

Maritime Command Education and Doctrinal Development in an Archipelagic State

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ABSTRACT:

This study provides a comprehensive, multi-dimensional academic analysis of the Sekolah Staf dan Komando Angkatan Laut (SESKOAL), the Indonesian Naval Staff and Command College, and its structural role in the formulation, transmission, and execution of Indonesian naval defense education. Positioned at the critical juncture between tactical proficiency and strategic statecraft, SESKOAL serves as the intellectual crucible for mid-career officers transitioning into senior operational and strategic leadership roles within the Indonesian National Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or TNI) and specifically the Navy (TNI Angkatan Laut, or TNI AL). Set against the geographic imperative of the world's largest archipelagic state, this paper interrogates how SESKOAL operationalizes defense pedagogy to balance traditional high-intensity naval warfare concepts with non-traditional maritime security challenges. Through a rigorous examination of institutional history, pedagogical frameworks, curricular structures, the military-academic symbiosis, and geopolitical adaptation, this study illuminates how SESKOAL serves as an instrument of national power, a driver of military professionalization, and a center of strategic maritime thought. Finally, the paper evaluates the institution's prospective evolutionary path as it confronts the disruptive realities of artificial intelligence, uncrewed systems, and shifting structural dynamics in the Indo-Pacific theater.

Keywords: SESKOAL, Indonesian Navy, TNI AL, Maritime Strategy, Military Education.

1. Introduction

The geopolitical reality of the Republic of Indonesia is fundamentally and inexorably maritime. Comprising more than 17,000 islands, spanning three time zones, and commanding the critical maritime chokepoints, the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar, that connect the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia occupies a space of profound strategic weight (Octavian,

2019). For an archipelagic state (*Negara Kepulauan*), maritime security is not merely an external policy consideration; it is the vital foundation of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and economic survival. The defense of this vast, fluid domain requires a highly sophisticated naval force led by officers who possess not only technical and tactical mastery but also advanced strategic foresight and operational acumen (Amelia et al., 2021).

Within the architecture of Indonesian military professionalization, this intellectual and conceptual transformation is executed by the Sekolah Staf dan Komando Angkatan Laut (SESKOAL). Established in 1962, SESKOAL functions as the premier command and staff college for mid-career officers of the Indonesian Navy (TNI AL), alongside selected officers from other branches of the TNI, the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency

(Bakamla), the Indonesian National Police (Polri), and international partner navies (Wicaksono et al., 2024). This paper offers an exhaustive academic and doctrinal assessment of SESKOAL's educational landscape. It explores how the institution bridges the gap between raw military power and strategic statecraft, shaping the intellectual capital necessary to defend Indonesia's maritime interests in an increasingly volatile regional security environment.

