



Air Defense Transformation: Strategy in the Context of Multi-Domain Operations

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ABSTRACT

This study is grounded in the necessity to integrate military capabilities across land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains to establish an adaptive and responsive air defense system. The objective of this research is to present various air defense strategies developed by different countries within the framework of multi-domain operations and to identify the most effective approaches in addressing the dynamics of modern threats. This study employs a qualitative method through comparative case studies of countries such as the United States, Russia, China, and Israel, which are considered to have progressively adopted multi-domain-based air defense strategies. The analysis highlights the vital role of integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data to support real-time threat detection and decision-making processes.

INTRODUCTION

Air defense transformation has become a strategic imperative amidst the increasingly complex and fragmented global threat landscape into various domains. Modern threats now not only come from the air, but also involve attacks from land, sea, space, and especially cyberspace. This complexity has given birth to the concept of multi-domain operations (MDO) as a new approach in global military doctrine. This concept emphasizes the importance of cross-domain integration in national defense strategy, including an air defense system that is adaptive and responsive to various forms of simultaneous threats (Mai, Johnson, & Smith, 2022). In the context of air defense, this integration includes combining conventional military forces with advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and digital-based command and control systems. This technology enables threat detection and decision-making to be carried out quickly and precisely, even in complex cross-domain attack conditions (Rogers & Davis, 2017; Anderson & Blackwell, 2020). Developed countries such as the United States, Russia, China, and Israel have utilized this approach in strengthening their air defense systems. Concepts such as the United States' Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) are a concrete example of how cross-domain integrated command coordination is beginning to be implemented systematically (Morris & Miller, 2019).

This study was conducted with the aim of identifying and analyzing air defense strategies within the framework of multi-domain operations and describing the transformation of defense approaches carried out by several major countries. This study also examines the main challenges in the transformation process, such as technological gaps between domains, lack of system interoperability, and obstacles to coordination between military components with different doctrines and organizational structures (Kott & Arnold, 2013). In addition, the ever-changing geopolitical dynamics, such as tensions in the Indo-Pacific or Middle East regions, also encourage countries to continue to adjust their defense strategies to remain relevant and responsive to change (Wong, 2019). The method used in this study is a qualitative approach based on comparative case studies, focusing on four major countries: the United States, Russia, China, and Israel. This study explores the policies, technology systems, and command structures used in their air defense, as well as how each country integrates its air defense system into multi-domain operations. By analyzing previous studies and official defense policy documents, this study aims to produce a more comprehensive strategic understanding. It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for defense policy makers in developing a national air defense strategy that is more adaptive, interoperable, and ready to face ever-evolving cross-domain threats.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multi-Domain Operations Concept

The concept of multi-domain operations (MDO) is a modern military strategic approach that emphasizes the simultaneous integration of various domains, namely land, sea, air, space, and cyber, in a single synergistic operational unit. This approach aims to create a combined effect that is able to overcome challenges from asymmetric and conventional threats simultaneously. According to Panait and Aionesei (2024), the effectiveness of multi-domain operations lies in the speed of response and the ability to integrate command systems across domains to produce superior operational effects. This is an important foundation in the development of modern air defense strategies.

Technology Gap Between Domains

The implementation of multi-domain strategies is faced with technological gaps between domains. Zehtab and Hong (2024) noted that the lack of interoperability between weapons systems and communications across domains is a major obstacle to effective integration of operations. Johnson (2021) added that these challenges include hardware, software, and differences in organizational structures and operational procedures between military units.

Utilization of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data in Air Defense

Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data technologies are crucial factors in strengthening the capabilities of MDO-based air defense systems. AI plays a role in detecting, classifying, and responding to threats automatically with high accuracy. Eerhart (2024) shows that AI's ability to support spatial computing accelerates decision-making in the battlespace. Rogers and Davis (2017) state that air defense systems such as Iron Dome have demonstrated the effectiveness of using AI in responding to missile attacks in real time.

