployment to the UN-determined conflict areas.⁵ In the TNI Law itself, the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops is included as part of the main duties categorized under Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW).⁶

Furthermore, the organizational unit in the TNI organization that has the authority to deploy peacekeeping troops is the Indonesian Military of Peacekeeping Mission Centre.⁷ In its preparation, the deployment of troops is not solely the responsibility of the TNI. Besides the TNI, at least nine stakeholders are involved in the Peacekeeping Mission Coordinating Team (PMCT), designated to prepare all matters deemed necessary for the deployment of peacekeeping troops.⁸

KONGA Deployment under President Joko Widodo Administration

Under the administration of President Joko Widodo, the government continues to increase Indonesia's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions by deploying 4,000 peacekeepers. By enacting Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation Number 5 of 2015 on the Vision Roadmap of 4,000 Peacekeepers 2015-2019 and amended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation Number 1 of 2017 (Minister of Foreign Affairs Vision Roadmap Peacekeepers), Indonesia was expected to improve their role in maintaining a peaceful world order. The implementation of the vision was further stipulated in the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2015-2019 through Presidential Regulation Number 2 of 2015.

While Indonesia aimed to deploy 4,000 UN peacekeepers, in 2019, Indonesia was also expected to surpass the top 10 countries contributing the most troops to UN peacekeeping missions.⁹ In 2017, Indonesia managed to enter the top 10 countries contributing the most troops to UN peacekeeping missions by ranking at the 9th place, with a total of 2,688 troops, wherein the Indonesian Military deployed 2,446 troops, 26 military experts, and 44 military staff.¹⁰ Unfortunately, in 2019, Indonesia did not manage to surpass the 4,000 troops target as in that year, the number of Indonesian troops in UN peacekeeping missions amounted to only 2,897.



Figure 1. Number of Indonesian Military Troops in the UN Peacekeeping Mission under the Administration of President Joko Widodo

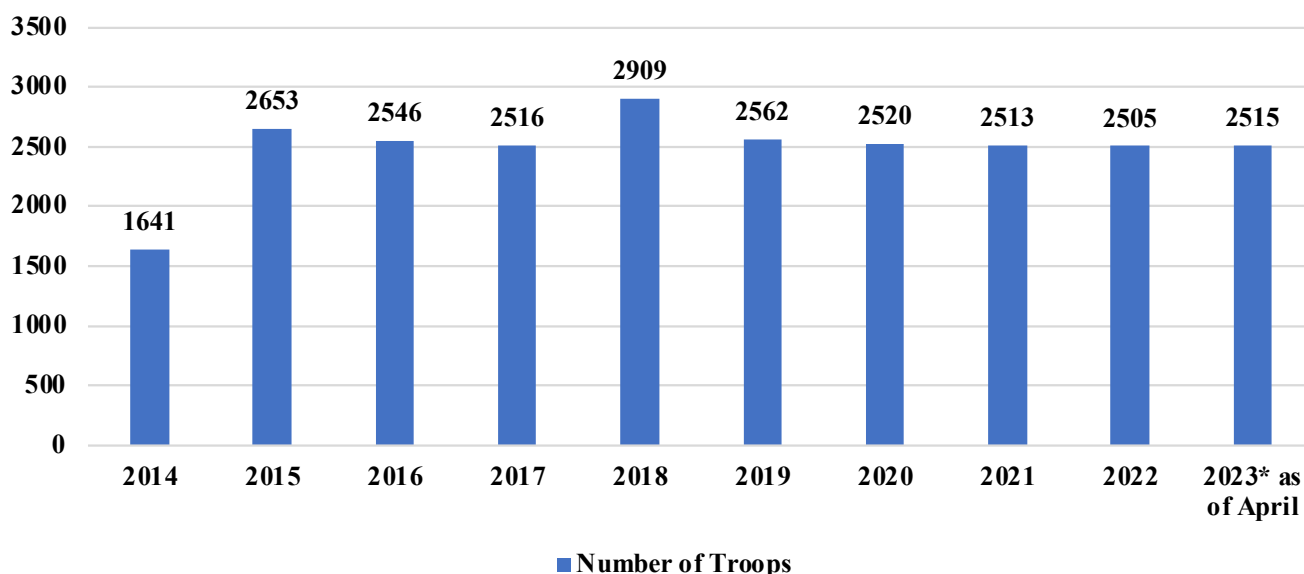
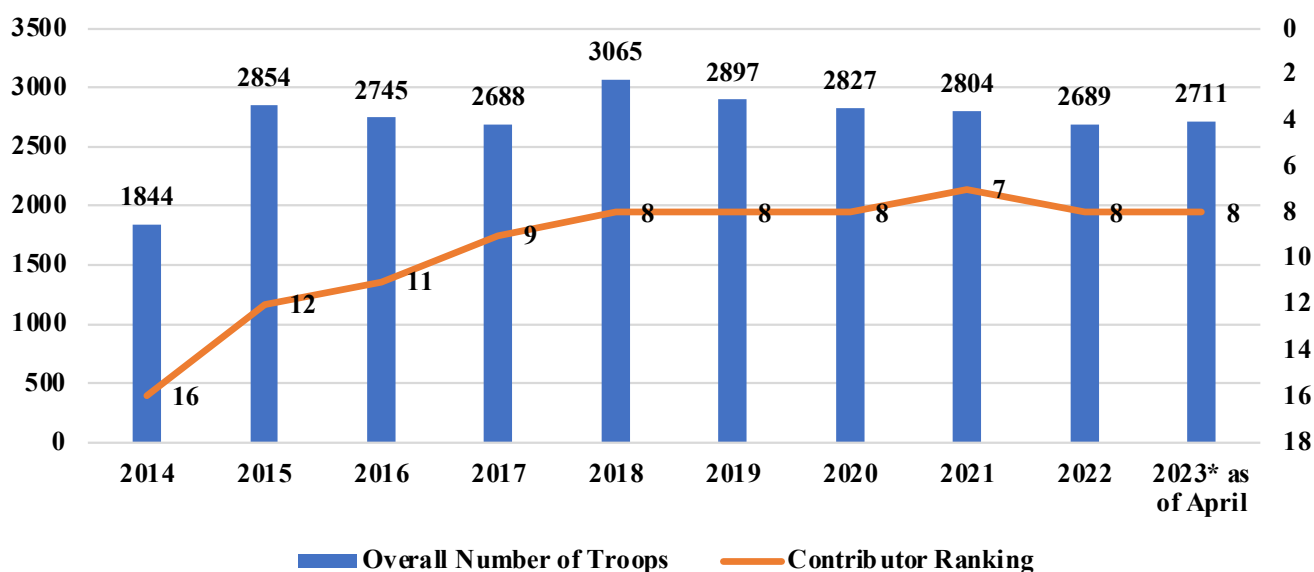