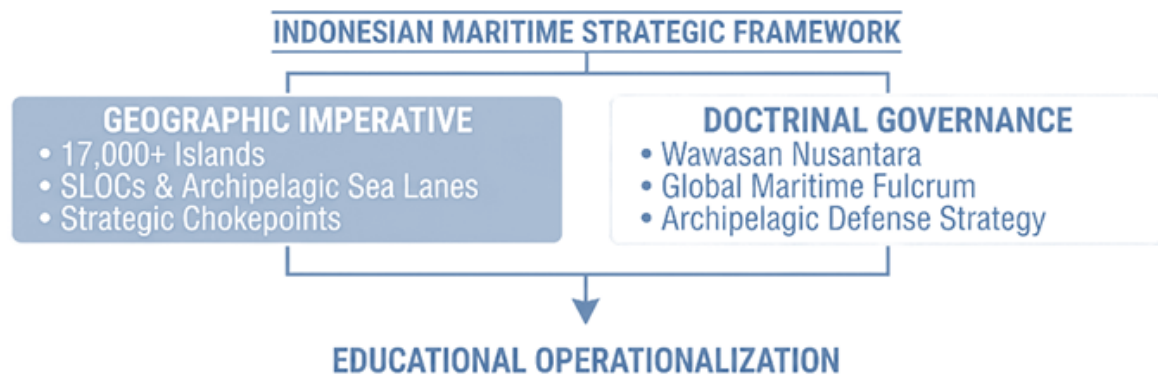


Figure 1. Indonesia Maritime Strategic Framework

2. Historical Evolution and Doctrinal Foundations

2.1 Post-Independence Origins and Institutional Genesis

To understand the pedagogical architecture of SESKOAL, one must trace its historical roots back to the early decades of the Indonesian Republic. Following the declaration of independence in 1945 and the subsequent war of independence against returning Dutch colonial forces, the young Indonesian military (*Angkatan Perang Republik Indonesia*) was primarily a guerrilla land force. The naval component, then known as the *Angkatan Laut Republik Indonesia* (ALRI), operated with limited assets, relying on small craft, improvised coastal defenses, and irregular amphibious operations (Octavian, 2019). As the nation stabilized in the 1950s, leadership recognized that a fragmented, purely tactical naval force was insufficient to secure an archipelagic domain. The transition from an irregular coastal defense force to a professional blue-water navy required a specialized elite of staff officers capable of managing complex fleets, planning large-scale operations, and understanding international maritime law (Zulkifli et al., 2020). On

November 26, 1962, by decree of the Minister/Chief of Staff of the Navy, Admiral R.E. Martadinata, SESKOAL was formally established in Cipulir, South Jakarta. Its founding mission was clear: to institutionalize naval staff training within Indonesia, ending the country's total reliance on foreign military education programs in Western Europe, the United States, or the Soviet bloc. It aimed to forge a distinctly Indonesian school of naval thought (Sajida, 2026).

2.2 Alignment with National Security Doctrines

From its inception, SESKOAL's curriculum has been closely aligned with Indonesia's foundational geopolitical and military doctrines (Siregar et al., 2022a). Chief among these is *Wawasan Nusantara* (the Archipelagic Outlook), which conceptualizes the land, water, and airspace of Indonesia as a single, indivisible strategic entity. *Wawasan Nusantara* demands that naval operations be viewed not as isolated expeditions but as integrated defense measures designed to maintain national cohesion and prevent internal fragmentation or external encroachment (Siregar et al., 2022b; Suardika, 2020). In the 21st century, this foundational outlook was augmented by the Global Maritime Fulcrum (*Porns*

Maritim Dunia or PMD) framework. The PMD repositioned Indonesia not as a passive observer between two oceans, but as a proactive regional power responsible for regional stability, maritime safety, and blue economy development. SESKOAL

became the primary laboratory where the military components of the PMD were studied, debated, and operationalized into concrete naval strategies (Prasetyo et al., 2024).

