

## National Defense Journalism

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### ABSTRACT

Journalism, as part of the fourth pillar of democracy, play a vital role in supporting national resilience through non-military defense. However, a portion of Indonesian journalists tends to prioritize personal or group interests over national obligations, raising concerns regarding ethical violations and legal compliance. This study aims to cultivate a national defense mindset among journalists by emphasizing their strategic role in safeguarding the public through responsible journalism. Employing a qualitative approach and guided by Sir Arthur F. Lykke's Ends-Ways-Means framework, this research highlights the importance of aligning journalism practices with the state's interests and public safety. The findings underscore the necessity for journalists to internalize values of patriotism and uphold Journalism ethics, especially in an era marked by widespread information disorder. Press freedom must be exercised with accountability to ensure that news production serves the collective interests of the Indonesian nation. Ultimately, journalism constitutes a crucial element of Indonesia's non-military defense strategy by strengthening public trust and national unity through accurate and ethical reporting.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press defines journalism as the process of seeking, obtaining, processing, and disseminating information while upholding the principles of accuracy, independence, and accountability (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 40 Tahun 1999 tentang Pers, 1999). Despite this legal foundation, Indonesian journalism continues to struggle with weak institutional oversight, growing commercial pressures, and the misuse of press freedom for political or personal gain (Haryanto, 2018; Sudiby, 2019; Ahmad, 2023). Such systemic weaknesses have eroded public trust in the media and constrained the press's ability to fulfill its democratic role as a watchdog and as a contributor to national resilience (Ahmad, 2023; Sudiby, 2019). Strengthening journalistic independence and ethical accountability is therefore essential to ensuring that the media can effectively support both democratic consolidation and national defense.

Law No. 32 of 2002 on Broadcasting establishes the legal framework governing Indonesia's public and private broadcasting institutions (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 32 Tahun 2002 tentang Penyiaran, 2002). The law emphasizes broadcasting as a public domain that must serve the national interest, cultural diversity, and democratic values. Mandates balanced information dissemination and prohibits content that threatens social harmony, morality, or national stability. Challenges persist in enforcing editorial independence and limiting political and commercial interference within Indonesia's evolving media landscape (Haryanto, 2018; Sudiby, 2019).

The nation's vast geography and diversity exacerbate these problems. With 17,508 islands, 38 provinces, and a population exceeding 281 million people from 1,340 ethnic groups (BPS, 2024), journalism institutions navigate significant logistical and social challenges in delivering inclusive and accurate information. At the same time, the rapid spread of hoaxes and disinformation in the digital era threatens social cohesion and state unit.

Ideally, journalism functions as the fourth pillar of democracy, serving as a watchdog over power while fostering national unity. Media organizations are expected to implement rigorous editorial processes, invest in professional training, and maintain ethical standards to ensure press freedom supports not harms the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). This vision aligns with the concept of journalism as a non-military defense instrument that protects public trust and counters social polarization.

Since its first broadcast on 11 September 1945, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) has embodied Indonesia's nationhood, rooted in Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, the Unitary State, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Kominform, 2024; UU No. 40 Tahun 1999). During the Battle of Surabaya, Bung Tomo's voice transmitted via RRI mobilized resistance against colonialism, demonstrating media's role as a strategic civil defense tool (Ahmad, 2023; UU No. 3 Tahun 2002). This legacy affirms journalism's duty to build resilience and unity, making the press as the fourth pillar of democracy responsible for state cohesion and public trust (Gadjah Mada University, 2023). In today's era of hybrid threats, disinformation, and democratic decline, journalism must be

recognized as a non-military defense asset for safeguarding national integrity through truth, ethics, and strategic communication (Lykke, 1997; Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

However, previous research has mostly examined press freedom and media ethics in isolation, without analyzing journalism's systemic role in state defense. Few studies have adopted the Ends Ways Means (EWM) strategic framework (Lykke, 1997) to assess how journalism can balance its objectives, strategies, and resources in fulfilling this role. According to Yarger (2006), the EWM model enables a structured understanding of how strategic actors align desired outcomes with available means through deliberate and ethical approaches. When applied to journalism, this framework clarifies how media institutions can define national communication objectives, employ strategic reporting methods, and allocate institutional capacities effectively. Such an approach bridges normative theories of journalism with strategic studies, integrating public information functions within broader national security objectives (Paul & Matthews, 2016). Therefore, incorporating EWM analysis into media research provides a multidimensional framework to assess journalism's contribution to democratic resilience and state defense (Lykke, 1997; Yarger, 2006).

