

COMPLEXITIES AND CHALLENGES OF COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE FOR GENERATION Z: A LEGAL REVIEW OF LAW NO. 23 OF 2019 ON NATIONAL DEFENSE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The complexity and challenges of military conscription for Generation Z in Indonesia are crucial topics in national defense discussions. This article analyzes the implementation of Law Number 23 of 2019 on National Resource Management for State Defense in enhancing Generation Z's national defense awareness. According to Litbang Kompas data, 57.6% of Generation Z are uninterested in joining the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI). Factors such as generational differences, psychosocial challenges, and misalignment with career aspirations pose significant obstacles to implementing military conscription. Additionally, the multi-actor dynamics and complexities of defense policy coordination further complicate human resource management in the national defense system. This article recommends a more flexible approach to conscription, including a voluntary system, incentives for participants, and the integration of technology in training programs. Thus, the national defense program can be more adaptive and inclusive for Generation Z. This study highlights the importance of balancing national defense obligations with individual rights and strengthening technology-based defense strategies to address modern threats.

KEYWORDS

military conscription, generation z, national defense, law 23/2019, national security



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How to cite: E-ISSN:

Purwantono R.A et all. (2025). Complexities and Challenges of Compulsory Military Service for Generation Z: A Legal Review of Law No. 23 of 2019 on National Defense Resource Management. Journal Eduvest. Vol 5 (2): 2960-2969
2775-3727

INTRODUCTION

Learn from Brazil,, a regional power in South America and an influential actor in the world. Brazil has contributed nearly 60% of South America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Brazil, a tropical country similar to Indonesia,, had the ninth largest economy in 2016 (World Bank, 2018 (Degaut, 2017) (Mares & Trinkunas, 2016). Brazil, which supports the principles of sovereignty, self-determination, non-intervention policies, non-coercive strategies, and leadership resources, has historically encouraged the ability of soft power to advance its domestic and foreign policies to be conducive to its national interests. This strategic political basis is part of using soft power resources accompanied by strong hard power (Heibach & Taş, 2024). So that no country can obtain the status of a global power without a strong military force supporting its diplomatic and economic credibility (Suman et al., 2025). Defense policy is not only based on ideological and hard power factors but also flexes the muscles of power, military determination, and centralized power projection (Porter, 2018).

As an important debate related to defense politics and the role of civil-military institutions and actors involved in national defense policy, it is important to support domestic policy, national security, economic growth, and technological innovation. As written by (Jankauskas, 2025), national defense is defense as the ability to implement, at any time, under any circumstances, a way to prevent, deter, or resist all forms of aggression to ensure the integrity and safety of the nation. So from this definition, it can be concluded that every country has a defense capability, and its development is needed to prevent, deter, and prevent conflicts to maintain territorial integrity and people's sovereignty, such as economic, technological, and national interests against all foreign threats, both potential and real. So defense through national expression, a state defense policy always includes the expression of national power such as politics, national security, economic growth, psychosocial, science, and technological innovation.

Experts agree that defense organizations are facing important strategic challenges (Harrison et al., 2017). This includes managing large and complex systems, or even the organization itself, in an increasingly volatile environment (Saxi, 2017; Tama, 2020). The proliferation of stakeholders who want to influence defense policies and strategies makes this even more challenging. In addition, strong stakeholders still require constant readiness despite resource allocation constraints (Edmunds et al., 2016). As these challenges continue to evolve, defense organizations have introduced managerial tools and practices that are indispensable to support the organization's overall management (Erbel, 2017). This includes using management and performance measurement systems that aim to support strategic decision-making and evaluation processes and ensure coherence, predictability, efficiency, and effectiveness (Davis, 2020). Good coordination in supporting the

management of national resources for national defense. Organizations and management of national resources are important to take advantage of strategic and overall organizational benefits (Alfawaire & Atan, 2021). Politics, economic incentives, and institutional relationships affect the distribution and contestation of power and resources between groups and individuals (Price, 2021; Worker, 2017). Today's challenges and complexities, along with the dynamics of various actors and different interests, make political economy analysis important, from the management of national resources to the organization of interests and policy coordination.

Policy coordination is the classic and oldest problem in the public service of government. This naturally results in the efficiency of coordinated/uncoordinated activities. Coordination has become very relevant today along with the increasing complexity of policy-making, which is characterized by multi-problem, multi-actor, and multi-level dynamics. This is complex due to the involvement of many actors and different levels of policymaking.