Figure 2. Number of Indonesian Military and National Police & Indonesia's Ranking in UN Peacekeeping Forces under President Joko Widodo Administration



Sources: Compiled by the author from the United Nations Peacekeeping website





In general, the trend of deployment of the TNI to UN peacekeeping forces in President Widodo's era tended to increase compared to the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). During the SBY era, the highest number of deployment was recorded in 2011, which only reached 1,826 troops, compared to President Widodo's era, which reached 2,909 troops in 2018. However, President SBY showed a commendable commitment by increasing the number of troops and military experts by 431% in 2006 at 1,058 compared to 199 troops in 2005.¹¹

On the roadmap of the vision of 4,000 peacekeeping personnel 2015-2019, Indonesia's target to enter the top 10 UN peacekeeping contributing countries was achieved in 2017. However, Indonesia has not managed to surpass the number of 4,000 personnel and seems satisfied with achieving the top 10 ranking. This can be seen in the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020-2024 as promulgated through Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020, where until 2024, the government has only targeted a position within the top 10. In other words, there is no significant effort to increase its contribution in adding the quantity of UN peacekeepers. Moreover, as the Chair of PMCT, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has not designed an updated roadmap on the vision of peacekeeping personnel in the second term of the Widodo administration.

Regarding Indonesia's unsuccessful attempt to meet the target of 4,000 troops in UN peacekeeping missions, the government did not elaborate on the challenges experienced in the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020-2024. However, considering the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vision Peacekeepers Roadmap, the major challenge is the sudden and rapid demand from the UN, while the preparation of personnel and the procurement of equipment and supplies are both time-consuming and require a significant budget.

The author argues that there are several factors as to why increasing the participation of peacekeeping troops has a positive impact on Indonesia. Besides implementing the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, it creates opportunities for Indonesia to be able to take on various strategic positions in the UN, such as the non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2019-2020 term.¹² From an economic point of view, increasing the number of troops can boost the development of the domestic defense industry by promoting military products from the state-owned company which engages in the defense industry.





Former personnel are of the same opinion. In addition to many positive impacts for Indonesia, the deployment of peacekeepers provides benefits and capacity building through exchanging knowledge and experience. Major Tech. I Wayan Ady Dharmadi, who previously served as the G-4 Logistic Operation Chief Sector East Head Quarter UNIFIL, explained that his ability to coordinate and conduct diplomacy with the foreign military has improved, especially in solving logistical problems. Additionally, he argues that the experience gained broadened his perspective on the organizational culture of foreign militaries, which is useful in carrying out his future duties. On the contrary, although also arguing that the ability to coordinate, cooperate, and participate in diplomacy with other countries' militaries has improved, 2nd LT (Adjutant General/Caj.) (Army Women Corps) Tri Hartuti Martalena Dame, who served as a French interpreter officer in the MONUSCO mission from February 2022 to March 2023, believes that improving the quality of personnel in terms of resources in accordance with their respective positions is the main priority at this time compared to the quantity of personnel.

Furthermore, both former personnel share the same opinion on the challenges they encountered during their missions, which was the condition of Contingent-Owned Equipment. Contingent equipment is the benchmark of a country's readiness in handling the situation in the mission area and crucial in achieving mission objectives, pointing to the necessity of quality improvement. The TNI Chief, Admiral Yudo Margono, also expressed the same sentiment. In May 2023, the Indonesian Military Chief visited Indobatt Headquarters at UNP-71 Adchit Al Qusayr, South Lebanon, to observe firsthand the condition of the contingent of peacekeeping forces in Lebanon. On his visit, the Indonesian Military Chief had the opportunity to experience the combat vehicle belonging to the Indobatt Task Force. Shortly after getting off the vehicle, the Indonesian Military Chief expressed his desire to replace the vehicle because he considered its condition outdated.¹³

Conclusion

Based on the experience of former personnel, apart from increasing the quantity, improving the quality in terms of human resources and the main weaponry system of the UN peacekeeping forces is equally important. With modern defense equipment, it is believed that the quality and safety of personnel in the field in carrying out missions can be optimally executed. On the other hand, the TNI also needs to prioritize domestic military products to promote defense and security equipment. Lastly, author opines that active participation with an increasing number of troops can also bring a positive impact to Indonesia's reputation in the international community, which can be an important asset for Indonesia's national interest in re-running as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2029-2030 period.¹⁴





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Endnotes

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Contact:

The Habibie Center

Jl. Kemang Selatan No. 98, Jakarta 12560

Tel: +62 21 781 7211 | Fax: +62 21 781 7212

Email: thc@habibiecenter.or.id

Website: www.habibiecenter.or.id