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Beyond Conventional Responses: Comparative Land Defense Strategy Against the Hybrid-Separatist Threat In Indonesia and the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary separatism no longer works in one domain: armed violence, narrative building in the international arena, and exploitation of development gaps as a recruitment base operates simultaneously. Defense responses that target only the physical domain experience structural deficits that cannot be overcome by increasing combat capacity. Basically, this study aims to identify patterns of failure to adapt land defense doctrines in the face of hybrid-separatist threats in Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as formulate the most institutionally realistic transformation prerequisites. This study uses a comparative case study design with the logic of most-similar systems and process tracing methods, with data sourced from official doctrinal documents, International Crisis Group reports, IISS, SIPRI, and relevant academic literature. The results of the study show that the TNI-AD and AFP face a similar pattern of structural failure even though they are taken through different paths: The Regional Command holds the architectural potential of community-based early detection that has never been connected to a multi-domain threat management system, while the Bayanihan IPSP offers a conceptually robust whole-of-nation framework but is not successfully operationalized consistently and does not have an adaptation mechanism to shifting actors partial post-peace threat. The study concludes that doctrinal transformation (not the addition of resources) is a key prerequisite for successful strategic adaptation, and that the most realistic solution lies in expanding the scope of doctrine in existing systems, rather than establishing new institutional structures.

Keywords: Hybrid Threats, Separatism, Comparative Land Defense, Territorial Command, IPSP Bayanihan, Doctrinal Transformation.

I. Introduction

Contemporary separatism does not work in a single field. In Papua and Mindanao, armed violence operates in tandem with the construction of decolonization narratives in international forums, the exploitation of development gaps as recruitment materials, and the mobilization of cross-border diaspora networks. A country that responds to this configuration solely as a matter of military security does not fail because of a lack of strength, but because it misdiagnoses the problem. Indonesia and the Philippines face similar structural challenges: the TNI-AD in Papua and the AFP in Mindanao have consistently reduced the intensity of violence, but those successes have not correlated with declining support for the separatist agenda. This paradox shows that the problem is not in combat capacity, but in the way in which both countries interpret and respond to threats that have gone beyond the boundaries of one domain.



Studies of hybrid warfare in Southeast Asia generally depart from the context of NATO or the Russia-Ukraine conflict and are therefore not easily operationalized for sub-national conflicts in the region (Hoffman 2007), while studies of Papua and Mindanao tend to focus on historical and ethnopolitical dimensions without explicitly articulating the implications of defense doctrine (Chalk 2001). The gap between these two currents is the absence of a comparative study that systematically links the character of the hybrid-separatist threat to the limitations of the land defense doctrine of two countries facing similar structural challenges. This paper fills this gap with one main argument: the structural weakness of the conventional response stems from the absence of doctrinal transformation, not from a lack of resources. The question to be answered is: where is the limit of the elasticity of the two countries' land defense doctrines against hybrid threats, and in what dimensions does the failure of adaptation most critically occur?

In connection with the above, the novelty of this article lies in two things. First, the Regional Command and IPSP Bayanihan are not treated as objects of description, but rather as analytical instruments to measure the distance between potential doctrine and actual capacity in the face of multi-domain threats. Second, through the use of most-similar systems design, this analysis shifts the question from "what is different" between the two countries to "what is the same in their patterns of adaptation failures", a shift that is more implicitly productive and directly relevant to policy recommendations.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

This study relies on two theoretical frameworks chosen because they answer different but mutually necessary questions: (Hoffman, 2007) on hybrid warfare answers the question of how the threat works, while (Duffield, 2001) on the security-development nexus answers the question of why the threat reproduces itself even after military pressure has been successfully applied. The two are not used in parallel, but rather in interlocking relationships: without understanding the logic of threat hybridity, there is no basis for assessing the adequacy of the doctrine; Without understanding the security-development nexus, there is no explanation for why kinetic victories fail to generate sustained strategic advantages. Hoffman (2007) formulated hybrid warfare as a way of warfare that combines regular, insurgent, criminal, and informational tactics in one coherent and simultaneous campaign. What makes this formulation analytically productive is not its tactical inventory, but rather its synchronization logic: hybrid threats are designed to exploit gaps between the response categories that states build separately. Any state instrument that works in sectoral silos becomes a vulnerable point, not a strength. In the context of Papua and Mindanao, this logic explains why consistent increases in combat capacity have not succeeded in closing the separatist space of movement: the groups operate simultaneously in the physical, cognitive, and informational terrain, while the state response is concentrated only on the first terrain. Renz (2022) expands on this argument by showing that the hybrid threat character in the Indo-Pacific region demands a fundamental overhaul in the way states conceptualize defense responses, going beyond conventional categorizations between regular and non-regular conflicts. Chalk & Ungerer (2022) confirm that the threat configuration that simultaneously operates in these three domains is a hallmark of contemporary separatism in Southeast Asia, which fundamentally distinguishes it from conventional insurgency that requires only a single military response. The Hoffman framework serves as a basis for assessing the extent to which the defense doctrines of the two countries are able to reach all three fields simultaneously.

