

From Classroom to Battlefield: Education as a Weapon Facing New Style Colonization

Ahmad Ripaldi¹, Sulhan Efendi Hasibuan², Siti Aisyah Hasibuan³, Reva Lina Pratiwi⁴, Nurhasanah⁵

¹²³⁴⁵Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan

Email:ahmadripaldi2104@gmail.com;sulhanhsb14@gmail.com;aishahhasibuan12@gmail.com;revasiergar97@gmail.com;snahsiregar@gmail.com

Abstract

A nation's independence is not only determined by its freedom from physical colonialism, but also by its ability to maintain sovereignty amidst the currents of globalization, which often brings new forms of colonialism, such as cultural domination, economic dependence, and the penetration of foreign ideologies. In this context, education plays a strategic role as a defensive bulwark and a weapon to maintain the existence of independence. This article discusses how the classroom is not merely a place for the transfer of knowledge, but also a battlefield in shaping a generation that is critical, independent, and has national character. Education is seen as a crucial instrument for building historical awareness, strengthening national values, and instilling resilience against the infiltration of modern colonialism that often comes through technology, media, and the global economic system. Using a qualitative approach based on literature studies, this paper emphasizes the importance of curriculum transformation, strengthening character education, and empowering teachers and students in maintaining national sovereignty. The results of the study indicate that education oriented towards strengthening national identity and critical thinking can become a strong bulwark in facing new styles of colonialism. Thus, education not only produces academically intelligent individuals but also intellectual fighters ready to defend national independence amidst global dynamics.

Keywords: Independence; Education; New Style of Colonization; National Identity; Globalization

INTRODUCTION

The independence achieved by the Indonesian people in 1945 was the result of a long struggle involving the sacrifice of life, body, and property by the nation's heroes and fighters. This independence did not come instantly, but rather through a historical process fraught with resistance against colonialism and oppression in various forms (Ricklefs, 2018). However, the independence achieved did not automatically guarantee freedom for the Indonesian people from all forms of colonial threats in the future. Over time, the form of colonialism transformed from physical domination to more subtle and systematic non-physical domination (Tien, 2021).

In the era of globalization, a new style of colonialism has emerged through mechanisms of cultural domination, economic dependence, and the penetration of foreign ideologies that can influence the way a nation's people think and act. This type of colonialism no longer requires direct territorial control, but rather operates through the hegemony of thought and the structure of a global system that binds developing nations (Sutrisno, 2019). This condition makes a nation appear politically independent, but in reality remains in a cycle of dependence on certain global powers.

On the one hand, globalization brings various advances, particularly in technology, communications, and economics. The development of information technology enables broader and faster access to knowledge and opens up opportunities for international

cooperation (Castells, 2017). However, on the other hand, globalization also presents serious challenges to the sustainability of national identity and sovereignty. The unstoppable flow of information, the massive influx of foreign cultures, and dependence on the global economic system have the potential to erode national values if not addressed critically and wisely (Tilaar, 2018).

Understanding independence in the contemporary context is no longer limited to freedom from physical colonialism, but also encompasses a nation's ability to maintain cultural, economic, and ideological sovereignty. Nations lacking internal resilience are easily swayed by global interests that often align with local and national values (Yusuf, 2020). Therefore, efforts to maintain independence must be directed at strengthening collective consciousness and national character.

New-style colonialism, or neocolonialism, is a form of domination that operates through economic, political, cultural, and educational channels. Through this mechanism, developing countries are often positioned as markets, consumers, or objects of interest for developed countries (Suryadi, 2018). As a result, formally independent nations can become trapped in structural dependencies that undermine national independence and competitiveness. This situation demands that the Indonesian nation possess strong ideological and cultural resilience to avoid being swept away by global hegemony.

In the context of maintaining

independence, education plays a highly strategic role. Education serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge and skills, but also as a medium for character formation, historical awareness, and national identity (Ki Hadjar Dewantara, 2017). Through education, national values and a spirit of patriotism can be systematically instilled in the younger generation, the nation's successors.

