



## A Comparative Analysis of Indonesian and Australian Military Deployment and Strategy

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### ARTICLE INFO

Submission: 2026-01-07  
Revised: 2026-01-26  
Accepted: 2026-01-29

### ABSTRACT

**Research Aims:** This study conducts a comparative analysis of Indonesian and Australian military deployment and utilization to illuminate divergent strategic paths within the Indo-Pacific. It evaluates how geography, threat perception, and defense budgets influence military posture and strategic flexibility.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study adopts a qualitative comparative case study methodology to examine the military deployment and utilization strategies of Indonesia and Australia. The analysis is guided by geopolitical theory and defense posture theory and is based on systematic analysis of secondary data, including official government defense white papers, strategic and doctrinal documents, and peer-reviewed scholarly literature.

**Research Findings:** Indonesia's posture is fundamentally inward-looking and defensive, dictated by its archipelagic geography and historical focus on internal unity. Its Total People's Defense relies on functional mass and territorial resilience. Conversely, Australia's posture is outward-looking and expeditionary, driven by continental geography and alliance commitments. While Indonesia is constrained by budgets below 1% of GDP, Australia's investment of approximately 2% of GDP facilitates high-end power projection and technological superiority.

**Theoretical Contribution/Originality:** This paper contributes to strategic theory by illustrating the dichotomy of strategic drivers between neighboring states. It highlights how historical identity and geography create a choice between Indonesia's strategic autonomy and Australia's alliance-integrated interoperability.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Australia, military deployment, defense strategy, Indo-Pacific.

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### Introduction

The 21st-century global security environment, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, is characterized by unprecedented complexity and flux. The intensifying strategic competition between the United States and the People's Republic of China, flashpoints

Social Science Studies Vol. 6 No. 1 2026 Page 070-083

e-ISSN: 2798-2688

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47153/sss61.23472026>

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in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, and the persistent challenges of terrorism, transnational crime, resource insecurity, and climate change are forcing nations to re-evaluate long-held strategic assumptions (Australian Government, 2013). Within this dynamic landscape, states must strike a difficult balance between strategic ambition and the stark realities of their resources, a dynamic that shapes not only what military capabilities they acquire but how they structure, deploy, and utilize their forces (Gray, 2010). This study focuses on that practical translation from strategy to military deployment and utilization.

Nowhere is this dynamic more apparent than in maritime Southeast Asia, where Indonesia and Australia stand out as crucial regional actors. As immediate neighbors sharing a maritime border, they have a mutual interest in a stable and prosperous region (Laksmana, 2018). However, their strategic outlooks, historical experiences, national identities, and military capabilities could not be more different. Indonesia, the world's largest archipelagic state and a fiercely independent nation, charts its course through the prism of non-alignment and internal resilience (Studies, 2021). Australia, an island-continent with a European heritage and a small population, has traditionally anchored its security in alliances with distant great powers (Australia, 2016). This paper will conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of the military deployment and utilization of Indonesia and Australia, selecting Australia as the comparative case to illuminate the divergent strategic paths nations can take even when faced with similar regional challenges. The comparative research problem, therefore, is to explain why two neighboring states facing similar regional pressures produce sharply different patterns of military deployment and utilization.

While existing researcher has extensively examined Indonesian defense doctrine and Australian military strategy as separate cases, there remains a lack of comparative research that systematically explains how differing strategic drivers translate into concrete patterns of military deployment and utilization. This study fills that gap by providing a comparison of Indonesia and Australia, linking geography, threat perception, and defense resources to observable differences in force structure, deployment doctrine, and operational use of military power. This paper argues that while both Indonesia and Australia are adapting their military postures to a more contested Indo-Pacific, their deployment doctrines and force structures are fundamentally shaped by a dichotomy of strategic drivers: Indonesia's posture is dictated by its archipelagic geography and a historical obsession with internal unity, resulting in a defensive, inward-looking, and territorially-focused force (Indonesia, 2015); in contrast, Australia's posture is driven by its continental geography and deeply-integrated alliance commitments, leading to a more expeditionary and technologically-superior force now being radically redesigned for high-end power projection and deterrence in its immediate region(Australia, 2016).