In various issues related to military and non-military defense, Arthur Lykke's End-Way-Mean theory always stands out. One of the journals that caught the author's attention was entitled *The Essence of Difference: The Ends, Ways, and Means of China's Military Maritime Mission*. The journal describes the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s rapid development of military maritime capabilities and their harnessing under strong personalist paramount leader Xi Jinping to address ambitious national goals. It is one of the most important subjects concerning great power security in the international system today. Understanding the key dynamics is thus inherently important.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing the Indonesian journalism system's capacity to act as a non-military defense instrument. It explores the challenges facing media organizations, from regulatory and commercial pressures to the need for more robust fact-checking and information security. Finally, the study proposes policy recommendations to strengthen journalism's ability to defend Indonesia's democratic values and national unity.

Journalism in Indonesia functions as a strategic tool of national communication, embedding non-military defense values into media systems. To confront disinformation and polarization, the press must go beyond informing, adopting a security-oriented role. By translating national ideologies such as Pancasila and constitutional sovereignty – into editorial practice, media reinforce unity and strengthen resilience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Lykke's Theory (Ends Ways Means)*

This paper utilizes End Way Means framework to conduct a comprehensive analysis of multifaceted issues and determine the most suitable solutions. End-Way-Means theory reveals deep linkages between attributes,

consequences, and personal values, enabling strategic alignment in complex decision-making processes. Lykke's theory guides State Defense Journalism by linking media content, audience interpretation, and national values to shape strategic, value-driven communication approaches.

Drawing on Arthur F. Lykke Jr.'s Ends Ways Means (EWM) model (Lykke, 1997), this analysis defines the ends as Indonesia's nonmilitary media defense objectives: preserving national unity, maintaining democratic stability, and safeguarding ideological integrity as mandated by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. The ways refer to the operational methods—strategic communication, conflict-sensitive reporting, peace-oriented journalism, and adherence to the Journalistic Code of Ethics necessary to achieve these goals. The means encompass both tangible resources, such as technological infrastructure, professional training, and institutional oversight, and intangible assets, including institutional credibility, ethical integrity, and public trust.

Within this framework, media bias constitutes a disruption or *gangguan* that directly impedes the ends by weakening the ways and eroding the means. By explicitly mapping instances of media dysfunction to each EWM component, the analysis demonstrates that unchecked bias not only distorts public perception but also strategically degrades the operational pathways and foundational resources necessary to achieve and sustain Indonesia's national resilience objectives in the information domain.

#### *Framework Threats, Disruptions, Obstacles, Challenges TDOC*

The Framework of *Threats, Disruptions, Obstacles, and Challenges* offers a doctrinal taxonomy for assessing security risks in the information environment (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2022). *Threats* include external or internal forces such as foreign information warfare, cross-border disinformation, and cyberattacks that undermine national resilience (Paul & Matthews, 2016; Rid, 2020). *Disruptions* cover domestic dynamics such as media bias, politicized framing, and inflammatory narratives that erode public trust and democratic stability (Sudiby, 2019; Freedom House, 2023). *Obstacles* refer to weak editorial oversight, limited journalist training in defense-oriented reporting, and inadequate technological capacity within media institutions (Ahmad, 2023; Haryanto, 2018). Finally, *Challenges* represent long-term pressures including digital transformation, hybrid warfare tactics, and ideological polarization that demand adaptive and integrated communication strategies (Yarger, 2006; Lykke, 1997). AGHT can be operationalized by aligning civil preparedness, strategic communication, and institutional resilience with constitutional values, enabling the press to act as an active non-military defense tool against hybrid threats.