The classroom, often viewed simply as a formal learning space, is actually an intellectual battlefield for educators and students. It is in this classroom that the process of internalizing values, developing critical thinking patterns, and strengthening national character takes place continuously (Sanjaya, 2019). From the classroom, a generation is born that is able to sort through information, act independently, and resist the influence of foreign cultures that conflict with national values.

The challenges of education in the era of globalization are increasingly complex with the rapid development of technology and digital media. While social media and digital platforms offer significant benefits for learning, they also serve as conduits for the influx of foreign ideologies, lifestyles, and values, potentially weakening students' nationalist spirit (Hidayat, 2021). Without strengthening character and critical awareness, students can lose their identity and become alienated from their nation's noble values.

Therefore, educational transformation is inevitable. The curriculum must be able to

respond to the challenges of the times without neglecting national values and local wisdom. Character education, strengthening nationalism, and learning based on history and Pancasila values need to be consistently integrated into the learning process (Mulyasa, 2020). Teachers, as the vanguard of education, must also be empowered to serve as role models and inspiration in shaping a generation that is intellectually superior and morally strong.

Based on this background, this study seeks to deeply examine the role of education as a national defense against new forms of colonialism. Using a qualitative approach based on literature, this study confirms that education is a strategic instrument in producing intelligent individuals and intellectual warriors with a sense of national consciousness. It is hoped that this paper will contribute academically to strengthening collective awareness of the importance of education as the nation's primary weapon in safeguarding and maintaining Indonesia's independence amidst global dynamics.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach using library research methods. This qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of this research is to understand and examine concepts, ideas, and thoughts related to the role of education in maintaining the existence of national independence amidst the challenges of new-style colonialism. The issues studied are conceptual and theoretical in nature, thus requiring not statistical data processing but

rather in-depth analysis of various relevant literature sources.

The library research method allows researchers to examine various scientific works related to the research topic. Data sources for this study were obtained from scientific books, academic journals, scholarly articles, and official documents discussing issues of education, independence, globalization, and new colonialism. The literature used was selectively selected, considering relevance, credibility, and suitability to the study's focus, ensuring that the data obtained can be academically accounted for.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature search utilizing both physical and digital libraries. All collected sources were then classified by theme and subject matter to facilitate the analysis process. This stage aimed to obtain a comprehensive overview of the various views and concepts related to the role of education in maintaining national independence.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach. The collected data was not only described but also critically analyzed to identify the relationship between educational concepts and efforts to maintain national independence from modern colonialism. The analysis process involved in-depth reading, understanding the literature, and interpreting the main ideas put forward by experts.

The results of this analysis are then synthesized and linked to the current social and

educational context in Indonesia. Thus, this research not only presents a theoretical explanation but also provides a contextual understanding of the challenges and strategic role of education in facing global dynamics. Through this library research method, it is hoped that this research will produce a comprehensive foundation for thinking about the importance of education as a bulwark of national defense in maintaining the existence of Indonesian independence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Existence of Independence in the Shadow of New Style Colonization

The independence achieved by the Indonesian people in 1945 was a historical milestone, marking the end of physical colonialism and the beginning of an era of national sovereignty. This independence was achieved through a long struggle and great sacrifice by the nation's founders. However, independence cannot be understood as a final state free from all forms of threat. Throughout global history, forms of colonialism have changed along with changes in global power structures (Miftakhuddin, 2020).

In the era of globalization, colonialism no longer occurs through military invasion or direct territorial control, but rather through more subtle and systemic mechanisms. This phenomenon is known as new-style colonialism or neocolonialism. Neocolonialism operates through economic, cultural, political, and ideological channels, gradually influencing the direction of

policy and lifestyles of a nation without the public realizing it (Suharyanto, 2019).

One of the most obvious manifestations of neocolonialism is the dominance of foreign culture. The development of information technology and digital media has opened up a vast space for the influx of global culture into Indonesian society. Foreign popular culture is easily accessed and consumed by the public, especially the younger generation, without adequate value filtering (Widodo, 2021).

This cultural dominance has resulted in a shift in societal values and lifestyles. The younger generation tends to be more familiar with foreign cultures than with local and national ones. This situation can weaken national identity and erode the sense of nationalism that is a crucial foundation for maintaining national independence (Sutopo, 2020).