But Hoffman is not enough to explain one recurring anomaly in both cases: why does the conflict continue to reproduce itself even when military pressure manages to significantly reduce the intensity of violence? This is where (Duffield, 2001) provides the most directly relevant answer. Duffield argues that armed conflicts in developing countries are not solely the result of security failures, but are the product of conditions of "unfinished development", thus creating systemic economic and political exclusion. Security intervention without the transformation of development conditions only results in a negative balance: violence is suppressed, but the roots of production remain intact. In the case of Papua, the gap between natural resource extraction and indigenous poverty is exactly what Duffield is referring to: it provides recruitment fuel and a

legitimacy base for a separatist narrative that no amount of military operations can extinguish. The same was true for pre-BARMM Mindanao, where the structural economic deprivation of the Bangsamoro people became a condition that reproduced the conflict beyond the AFP's capacity to suppress it kinetically.

From these two frameworks is derived an analytical proposition that is the foundation of all studies, namely that an effective defense response to hybrid separatism cannot be built solely on kinetic capacity, because the threats faced operate in terrain beyond the range of that capacity. Singh (2021) reinforces this proposition by showing that the cognitive domain is an arena in which Southeast Asian separatist groups consistently achieve asymmetric advantages that conventional military capacity cannot adequately respond to. This proposition is then tested through a comparison of the Regional Command in Papua and the IPSP Bayanihan in Mindanao: to what extent are the two systems able to operationalize a response that reaches both dimensions of threat hybridity and the structural conditions that reproduce them, and at what point does each experience the most critical deficits?

III. Research Method

This study uses a comparative case study design with the logic of most-similar systems design. Indonesia and the Philippines were chosen because they share fairly close structural characteristics, namely island nations with long-standing sub-national separatist conflicts, territorial-based defense systems, and international pressure for a peaceful settlement, but pursuing contrastingly different doctrinal choices. Similarity of context allows for controlled comparisons; Differences in doctrinal choices result in variations that are analytically informative. The unit of analysis is the doctrine of land defense, not the policy of the state as a whole, so the comparison focuses on the question of the capacity of military institutions to adapt to threats that transcend the boundaries of a single domain.

Data collection was carried out through documentation studies on two categories of sources. The first category is official doctrine and policy documents, including IPSP Bayanihan (Philippine Army 2011), the Indonesian Defense White Paper (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia 2015), and the State Defense Posture (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia 2020). The second category is academic literature and reports from independent research institutions that have a verified analytical track record, including reports from the International Crisis Group, IISS, SIPRI, as well as academic works that directly discuss the conflicts of Papua, Mindanao, and the dynamics of regional defense in both countries. This study did not use primary data from interviews or field observations; Its entire empirical basis rests on documentary sources that can be openly verified and criticized.

Data analysis was carried out using the process tracing method operated in a comparative framework. Process tracing is used to identify the mechanisms that link the hybrid threat character to the choice and limits of doctrine adaptation in each country: why Kowil has not succeeded in actualizing its architectural potential, and why Bayanihan has not managed to maintain its relevance to the shift of threat actors. The results of process tracing from each case are then compared comparatively to identify commonalities in cross-context failure patterns, rather than an inventory of differences as a basis for formulating strategic implications that apply beyond a single case.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Analysis Result

The first findings suggest that the Regional Command has an institutional architecture that is inherently compatible with the demands of hybrid threat management, but that compatibility never translates into actual operational capacity. The Kowil system includes a network of Kodam, Korem, Kodim, Koramil, and Babinsa at the village level, forming a layered and permanent state presence structure (Joewono 2016). This structural advantage theoretically positions Kowil as an early detection instrument that is much

more responsive to shifting community sentiment than the reactionary combat units that are only deployed when escalation has occurred. The experience of the 2005 Helsinki MoU in Aceh confirms that this system is able to contribute to stabilization when operated with an orientation that goes beyond mere security functions.