Application safeguards Indonesia's unity by aligning journalistic narratives with core ideals, countering internal disruption and external threats through informed, purposeful public engagement. Its application enhances analytical depth, supports targeted solutions, and fosters value-based understanding essential for policy, communication, and behavioral research frameworks. Researcher further adopts the threat-disruption-obstacle-

challenge model to deconstruct problem structures and refine the evaluative process toward impactful conclusions.

The dynamic threats to national integrity ranging from misinformation to media politicization necessitate a non-military defense rooted in critical journalism and ethical information dissemination. By integrating the Threat Disruption Obstacle Challenge framework with the Ends Ways Means model, this study systematically analyzes layered vulnerabilities and strategic responses in journalistic practices. This dual-framework approach allows for a holistic evaluation of the press's role in defending national interests through both normative intent and operational execution.

#### *Peace Journalism Theory*

Peace journalism, as defined by Galtung (2002), emphasizes conflict resolution, empathy, and factual accuracy, rejecting war journalism's binary framing. By promoting solutions-oriented reporting and amplifying peaceful actors, it reduces hostility, counters disinformation, and fosters cohesion (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Rooted in ethics and civic trust, this model aligns with *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, supporting democratic stability and serving as a strategic non-military instrument consistent with Indonesia's constitutional and defense doctrine.

#### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis in this study employed the Miles and Huberman Interactive Model (1994), which consists of three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M., 1994). Collected qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documents were first reduced through coding and thematic categorization to identify patterns relevant to journalism as a non-military defense instrument. The reduced data were then organized into analytical matrices aligning with EWM and AGHT frameworks to ensure conceptual consistency. Finally, conclusions were drawn through iterative verification, comparing empirical findings with theoretical propositions to enhance analytical validity and maintain alignment with the strategic defense context.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In preparing this journal for the Republic of Indonesia Defense University, the researcher employs a qualitative approach, conducting institutional interviews with diverse stakeholders to examine State Defense Journalism as an essential non-military instrument of national security.

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore complex social phenomena by focusing on participant-driven meaning and interpretation (Semiawan, 2010). It adopts an inductive method, developing theoretical insights from empirical findings supported by observation, structured interviews, and document analysis. To ensure depth and inclusivity, the researcher—drawing on journalistic expertise as a postgraduate at the Defense University—conducted institutionally approved interviews with RRI, the Press Council, and Presidential Communications, combining academic rigor with practical engagement.

All information obtained from sources serves as essential input in this study, reliability, and academic credibility. Strategically, this approach facilitates the interpretation of subjective perceptions and lived experiences within authentic settings, enabling adaptive refinement of inquiry as insights emerge.

Proves effective for investigating intricate or delicate matters, contributes to the generation of grounded theories, enhances participant-researcher rapport, and produces nuanced, narrative-based findings. The researcher also held in-depth discussions with key representatives from major institutions, including Radio Republik Indonesia, the Press Council, and the Presidential Communications Bureau.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In media studies and communication systems theory (Denis McQuail & Sven Windahl, 2015), journalism is seen as a complex system shaped by interactions between media actors, institutions, and society. The media system highlights the dynamics of regulation, organizational structures, and journalistic values and practices, while also considering power relations, technological change, and shifting patterns of information use. In Indonesia, this framework is reflected in governance, organizational structures, professional standards, ethics, technology, and socio-political contexts that influence journalism's role:

### *Governance and Regulation Framework*

Refer to Laura (2025), Indonesia's press regulations, including Law No. 40/1999 and the Journalistic Code of Ethics, provide a normative foundation for press freedom, democracy, and national defense, yet enforcement remains weak and susceptible to political and economic interference (Laura, Personal Communication, February 2025). From an EWM perspective, the Ends of these regulations are to preserve democracy, safeguard national unity, and strengthen information sovereignty, the Ways involve implementing strong ethical standards, independent oversight, and institutionalizing peace journalism, while the Means—effective enforcement, transparent ownership, and institutional independence—remain underdeveloped, creating a gap between normative intent and practical execution. The TDOC analysis further highlights Threats from political and economic intrusion, Disruptions from ethical breaches and politicized narratives, Obstacles due to insufficient oversight and weak enforcement, and Challenges in reforming regulatory systems to align practice with democratic and defense-oriented objectives. This imbalance undermines journalism's capacity to act as both a democratic pillar and a non-military defense instrument, emphasizing the need for operationalized, enforceable, and transparent regulatory frameworks.

