

# Overlapping Powers in Merah Putih Cabinet: Case of Presidential Special Representative

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## Abstract

This research discusses the complexity of jurisdiction surrounding the status of the Presidential Special Representative (PSR) in the Red and White Cabinet, as regulated by Presidential Regulation No. 137 of 2024. This examines indications of overlapping authority granted to the Special Presidential Representative (PSR) over several ministries, which has implications for inefficiency in governance. PSR holds an equal position and financial rights comparable to ministers, with the only difference being that PSR does not receive a pension. The emergence of the PSR position has also drawn public criticism, with many assuming that this position is not urgent to establish and could actually complicate the bureaucracy further. This study aims to explore the implications of the PSR role on government efficiency and identify overlaps in key areas such as food security, religious harmony, and small business development, which fall within the scope of several ministries and agencies. This aims to provide insights into how this overlap affects bureaucratic functions, policy implementation, and public perception of government efficiency. Using a literature review methodology, this study observes and analyzes the role of PSR in relation to the existing functions of ministries and evaluates its impact on bureaucratic performance. This study reveals a significant overlap in the assignment of PSR with existing government bodies, resulting in inefficiencies, delays in policy implementation, and public criticism regarding budget waste. The divided opinions of the public and policymakers indicate that the clear mandate of PSR is questionable, whether it is to improve executive performance or complicate the government structure. These findings highlight the need to further evaluate of the PSR's role to simplify responsibilities and reduce structural complexity within Indonesia's governance system, with the hope of restoring public trust in government accountability and transparency. Future studies using in-depth observational methods can provide solutions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the government structure, both PSR and other government administrative units, which will ultimately enhance the delivery of public services in Indonesia quickly and accurately.

**Keywords:** Bureaucratic Challenges, Governance Efficiency, Merah Putih Cabinet, Overlapping Authorities, Presidential Special Representative



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## Introduction

Governance systems across the globe are under constant scrutiny for their efficiency, adaptability, and responsiveness to public needs (Kusumasari et al., 2023). Indonesia, as a rapidly developing nation, Indonesian faces unique challenges in ensuring that its public administration system remains effective while addressing emerging political and socio-economic complexities (Sajida, 2024). A central issue in this regard is the overlapping authorities within the government's institutional framework, which not only impede efficiency and create public perceptions of wastefulness and bureaucratic redundancy

(Wiraguna & Maradona, 2024). The implications of such inefficiencies are profound, ranging from delays in policy execution to diminished public trust in the government's ability to deliver on its promises. Addressing these issues is critical, particularly as Indonesia navigates its development trajectory amidst global and regional uncertainties. In recent years, the Indonesian government has seen the proliferation of executive positions that extend beyond the traditional roles of ministries. While these positions are often justified as strategic responses to specific challenges, they frequently result in authority overlaps that compromise governance effectiveness. Establishing of Presidential Special Representatives (PSRs) under Presidential Regulation No. 137 of 2024 exemplifies this trend. Introduced as part of the final administrative actions by President Joko Widodo, this regulation formalized roles for four new categories: Presidential Special Advisers, Presidential Special Representatives, Presidential Special Staff, and Vice-Presidential Special Staff. The PSRs, in particular, have been tasked with executing specialized assignments outside the mandates of ministries or other government agencies. However, their creation has raised critical questions about their necessity, given the already extensive network of ministries and agencies in the Indonesian government.

Historically, the Indonesian Constitution mandates that the president's primary aides in governance are the vice president and ministers. However, the dynamic nature of presidential power has allowed for the creation of roles not explicitly defined within constitutional frameworks. Michael Gonovese's analysis of presidential authority highlights the evolution of informal powers that enable presidents to expand their administrative apparatus as needed. While advantageous in addressing immediate issues, this flexibility often leads to administrative chaos and inefficiencies when new roles are not integrated into the existing structure. The Merah Putih Cabinet, under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto, has continued this trend by appointing seven PSRs shortly after its inauguration. These roles, although designed to address specific strategic areas, these role have faced significant criticism for overlapping with established ministerial functions. The core issue with introducing of PSRs lies in their potential to create overlapping authorities with existing ministries and agencies.