Besides cultural dominance, economic dependence is also a key characteristic of the new colonialism. Dependence on imported products, foreign investment, and foreign debt places countries vulnerable to global pressures. As economic independence weakens, a country's ability to freely determine policy direction becomes increasingly limited (Rahayuningsih et al., 2024).

This state of economic dependence has direct implications for national sovereignty. The country's strategic decisions are often influenced by the interests of external parties with greater capital and market access. In such a situation, economic independence is a crucial prerequisite for achieving complete and dignified

independence (Prasetyo, 2019).

The penetration of foreign ideologies is also an integral part of neocolonialism. Through various channels, such as international education, mass media, and social media, certain ideological values are disseminated and widely accepted by society. These ideologies are not always aligned with the values of Pancasila and the character of the Indonesian nation (Ma'arif, 2018).

If the penetration of foreign ideologies is not properly anticipated, it can lead to a disorientation of values in national and state life. Society has the potential to lose the ideological foundation that has served as a social glue. In the long term, this situation could weaken national solidarity and threaten national unity (Arifin, 2020).

On the other hand, globalization cannot be entirely viewed as a threat. It also brings significant opportunities in the form of technological advancements, increased access to information, and international cooperation. However, these opportunities can only be optimally utilized if a nation possesses strong selective skills and critical awareness (Herlambang, 2021).

Without critical awareness, globalization can become an effective tool for a new style of colonialism. Nations lacking cultural, economic, and ideological resilience will easily become trapped in global currents that benefit certain parties. In this situation, independence is merely formal, while in essence, the nation remains trapped in a cycle of dependency (Nugroho, 2022).

Therefore, maintaining independence in the

modern era is not enough by simply safeguarding territorial sovereignty. This effort must be accompanied by strengthening cultural, economic, and ideological sovereignty. Public awareness, especially among the younger generation, needs to be built so they can recognize and confront various forms of modern colonialism intelligently and empoweredly (Sari, 2021).

Without a collective effort to combat neocolonialism, the independence fought for at great sacrifice has the potential to lose its substantive meaning. True independence can only be achieved if the Indonesian nation is able to stand independently, with a distinct cultural identity, economic sovereignty, and a strong ideology. This is the primary challenge the Indonesian nation must face in maintaining the sustainability of its independence amidst ever-evolving global dynamics (Kusnadi, 2023).

Education as a Fortress of National Defense

Education plays a strategic role in maintaining the nation's independence. Since the founding of Indonesia, the nation's founders have positioned education as a key pillar of national development. Education is understood not only as a means of enlightening the nation, but also as an ideological instrument for preserving national values. Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized that the goal of education is to liberate humans physically and spiritually, enabling individuals to think, behave, and act independently as dignified human beings. This concept demonstrates that education has a meaning far beyond mere academic aspects, as

it functions to shape Indonesians who are intellectually and morally sovereign (Nurmalisa et al., 2020).

In this context, education plays a strategic role in instilling national values and national awareness. Through a planned and continuous educational process, students are introduced to the history of the nation's struggle, state ideology, and the noble values that underlie national and state life. Instilling these values is crucial for the younger generation to have a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of independence, enabling them to safeguard and defend it amidst various global challenges.

From this perspective, the classroom cannot be viewed simply as a place for the transfer of knowledge. It is a strategic space for developing a generation that is critical, independent, and has character. Within the classroom, the process of internalizing values, forming mindsets, and strengthening national attitudes takes place. It is from this classroom that individuals emerge with historical awareness, a sense of national identity, and a commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty.

Through meaningful learning, students are encouraged to critically understand social realities and national challenges. Such education will produce a generation capable not only of receiving information but also of analyzing, evaluating, and taking action against various external influences. Thus, the classroom can be understood as an arena for building the nation's intellectual defenses against the penetration of

foreign ideologies and cultures.

Education's role as a national bulwark is also reflected in its ability to develop critical awareness in students. Amidst the rapid flow of digital information and social media, education is required to equip students with critical literacy skills. Students must be able to sort out valid information, reject hoaxes, and be selective about foreign cultural influences that are inconsistent with national values. Education oriented toward strengthening character and morals is key to building national resilience against modern forms of colonialism.