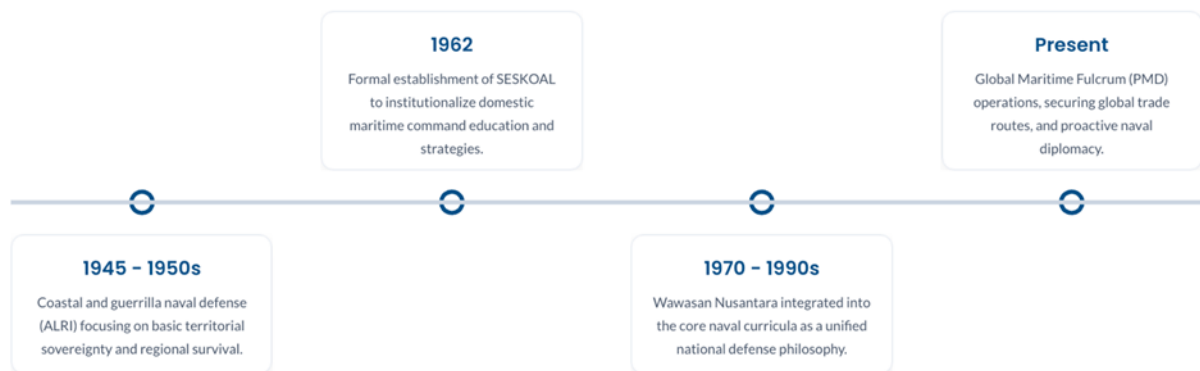


Figure 2. Evolution of Maritime Strategic Thought

3. The Pedagogical Architecture of SESKOAL

3.1 The Mid-Career Curricular Transition

The primary educational program at SESKOAL is the Naval Command and Staff Course, or *Pendidikan Reguler Seskoal* (Dikreg). This program is designed specifically for officers holding the rank of Major (*Mayor*) who are on the cusp of promotion to Lieutenant Colonel (*Letnan Kolonel*). This career juncture represents a profound psychological and operational shift for the individual. The educational philosophy of SESKOAL is structured to shatter a traditionally platform-centric mindset. Rather than teaching officers how to run a single ship or command an isolated marine battalion, the curriculum focuses on employing entire task forces within a joint, combined, and multi-domain operational theatre (Sudiro & Rizqoh, 2024).

3.2 Taxonomy of Educational Delivery

SESKOAL uses an integrated pedagogical approach based on advanced military blooms, moving quickly from knowledge retention to synthesis, evaluation, and creation. The educational delivery relies on four primary methodologies to achieve these goals. First, didactic lectures and case studies led by a mix of senior military flag officers, civilian academics, and international experts provide the theoretical

foundation for maritime strategy, logistics, and defense management. Second, seminar panels and peer debates place students into small syndicate groups (*Kelompok Diskusi*) to debate complex strategic challenges. This format encourages independent thinking and challenges rigid hierarchical norms by prompting officers to defend strategic recommendations with rigorous evidence. Third, wargaming and operational simulations utilize advanced computer-assisted wargaming suites alongside traditional tabletop exercises, allowing students to assume command and staff roles in simulated high-intensity conflicts within the Indonesian archipelago. Finally, field studies and strategic research paperwork require students to conduct field research at major naval bases, industrial centers, and strategic maritime corridors, culminating in a comprehensive thesis (*Karya Tulis Perorangan* or Taskap) that offers actionable policy solutions to the leadership of the TNI AL (Amelia et al., 2021; Octavian, 2019).

4. Curricular Dissection

The regular curriculum of SESKOAL is organized into distinct but mutually reinforcing modules. This programmatic division demonstrates how the institution builds a cohesive framework for naval

leadership across four distinct themes. These core components are organized into a defined modular matrix: Module 1 addresses Maritime Strategy, Geopolitics, and International Law; Module 2 focuses on Operational Art, Joint Planning, and Fleet Logistics; Module 3 covers Defense Management, Technology, and Resource Procurement; and Module 4 centers on Military Leadership, Ethics, and Command Responsibility.

4.1 Module 1: Maritime Strategy, Geopolitics, and International Law

This module establishes the foundational context for modern naval operations by introducing officers to classical maritime strategic theorists and assessing how their ideas apply to an archipelagic environment. Students examine Alfred Thayer Mahan's analysis of sea power, fleet concentration, and the vital role of strategic sea lines of communication (SLOCs). They also explore Julian Corbett's concepts regarding the limits of absolute sea control, the vital intersection of land and sea operations, and how a weaker naval power can use strategic disputes to its advantage. This historical baseline is rounded out by Raoul Castex and various modern theorists who review regional adaptations of naval power suited to modern archipelagic security (Arto et al., 2019).

A major portion of this module is dedicated to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), particularly Part IV, which governs archipelagic states. Because Indonesia's maritime sovereignty depends on international legal frameworks, officers must deeply understand the rights and limitations of Archipelagic Sea Lanes Passage (ASLP), Innocent Passage, and Transit Passage. Students analyze how to handle real-world challenges, such as foreign military vessels operating within Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) without prior notice, balancing the preservation of national sovereignty with the avoidance of unintended international escalation. These scenarios map directly onto the defined UNCLOS deployment jurisdictions, which stipulate that sovereignty is absolute in internal waters where no right of innocent passage exists. Within archipelagic waters, sovereignty applies but remains subject to innocent passage and ASLP. Beyond

these boundaries, the territorial sea extends 12 nautical miles out as a sovereign domain, followed by a 24-nautical-mile contiguous zone for customs, fiscal, and immigration enforcement, and finally a 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone where sovereign economic rights over resources apply while preserving the freedom of navigation (Arif & Kurniawan, 2018).