To explore this thesis, the paper is structured in several parts. First, it will outline key strategic theories related to geopolitics and defense posture, military deployment and utilization that provide an analytical framework. Second, it will

comparatively analyze in greater depth the primary factors; geography, threat perception, and defense budgets that influence the defense planning of both nations. Third, it will meticulously compare their respective force structures, deployment doctrines, and regional commitments, providing specific examples of their military utilization. Finally, the conclusion will synthesize these findings to critically evaluate how these factors affect their overall military posture and strategic flexibility, offering a nuanced perspective on their roles in the evolving regional order. The analysis will draw heavily upon official documents, including Indonesia's and Australia's Defense white papers, alongside scholarly sources, to provide a well-supported and critical comparison.

From the discussion above, the research question of this paper is: How do Indonesia and Australia as neighboring countries operating in the same Indo-Pacific security environment develop markedly different patterns of military deployment and utilization? Accordingly, the objective of this study is to explain how differing strategic drivers; particularly geography, threat perception, and defense resources shape and produce these contrasting deployment and utilization postures, as examined in the comparative analysis below.

## **Literature Review**

### **Geopolitics and Strategic Posture**

To effectively compare the defense strategies of Indonesia and Australia, it is useful to ground the analysis in foundational strategic theory. The concepts of geopolitics explain the enduring influence of geography on national power, while theories of strategic posture provide a vocabulary for describing how nations choose to utilize their military forces.

Classical geopolitical theory emphasizes that a nation's geography is a primary, often deterministic, factor in its strategic destiny. Alfred Thayer Mahan, in his seminal work *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, argued that national greatness was inextricably linked to control of the seas through commerce and naval power. For Mahan, nations that command key sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) possess a decisive advantage (Mahan, 1890). This perspective is perfectly suited to understanding Indonesia, an archipelagic state whose national unity and economic lifeblood depend on its ability to control strategic straits (Malacca, Sunda, Lombok) and police its vast internal waters. In contrast, Halford Mackinder's "Heartland" theory posited that control over the vast Eurasian landmass was the key to world power, highlighting the strategic logic of continental states (Mackinder, 1904). While Australia is not a Eurasian power, Mackinder's focus on the strategic imperatives of a large, contiguous landmass helps frame its defense challenge. Its geography as an island continent creates what historian Geoffrey Blainey termed the tyranny of distance, a

sense of isolation and vulnerability that has historically driven it to seek protection from powerful, distant allies (Blainey, 2001).

These geographical realities fundamentally inform a state's strategic posture. This posture can be defined by its orientation (defensive or offensive) and its objectives (Gray, 2019). A primarily defensive posture prioritizes the protection of sovereign territory. This can be achieved through deterrence by punishment, where a state threatens massive retaliation after an attack, or, more relevant to this analysis, deterrence by denial, where a state seeks to build sufficient capability to make an invasion so costly and difficult that an adversary is dissuaded from even trying (Snyder, 1961). Indonesia's concept of Total People's Defense is a classic example of a denial strategy. An expeditionary or offensive posture involves the ability to project power far beyond one's borders, often in support of allies or to preempt threats at a distance (Defense, 2022). As security threats become more complex, nations must constantly adjust this posture, balancing the need for territorial defense with the ability to act proactively in their near-abroad, a choice heavily influenced by their resources, political will, and strategic flexibility (Betts, 2012). This theoretical toolkit allows for a nuanced analysis of why Indonesia and Australia, despite being neighbors, have developed such divergent military structures and doctrines.

### **Military Deployment and Utilization**

Based on Joint Publication 3-35, Deployment and Redeployment Operations published by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Military strategy, deployment and utilization are two fundamental and interconnected concepts that describe how a nation uses its armed forces (Staff, 2020). While the core definitions are universal, their practical application is uniquely shaped by a nation's geography, political objectives, and strategic culture. Understanding these concepts provides the necessary lens through which to compare and contrast the distinct approaches of Indonesia and Australia. Deployment is the strategic movement and positioning of troops, equipment, and supplies from a home base to a specific location. It is a complex logistical process that answers the questions of how and where military power will be positioned. For both Indonesia and Australia, the decision to deploy is driven by a confluence of critical factors, but the emphasis on each factor differs (Staff, 2020).