In addition to fostering critical awareness, education also plays a strategic role in strengthening national identity. A strong national identity is a crucial foundation for the continued independence of a nation. Through a contextually designed curriculum grounded in national values, students can understand and internalize noble values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, tolerance, and social justice. These values are not only taught theoretically but also practiced in everyday life within the educational environment.

A deeply ingrained national identity will prevent the Indonesian people from being easily swayed by the currents of globalization. A nation confident in its own values and culture will be able to interact with the global world without losing its identity. In this context, independence is not only interpreted as a political status but also reflected in people's attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles.

Teachers play a vital role in realizing this

strategic function of education. Teachers are not merely instructors who deliver subject matter, but also educators, role models, and agents of change. Through their attitudes, behavior, and integrity, teachers become role models for students. Teachers with a strong sense of nationalism will be able to authentically instill the values of nationalism and patriotism in the learning process.

With the guidance of teachers with integrity and a commitment to national values, students can grow into intellectually intelligent individuals with a spirit of patriotism. Teachers who understand the strategic role of education will transform the classroom into a space for intellectual resistance, a place where students are trained to think critically, take bold action, and care about the nation's future.

Thus, education can be seen as the nation's most fundamental and sustainable defense. Education not only produces skilled and competitive human resources but also shapes citizens with critical awareness and a strong national identity. Without education oriented toward strengthening national values, the Indonesian nation will be vulnerable to foreign cultural, economic, and ideological domination.

Therefore, education must be continuously revitalized to meet the challenges of the times without losing the nation's identity. Educational revitalization should be directed at strengthening students' character, nationalism, and critical awareness. With education oriented toward human freedom and national sovereignty, Indonesia will have a solid defense to maintain

its independence amidst the dynamics of new-style colonialism (Sabil Ryañzada et al., 2025).

Educational Strategy in Facing New Style Colonization

Facing the challenges of a new style of colonialism, education is required to develop strategies that adapt to changing times without losing the roots of national identity. Globalization and technological advances have transformed the way people think, behave, and interact, especially the younger generation. In this context, education must be able to act as a balance between openness to the global world and strengthening national values. The right educational strategy will determine the extent to which the Indonesian nation can maintain its independence amidst increasingly complex global dynamics (Abd. Muiz et al., 2024).

One fundamental strategy that needs to be implemented is curriculum transformation. The curriculum is no longer solely oriented toward mastering academic material; it must be designed contextually to align with the social, political, and cultural realities facing the nation. Integrating national values, independence, and critical thinking into every subject is essential to ensure students have a comprehensive understanding of national challenges in the era of globalization. With a relevant and adaptive curriculum, education can equip students with the ability to understand national issues reflectively and responsibly (Abd. Muiz et al., 2024).

Curriculum transformation also demands meaningful, problem-solving-oriented learning. Students are not only encouraged to understand

theory but also trained to connect knowledge to the realities of everyday life. Through this approach, students will develop stronger social sensitivity and national awareness, enabling them to view globalization not merely as a threat but as a challenge that must be faced with a critical and sovereign attitude.

In addition to strengthening the curriculum, character education is an equally important strategy. Character education serves as the primary foundation for building a generation with integrity, noble morals, and a strong commitment to nationalism. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, social awareness, and a spirit of mutual cooperation must be consistently instilled in all educational activities. A strong character will serve as a primary bulwark for students against the negative influences of globalization and the infiltration of foreign ideologies (Murtiningsih et al., 2024).

Character education is not only implemented through specific subjects but must be integrated into the school culture. Role modelling, habituation, and reinforcement of values through intracurricular and extracurricular activities are effective tools in shaping students' personalities. With continuous character education, students are expected to grow into individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and socially mature.

The next equally important strategy is empowering teachers as agents of change. Teachers play a strategic role in transforming national values into students. Teachers are not merely transmitters of subject matter but also role

models who influence students' attitudes and behavior. Therefore, strengthening teachers' pedagogical, professional, and personal competencies is crucial to enable them to optimally fulfill this role.