Coordination Between Military Components in Multi-Domain Operations

Cross-domain coordination is one of the biggest challenges in conducting multi-domain operations. Pfeiffer, Musaeus, and Heitmann (2020) highlighted that obstacles such as differences in military doctrine, differences in systems, and lack of joint training across units can hinder the effectiveness of operations. Therefore, Chance et al. (2024) suggested the importance of developing common interoperability standards and AI-based training simulations to enhance cross-domain collaboration.

Geopolitical Dynamics and Their Implications for Air Defense Strategy

Rapidly changing global geopolitical dynamics also influence air defense strategies. Countries must respond to international tensions with high strategic flexibility. Lee et al. (2023) stated that changes in interstate relations can trigger rapid transformations in command structures and defense modernization. Panait and Aionesei (2024) emphasized the importance of adaptive readiness to regional threats in regions such as the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative case study method that focuses on analyzing the transformation of air defense strategies in the context of multi-domain operations (MDO). This approach was chosen because it is able to provide an in-depth understanding of how various countries develop integrated cross-domain air defense systems, while also presenting a comparison between policies, military organizational structures, and the application of advanced defense technology. The focus of the study is directed at four main countries, namely the United States, Russia, China, and Israel, which are considered to have progressively adopted a multi-domain approach in their defense doctrine.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature review of relevant secondary sources, such as scientific journals, defense strategy reports, academic articles, and official government and military documents published between 2017 and 2024. These sources provide comprehensive information on the implementation of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and command and control systems in multi-domain operations. To maintain accuracy and increase the validity of the results, this study applies data triangulation techniques by comparing findings from various sources to obtain consistency and depth of information.

The collected data was then analyzed using the thematic analysis method, namely by grouping information based on the main themes that are relevant to the focus of the study. These themes include the development of multi-domain doctrine, integration of advanced technology in air defense systems, challenges of coordination and interoperability between domains, and responses to changing geopolitical dynamics. Through this approach, this study is expected to be able to produce a holistic strategic understanding of how major countries formulate their air defense policies in dealing with multi-domain threats, as well as formulate relevant policy recommendations for the development of a more adaptive national air defense system that is ready to face future challenges.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Multi-Domain Operations Concept

The concept of multi-domain operations (MDO) is a strategy that integrates military forces from various domains – land, sea, air, space, and cyber – to create a synergistic effect in dealing with an increasingly complex and simultaneous spectrum of threats. This strategy is essential in modern air defense, because threats are no longer present separately, but come simultaneously from various directions and forms, such as hypersonic missiles, *drone attacks*, and system disruptions through cyber and space. In a real scenario, for example, a cyber-attack targeting the command system can paralyze the communication and control of air defense units, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the response to a physical attack.

Real-time coordinated and integrated response readiness across domains. Major countries such as the United States, Russia, China, and Israel have formulated and implemented MDO-based defense doctrines to anticipate multidimensional threats. Wong (2019) explains that MDO provides strategic flexibility and allows countries to adjust their responses based on changing geopolitical conditions. The United States pioneered this concept through *the Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2)*, an integrated command and control system that digitally connects all military domains, enabling instant information distribution between units and systems (Morris & Miller, 2019). One of its implementations is *the Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD)*, which utilizes artificial intelligence and big data to accelerate the process of detecting, identifying, and responding to air threats.

Russia has also adopted an MDO strategy by integrating air defense systems such as the S-400 and S-500 that include cross-domain capabilities, including space and cyberspace (Zygar, 2020). In addition, Russia is leveraging AI and electronic warfare technology to strengthen its cyber defenses and respond to unconventional threats. Israel has shown a unique approach with the development of *Iron Dome*, a short-range air defense system capable of responding to artillery and rocket threats very quickly. This system successfully integrates various data from sensors and military units through AI algorithms to estimate the trajectory and impact of attacks, and provides an automated response within seconds (Rogers & Davis, 2017). China, on the other hand, is focusing on developing cutting-edge technology-based air defenses such as the HQ-9, a missile system designed to counter threats from fighter jets, ballistic missiles, and low-orbit satellites. Strengthened by AI and *big data*, this system is part of China's national defense doctrine that combines air, cyber, and space operations in a single tactical unit (Wong, 2019). Overall, the success of MDO implementation in air defense systems depends on a nation's ability to integrate cross-domain technologies, manage system interoperability, and implement a responsive and adaptive command structure. This approach also requires doctrinal readiness, trained personnel, and strategic partnerships to support operations in a dynamically changing environment.