A nation's political objectives set the overarching goals, whether that is maintaining regional stability, honoring alliance commitments, or protecting territorial sovereignty. The specific mission requirements for; combat, peacekeeping, or disaster relief, then determine the scale and type of forces needed. Finally, and perhaps most critically for a comparative analysis, strategic geography dictates where forces can be most effectively placed (Staff, 2020)(United States Joint Chief of Staff, 2007). For an archipelagic nation like Indonesia, deployment is intrinsically linked to maritime security and maintaining cohesion across its vast territory (Indonesia, 2015). For Australia, a continent with distinct strategic approaches to its northern and eastern shores, deployment may focus more on expeditionary capabilities to support a rules-based order in the wider Indo-Pacific. The deployment process for both nations

follows structured phases of preparation, movement, sustainment, and redeployment, but the geographical and political context will shape the execution of each phase (Australian Government, 2023).

Once forces are in position, their utilization, the practical application of that power begins. This answers the crucial question of why the forces were sent. While both Indonesia and Australia utilize their forces across a similar spectrum of activities, their national priorities lead to different patterns of application. Forces can be used for deterrence, positioning a credible military presence to discourage adversaries, or for defense, actively protecting national territory and interests (Defense, 2022). Beyond this, power projection allows a nation to influence events far from its shores. A key area for comparison is the emphasis on cooperative or non-kinetic roles (United States Joint Chief of Staff, 2007). Both nations actively engage in defense diplomacy to build trust and strengthen alliances through joint exercises. Both are also key regional actors in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), leveraging their military's logistical capabilities. Furthermore, Indonesia's significant contributions to international peacekeeping missions represent a major pillar of its foreign policy and force utilization. Analyzing how each country balances these different forms of utilization, from hard power for defense to soft power through diplomacy and aid will reveal deep insights into their respective strategic postures. By using these concepts as an analytical framework, one can move beyond a simple list of military assets to a nuanced understanding of how and why Indonesia and Australia project power to secure their interests in a complex and evolving region.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study methodology to analyze the military deployment and utilization strategies of Indonesia and Australia within the Indo-Pacific security environment. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research examines strategic doctrines, defense postures, and policy orientations that are socially constructed, historically embedded, and context-specific, rather than variables amenable to quantitative measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research design follows an explanatory comparative case study model. Indonesia and Australia are selected through purposive sampling using comparative research logic: as immediate neighbours operating in the same Indo-Pacific strategic environment, they share similar regional exposure, while differing on key explanatory conditions; geography (archipelagic vs. continental), strategic culture/threat orientation, and security alignment (non-alignment vs. alliance integration). This most-similar systems comparison increases explanatory leverage by holding regional context relatively constant while examining how variation in these drivers especially geography, threat perception, and defence resources produces contrasting patterns of military deployment and utilization (Yin, 2018).

Data collection relies exclusively on secondary data to ensure consistency and comparability across cases. The primary sources include official defense white papers,

strategic reviews, and doctrinal publications issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Defense and the Australian Department of Defense. These documents are treated as authoritative articulations of national defense priorities, threat assessments, and force development plans. Secondary sources include academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and policy reports from established scholars and research institutions, which provide theoretical grounding and critical interpretation of official narratives (Gray, 2010; Betts, 2012).

The analytical framework integrates geopolitical theory and defense posture theory. Classical geopolitical perspectives are used to assess how physical geography constrains and enables military deployment choices (Mahan, 1890; Mackinder, 1904). Defense posture theory provides conceptual tools to distinguish between inward-looking, territorially focused defense strategies and outward-oriented, expeditionary postures, as well as to analyze deterrence mechanisms such as deterrence by denial and power projection (Gray, 2019; Snyder, 1961). Concepts of military deployment and utilization are further operationalized using standardized doctrinal definitions from U.S. Joint Publications to ensure analytical clarity and terminological consistency (U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2020).

Data analysis is conducted through thematic qualitative analysis using a structured, focused comparative procedure. First, key documents for each country are systematically coded using the same analytical categories: geography, threat perception, defence budget/resources, force structure, deployment doctrine, and patterns of military utilization. Second, a within-case analysis is conducted for Indonesia and Australia to trace how these drivers shape deployment and utilization in each case. Third, findings are compared through cross-case analysis, examining each category with the same guiding questions to identify convergences and divergences. Finally, the study synthesizes the results by linking observed differences in force structure and operational use to the underlying strategic drivers, strengthening explanatory clarity and comparability (Yin, 2018).