Recognizing these complexities and challenges, Indonesia, on October 24, 2024, also began holding a retreat at the Military Academy, Magelang, to discuss the country's strategies and policies. All ministers attended this event, deputy ministers, heads of agencies, special staff, and advisors in the New Cabinet of government in Indonesia, namely the Red and White Cabinet. This happened to strengthen collaboration and coordination between ministries under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto's government. Indonesia also recognizes the importance of coordination as an important part of the challenges and complexities of government because "The best defense system is the Universal People's Defense System, where every citizen must be ready to defend his country."

Based on a Kompas R&D poll, especially regarding interest in becoming a member of the TNI. As many as 57.6% of respondents aged 17-23 years called Generation Z, mostly said they were not interested in becoming a member of the TNI. Only around 28.7% of Generation Z said they were interested in becoming a member of the TNI. Many Generation Z members are not interested in becoming members of the TNI, which certainly raises concerns because of the potential for quality human resources who will later fill strategic positions in the government and ensure that the state's administration can run well, optimally, and strategically.

With various empirical and theoretical problems above, how Generation Z (Gen Z), which is the nation's asset, can become a strategic component of the nation in the pillar of state defense can increase its awareness. Therefore, this article emerged to answer the challenges and complexities of military service as part of the national defense program and is an implementation of Law Number 23 of 2019 concerning the management of national resources as part of national defense.

Problem Formulation

1. Is implementing Law 23/2019 appropriate to increase awareness of state defense?
2. What can the state do to increase awareness of national defense for Generation Z in Indonesia?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research could be descriptive and exploratory, aiming to understand Gen Z's perspectives on mandatory military service and how the implementation of Law No. 23 of 2019 could improve their awareness of national defense. Mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative).

Qualitative Research

- a. Objective: To explore Gen Z's attitudes, experiences, and opinions towards mandatory military service and national defense.
- b. Data Collection Methods:
 1. Interviews: Conduct semi-structured interviews with Gen Z participants to understand their views on mandatory military service, its relevance to them, and potential improvements in policy.
 2. Focus Groups: Organize focus group discussions to gather collective opinions and foster open discussions about national defense and Gen Z's role in it.
- c. Sampling: Purposeful sampling to select individuals within the 17-23 age group (Gen Z), ensuring a mix of individuals with varying backgrounds, education levels, and regional representation.
- d. Data Analysis: Thematic analysis of interview and focus group data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights.

Quantitative Research

- a. Objective: To measure the level of awareness, interest, and engagement of Gen Z in mandatory military service and national defense, as well as the impact of the 2019 law.
- b. Data Collection Method:

Surveys: Design a structured questionnaire focusing on key aspects such as awareness of national defense policies, willingness to participate in military service, perceived benefits of the law, and opinions on possible alternatives.

Sampling: Random sampling of Gen Z participants across various regions, ensuring diversity in education, socioeconomic status, and geographical location.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics to quantify responses (e.g., percentages, mean scores) and inferential statistics to identify correlations between variables (e.g., awareness levels and willingness to participate in military service).

Ethical Considerations

- a. Informed Consent: Ensure that all participants understand the purpose of the study, their rights, and the confidentiality of their responses.

- b. Confidentiality: Protect the identity of respondents and ensure data is securely stored.
- c. Right to Withdraw: Participants can withdraw at any point without consequence.

Expected Outcomes

- a. Insight into the level of awareness of Gen Z regarding the legal framework of national defense and their engagement with mandatory military service.
- b. Understanding of the challenges and opportunities in increasing participation among Gen Z in national defense programs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges and Opportunities for Gen Z

For Gen Z, the opportunities and challenges in participating in the conscription program (enlistment) are unique because they are a generation that is very different from the previous generation, both in terms of thinking, technological skills, and social views. Military service provides valuable experience to improve discipline, maturity, and the ability to take responsibility, which is important for personal and career development.

Gen Z, who are familiar with technology, can get new skills that are more physical and practical. Military training includes survivability, physical endurance, and knowledge of defense strategies. Military service can strengthen the sense of love for the homeland and unity between generations. Gen Z can interact with friends from various backgrounds, which helps them see Indonesia's cultural diversity from a broader perspective.