Table 1. Multi-Domain Operations Concept

Negara	Doktrin Utama	Teknologi Kunci	Fokus Operasional	Tantangan Utama
Amerika Serikat	Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2)	AI, Big Data, IAMD, jaringan komando digital	Respons real-time, deteksi awal, integrasi semua domain	Interoperabilitas antardepartemen, kompleksitas jaringan
Rusia	Integrasi Air-Space-Cyber Defense	S-400, S-500, AI, sistem perang elektronik	Pertahanan berlapis, dominasi ruang udara dan siber	Ketergantungan pada modernisasi sistem lama
China	Integrated Multi-Layer Air Defense	HQ-9, AI, Big Data, satelit orbit rendah	Perlindungan strategis wilayah Asia-Pasifik	Ancaman siber eksternal, tekanan geopolitik di LCS
Israel	Smart Layered Air Defense	Iron Dome, AI, sensor fusion, command AI platform	Respon cepat terhadap roket dan drone	Volume serangan simultan, serangan siber terhadap sistem vital

Technology Gap Between Domains

Technology gaps between domains pose a significant challenge in implementing multi-domain operations (MDO) strategies. Differences in technological maturity levels across domains—such as land, sea, air, space, and cyber often create barriers to holistic system integration and coordination of military operations. For example, communication systems in the air domain are generally more advanced and support *real-time connectivity*, while in the land domain, the adoption of communication technologies often lags behind, causing delays in the transmission of critical information (Johnson, 2021; Pfeiffer, Musaeus, & Heitmann, 2020). This imbalance risks reducing the efficiency of decision-making and response to threats, as well as increasing the likelihood of mission failure due to miscommunication or delays in coordination between units across domains.

This gap is also rooted in the aspect of technological interoperability, both in terms of hardware, software, and information system architecture. Differences in operational platforms and communication protocols often make data unreadable across domains directly, causing fragmentation in situational understanding (Williams & Taylor, 2021). In addition, the absence of uniform global standards in the development of defense technology has exacerbated the gap, especially in countries that do not yet have the capacity to develop integrated systems independently. To address these challenges, efforts are needed to develop technology that is modular and adaptable across domains. Georgiadou, Mouzakis, and Askounis (2021) suggest the adoption of an open *-source platform* and the implementation of a cloud-based command architecture that enables *real-time cross-domain integration*. In addition, Chance et al. (2024) recommend the development of a military communications system based on NATO interoperability standards and joint testing between domains as an effective strategy in bridging the technology gap.

The use of artificial intelligence and *big data technologies* can also help in data synchronization between domains, enabling rapid processing of information from multiple sensor sources. Zehtab and Hong (2024) added that the integration of AI-based technologies with traditional command systems must be accompanied by increased cybersecurity and cross-domain training to maximize the potential of the technology without creating additional vulnerabilities. Thus, the solution to the technology gap is not only technical, but also requires a multidimensional approach that includes standards, human resources, and regulations. Through collaboration between countries, the development of standardized and interoperable cross-domain technologies is expected to strengthen the effectiveness of air defense strategies within the framework of multi-domain operations.

Utilization of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data in Air Defense

Artificial intelligence (AI) and *big data* play a critical role in enhancing military capabilities in multi-domain operations. These technologies enable the processing of large amounts of data in *real-time*, which is used to detect threats, coordinate responses, and make strategic decisions quickly. For example, in the context of air defense, AI can be used to improve accuracy in target detection and tracking, while *big data* manages information coming from multiple sensors and other data sources, providing a better understanding of the situation. Anderson & Blackwell (2020) point out that AI and *big data* can be used to integrate information from multiple domains and create a comprehensive picture of the threat, allowing the military to respond in the most effective way. For example, data from satellites in space can be combined with data from radars on the ground and aircraft in the air to create a complete picture of the incoming threat, allowing the military to respond in the most appropriate way.