4.2 Module 2: Operational Art, Joint Planning, and Fleet Logistics

This module shifts from broad strategic theories to the concrete realities of planning naval operations. Students learn the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) and joint operational planning methodologies, with a focus on the defense of Indonesia's major maritime defense sectors, namely *Komando Armada* I, II, and III. The joint operational planning flow follows a strict sequential progression through the MDMP, beginning with Phase 1 for the receipt of mission or higher commander's intent, moving to Phase 2 for mission analysis regarding the threat matrix, environment, and center of gravity, continuing to Phase 3 for course of action (COA) development, transitioning to Phase 4 for COA analysis, wargaming, and comparison, and concluding with Phase 5 for COA approval and order production via operational orders or plans (Zulkifli et al., 2020).

Key operational concepts studied within this framework include archipelagic chokepoint defense, which involves designing layered defense systems using surface assets, fast attack craft, diesel-electric submarines, coastal missile batteries, and air cover to deny hostile force access through key straits. Students also cover amphibious and expeditionary warfare to plan and execute amphibious assaults aimed at recapturing islands held by an adversary, an effort that requires close integration among Navy transport and combat fleets, Marine landing forces, Air Force transport and strike wings, and Army units. Finally, fleet logistics in austere environments trains officers to manage supply chains across long, distributed distances without relying on permanent land infrastructure, forcing students to address the challenge of keeping multi-ship task groups fueled, armed, and maintained using minimal forward operating bases (Raymond, 2017).

4.3 Module 3: Defense Management, Technology, and Resource Procurement

Naval power is heavily dependent on technology and industrial capacity. This module introduces students to the complexities of the defense acquisition cycle, resource allocation, and defense economics. Officers study the TNI AL's e long-term planning framework, focusing on the acquisition and maintenance of capital assets, such as multi-role guided-missile frigates, corvettes, submarines, and maritime patrol aircraft. It includes lifecycle management and total cost of ownership calculations, in which students determine the long-term costs of maintaining sophisticated systems and balance acquisition costs with operations and maintenance (O&M) budgets. It also encompasses defense industrial self-reliance, assessing how to support and utilize state-owned defense industries, such as PT PAL for naval shipbuilding, to build domestic capacity, reduce reliance on foreign suppliers, and safeguard critical supply chains. Finally, technological convergence issues require officers to evaluate how to integrate older, legacy platforms with newly acquired, state-of-the-art combat systems to ensure fleet-wide interoperability (Amelia et al., 2021; Carlson et al., 2023).

4.4 Module 4: Military Leadership, Ethics, and Command Responsibility

The final component of the core curriculum shifts the focus entirely toward the human dimension of command. As mid-career naval officers transition from platform-centric roles to positions where they hold legal and operational authority over hundreds or thousands of personnel, the ethical, psychological, and legal demands of leadership grow exponentially. The curriculum is meticulously structured around operationalizing the commander's intent, ensuring that officers can issue clear, decentralized directives that remain resilient in the fog of war. A significant portion of this instructional block is dedicated to military law, the Geneva Conventions, and the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). These legal frameworks are not taught merely as abstract theories, but as strict operational constraints that govern targeting, rules of engagement, and the treatment of non-

combatants in high-intensity maritime environments (Mahfouz et al., 2022).

To bridge the gap between doctrine and reality, the pedagogical design relies heavily on historical and contemporary case studies. These exercises force students to navigate the complex realities of maintaining ironclad unit discipline and preserving personnel morale during stressful, extended sea deployments where logistics and communications may be severely degraded. Furthermore, the module places a heavy emphasis on grey-zone operations and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) crises. Officers are routinely pressure-tested through tactical scenarios where the boundaries of international law are deliberately ambiguous, such as encountering forced maritime migration or managing unflagged foreign asymmetric actors. Through these complex simulations, Module 4 ensures that future commanders develop the ethical clarity, legal precision, and psychological resilience required to make split-second, high-stakes decisions under intense operational friction (Lazuardi & Suharjo, 2023).