For those interested, military experience can be the first step to a career in defense. Military service also allows building a professional network and developing a reputation within government institutions. Gen Z, who are proficient in technology, can help innovate in the defense field, such as developing cyber defense technology and military communications. This provides an opportunity to bring a new perspective to improving the country's security strategy.

In addition to these aspects, of course, there are also several challenges that Gen Z will need to overcome to properly internalize the military service program. The first challenge is that Gen Z tends to have a greater interest in digital, creativity, or entrepreneurship than physical defense. Military service may be perceived as less relevant to their ambitions, so motivation to join the program may be low.

A harsh and disciplined military program may affect the mental health of some Gen Z members who are used to a freer mindset. Changing the environment from a flexible one to a regulated environment can be stressful. The less active lifestyle among Gen Z makes some of them have limited physical abilities. Military programs demanding physical strength can be a major challenge, especially for those not yet used to it.

Gen Z is growing up in the digital era with a more open approach to views and identities. They may face difficulties adjusting to more rigid military structures and norms, especially in dealing with the more senior generation. For Gen Z, with career or educational ambitions, the time spent on military service can be

considered a barrier. They may prefer that time to be used to develop themselves in their chosen field.

For Gen Z, military service offers an opportunity to improve discipline, skills, and a sense of nationalism. However, it also presents challenges, especially regarding mental health, motivation, and physical readiness. The success of this program for Gen Z will largely depend on how military institutions adapt their approach to the characteristics and needs of this Generation.

Legal Perspectives

From a legal point of view, the conscription program requires an in-depth analysis of the rights and obligations of citizens, as well as human rights principles. Some of the relevant legal aspects include:

Legal Basis of Military Service in Indonesia

1945: Article 27, paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution states that every citizen has the right and obligation to participate in the state's defense. This constitutional basis gives the country legitimacy to require its citizens, including Gen Z, to be involved in the country's defense.

Law No. 3 of 2002 concerning State Defense: Article 9 states that every citizen has the right and obligation to participate in national defense efforts. This law mandates the implementation of state defense as the responsibility of all people, which can be interpreted as a legal basis for implementing the military conscription program.

Law No. 23 of 2019 concerning the Management of National Resources for State Defense: Articles 4 and 6 states that military conscription or other forms of state defense can be carried out by forming a reserve component that involves citizens in state defense. This law also emphasizes the basic rights of citizens participating in this program.

Human Rights in Military Obligation

Right to Freedom of Choice: In international law, for example, through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (DUHAM), everyone has the right to choose their career and life path. In Indonesia, if conscription is held on a compulsory basis without exception or other alternatives, then the program must meet international and national standards regarding the right to freedom of career choice.

The Right Not to Be Treated Arbitrarily: Article 281 of the 1945 Constitution states that everyone has the right to security and protection from degrading treatment. Therefore, the conscription program must be carried out with humane treatment standards and ensure the safety and security of participants.

Public Interest and National Resilience

The Principle of Balance between Individual Rights and State Interests: The doctrine of national law states that individual rights can be limited in the public interest. The conscription program can be justified in terms of law if it is proven to strengthen the country's resilience and meet the national need for a defense component.

Legal Certainty and Legal Protection: Based on Article 28D paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, every citizen has the right to legal recognition, guarantee, protection, and certainty. Therefore, the rules and mechanisms of military

conscription must be formulated, transparently, and fairly so that there is no abuse of power or injustice in its implementation.

Alternatives to Non-Military or Objections of Conscience

In some countries, there is a concept of "Conscientious Objection" or an exception for citizens with moral or religious objections to join military service. Indonesian law does not yet have clear rules regarding this option. However, with the increasing diversity of people's preferences and beliefs, including Gen Z, conscription laws need to weigh alternative options (such as civilian or social services) for those who object based on conscience.

State Obligations in the Provision of Training Facilities and Infrastructure

Under national law, the state must ensure safe facilities, funding, and training and support skills development. The government is responsible for providing protection for conscription participants in terms of physical and mental health. Clear regulations in its implementing legislation should also cover this.

Evaluation and Protection for Gen Z in the Implementation of Military Service

As a group that may have different physical and mental needs than previous Generations, Gen Z needs specific legal protections. For example, adjustments and supervision of the duration, training methods, and psychological approaches must be applied. This is necessary so that the conscription program does not have negative effects that violate the human rights of the younger generation.