For instance, the PSR for Food Security, tasked with overseeing policies in this area, shares similar functions with the National Food Agency, which operates under the Ministry of Agriculture. Similarly, the PSR for Religious Harmony mirrors programs already implemented by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, such as the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB). These overlaps create inefficiencies and lead to delays in policy implementation, as administrative units grapple with unclear boundaries of responsibility. In line with (Putra & Wardhani, 2024), a clear bureaucratic structure and good coordination between levels of the bureaucracy are needed so that policies can be implemented properly. Furthermore, the public's perception of these roles as politically motivated rather than strategically necessary adds another layer of complexity. The appointments have been criticized as political rewards, with some appointees playing key roles in the 2024 election campaign. This perception

undermines public trust and raises questions about the effectiveness of these positions in achieving their intended objectives.

Despite extensive research on governance inefficiencies in Indonesia, there remains a paucity of studies focusing specifically on the role and impact of Presidential Special Representatives. Existing literature has broadly examined overlapping authorities within inter-ministerial functions or local government structures. For example, studies by Elva (2022) and Raseukiy (2022) highlight the challenges posed by redundant roles in governance but do not delve into the unique dynamics introduced by PSRs. Recent research by Adhitya (2024) on the president's special staff is also considered to indicate overlapping authority, which has received negative stigma from the public because their existence is deemed non-essential. This gap is particularly significant given the increasing reliance on these positions in recent administrations. By focusing on the PSRs within the Merah Putih Cabinet, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of their impact on governance efficiency and effectiveness.

Empirical evidence from previous administrations underscores the recurring challenges associated with overlapping authorities. During President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's tenure, the formalization of memorable representative roles under Presidential Regulation No. 17 of 2012 was met with mixed reactions. While the regulation aimed to clarify the functions of these roles, its implementation revealed significant overlaps with ministerial responsibilities. Similar issues persisted under President Joko Widodo, who appointed three PSRs during his administration. For example, the appointment of Eddy Pratomo as a PSR for maritime boundary negotiations raised concerns about redundancy with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These historical precedents provide critical insights into the current challenges faced by the Merah Putih Cabinet, where the introduction of seven PSRs has reignited debates about their necessity and functionality.

The Merah Putih Cabinet, led by President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka, marks a significant shift in Indonesia's political landscape. With a total of 48 ministries and the addition of seven PSRs, the cabinet is one of the largest and most complex government structures in Indonesian history. The PSRs have been tasked with areas such as food security, religious harmony, small business development, and international trade. However, these appointments have drawn criticism for being excessive and potentially exacerbating bureaucratic inefficiencies. For example, the Small Business Development PSR overlaps with the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises, while the International Trade PSR encroaches on the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Trade.

These overlaps have significant implications for governance, especially in a country that needs efficient public administration to address socio-economic disparities and promote development. This research is exploratory, aimed at uncovering new insights into indications of overlapping authority with a research object that has rarely been studied before, namely between PSR and other ministries/agencies. More specifically, this research aims to achieve the following, including outlining the duties and responsibilities of the Presidential Special Representative (PSR) in the Merah Putih Cabinet; analyzing the potential overlap between the

PSR and other government agencies. It also investigates public perceptions of the PSR's role and contribution to government effectiveness. This research has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the discourse on governance reform by examining the dynamics of overlapping authority and its implications for public trust. Practically, it informs policymakers of the potential risks of creating new positions, and ensures that the creation of new positions is guided by needs-based analysis and governance objectives.

## Literature Review

### A. Overlapping Authorities

The term “overlapping” in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) refers to that overlap, interlace, and mix. In governance, overlapping authority can cause inefficiencies in the implementation of tasks and functions within government institutions, more than that, overlapping authority can cause uncertainty and confusion regarding who is responsible for a decision or action (Muhtada, Dani & Dan, 2021). Authority, often referred to as “authority” in the context of administrative law, is a fundamental element that legitimizes government action. It is the basis for public institutions to carry out their functions and mandates. Without clear authority, these institutions can encroach on each other's authority without clearly defined authorities, leading to administrative chaos and inefficiency (Isnanda et al., 2024). Therefore, the issue of overlapping authority is not only an operational problem, but also a fundamental governance challenge that requires careful structuring and defining to avoid systemic inefficiencies. In line with that xxx states that overlapping can cause ambiguity in the division of tasks and responsibilities