Table 1. Curricular Architecture

The table below outlines the structural pillars, key educational subjects, and practical applications taught within this module:

Core Pillar	Key Instructional Subjects	Practical Operational Application
Command Philosophy	- Commander's Intent - Mission Command Doctrine - Decentralized Execution	Enforcing clear, actionable guidance that allows subordinate units to operate independently if communications are severed.
Legal Frameworks	- Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) - Geneva Conventions	Ensuring absolute legal compliance during targeting, kinetic engagements,

	• Rules of Engagement (ROE)	and maritime interdiction operations.
Human Dimension	• Morale Maintenance • Unit Discipline & Ethics • Stress Management under Deployment	Preserving combat readiness and psychological resilience during high-friction, long-duration sea operations.
Crisis & Grey-Zone	• HADR Operational Protocols • Asymmetric Threat Response • Ambiguous Sovereignty Scenarios	Navigating non-traditional maritime crises and foreign provocations that fall below the threshold of open warfare.

5. The Role of Technology

A modern naval staff college cannot rely solely on lectures and textbooks. SESKOAL has invested heavily in digital infrastructure to ground theoretical concepts in realistic operational environments, establishing a virtual wargaming architecture centered on a core integration server for command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR). This centralized system links directly into a surface and sub-surface tactical node, an air and patrol support node, and a cyber or asymmetric disruptive node (Octavian, 2019). At the center of this capability is the *Pusat Olah Yudha* (Pusolyu), SESKOAL's dedicated wargaming center. This facility uses high-fidelity simulation software to model real-world naval variables. Through hydrographic and meteorological modeling, the system simulates the impact of complex currents, changing thermoclines, and monsoonal weather patterns on sonar detection and missile trajectories within the Indonesian archipelago. The platform also runs asymmetric and electronic scenarios, testing how command structures adapt when satellite communications are jammed, cyberattacks disrupt networks, or forces

encounter unexpected swarm attacks from uncrewed surface vessels. Finally, real-time assessment capabilities track and analyze students' decisions to evaluate response times, risk management, and communication clarity under stress. This data-driven approach allows instructors to offer objective feedback during post-exercise debriefs (Prasetyo et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2022).

Modern maritime security requires close cooperation across organizational boundaries, a reality that SESKOAL explicitly addresses through its integrated student body and joint curriculum elements. For intra-TNI interoperability, the college regularly coordinates with the Army (*SESKOALAD*) and the Air Force (*SESKOALAU*). This collaboration ensures that future naval commanders can design operations that work seamlessly within broader TNI joint campaigns, particularly under the *Kogabwilhan* (Joint Defense Commands) system, where the *Kogabwilhan* command coordinates the maritime control and ASLP security of the TNI AL alongside the coastal holding and island garrison capabilities of the TNI AD and the air superiority and long-range strike capabilities of the TNI AU (Malau et al., 2021). Furthermore, the interagency sector recognizes that maritime security in Indonesia involves several agencies beyond the Navy. SESKOAL regularly includes officers from *Bakamla* (Maritime Security Agency), *Polairud* (Marine Police), the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), and immigration and customs departments. This diverse student body helps officers understand the nuances of the "grey zone", where threats may look like civil or criminal infractions rather than overt military actions, requiring a coordinated, interagency response. This collaboration is modeled across a clear maritime constabulary enforcement matrix where the TNI AL focuses on sovereignty enforcement, high-intensity conflict, and warfighting; *Bakamla* oversees coast guard operations, maritime safety, and interagency coordination; *Polairud* maintains law enforcement within territorial and coastal waters; and the KKP handles anti-illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing (Wicaksono et al., 2024). SESKOAL also plays a key role in Indonesia's military diplomacy, extending its impact well beyond domestic borders through a maritime

diplomacy engine built on track 1.5 and track 2 academic forums that generate joint seminars on regional stability, international fellowships that foster direct co-education with partner navies, and confidence-building measures (CBMs) that establish shared rules of engagement workshops. Through international fellowships and cross-pollination, SESKOAL hosts mid-career officers from across the globe each year, including ASEAN partners, Australia, India, Japan, the United States, and European nations. This integration builds professional relationships and personal connections among officers who may later command regional fleets, reducing the risk of future miscalculations. It also facilitates shared tactical perspectives by exposing Indonesian officers to different naval doctrines, operational planning models, and command philosophies, while fostering regional transparency by serving as a platform for CBMs where regional security concerns can be discussed openly in an academic setting. These initiatives are supported by research and global engagement efforts, including the production of the *Jurnal Seskoal*, an academic publication focused on naval warfare, maritime strategy, and defense management (Janawi et al., 2025; Wicaksono et al., 2024).