However, a review of the official doctrinal documents in the form of the 2015 Defense White Paper and the 2020 State Defense Posture reveal a fundamental gap: neither document formulates the functions of the Kowil in a framework that explicitly recognizes the cognitive and informational dimensions of hybrid threats. The function of Babinsa is defined primarily as a social information collector and community stabilizer that is reactive. Laksmana (2021) notes that these functional limitations are a structural legacy of the New Order period, where Kowil was designed to manage population-based internal threats, rather than to deal with hybrid threats operating simultaneously in the physical, cognitive, and informational domains. Mietzner (2022) adds an institutional dimension to this limitation: the post-Reform TNI-AD doctrine did not succeed in reformulating the role of Babinsa beyond the reactive stabilization function inherited from the previous era. There is no mechanism that connects Babinsa's field data to a threat analysis system capable of detecting separatist narrative patterns, diaspora mobilization, or adversarial information operations. As a result, as the Papuan separatist movement shifts its main battleground to international forums and Pacific diaspora networks, Kowil lacks the doctrinal footing to respond in a structured manner.

These findings are confirmed by a recurring paradoxical pattern in Papua: although the TNI-AD has consistently reduced incidents of armed violence over the past decade, support for the separatist agenda has not shown a proportionate decline. Lintner and Budiardjo (2021) identified this gap as a structural indicator of the failure of post-Special Autonomy integration: the increase in the development budget was not accompanied by a transformation of the perception of distributive justice among the Papuan people, so that the success of military operations did not result in the expected delegitimization of separatism. In contrast, the narrative of Papuan decolonization continues to gain space in Pacific forums, especially the Melanesian Spearhead Group, and has received attention from a number of UN human rights mechanisms. Hernawan (2022) shows that the internationalization of the Papuan issue through the Pacific diaspora network and multilateral forums is the result of a planned campaign strategy based on Melanesian identity, rather than a spontaneous response to conditions on the ground — a dynamic that is completely beyond the reach of Kowil's capacity in its current form. This gap between kinetic success and strategic stagnation is the clearest marker of the inability of existing doctrine to reach the cognitive and informational terrain in which the actual conflict is reproduced.

It should be noted that this doctrinal gap does not mean that the TNI-AD has not adapted at all. In field practice, a number of informal initiatives have developed, such as community empowerment programs run by Kodam XVII/Cenderawasih units, counter-narrative efforts carried out on an ad hoc basis, or cooperation with local governments in handling community complaints. Yet such initiatives operate outside the framework of officially recognized doctrine: they cannot be systematically replicated across the ranks of the Kowil, are not connected to the intelligence and operational planning cycles, and rely heavily on the initiative of local commanders that can change with each rotation of positions. This makes the problem not about a lack of field awareness, but about the absence of a doctrinal framework that consolidates informal adaptation into a permanently institutionalized capacity. Kowil, with its institutional network that has reached the village level, actually provides the most ready platform for such transformation.

Table 1. Mapping the Capacity and Gap of Kowil Doctrine on the Three Hybrid Threat Domains in Papua

Threat Dimension	Available Kowil Capacity	Doctrinal Gaps
Physical Domain	Layered presence to the village; Babinsa as an instrument of community stabilization	Functions are reactive; Not integrated in the proactive operating cycle

Threat Dimension	Available Kowil Capacity	Doctrinal Gaps
Cognitive Domains	Potential for early detection of shifts in community sentiment through the Babinsa network	There is no counter-narrative framework; Field data not connected to the threat analysis system
Informational Domain	No capacity identified in official doctrine documents	The narrative of Papuan decolonization is unstoppable in international forums and the Pacific diaspora

a. The Case in the Philippines: IPSP Bayanihan and the Paradox of Partial Success in Mindanao