### B. Presidential Special Representative

Presidential special representatives are appointed based on Presidential Decree Number 76/M of 2024 on the Appointment of Special Envoys of the President of the Republic of Indonesia for 2024-2029. The task of the Presidential Special Representative (PSR) is to assist the smooth running of the president's duties, which are given special tasks outside the scope of ministries or other government agencies. Furthermore, the PSR task implementation report is coordinated by the Cabinet secretary (Presidential Regulation Number 137 of 2024). In the preamble, it is said that this position exists to improve the implementation of the duties of the President and Vice President with the expectations of the Indonesian people for the President and Vice President who are directly elected to be able to immediately resolve various problems faced (Putra, 2023).

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation collecting and analyzing descriptive data, including words, narratives, and relevant documents (Rohman et al., 2024; Sholahuddin, 2021). A qualitative approach is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena, allowing the researcher to delve deeply into the contextual and interpretive aspects of the

subject matter. Primary data as well as secondary data will be obtained through literature review. The primary method utilized in this research is literature review as outlined by (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Literature review involves systematically examining, references, and other scientific literature relevant to the cultural, value-based, and normative aspects inherent to the social context being studied. This method allows the researcher to establish a solid theoretical framework while situating the research within existing academic discourse. The research process began with identifying a specific topic and the formulation of research questions, which served as the foundation for the study, following previous studies on the same field (Sukardi & Sajida, 2023). Data and information were gathered from various credible and relevant sources. These sources included academic journals, government documents, news articles, expert opinions, and other materials pertinent to the research focus. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that all collected data aligned with the research objectives and addressed the identified research questions. The data collection process involved carefully selecting materials that provided insights into the roles, responsibilities, and implications of Presidential Special Representatives within the Merah Putih Cabinet. Once gathered, the data were systematically processed and analyzed to identify patterns, relationships, and key themes. The analysis focused on synthesizing information to draw meaningful conclusions while maintaining coherence with the research objectives. Through this rigorous methodological approach, the study ensures that its findings are both reliable and grounded in existing literature, providing a robust foundation for analyzing the overlapping authorities and their implications within Indonesia's governance framework.

## Result and Discussion

### A. Indications of Overlapping Authorities in the Presidential Special Representative Role

The role of the Presidential Special Representative (PSR), or Utusan Khusus Presiden (UKP), has evolved significantly throughout Indonesia's political history. From its informal inception under President Soekarno to its formalization during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the changing dynamics of governance and executive power have shaped the role. Despite its potential to address strategic issues, the establishment of PSRs has frequently sparked debates about their relevance, efficiency, and the potential for overlapping authorities. In line with this, research conducted by Oktarinda & Rosmalinda (2024) found the fact that currently there are still many problems that occur due to the existence of the Presidential Special Staff, one of which is caused by the unclear mission of the Presidential Special Staff. Its existence is also considered a part that is not actually urgent. This has caused a surge of negative sentiment in society (Oktarianda & Rosmalinda, 2024).

This section provides an in-depth analysis of these issues, tracing their historical roots and examining specific cases under the Merah Putih Cabinet. The concept of a PSR can be traced back to Indonesia's first president, Soekarno, who utilized informal representatives for diplomatic and economic missions. These individuals were appointed to assist in areas that requiring urgent attention or specialized expertise, often outside the formal government

structure. However, the lack of formal documentation from this period, as noted by Dino Patti Djalal in Kompas (2015), makes it challenging to assess the specific roles and impacts of these appointments.