The use of AI in the military has shown significant improvements in operational effectiveness. For example, the United States has developed an AI system that can detect and track cyber threats and integrate it with air defense systems to provide a comprehensive threat picture (Rogers & Davis, 2017). This system uses AI to analyze data from multiple sensors and identify patterns that indicate a threat. This data is then sent to the air defense system, which uses the information to target and destroy threats before they reach their target. In Russia, AI is used in advanced air defense systems such as the S-400 to increase the speed and accuracy of target tracking (Zygar, 2020). This system uses AI to process data from radars and other sensors, allowing the system to target and destroy threats with high precision. Israel also uses AI in its defense systems, such as *the Iron Dome*, to respond to threats from various types of rockets and *drones* (Rogers & Davis, 2017). This system uses AI to analyze data from multiple sensors and predict the flight path of incoming rockets, allowing the system to target and destroy them before they reach their target.

Despite its great benefits, the application of AI and *big data* in multi-domain operations faces several challenges. One of the main challenges is the issue of data security. In multi-domain operations, data from multiple sources and domains must be collected, processed, and analyzed in a short time to create an accurate situational picture. However, if this data is not secure, the enemy can access or manipulate it, which can lead to failure of the operation. Georgiadou, Mouzakitis, and Askounis (2021) note that maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of data used by AI and *big data* systems is a significant challenge. In addition, the compatibility of existing systems with new technologies is another challenge. Many military systems in use today were designed decades ago and were not designed to work with AI and *big data* technologies. Integrating these new technologies with legacy systems often requires expensive and time-consuming modifications, which can delay the implementation of a multi-domain strategy. In addition, there is also the challenge of training military personnel to use these new technologies effectively. AI and *big data* technologies require a deep understanding of how the system works and how data can be analyzed and used for decision-making.

Coordination between Military Components

Effective coordination between military components is critical to the success of multi-domain operations. Without proper coordination, operations can suffer from inefficiencies and even failure. For example, if ground and air units cannot share information quickly and accurately, then the air unit may not be able to target and destroy incoming threats, which can result in operational failure. Johnson (2021) highlights that one of the biggest obstacles to multi-domain operations is the lack of effective communication between military units operating in different domains. When these units cannot share information quickly or do not have a common understanding of the situation on the ground, operational efforts can suffer. Good coordination between different military units is necessary to ensure that all units are working in a coordinated and effective manner. This includes not only sharing information but also working together in planning and executing operations.

There are several factors that can hinder coordination in multi-domain operations. One major factor is the difference in organizational culture between military units. Each military unit may have different ways of working, operational procedures, and priorities, which can lead to a lack of coordination and collaboration between the units. In addition, differences in access to technology and information can also be a barrier. For example, if one military unit has access to advanced technologies such as AI and *big data*, while another does not, there will be a gap in the ability to respond to threats. In addition, differences in military doctrine and perspectives on threats can also lead to a lack of coordination. For example, one military unit may consider cyber threats a top priority, while another unit may focus more on physical threats such as missile attacks. Pfeiffer, Musaeus, and Heitmann (2020) note that these differences often hinder effective coordination in multi-domain operations.

To address coordination issues in multi-domain operations, various solutions can be implemented. One of the main solutions is the development of flexible operational standards that can be used by all military units, regardless of the domain in which they operate. These standards should cover communication procedures, information exchange, and coordination in the planning and execution of operations. In addition, better training is also needed to ensure that all military units understand and can use the technologies and systems used in multi-domain operations. Williams & Taylor (2021) point out that intensive and continuous training is needed to ensure that all military personnel can work together effectively in multi-domain operations. The use of more sophisticated communication technologies and interoperability between systems used in various domains are also important steps to ensure that all military units can work together effectively. For example, the use of secure and reliable communication networks can help ensure that information can flow smoothly between military units, allowing for quick and accurate decision-making. In addition, increasing joint exercises between units from various domains can also improve understanding and coordination between units. These exercises allow military units to work together in realistic scenarios, allowing them to test and

refine operational procedures and improve their ability to coordinate in real operations.