It can be concluded that Indonesian press regulations, although normatively strong, remain fragile in practice, and without effective law enforcement and institutional reform, the press cannot fully serve as both a safeguard of democracy and a strategic non-military defense asset. From a media studies and communication systems perspective, journalism functions as a complex ecosystem shaped by interactions among institutions, actors, and

society, where governance, organizational structures, professional standards, technology, and socio-political forces collectively define its public role (McQuail & Windahl, 2015). In Indonesia, these systemic and normative dimensions form the foundation for journalism as a democratic pillar and a non-military defense instrument; however, persistent gaps between normative intent and institutional capacity continue to undermine its effectiveness in sustaining democracy and securing the national information domain.

#### *Media Organizational Structure*

The absence of uniform recruitment and qualification standards in Indonesia's journalism sector undermines professional quality and weakens adherence to ethical norms, as entry into the profession varies widely: some journalists hold formal degrees in communication, journalism, or related fields, while others rely solely on practical experience, creating inconsistent competence and ethical application that diminishes journalism's credibility and its capacity to fulfill democratic and national defense roles (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; McQuail & Windahl, 2015). Although the Uji Kompetensi Wartawan seeks to standardize skills, its limited incorporation of *bela negara* principles, information security, conflict-sensitive reporting, and digital verification reduces its effectiveness in preparing journalists for hybrid threats (Ward, 2018). As Hendrasmo (2025) notes, many journalists remain unprepared for strategic or defense-related issues, and training in defense journalism is minimal and not systematically integrated into professional education or certification. Without reforms to strengthen ethics, digital literacy, and civic awareness, the press remains vulnerable to disinformation, political and economic manipulation, and declining public trust, undermining its role as both a watchdog and a strategic non-military defense asset. The central challenge, therefore, lies in reforming recruitment, training, and certification processes to produce professionals who are ethically sound, technologically competent, and strategically capable of supporting democratic accountability and national resilience (Hendrasmo, Personal Communication, April 2025).

The End While Mean (EWM) analysis reveals that Indonesia's media ecosystem exhibits structural vulnerabilities that weaken alignment between national defense communication objectives and editorial practices. While the national communication strategy articulates strong normative goals, supporting mechanisms—such as independent regulators, institutional safeguards, and dedicated editorial units—remain underdeveloped, and concentrated ownership, political influence, and weak enforcement further undermine editorial independence and organizational resilience (Widodo, 2021; Setiawan, 2025; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Using the EWM framework, the overarching goal (End) in Indonesian journalism is to strengthen journalists' quality, ethics, and strategic role in democracy and national defense, prioritizing ethical competence and integrating national defense, information security, and conflict-sensitive reporting (Ways). Achieving this requires legal and institutional reforms, clear recruitment policies, and ongoing capacity building through Journalist Competency Tests (Means); however, weak integration of these resources creates a gap between

normative objectives and actual journalistic capacity. From a TDOC perspective, the sector faces threats from disinformation, political manipulation, and declining public trust; disruptions due to uneven recruitment, inconsistent qualifications, and weak ethics enforcement; and obstacles stemming from the absence of standardized training and defense-oriented professional development. The lack of uniform recruitment and qualification systems undermines professionalism and ethical consistency, as entry pathways vary widely and the Uji Kompetensi Wartawan, while partially standardizing competence, still lacks integration of national defense principles, information security, and digital verification (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Ward, 2018). The central challenge, therefore, is to comprehensively reform recruitment, training, and certification processes to ensure journalists are ethically sound, professionally competent, and strategically prepared to counter hybrid threats within a complex information environment.