Methodological rigor is enhanced through explicit strategies for reliability, validity, and triangulation. Reliability is supported by applying a consistent coding framework across both cases and by using standardized doctrinal definitions (e.g., Joint Publications) to maintain terminological consistency in concepts such as deployment and utilization. Validity (credibility) is strengthened through source triangulation, cross-checking official defence documents against peer-reviewed scholarship and policy analyses to reduce single-source bias and corroborate interpretations. To improve comparability, the study prioritizes documents with similar function and authority (e.g., white papers, strategic reviews, doctrinal publications) and evaluates claims by seeking convergence across multiple credible sources rather than relying on isolated statements (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

## **Result and Discussion**

The defense postures of Indonesia and Australia are the products of unique national journeys. By comparing the key drivers of their strategies with specific data and official doctrine, a clearer picture emerges of two fundamentally different approaches to regional security.

### **Foundational Drivers: Geography, Threats, and Budgets**

The strategic context of each nation is the essential starting point for any comparison. For Indonesia, the defining feature is its geography. The 2015 Defense White Paper explicitly identifies Indonesia as one of the largest archipelago countries in the world, located between two oceans and two continents with ten direct land and sea borders. As one of the world's largest archipelagos, geography presents Indonesia with an immense defensive challenge. Its military must be dispersed across thousands of islands to guard against separatism, secure maritime resources, and assert sovereignty. This necessitates a dispersed, defensive posture focused on presence, not projection (Indonesia, 2015).

This geography has historically shaped Indonesia's threat perception to be overwhelmingly inward-looking. The 2015 White Paper categorizes threats into factual and non-factual. Tellingly, it lists conventional war as a non-factual (i.e., unlikely) threat. The factual threats are predominantly internal or transnational in nature: "terrorism and radicalism, separatism and armed uprisings, natural disasters, border trespassing, piracy and natural resources theft, epidemics, cyber attacks and espionage, as well as trafficking and drug abuse" (Indonesia, 2015). This deep-seated institutional focus on internal security and territorial integrity remains a powerful driver of its defense posture. The Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) is overwhelmingly oriented toward internal security and protecting its territorial integrity. Its core doctrine, the Total Defense System, is about mobilizing the entire nation to defend the homeland from threats, both foreign and domestic (Indonesia, 2019). This is an inward-facing, territorial mission (Sebastian & Lanti, 2018).

Indonesia's defense budget is the critical constraint that mediates its strategic ambition. While its total expenditure is significant in regional terms, it has consistently remained low as a percentage of its rapidly growing GDP. Persistent budget constraints, this is the most critical factor. While the defense budget has grown in absolute terms, it has consistently fallen short of the amounts projected as necessary to fund the MEF. As a percentage of GDP, Indonesia's defense spending has hovered around 0.7-0.9%, far below the 1.5% that was initially deemed necessary for the program's success (Rizal, 2024). The 2015 White Paper notes that the projected defense budget is expected to be above 1% of GDP, a figure that forces severe trade-offs, hampering the pace of modernization and the capacity for sustained, high-tech military operations (Indonesia, 2015). With a smaller budget (around 1% of GDP), the focus is on maintaining a large force capable of covering its vast territory. Modernization is incremental, prioritizing equipment for territorial control, maritime

surveillance, and troop transport over expensive, high-end expeditionary capabilities (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2024). The focus is on functional mass.

In stark contrast, Australia's geography as an island-continent creates a different set of problems. Its primary geographical challenge has always been the defense of its vast northern maritime approaches. As a continent with no land borders, Australia is a natural maritime power (Australia, 2016). Its strategic depth allows it to focus on monitoring and controlling its vast sea and air approaches, using its northern coast as a springboard for forward defense into the region. This has shaped its threat perception around the need to prevent a hostile major power from dominating maritime Southeast Asia. Australia's 2016 Defense White Paper identifies its key strategic drivers as overwhelmingly external: the roles of the United States and China, challenges to the stability of the rules-based global order, the enduring threat of terrorism, and the pace of military modernisation in the region (White, 2019). The Australian Defense Force (ADF) is structured to operate far beyond its borders. Its primary goal is to proactively shape the strategic environment in Southeast Asia and the Pacific and contribute to a rules-based global order. This outward focus is a direct inversion of Indonesia's priorities (Medcalf, 2020).

This shift is underwritten by a robust defense budget. The 2016 White Paper committed to increasing defense spending to two per cent of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2020–21, which involved an additional \$29.9 billion over the decade. With a defense budget targeted at 2% of its GDP (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2024), Australia invests in advanced, high-cost platforms designed for power projection and interoperability (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020). This includes F-35 fighter jets, advanced warships, and future nuclear-powered submarines. The focus is on technological superiority. This provides a level of financial resourcing for advanced technology that is simply unattainable for Indonesia.