Under President Soeharto, the concept of informal representation evolved into a more structured form with the establishment of Asisten Pribadi (Aspri), who were directly responsible for assisting the president in governance. Notable figures such as Ali Moertopo and Soedjono Hoemardhani exemplified this role, focusing on political and economic issues, respectively. However, even during this period, concerns about overlapping functions and the concentration of power within the executive branch began to surface. The formalization of the PSR role occurred during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono with the issuance of Presidential Regulation No. 17 of 2012. This regulation provided clear definitions of the duties, functions, and financial rights of PSRs, aligning them with Indonesia's broader governance framework. Nevertheless, the implementation of this regulation revealed persistent issues, including ambiguities in role delineation and overlaps with existing ministries. President Joko Widodo further institutionalized the role of PSRs, appointing individuals to address critical issues such as maritime boundary negotiations, interfaith dialogue, and poverty alleviation. For example, Eddy Pratomo, as a PSR for maritime boundaries, operated in parallel with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, raising questions about redundancy and efficiency. The culmination of these developments occurred with the issuance of Presidential Regulation No. 137 of 2024, which expanded the scope of PSRs under the Merah Putih Cabinet.

Currently, Presidential Special Representatives (PSRs) are appointed based on Presidential Decree No. 76/M of 2024. Their primary function is to assist the president by handling specific assignments that fall outside the purview of ministries or government agencies. The reporting structure for PSRs is coordinated through the Secretary of the Cabinet, ensuring direct accountability to the president (Perpres No. 137 of 2024). The PSR role is designed to operate at a ministerial level, granting these representatives financial privileges and support comparable to those of ministers. However, a notable distinction is that PSRs do not receive pension benefits upon completing their term, as stipulated in Article 8 of the regulation. While the creation of PSRs aims to address strategic issues, their roles and responsibilities often intersect with those of established ministries, raising concerns about overlapping functions and potential inefficiencies.

For example, the PSR for Food Security has a mandate that closely aligns with the National Food Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture. Both entities are tasked with coordinating and supervising policies related to food security. Similarly, the PSR for Religious Harmony has overlapping responsibilities with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which implements initiatives such as the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) to promote interfaith understanding. The establishment of PSRs has been met with both support and criticism. Proponents argue that these roles allow the president to address specific challenges more effectively by delegating authority to individuals with specialized expertise. Critics, however, contend that these appointments add layers of bureaucracy and create redundancies that

undermine the efficiency of existing institutions. The financial and operational implications of maintaining PSRs at ministerial levels further fuel debates about their necessity and effectiveness in improving governance outcomes. By examining the roles, structures, and impacts of overlapping authorities in the Merah Putih Cabinet, this literature review highlights the complexities of governance in Indonesia. It underscores the need for a more integrated and streamlined approach to delineate responsibilities, minimize redundancies, and enhance institutional efficiency. The challenges posed by overlapping authorities in the context of the Merah Putih Cabinet provide a critical lens through which governance reforms can be analyzed and addressed.

Then, The Merah Putih Cabinet, established under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka, represents a significant shift in Indonesia's executive structure. The cabinet, organized based on the expertise and capabilities of its ministers, underwent substantial restructuring following the inauguration of the president and vice president for the 2024–2029 period. Presidential Regulation No. 139 of 2024 was issued on October 21, 2024, outlining the duties and functions of the 48 ministries within this administration (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2024).

The structural expansion from 34 to 48 ministries is indicative of the administration's intention to address Indonesia's multifaceted governance challenges. The cabinet now includes ministries focusing on previously underrepresented areas, such as digital communication, micro and small enterprises, and population and family development. While this diversification aims to target specific socio-economic challenges, it has also raised concerns regarding potential overlaps and inefficiencies. Critics argue that an expanded cabinet with overlapping functions could dilute accountability, delay decision-making processes, and increase operational costs.

Each ministry within the Merah Putih Cabinet plays a vital role in addressing Indonesia's development priorities. For instance, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development focuses on enhancing connectivity across the archipelago, while the Ministry of Investment and Downstream Industry aims to strengthen economic growth by fostering foreign investments and promoting value-added industries. Despite the potential benefits, these ministries must work in harmony to prevent duplication of efforts and conflicting mandates. The Merah Putih Cabinet represents a significant expansion of the executive branch, with 48 ministries and seven PSRs. While this structure aims to address Indonesia's complex governance challenges, it has also intensified concerns about overlapping authorities.