As naval technology evolves rapidly, SESKOAL is modernizing its curriculum to prepare future leaders for automated and network-centric warfare, addressing a clear paradigm shift in maritime conflict away from traditional frameworks characterized by legacy, platform-heavy fleets, human-centric OODA loops, and clear kinetic boundaries, toward emerging disruption vectors defined by uncrewed swarms, AI-assisted targeting engines, and multi-domain cyber-kinetic operations. The integration of uncrewed systems (UxV), including uncrewed aerial vehicles, uncrewed surface vessels, and uncrewed underwater vehicles, is changing naval tactics. SESKOAL is updating its doctrine to reflect these realities by evaluating how low-cost, long-range uncrewed systems can monitor and protect remote chokepoints, thereby extending the reach of traditional surface fleets, and by formulating counter-UxV tactics to defend naval bases and capital ships against distributed uncrewed swarm attacks (Janawi et al., 2025).

Simultaneously, the institution addresses artificial intelligence and decision-making at the operational level, where AI speeds up the collection and analysis of sensor data. SESKOAL teaches officers to manage this information flow without losing critical thinking skills, focusing on using AI-driven insights to speed up the OODA loop while maintaining clear human control over ethical choices and the use of force. It is paired with dedicated modules on cyber warfare in the maritime domain, emphasizing the security of interconnected data links and satellite communications against electronic disruption to ensure commands can still be executed if the main communication lines are compromised. To sustain this efficacy, the college addresses critical challenges and resolutions across several institutional areas. In the academic-military balance, the strategic resolution requires recruiting more civilian subject-matter experts to broaden technical and strategic curricula, helping to continually balance practical military training with broader academic rigor. In terms of interoperability realism, the resolution demands expanding multi-domain wargaming scenarios across all service branches to move past historical service rivalries and build a unified operational culture (Malau et al., 2021; Prasetyo et al., 2024). Finally, confronting rapid technological shifts requires implementing agile modular updates to capture emerging defense technologies, ensuring that state-of-the-art wargaming facilities receive consistent funding and follow fast procurement cycles to match the pace of global technological developments.

6. Conclusion

The *Sekolah Staf dan Komando Angkatan Laut* transcends its conventional role as a bureaucratic milestone for institutional advancement, operating fundamentally as the primary intellectual engine for the reproduction and evolution of Indonesian naval strategic culture. By facilitating a critical epistemological transition from localized, platform-centric tactical proficiency to systemic, multi-domain operational art, the institution directly influences the operationalization of state authority over contested maritime spaces. Since its inception in 1962, the college has continuously recalibrated its pedagogical architecture to mirror the changing

realities of maritime conflict, evolving from historical paradigms of localized coastal defense to contemporary requirements for network-centric warfare and automated system integration. Consequently, the institution serves as a critical nexus where emerging defense doctrines are synthesized with institutional memory, ensuring that the officer corps can effectively translate abstract state philosophies into concrete, scalable maritime security strategies. Given Indonesia's permanent geopolitical exposure at the crossroads of critical global shipping lanes and strategic chokepoints, the defense of the state's archipelagic integrity remains permanently tethered to the analytical capacity of its naval leadership. This study demonstrates that the institution's e-curricular

design does not merely teach technical skills; rather, it cultivates an advanced cognitive framework capable of managing strategic ambiguity in grey-zone environments and enforcing complex international legal regimes, such as UNCLOS. As disruptive technological vectors, ranging from uncrewed swarms to artificial intelligence-driven targeting systems, continue to compress operational decision-making timelines, the institutional agility of this command college will dictate the Navy's readiness to deter multi-dimensional threats. Ultimately, the college remains the indispensable intellectual foundation ensuring that future naval commanders can safeguard national sovereignty, project regional maritime power, and maintain the geopolitical equilibrium of the archipelagic state.

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