### **Force Structure and Deployment Doctrines**

These differing contexts produce profoundly different military doctrines and force structures. Indonesia's guiding defense doctrine is *Sistem Pertahanan Rakyat Semesta* (Sishankamrata), or the Total People's Defense System. Rooted in its revolutionary experience, this doctrine is defined in the 2015 White Paper as a Defense "involving all citizens, territories, and other national resources." Its military expression is a defensive, attritional strategy where the TNI acts as the "Main Component," reinforced by a "Reserve Component" (*Komcad*) and "Supporting Components" drawn from the populace. This doctrine has historically justified a force structure overwhelmingly dominated by the Army. The long-running Minimum Essential Force (MEF) modernization program sought to rebalance this, but budgetary issues have left critical gaps in external defense capabilities (Rasyid, 2024). Numerous analysts and official reports indicate that the overall targets were not met. In mid 2022, TNI

Commander Gen. Andika Perkasa stated that MEF realization stood at around 65-70% (Ashar & Malufti, 2022).

The deployment of Indonesian forces is overwhelmingly internal. The Army's territorial structure is the backbone of the state's presence. External deployments are modest and primarily serve diplomatic goals. As noted in the 2015 White Paper, Indonesia is a world-class contributor to UN peacekeeping, at the time deploying 2.684 soldiers to nine missions with a goal of reaching 4.000 personnel. This use of the military as a tool of its free and active foreign policy aims to enhance international prestige and build diplomatic capital (Indonesia, 2015). The outcomes of Indonesia's participation in peacekeeping missions are significant. Its contributions increase Indonesia's diplomatic visibility and credibility on the global stage (Ruffa, 2023). As a mediator and peacebuilder, Indonesia's involvement in these missions fosters greater engagement with major powers and other Troops Contributing Countries (TCCs) (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024). Furthermore, peacekeeping operations strengthen Indonesia's partnerships with other nations, enabling knowledge exchange and collaborative training initiatives that enhance its defense capabilities and diplomatic ties (Widyawati, 2024).

Australia's traditional Defense doctrine, conversely, has been expeditionary. The ADF has been structured and trained for high-end interoperability with the United States, deploying forces far from home in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 2016 White Paper reinforces this by defining one of its three core Strategic Defense Objectives as being able to "Contribute military capabilities to coalition operations that support Australia's interests in a rules-based global order" (Australia, 2016).

This doctrine is driving a radical transformation of Australia's force structure. The ADF is a much smaller (~6.0000 active personnel in 2016, growing to ~62.400), all-volunteer, professional force. The 2016 White Paper detailed massive investments in technologically advanced platforms to create a more capable, agile and potent future force (Australia, 2016) including:

1. Undersea Warfare: Increasing the submarine force from six to twelve regionally superior submarines.
2. Surface Fleet: Acquiring nine new future frigates and twelve new offshore patrol vessels.
3. Air Combat: Acquiring 72 F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters to form the core of its air power.

The deployment of the ADF is explicitly global and alliance-integrated, focused on exercises like Talisman Sabre and the United States Force Posture Initiatives in northern Australia to enhance interoperability (Australia, 2016).

### **Regional Commitments and Strategic Flexibility**

The final point of comparison lies in how each nation engages with the region and the flexibility this affords them. Indonesia is a champion of ASEAN Centrality and

strictly adheres to its free and active (*bebas aktif*) foreign policy. It avoids formal military alliances, preferring multilateral diplomacy. This gives it significant political credibility, but the ASEAN framework, based on non-interference and consensus, offers little in terms of hard security guarantees (Jose, 2022). This reinforces Indonesia's deep-seated belief in self-reliance. However, its strategic flexibility is critically undermined by its budget. Its navy can only afford a limited number of patrol days, its air force struggles with aircraft availability, and its modernization plans are often delayed. This creates a persistent and dangerous gap between its stated strategic objective to become a "global maritime fulcrum" and its actual military capacity (Indonesia, 2015). Indonesia fiercely guards its strategic independence, avoiding binding military alliances. It prefers to engage with all major powers (including the U.S., China, and Russia) on its own terms and prioritizes regional diplomacy through ASEAN (Bajpae et al., 2025). Its goal is strategic autonomy, not integration into an alliance.