Geopolitical Dynamics and Their Implications for Air Defense Strategy

Rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics have a significant impact on air defense strategies. Countries must adapt their strategies to changing alliances, new technological developments, and rising regional tensions. For example, changes in the relationship between NATO and Russia have forced NATO member states to adjust their air defense strategies to anticipate possible future conflicts. Mai et al. (2022) show that rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics are influencing how countries design their defense strategies. For example, in the Asia-Pacific, tensions between China and its neighbors have forced countries to strengthen their air defense systems and adopt a multi-domain approach to ensure that they can deal with threats from multiple directions and in multiple forms.

In responding to these changes, the military must have a flexible strategy and be able to adapt quickly to changing global situations. This includes the ability to integrate new technologies and adjust military doctrine to changes in the geopolitical environment. Case studies from Australia and Indonesia show how changes in geopolitical dynamics can encourage both countries to strengthen their defense cooperation in order to face common threats (Abke, 2019). For example, cooperation between Australia and Indonesia in strengthening their air defense includes technology exchanges, joint training, and increasing interoperability between systems used by both countries. A rapid and effective military response to these geopolitical changes is needed to ensure that countries can maintain their national security and protect their strategic interests.

Examples of military strategy adaptation in the Asia-Pacific region show how countries such as Indonesia and Australia are increasing their defense cooperation to counter the threat of China's military expansion in the South China Sea (Abke, 2019). The two countries have increased their cooperation in various areas, including intelligence exchange, joint training, and development of defense technology. Israel, on the other hand, continues to strengthen its position in the Middle East by adapting a defense strategy that emphasizes speed and precision, and utilizing technological advances to maintain its military advantage in a region full of conflict (Rogers & Davis, 2017). Israel has developed a sophisticated air defense system that can respond to threats from various types of rockets and drones, and has increased its capabilities in cyber warfare to protect critical infrastructure from attacks. China, which continues to strengthen its position in the Asia-Pacific, has developed an air defense system designed to counter threats from ballistic missiles and advanced fighter jets. China has also increased its cyber capabilities to protect military communication networks and launch cyber-attacks on enemies if necessary.

Air Defense Strategy in the Context of Multi-Domain Warfare

In facing the complexity of simultaneous global threats originating from various domains – air, land, sea, space, and cyber a comprehensive and adaptive strategic approach is needed. The transformation of air defense systems into a multi-domain operations framework (*Multi-Domain Operations/MDO*) is not only a conceptual imperative, but a practical need that must be implemented immediately. Countries such as the United States, Russia, Israel, and China have demonstrated how modern technology can be used to integrate command, sensor, and response systems into a single integrated military platform (Wong, 2019; Morris & Miller, 2019). Based on recent studies, there are at least nine main strategies that can be applied to improve the effectiveness of air defense systems in the context of multi-domain warfare.

cloud-based and AI-based command and control architecture (*Cloud-AI C2*) that supports *real-time connectivity* between units and enables automated big data-driven decision-making. This strategy enables comprehensive integration across domains (Georgiadou et al., 2021; Rozman, 2020). Second, developing *AI-based simulation training* to improve interoperability and operational readiness between land, sea, air, and cyber units in the face of multi-domain threat scenarios (Chance et al., 2024). Third, modernizing communication and sensor systems by adopting open interoperability protocols such as NATO standards, in order to reduce the technology gap between domains (Zehtab & Hong, 2024). Fourth, implementing *big data analytics* in radar and satellite systems to improve early detection of hypersonic and *drone threats*. This enables automatic filtering of threats based on their priority and potential impact (Anderson & Blackwell, 2020).