### **1. Food Security and the National Food Agency**

One of the most prominent examples of overlapping authorities involves Muhammad Mardiono, the PSR for Food Security. This role mirrors the responsibilities of the National Food Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, which is tasked with coordinating, supervising, and implementing food security policies. According to the National Food Agency's mandate, its functions include overseeing food distribution, ensuring price stability,

and managing food reserves. Similarly, Mardiono's role involves coordinating and monitoring government programs related to food security (Sekretariat Kabinet RI, 2022).

This overlap creates significant inefficiencies. For instance, conflicting directives from the PSR and the National Food Agency can delay decision-making processes and create confusion among stakeholders. Moreover, the duplication of efforts in areas such as food distribution and monitoring exacerbates resource wastage, undermining the government's ability to achieve its food security objectives.

## **2. Religious Harmony and the Ministry of Religious Affairs**

The appointment of Gus Miftah as the PSR for Religious Harmony highlights another critical area of overlap. This role aims to address issues such as intolerance, discrimination, and religious extremism. However, these responsibilities are already encompassed within the Ministry of Religious Affairs' programs, such as the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) and the Religious Harmony Program (KUB).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has a well-established framework for promoting interfaith dialogue and addressing religious tensions, including regular outreach programs and community engagement initiatives. The addition of a PSR in this domain not only duplicates these efforts but also risks creating inconsistencies in messaging and implementation. For example, conflicting approaches to addressing religious tensions could undermine public confidence in the government's commitment to fostering harmony (Antara, 2024).

## **3. Small Business Development and the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs**

Ahmad Ridha Sabana's role as the PSR for Small Business Development, Creative Economy, and Digital Transformation further illustrates the challenges of overlapping authorities. This position overlaps with the mandates of both the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the Ministry of Creative Economy. The Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs is responsible for formulating policies to support small businesses, including access to financing, capacity building, and market expansion. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Creative Economy focuses on promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in sectors such as digital technology and cultural industries. The PSR's involvement in these areas introduces additional layers of bureaucracy, potentially diluting the effectiveness of existing programs. For instance, initiatives to support digital entrepreneurs may encounter delays if responsibilities are divided between the PSR and the relevant ministries. Furthermore, the lack of clear coordination mechanisms can lead to overlapping budget allocations, reducing the overall efficiency of resource utilization.

The overlapping authorities identified in the Merah Putih Cabinet have far-reaching implications for Indonesia's governance framework. At a structural level, the addition of PSRs increases the complexity of the executive branch, making it more challenging to delineate responsibilities and ensure accountability. This complexity is further exacerbated by the absence of clear coordination mechanisms between PSRs and existing ministries.

Operationally, these overlaps hinder the government's ability to deliver services efficiently. Delays in policy implementation, conflicting directives, and resource wastage are among the most visible consequences. Moreover, the public perception of these issues undermines trust in the government's ability to manage its administrative apparatus effectively.

## **B. Public and Policymaker Perceptions of Presidential Special Representatives in the Merah Putih Cabinet**

The introduction of Presidential Special Representatives (PSRs) in the Merah Putih Cabinet under President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka has ignited significant public and political discourse. These positions were designed to address specific strategic issues beyond the capacities of existing ministries. However, the very existence of these roles has triggered debates, with opinions polarized between their potential strategic value and the risks of bureaucratic inefficiency. This section delves into the nuanced perceptions of the public and policymakers regarding PSRs, offering a comprehensive analysis of their implications for governance.

### **1. The role and Expectations of PSRs**

According to Presidential Decree No. 76/M of 2024, seven PSRs were appointed to oversee critical domains, ranging from food security to international trade. The expectations of these positions are multifaceted: they serve as intermediaries between the government and the public, provide policy advice to the president, and undertake diplomatic or representational duties. While these roles were envisioned to bring agility and specialized expertise to governance, they have faced skepticism regarding their effectiveness and relevance.

In principle, PSRs could serve as an innovative governance mechanism, addressing complex challenges that require targeted intervention. For example, the PSR for Food Security, Muhammad Mardiono, is tasked with coordinating and monitoring national food programs. Similarly, Mari Elka Pangestu, appointed as the PSR for International Trade and Multilateral Cooperation, is expected to enhance Indonesia's global economic engagements. However, the practical implementation of these roles has highlighted structural and operational inefficiencies that hinder their intended impact.