#### *Editorial Workflow*

The arrest of Jak TV's News Director, Tian Bahtiar, for taking IDR 487 million to spread disinformation highlights weak ethical safeguards in Indonesian journalism, exposing systemic ethical decay that undermines democratic institutions and public trust (Pikiran Rakyat, 2025; McQuail, 2010). Although journalist competency certification exists, the Press Council acknowledges that ethical lapses at senior levels cannot be resolved through testing alone, and current measures, such as distributing pocket ethics guides, lack structural depth (Sudiby, 2019). Variations in news gathering, inconsistent verification protocols, and the prioritization of speed over accuracy in multi-platform dissemination further facilitate the rapid spread of misinformation (Silverman, 2014; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Ward, 2018; Graves, 2016). Without institutionalized external oversight, recurrent ethics training, and leadership aligned with national resilience principles rooted in Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, journalism cannot effectively function as a non-military defense instrument to counter information threats and protect the national information domain (Napoli, 2015). Moreover, the current editorial process—typically following planning, reporting, verification, editing, and publication meetings—remains poorly institutionalized for aligning news with national interests, while external pressures from politics, business, and public opinion continue to influence editorial policy and undermine independence (Hendrasmo, 2025; Hendrasmo, Personal Communication, April 2025).

Using the End While Mean (EWM) framework, the Ends of editorial workflow in Indonesian journalism are to safeguard information integrity and accuracy while strengthening media as a non-military instrument of democracy and national security; the Ways include embedding peace journalism, conflict-sensitive reporting, robust ethics oversight, institutionalized fact-checking, continuous training, committed leadership, external monitoring, standardized verification, and improved news-gathering practices; and the Means require legal reforms, independent regulatory bodies, sustainable funding, advanced verification technologies, and journalist capacity-building programs. However, current implementation remains weak, as ethics training is superficial,

oversight is non-institutionalized, and leadership often fails to align newsroom practices with national resilience goals. From a TDOC perspective, Threats include disinformation and ethical breaches; Disruptions arise from inconsistent reporting, politicized decision-making, and speed-driven journalism; Obstacles involve limited tools, weak enforcement, and lack of verification systems; and the central Challenge is to reform ethics governance, standardize verification processes, embed national defense principles into newsroom culture, and institutionalize external accountability to enhance accuracy, cohesion, and resilience.

#### *Ethics and Codes of Conduct*

The lack of consistently enforced ethical standards in Indonesian journalism undermines public trust and weakens the media's role in safeguarding the national information space, as core principles of objectivity, balance, and accuracy (Ward, 2018) are increasingly compromised by clickbait, conflicts of interest, and social media disinformation (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014; Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018). These ethical breaches erode editorial independence, degrade public discourse quality, and create vulnerabilities to domestic and foreign information threats. Addressing these issues requires stricter code enforcement, continuous ethics training, and institutionalized fact-checking, supported by transparent policies, public corrections, and ombudsman systems, thereby enabling media to fulfill democratic responsibilities and enhance national resilience against cognitive and information warfare. Challenges in the digital era—including speed-driven misinformation, limited Press Council authority, and politically motivated hoaxes—further test journalism's ethical integrity and its alignment with national interests (Setiawan, 2025; Hendrasmo, 2025).

Based on the EWM analysis, the Ends of ethics in Indonesian journalism are to preserve public trust, strengthen democracy, and protect the national information space, while the Ways involve enforcing ethical codes, institutionalizing fact-checking, ensuring transparency, and providing continuous ethics training for journalists and editors. However, the Means—including robust legal enforcement, effective oversight bodies, and credible sanctioning mechanisms—remain weak, limiting the Press Council's authority and efficacy. Digital-era challenges such as clickbait, political hoaxes, and social media disinformation further undermine ethical standards and newsroom accountability (Ward, 2018; McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014; Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018). From a TDOC perspective, threats include declining objectivity, balance, and accuracy; disruptions arise from reduced editorial independence; and obstacles stem from weak enforcement and verification gaps. The central challenge is embedding ethics and accountability throughout newsroom governance to ensure normative goals translate into resilient, trustworthy journalistic practice, as weak ethics and clickbait culture foster disinformation and polarization, diminish public trust, and compromise journalism's credibility and its role in protecting the national information environment (Ward, 2018), while legal enforcement and oversight bodies are needed to operationalize ethical integrity effectively.