Australia, conversely, is a quintessential US ally. Its security is anchored in the ANZUS Treaty, and its 2016 White Paper affirms that the alliance is the core of Australia's security and defense planning. It is also a member of the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) and the Five-Eyes intelligence network (Australia, 2016). These commitments provide immense benefits, including intelligence sharing, preferential access to advanced military technology, and a powerful security guarantee. This, combined with its robust budget, gives the ADF enormous strategic flexibility in terms of technological superiority and operational reach. However, this deep integration comes at the cost of strategic autonomy. Its foreign policy is closely aligned with Washington's, creating a different kind of strategic constraint where its freedom of political maneuver is limited by its alliance obligations.

### Comparative Analysis: Indonesia and Australia - Military Deployment and Utilization Strategy

From those analysis on how Indonesia and Australia in practice of their military deployment and utilization, this is a table that can be easily understood;

Table 1. The Quantity of Shopping

Aspect	Indonesia	Australia
<b>Geography</b>	Archipelagic state with 17,000+ islands; maritime chokepoints (Malacca, Sunda, Lombok)	Island-continent; vast northern maritime approaches; geographically isolated
<b>Strategic Orientation</b>	Inward-looking; focused on territorial defense and internal stability	Outward-looking; forward defense posture focused on Indo-Pacific regional engagement
<b>Core Doctrine</b>	<i>Sistem Pertahanan Rakyat Semesta</i> (Total People's Defense)	Expeditionary, alliance-based doctrine with emphasis on deterrence and power projection

<b>Military Utilization</b>	Primarily for sovereignty protection, internal threats, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations	Deployed globally; focuses on interoperability with allies and coalition-based missions
<b>Threat Perception</b>	Internal threats (terrorism, separatism, natural disasters, piracy, cyber)	External threats (great power competition, regional instability, terrorism, rising Chinese influence)
<b>Defense Budget</b>	~0.7-0.9% of GDP; limited modernization pace	~2% of GDP; sustained investment in advanced platforms and force development
<b>Force Structure</b>	Army-dominated; incremental modernization under MEF program; logistical challenges persist	Technologically advanced tri-service force; emphasis on submarines, frigates, and F-35s
<b>Alliance &amp; Partnerships</b>	Non-aligned; emphasizes ASEAN centrality and strategic autonomy	Strong US ally; member of ANZUS, FPDA, and Five Eyes intelligence network
<b>Regional Engagement</b>	Diplomatic; peacekeeping contributor; emphasizes free and active foreign policy	Active regional and global military contributor; bilateral and multilateral exercises (e.g., Talisman Sabre)
<b>Strategic Flexibility</b>	Constrained by budget and logistical limits; high emphasis on independence	High technological and operational flexibility; limited autonomy due to alliance obligations

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## Conclusion

This comparative analysis highlights the fundamental differences on how Indonesia and Australia conceptualize, structure, and deploy their military forces in response to the evolving security landscape of the Indo-Pacific region. Indonesia, shaped by its archipelagic geography and internal security priorities, maintains a defense posture rooted in territorial resilience and national unity. Guided by the doctrine of Total People’s Defense (Sishankamrata), its military remains largely inward-focused, emphasizing internal stability and sovereignty over power projection. Budget limitations and a long-standing preference for non-alignment reinforce this approach, resulting in a military that prioritizes functional mass and wide territorial coverage over technological sophistication.

In contrast, Australia’s military strategy is deeply informed by its continental geography and enduring alliance with the United States. With a focus on regional engagement and a forward-leaning deterrence strategy, Australia maintains a

technologically advanced, expeditionary force capable of operating far beyond its borders. Its robust defense budget supports this outward orientation, enabling sustained investments in modern platforms and interoperability with allied forces. However, this close integration also ties Australia's strategic flexibility to its alliance commitments, limiting its autonomy in certain foreign policy decisions.

Both countries are adapting to a more competitive Indo-Pacific, but their responses remain distinct reflections of their geopolitical realities, historical experiences, and national identities. While Indonesia seeks strategic autonomy through regional diplomacy and internal resilience, Australia reinforces its role as a proactive security partner within a network of alliances. These divergent paths not only illuminate the strategic diversity within the region but also highlight the complexity of shaping defense strategies in an era marked by uncertainty and great power competition.

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