The second finding suggests that the Philippines took a different path but ended up with a similar strategic deficit. The IPSP Bayanihan launched by the AFP in 2011 is a genuine doctrinal breakthrough: for the first time, the AFP formally recognizes that internal security cannot be achieved by a single instrument and requires the active involvement of local governments, civil society and the private sector. This shift goes beyond tactical adjustments, it touches on basic assumptions about who is responsible for security. A review of the IPSP Bayanihan document shows that this framework explicitly includes components of peacebuilding, community reconciliation, and strengthening local governance; elements that are not found in any version of Kowil doctrine. However, an analysis of implementation practices reveals a wide gap between formulation and implementation. The cross-sectoral coordination mandated by Bayanihan is in practice asymmetrical: the AFP continues to dominate the operational planning cycle, while the civilian ministry plays the role of executor of the programs that accompany military operations, rather than an equal partner in determining strategic direction. As a result, the whole-of-nation approach formulated by Bayanihan reflects more normative aspirations than consistently institutionalized coordination practices.

The establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in 2019 marked the most concrete achievement of the Bayanihan approach: the integration of former MILF combatants into the constitutional governance framework closed a single threat vector that for four decades was a major source of destabilization. But the study's findings identify a significant paradox: the success of accommodating the MILF actually consolidates the positions of groups that have rejected the negotiation path from the outset. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) fill the void left by the MILF with qualitatively distinct hybrid capacities: transnational criminal funding networks, ideologically-based digital recruitment, and opportunistic attacks that are not bounded by territorial boundaries (Blannin, 2022). Abuse (2022) documents how the ASG transformed the MILF's post-normalization from a territorial-based tactical group into a network that integrates cross-border criminal funding with ideological narrative-based recruitment in the digital space. Quimpo (2021) complements this picture by showing that BIFF is strategically leveraging the momentum of the BARMM negotiations to strengthen its position with groups that resist integration, creating a post-peace threat landscape that is qualitatively more fragmented and difficult to map by existing doctrinal frameworks. The Bayanihan framework does not have adequate adaptation mechanisms to this kind of shift of actors, as it is designed to respond to threats with MILF characters, not post-normalization threats.

Another important dimension revealed from the Philippine case is that the success of the BARMM paradoxically narrowed the space for the defense doctrine. When the MILF was successfully integrated into the governance framework, the AFP lost the operational precedent that had been the main reference for doctrinal planning. The ASG and BIFF, which operate by different logics, are not regionally bound, are not centered on a governance agenda, and have transnationally dispersed funding sources, require a response framework that is fundamentally different from what Bayanihan developed for the MILF context. This reveals a more fundamental limitation: doctrines designed to deal with a single threat configuration do not automatically have the capacity to deal with different configurations, even when those two configurations arise from the same geographic context. In other words, the success of peace does not reduce the need for doctrinal adaptation, but rather renews the need with a different urgency.

b. Comparative Findings: Similarities in Cross-Context Failure Patterns

A comparison of the two cases yields comparative findings that are the main analytical contribution of this study: although Indonesia and the Philippines follow different paths, namely Indonesia with a doctrinally not yet renewable territorial system, and the Philippines with a renewable but non-operationalized doctrine, both end up with similar structural strategic deficits. More specifically, this study identifies three common patterns of failure that are cross-context. First, in both cases, operational success in the physical domain does not translate into strategic advantage because it is not accompanied by an equal presence in the cognitive and informational domains. Second, the cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms that exist in both countries, both those expressed in the doctrine (the Philippines) and those implied in the system architecture (Indonesia), do not function with equal institutional weight between military and civilian instruments. Third, neither system has an incremental and responsive doctrine adaptation mechanism to the shifting character of the threat; Both rely on a cycle of formal doctrine revision that is too slow to keep up with the evolutionary pace of hybrid threats. This pattern of similarity is summarized in the following table.

Table 2. Comparison of Indonesian and Philippine Case Findings on Five Analytical Dimensions

Dimensions of Analysis	Indonesia (TNI-AD / Kowil)	Philippines (AFP/ Bayanihan)
Doctrinal Maturity	The hybrid doctrine is not formalized; Sishankamrata opens an implicit but non-operationalized space	The doctrine <i>of the whole-of-nation</i> is formalized but the implementation is asymmetrical; AFP dominates the planning cycle
Adaptation to the Cognitive Domain	There is no unified counter-narrative strategy; the narrative of Papuan decolonization is not unstoppable in international forums	CMO functions post-conflict; there is no mechanism to prevent ASG/BIFF digital recruitment
Mechanism of Doctrinal Adaptation	There is no cycle of doctrine revision that is responsive to changes in the character of the threat	There is no quick adaptation mechanism; BARMM changed the threat map but doctrine did not evolve
Integration of Civil-Military Instruments	Papua's development policy is not structurally connected to defense operations	Coordination is institutionalized in IPSP but runs asymmetrical; civil servants as implementers, not strategic partners