### *Technology and Infrastructure*

Indonesia's journalism still lacks advanced technology and robust cybersecurity, limiting efficiency, accuracy, and resilience in both reporting and non-military defense functions, as unequal access to high-resolution equipment, editing systems, and content management platforms weakens storytelling, verification, and consistent journalistic quality (Pavlik, 2013). Weak cybersecurity frameworks expose media organizations to hacking, data breaches, and coordinated disinformation attacks, threatening public trust and information sovereignty (Rid, 2020), while underutilization of artificial intelligence in fact-checking and content verification slows journalistic responsiveness, allowing misinformation and hoaxes to proliferate (Graves & Anderson, 2020). Addressing these gaps requires strategic investment in modern tools, AI adoption, and strengthened cybersecurity to protect credibility, secure content, and enhance resilience. Technological infrastructure remains unevenly distributed, favoring large media outlets and making smaller organizations more vulnerable to cyberattacks, operational disruptions, and information interference (Setiawan, 2025; Personal Communication, March 2025).

Indonesia's journalism sector remains technologically fragmented and cyber-vulnerable, undermining its credibility and strategic role in non-military defense, as limited access to advanced tools, secure infrastructure, and AI-enabled verification creates structural disparities among media organizations (Pavlik, 2013; Rid, 2020). Weak technological governance and insufficient cybersecurity investment increase exposure to hacking, disinformation, and foreign interference, threatening public trust and information sovereignty. Furthermore, underutilization of AI in verification and analysis restricts journalistic accuracy, responsiveness, and investigative depth (Graves & Anderson, 2020). Addressing these vulnerabilities requires an integrated national strategy that links technological modernization, governance reform, and defense-oriented policies to strengthen media resilience, credibility, and cognitive security.

### *Public Relations and Engagement*

The persistent lack of transparency and meaningful public engagement in Indonesian journalism erodes trust, weakens democratic accountability, and reduces resilience against disinformation. Limited openness in sourcing, editorial decisions, and verification processes undermines public understanding and perceptions of accuracy, fairness, and independence (Karlsson, 2010). Although public participation in press monitoring is growing through social media and Press Council complaints, it remains reactive, fragmented, and institutionally weak (Allan & Thorsen, 2009; Setiawan, 2025). The absence of structured mechanisms, such as citizen journalism platforms and transparent feedback systems, constrains the public's ability to hold media accountable. Institutionalizing ethical practices, data-driven reporting, and participatory communication within newsroom culture can enhance credibility, foster social cohesion, and strengthen Indonesia's non-military defense posture, transforming public engagement from symbolic gestures into substantive oversight.

Based on the End While Mean (EWM) analysis, the Ends of public relations and engagement in Indonesian journalism are to build trust, strengthen democratic accountability, and enhance resilience against disinformation, while the Ways include embedding transparency in sourcing and editorial processes, creating structured feedback mechanisms, and ensuring consistent ethical practices. The Means – such as institutionalized participation platforms, trained editorial teams, and professional feedback management systems remain weak and underdeveloped, creating an imbalance that prevents journalism from fully securing public trust and limits its role as a non-military defense instrument for cognitive security and social cohesion. From a TDOC perspective, the sector faces threats from disinformation, declining trust, and opinion manipulation, with symptoms including weak engagement and low public understanding; obstacles arise from resistance to openness, poor feedback systems, and limited capacity. The central challenge is to institutionalize transparency and participation as permanent newsroom practices, thereby enabling journalism to simultaneously improve democratic accountability and function as a non-military defense asset protecting cognitive security and social cohesion.

#### *Socio-Political and Economic Environment*

The weak protection of press freedom in Indonesia undermines journalism's independence and credibility, leaving it vulnerable to political and corporate influence that reduces editorial autonomy, content diversity, and its watchdog role (Freedom House, 2023), thereby limiting the press's contribution to national defense by weakening informed public discourse. In a society marked by ethnic, religious, and regional diversity, the erosion of journalism's unifying role increases risks of polarization and intensifies the spread of disinformation (McQuail, 2010). Addressing these challenges requires stronger legal safeguards for journalists, transparent media ownership, and sustainable business models less reliant on politically connected funding, which would strengthen editorial independence, align news content with public interest, and reinforce democratic resilience while positioning the media as a strategic asset in protecting Indonesia's information environment. According to Setiawan (2025), press freedom in Indonesia – defined by the Press Law to uphold democracy, law, and national unity – is distinct from Western-style unlimited freedom; nonetheless, political interference, economic pressure, societal polarization, and concentrated media ownership continue to limit independence and increase risks of politicized information (Setiawan, Personal Communication, March 2025).