Fifth, strengthening military cyber defense capacity through the implementation of an AI-based encryption security system capable of preventing digital penetration and *spoofing* attacks on air defense command systems (Georgiadou et al., 2021). Sixth, developing a multi-domain strategic intelligence unit capable of synchronizing information from air, sea, and space intelligence platforms, as well as cyber in a centralized decision system. Seventh, expanding regional defense technology cooperation, such as the exchange of AI algorithms and satellite data between partner countries, to strengthen situational understanding in conflict-prone areas such as the South China Sea and the Middle East (Abke, 2019; Lee et al., 2023). Eighth, integrating AI-based automated countermeasure capabilities *into* defense missile and *drone systems*, as Israel has done through Iron Dome (Rogers & Davis, 2017). Finally, ninth, initiate a transformation of military culture and organizational governance to be able to adopt multidomain operational principles, including strengthening unified command and simplifying the chain of command for rapid response (Pfeiffer et al., 2020; Williams & Taylor, 2021). By implementing these strategies, countries will be better prepared to face rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics and increasingly complex forms of modern threats. Future air defense systems must not only be technically robust, but also intelligent, connected, and able to adapt to all forms of multidomain attacks.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transformation of air defense within the framework of multi-domain operations (MDO) is an inevitable strategic step for countries that want to maintain military superiority in an era of complex and simultaneous threats. The integration of forces from land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains in the air defense system allows for a faster, more accurate, and more adaptive response to modern threats such as hypersonic missile attacks, drones, and cyber intrusions. A comparative study of the approaches of the United States, Russia, China, and Israel shows that the effectiveness of air defense systems is highly dependent on technological interoperability, mastery of artificial intelligence and big data, and a real-time integrated command structure. Challenges such as technological gaps between domains, cross-unit coordination, and geopolitical dynamics demand the implementation of flexible and innovation-based strategies.

Therefore, the nine main strategies formulated in this study are an important foundation for improving the adaptability of the national air defense system, including the development of AI-based command architecture, simulation-based joint training, modernization of communication systems, and strengthening cyber defense. With the implementation of these strategies, it is hoped that Indonesia can take the right and strategic steps in facing air defense challenges in the modern era. Given Indonesia's geostrategic position in the Indo-Pacific region which is vulnerable to regional tensions, the development of an MDO-based air defense system will strengthen the national defense posture while increasing the response capacity to cross-domain threats. This step is also an opportunity for Indonesia to strengthen regional and international defense cooperation, increase the independence of defense technology, and build a more adaptive, resilient, and digital transformation-based national security system in the future.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Further research on air defense transformation in the context of multi-domain operations needs to focus on developing an integrative strategy that is able to synergistically combine air, land, sea, cyber, and space capabilities. This approach is important to address the complexity of modern threats that are asymmetric, cross-domain, and high-tech. Future in-depth studies should explore the use of cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Military Things (IoMT), and sensor fusion to enhance situational awareness and real-time decision-making in air defense systems. In addition, the integration of *Joint All-Domain Command and Control* (JADC2)-based command and control systems will be key to supporting inter-service interoperability and strengthening the ability to detect, track, and respond to cross-domain threats.

The study also needs to analyze the readiness of the organizational structure, doctrine, and human resources of the Indonesian Air Force and other related units to adapt to the demands of multi-domain operations. The application of the *adaptive basing concept*, flexible maneuvering of radar and missile units, and strengthening cyber defense as part of an integrated weapons system are important aspects in this transformation framework.

In addition, collaboration between the TNI, national defense industry, research institutions, and international strategic partners must be strengthened to support innovation and technology transfer in building a resilient and independent air defense system. Research approaches based on *threat projection*, *scenario-based simulation*, and *predictive analytics* also need to be adopted to design an air defense system that is responsive to future threats. With these approaches, the results of further research are expected to be the basis for formulating relevant, adaptive, and superior air defense policies and strategies in facing the increasingly complex challenges of multi-domain operations in the modern defense era.

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