The implementation of military service for Gen Z must be carried out with a comprehensive legal approach, referring to the rights and obligations of citizens as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution and laws related to national defense. The program requires clear regulations, protection of basic rights, and alternative options that consider the diverse views and needs of the younger generation. Thus, conscription for Gen Z can fulfill legal principles without violating human rights and still strengthen the country's defense.

Recommendations

To carry out a conscription program that is by the characteristics of Gen 7 and respects human rights and national defense needs, the government needs to consider the following recommendations:

Implementation of Conscription with Optional or Phased Models

Voluntary and Phased Model: Start with a voluntary system to see citizens' interest and participation, especially among Gen Z. This system can be strengthened with incentives such as recognition of certifications, scholarships, or priority in job recruitment in the government sector.

Phased Programs for Gen Z: Design programs with short duration and intensity that adjust to physical and mental readiness. This stage can include basic training that continues to intensive training only for those who show interest and ability.

Provides an Alternative to Conscience Objectivity

Civil or Social Services as an Alternative: Provide options for those with moral objections or religious beliefs contrary to militarism. They can undergo alternative programs in the form of civilian or social services (e.g., education or health) that still contribute to the country without having to attend direct military training.

Protection of Human Rights and Development of Complaint Mechanisms

Specific Policies for Gen Z: A form of policy that respects the psychological and social characteristics of Gen Z, for example, by creating a training environment that is safe, inclusive, and free from violence or harassment.

Transparent and Open Complaint Mechanism: Set up a complaint system that allows participants to express problems or complaints safely and confidentially. External oversight from an independent committee is also needed to maintain accountability for program implementation.

Provision of Supporting Facilities for Mental and Physical Health

Psychological Counseling Facilities: Provide mental health services and specialized counseling that are easily accessible during training. A supportive psychological approach can accompany physically and mentally demanding programs.

Gradual Physical Adjustment: Some Gen Z may not be used to intensive physical activity, so physical training should be done gradually to avoid injury. Medical evaluation and good health support also need to be a priority.

Technology Integration in Defense Training and Strategy

Leveraging Gen Z Technology Expertise: Gen Z is very familiar with digital technology. Military conscription programs can use this ability to develop technology-based training, such as simulation training, cybersecurity, and defense information systems.

Building a Skills-Based Backup Component: A backup component that focuses on digital skills, information technology, and cybersecurity as part of national defense. This is relevant to Gen Z, which tends, who are more competent in the digital field.

Transparent and Educational Socialization.

Comprehensive Information Campaign: Socialize openly about the goals, benefits, and process of military service through media commonly accessed by Gen Z, such as social media, webinars, or other digital platforms. Present this information in an attractive and easy-to-understand format.

Young Character Involvement: To build awareness and interest in this program, involve young figures or influencers who are known and trusted by Gen Z.

Provision of Incentives and Awards for Participants

Economic and Educational Incentives: Provide incentives for educational assistance, access to certain jobs, or allowances during the training period. This could increase the interest of Gen Z, who may consider the concrete benefits of military service programs.

Non-Material Awards: Provide recognition-based awards such as nationally recognized national defense certificates and add value in various fields.

Routine Monitoring and Evaluation for Continuous Improvement

Evaluation Based on Participant Feedback: Conduct periodic evaluations that involve feedback from Gen Z participants so that program implementation can be adjusted based on the experience and needs of the younger generation.

Monitoring by Independent Institutions: Form an independent monitoring team that ensures that the program runs by human rights principles and is transparent at every stage.

CONCLUSION

Military service for Gen Z can be optimally applied by considering aspects of humanity, technology, and alternative programs based on Law 23/2019. This law allows for a selective, phased implementation of the reserve component through voluntary recruitment and offers flexible, non-military alternatives for those who object to conscription. It emphasizes the protection of human rights, with provisions for legal security and a grievance mechanism, ensuring participants' well-being. The law supports the integration of technology in defense training, catering to Gen Z's digital competencies, while promoting transparent recruitment and educational socialization about the program's benefits. Additionally, incentives such as allowances and scholarships are provided to encourage participation, with regular monitoring and evaluations to ensure continuous improvement. Overall, Law 23/2019 offers a flexible legal framework for adapting the military service program to Gen Z's needs, but its success depends on detailed implementation regulations.

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