The persistent lack of transparency and meaningful public engagement in Indonesian journalism undermines trust, weakens democratic accountability, and reduces resilience against disinformation. Limited openness in sourcing, editorial decisions, and verification processes diminishes public perceptions of accuracy, fairness, and independence (Karlsson, 2010). While social media and Press Council complaints have increased participatory monitoring, engagement remains reactive, fragmented, and institutionally weak (Allan & Thorsen, 2009; Setiawan, 2025). The absence of structured mechanisms, such as citizen

journalism platforms and transparent feedback systems, limits the public's ability to hold media accountable. EWM-TDOC analysis identifies the weakest links in Indonesia's journalism system as the Means—particularly law enforcement, human resource capacity, and technological preparedness. Disinformation and cyber threats compromise national information sovereignty and public trust, while political interference, economic dependency, concentrated ownership, and ideological polarization further reduce editorial autonomy and weaken journalism's integrative democratic role (Freedom House, 2023; McQuail, 2010; Setiawan, 2025). Strengthening media resilience requires institutionalized ownership transparency, diversified politically neutral funding, sustainable business models, and comprehensive legal and regulatory reforms to reinforce press independence. Embedding ethical practices, data-driven reporting, and participatory communication into newsroom culture can enhance credibility, social cohesion, and Indonesia's non-military defense posture, transforming public engagement from symbolic gestures into substantive oversight and positioning the media as a strategic pillar of national information resilience.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on an analysis of the eight dimensions of Indonesian journalism—namely governance and regulation, organizational structure, human resources, editorial workflow, ethics, technology, public engagement, and the socio-political-economic environment—it is evident that the media system possesses significant potential to function as both a democratic pillar and a non-military defense instrument. From a *Das Sein* perspective, the current state of journalism reflects structural, normative, and technological deficiencies, including weak law enforcement, political and economic interference, concentrated media ownership, uneven journalist competence, limited integration of ethical standards and national defense awareness, technological disparities, cyber vulnerabilities, and fragmented public engagement. These empirical realities highlight a persistent gap between normative objectives and actual practice, underscoring the need for systematic reform without presuming that transformative change will occur automatically.

From a *Das Sollen* standpoint, enhancing the effectiveness and resilience of Indonesian journalism requires coordinated, evidence-based strategies involving the government, regulatory bodies, media organizations, and civil society. First, there is a pressing need for the adaptive revision of Law No. 40/1999 on the Press and Law No. 32/2002 on Broadcasting to align national media legislation with rapidly evolving digital ecosystems and emerging challenges in information geopolitics, thereby strengthening institutional oversight, transparency, and protection against political and economic interference. Second, professionalization of journalism should be pursued through standardized recruitment, competency certification, and continuous training programs that integrate ethics, digital literacy, and national defense awareness. Third, editorial governance must be reinforced via robust internal and external oversight mechanisms, strict enforcement of ethical codes,

enhanced authority of the Press Council or complementary independent ethics boards, and AI-assisted fact-checking systems to combat misinformation effectively. Fourth, strategic investment in technological infrastructure, including integrated content management systems, cybersecurity frameworks, and advanced verification tools, is essential to reduce disparities among media organizations and enhance operational resilience. Finally, structured public engagement through citizen journalism platforms and transparent feedback mechanisms should be institutionalized to improve accountability, rebuild public trust, and strengthen Indonesia's non-military defense posture. These recommendations are designed as adaptive, evidence-informed interventions, emphasizing iterative monitoring and evaluation to ensure that normative goals are translated into sustainable journalistic practice that supports democratic integrity and national information resilience.

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