4.2. Discussion

a. Doctrinal Failures in Hybrid Warfare Perspectives

The findings of this study directly confirm and expand the argument (Hoffman, 2007) that hybrid threats are designed to exploit gaps between the categories of responses that states build separately. Both Kowil and Bayanihan point out that systems that only operationalize one or two domains of the three hybrid threat domains will consistently lag behind actors operating in all three simultaneously. These findings are in line with (Wirtz, 2022) who argue that the military institutions of developing countries face a double structural barrier in responding to hybrid threats: on the one hand, the legacy of conventional doctrine that prioritizes the physical domain; On the other hand, there is no cross-agency coordination mechanism that is strong enough to operate a unified response. This double barrier is exactly what this study found in both cases. Croissant & Kuehn (2021) expands on this argument by showing that structural barriers to doctrinal adaptation in Asia stem not solely from conventional military legacies, but also from the dynamics of civil-military relations that create institutional incentives to maintain threat definitions that legitimize existing kinetic capacity.

Furthermore, the findings about the cognitive doctrinal gap in the two countries are in line with the argument (Pamment & Ramsay, 2023) that the influence and narrative operations launched by contemporary

separatist groups consistently exceed the capacity of the state's still-structured response to respond to physical threats. In the Papuan context, the narrative of decolonization successfully consolidated in the Melanesian Spearhead Group forum reflects the asymmetrical superiority of separatist actors in the cognitive domain that cannot be countered by any increase in combat capacity. This alignment reinforces the argument that the TNI-AD's failure to adapt is not an anomaly unique to the Indonesian context, but rather a manifestation of a more general pattern of conventional military institutions' unpreparedness for the hybridity of contemporary conflicts.

The findings on Bayanihan add an important analytical dimension: even when a formal doctrinal transformation is successfully undertaken, an asymmetrical implementation can nullify its conceptual superiority. This is in line with the argument (Mello & Ostergaard, 2021) which suggests that military doctrine reform in Southeast Asian countries generally faces the problem of "decoupling", where document formulation and operational practices run on an uninterconnected trajectory, due to institutional incentives that remain oriented towards kinetic capacity. De Castro (2022) identifies that the coordination mechanism in the IPSP Bayanihan has never succeeded in placing civilian and military instruments in an equal position in the strategic planning cycle: military operations remain an independent variable, while the development and reconciliation program follows its logic, not the other way around. The Bayanihan case is the clearest illustration of this dynamic of decoupling in the Southeast Asian region.

b. Security-Development Nexus and Reproduction of Conflict

The paradox found in both cases, the kinetic success that does not result in a reduction in support for separatism, gets the most direct explanation from the Duffield framework (Duffield, 2001). Conflicts rooted in conditions of "unfinished development" will continue to reproduce themselves as long as the structural conditions that produce them are not transformed. In the context of Papua, the study (Karnavian et al., 2021) confirming that the development gap between Papua and other regions of Indonesia remains the most consistent condition exploited by separatist narratives as evidence of integration failure. Development efforts that do not explicitly target perceptions of distributive injustice (not just macroeconomic indicators) have not succeeded in extinguishing the structural motives that reproduce support for separatism.

The case of post-BARMM Mindanao shows an additional dimension of this nexus that Duffield did not fully anticipate: partial peace with one group can inadvertently expand the space of movement of another group operating with a different threat logic. These findings are in line with the argument (Bapat & Zeigler, 2023) That a peace process that is not accompanied by a mechanism to manage the dynamics of rivalry between separatist groups risks resulting in a reconfiguration of the threat map that is actually more difficult to handle. ASG and BIFF that take advantage of the post-normalization vacuum of MILF are concrete manifestations of the dynamics identified by Bapat and Zeigler. The implication for this study is that the Duffield framework needs to be complemented by an analysis of how structural conditions interact with inter-actor dynamics in producing complex conflict reproduction patterns.