Teacher empowerment can be achieved through ongoing training, developing national insight, and enhancing digital and critical literacy. Teachers with a strong understanding of nationalism and strong pedagogical skills will more easily instill the values of patriotism and nationalism in students. Thus, the classroom can become a strategic space for fostering national awareness amidst the onslaught of global culture.

Wise use of technology is also an indispensable strategy in modern education. Information and communication technology must be positioned as a learning tool, not as a gateway for foreign ideologies and values that conflict with national identity. Through strengthening digital literacy, students are taught to use technology critically, selectively, and productively, enabling them to leverage digital media for personal development and the benefit of the nation.

Strong digital literacy will empower students to become not only consumers of information, but also producers of content that reflects national values. Thus, technology can become a tool for intellectual struggle in confronting new forms of colonialism, rather than a means of undermining the nation's cultural and ideological sovereignty.

Another equally important strategy is

strengthening collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Education cannot be effective if it is solely the responsibility of schools. The family, as the primary educational environment, and the community, as the social environment, play a significant role in shaping students' character and national attitudes. Harmonious synergy between these three elements will strengthen an educational ecosystem oriented toward strengthening national values (Rivaldi & Benhar, 2025).

With family and community support, the values taught in schools will be more easily internalized by students. A conducive environment will help shape a generation with consistent attitudes and behaviors aligned with national values. This collaboration is key to facing the challenges of this new, multidimensional colonialism.

With these various strategies, education is expected to produce a generation that excels not only academically but also has strong character, critical thinking, and a strong commitment to maintaining national identity. This generation will become intellectual champions and the nation's defense against the ever-growing tide of globalization.

Therefore, education cannot be viewed simply as a teaching and learning process, but rather as the nation's collective struggle to safeguard and maintain independence. Through a planned, adaptive educational strategy grounded in national values, the existence of Indonesian independence can be continuously safeguarded against various forms of modern colonialism

(Hendra, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Indonesian independence is not only defined as freedom from the shackles of physical colonialism, but also as the nation's ability to maintain its sovereignty and identity amidst the increasingly complex currents of globalization. This new form of colonialism emerges through various non-physical mechanisms, such as cultural domination, economic dependence, and the penetration of foreign ideologies, which can gradually erode national identity. In this context, education plays a highly strategic role as both a bulwark of national defense and a means of intellectual struggle to maintain the existence of independence.

The study's findings demonstrate that education oriented toward strengthening national values can foster a critical, independent, and character-driven generation. A curriculum that is contextual and relevant to current developments enables students not only to understand theory but also to interpret the social, political, and cultural dynamics that influence national life. With this approach, the classroom is no longer simply a place to transfer knowledge, but rather a battlefield for cultivating intellectual champions with national awareness and resilience against global influences that align with national values.

Character education has proven to be a key pillar in protecting the younger generation

from the influence of modern colonialism. Noble values such as responsibility, integrity, social awareness, and the spirit of mutual cooperation constitute the Indonesian national identity and must be continuously instilled and internalized throughout the educational process. With strong character, the younger generation will possess the moral and ideological resilience to withstand the infiltration of foreign cultures that could potentially weaken the spirit of nationalism.

Furthermore, the role of teachers as agents of change is crucial in realizing the strategic function of education. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as educators, role models, and inspirators in instilling national values. Teachers with strong professional competence and national awareness will be able to guide students to become intelligent and patriotic individuals. Family and community support are also crucial factors in ensuring the values instilled in schools are consistently internalized in daily life.

Wise use of technology is another crucial aspect in facing the challenges of new-style colonialism. Digital literacy needs to be developed so that the younger generation can use technology critically, selectively, and productively. With adequate digital literacy, students will not only be consumers of information but will also be able to produce works and ideas that reflect national identity and contribute to maintaining national sovereignty in the digital age.

Based on the overall discussion, it can be

concluded that education is the most effective and sustainable instrument for maintaining national independence amidst the dynamics of globalization. Through curriculum transformation, strengthening character education, empowering teachers, wise use of technology, and synergy between schools, families, and communities, education can produce a generation that is intelligent, character-driven, critical, and possesses a strong national identity. This generation is expected to become the nation's bulwark and hope in facing and fighting against increasingly complex new styles of colonialism in the future.

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