More broadly, the inability of the two countries to link security instruments with development instruments in an integrated manner reflects what is expected of the (Sedra, 2022) It is called "silo pathology" in security governance, which is a condition in which institutions that are technically tasked with handling various dimensions of conflict operate in functional silos that do not exchange information or align operational objectives. The cases of Indonesia and the Philippines reinforce Sedra's argument that this silo of pathology is not a technical problem that can be solved by additional coordination mechanisms, but rather a doctrinal problem that requires a fundamental redefinition of what constitutes "success" in the face of the threat of sub-national hybrids.

c. Strategic Implications

The above findings and discussion lead to two strategic implications that can be operationalized without requiring the establishment of a new institutional structure. For the TNI-AD, the most urgent priority is to formulate a Kowil doctrinal framework that explicitly integrates the functions of information

management, cognitive threat detection, and counter-narrative into the existing regional operations cycle. This is not the construction of a new system, but rather an expansion of the doctrinal scope of a system that has had institutional roots for decades. Pedrosa & Galvez (2022) their study of military doctrine reform in the Asia-Pacific shows that the most successful transformations are those that depart from existing architectural strengths, not those that try to build new capacities from scratch. This approach has realistic advantages: it can be started from within existing institutions, does not require large resource allocations, and results can be tested gradually.

For the AFP, the priorities are different but just as urgent: to embed a rapid adaptation mechanism into the Bayanihan framework that allows for responses to shifting threat actors without having to wait for the next cycle of doctrine revision. Argueta (2023), in its analysis of the evolution of AFP doctrine after the MILF's peace, identified that the absence of an incremental adaptation mechanism was the most critical weakness of the IPSP Bayanihan that caused the AFP to always be in a position of reactivity to shifting threats. The findings of this study confirm Argueta's identification and add a comparative dimension: the same weakness although in a different form is also found in the Kowil doctrine, suggesting that the absence of dynamic adaptation mechanisms is a systemic weakness at the regional level, not the idiosyncrasy of one country.

It should also be noted that the pattern of failures found in this study has implications that go beyond Indonesia and the Philippines. In the broader Southeast Asian context, a number of countries face similar structural challenges: identity-based separatism that exploits development gaps and harnesses digital space to build international narratives. Southern Thailand, Myanmar, and even East Malaysia show threat configurations that have comparable elements (Acharya, 2021; Emmers, 2021). If the patterns found in this study, the absence of cross-domain doctrinal integration and the inability to link security instruments with development, are common in this region, then the argument about the need for doctrinal transformation has relevance that goes beyond the two cases analyzed. This opens up space for broader comparative research as a productive follow-up step.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the doctrinal transformation recommended in this study is not a stand-alone solution. It is a necessary prerequisite, but not enough. Sustained strategic excellence in the face of hybrid separatism requires at least three things simultaneously: a doctrine that recognizes the multi-domain dimension of the threat, a mechanism of coordination between instruments that is mandatory and measurable (not merely aspirational), and a political commitment that ensures that success is no longer defined solely by kinetic indicators. Without these three elements working synergistically, even the most comprehensive doctrinal transformation would face the same risks that befell Bayanihan: to be conceptually sound but operationally weak.

V. Conclusion

This study proves that the failure of the TNI-AD and AFP to adapt to hybrid separatism is structural and patterned: both have conceptually adequate system architectures, but they do not succeed in operationalizing them across domains. From perspective (Hoffman, 2007), that gap lies in the absence of a doctrine that integrates the physical, cognitive, and informational dimensions simultaneously. From perspective (Duffield, 2001), the gap is deepened by the inability to link security instruments to developmental conditions that reproduce conflict. Doctrinal transformation (not resource addition) is an inevitable prerequisite.

In this study, there are at least two limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, its entire empirical basis rests on documentary sources; There is no primary data from policy actors or operational commanders that can reveal the dynamics of implementation that are not recorded in official documents. Second, the comparison of two cases, even if chosen with the logic of most-similar systems, limits the generalizability of the findings; The identified failure patterns may not be fully applicable to the context of hybrid separatism in other regions with different configurations of actors and external pressures.

Two further research agendas can be formulated from these limitations. First, an in-depth interview-based study with operational officers and doctrine designers in both countries will result in an understanding of the mechanisms of adaptation inhibition that cannot be reached through document analysis. Second, extending the comparison to a third case, such as the experience of southern Thailand or Myanmar, will test whether the failure patterns identified in this study are typical of Southeast Asia or whether they reflect the more general limitations of conventional land defense doctrines in the face of sub-national hybrid threats.

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