### **2. Public Perceptions of PSRs**

Public sentiment towards PSRs reflects a spectrum of opinions, ranging from cautious optimism to outright skepticism. One significant concern is the perceived redundancy of these roles, particularly in areas where existing ministries already have established mandates. The public discourse often frames PSRs as emblematic of a "bloated cabinet," adding unnecessary layers to an already complex governance structure. The notion of inefficiency resonates strongly among critics who view PSRs as an additional financial burden. This perspective is amplified by the economic realities of Indonesia, where budget allocations are scrutinized for their alignment with developmental priorities.

For instance, the public perception of PSRs as redundant is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where citizens often experience delays or inconsistencies in service delivery. Such inefficiencies are attributed to overlapping responsibilities between PSRs and ministries, creating bottlenecks in policy execution. The public also expresses concerns about potential conflicts of interest, particularly when PSRs are seen as political appointees rather than merit-based selections. For example, some appointees' prior involvement in the 2024 presidential campaign has fueled speculation that these roles serve as rewards for political loyalty rather than instruments of governance improvement. This narrative undermines public trust in the government's commitment to transparency and accountability.

### **3. Policymaker Perspectives on PSRs**

Policymakers' views on PSRs are equally divided, reflecting the broader political and administrative dynamics of the Merah Putih Cabinet. Supporters argue that PSRs fill critical gaps in governance, particularly in areas requiring rapid responses or specialized expertise. For instance, Dian Ediana Rae, Executive Chief Supervisor of Banking at OJK, emphasized that the PSR for Economics and Banking does not overlap with existing institutions because its mandate is strategically aligned with national financial priorities (al Ishaqi & Pratama, 2024).

However, critics within policymaking circles highlight the risks of inefficiency and duplication. Adinova Fauri, a researcher at CSIS, observed that the Merah Putih Cabinet's expansive structure complicates policy implementation, particularly at the regional level. The proliferation of roles and the lack of clear coordination mechanisms exacerbate challenges in aligning national and local governance priorities (Safitri & Taher, 2024). Yose Rizal Damuri, Director of CSIS, expressed similar concerns, noting that the cabinet's size increases the risk of coordination breakdowns and delays in decision-making. He argued that overlapping authorities create ambiguity, making it difficult to assign accountability for policy outcomes. This perspective is echoed by public policy expert Trubus Rahadiansyah, who criticized the PSRs for adding layers of bureaucracy without clear value addition (Alinea, 2024; Ridwansyah, 2024).

### **4. Case Analysis: Specific PSR Roles**

#### **a. Food Security (Muhammad Mardiono)**

The PSR for Food Security faces direct overlap with the National Food Agency. While the PSR is tasked with coordinating food security programs, the National Food Agency already performs similar functions, such as policy implementation, monitoring, and price stabilization. This overlap creates redundancies, leading to inefficiencies in program execution and resource allocation.

#### **b. Religious Harmony (Gus Miftah)**

The role of the PSR for Religious Harmony is intended to address issues such as intolerance and extremism. However, these responsibilities overlap with programs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, including the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB). This

duplication risks diluting the effectiveness of both entities, as conflicting approaches may emerge.

#### **c. Small Business Development (Ahmad Ridha Sabana)**

The PSR for Small Business Development faces similar challenges, with overlapping mandates shared by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs and the Ministry of Creative Economy. The lack of delineation between these roles leads to inefficiencies in policy implementation and undermines the overall objective of promoting entrepreneurship.

#### **d. Broader Implications**

The existence of PSRs reflects broader governance challenges in Indonesia, including the need for structural reform and improved coordination mechanisms. While these roles are designed to enhance the president's capacity to address strategic issues, their overlapping mandates with existing ministries highlight systemic inefficiencies.

At a macro level, these inefficiencies contribute to public distrust in government institutions, particularly when the PSRs are perceived as politically motivated appointments. This perception undermines the legitimacy of the executive branch and hampers its ability to deliver effective governance

### **Discussion**

The presence of Presidential Special Representatives (PSRs) in the Merah Putih Cabinet has sparked considerable debate among policymakers and the public, reflecting broader concerns about governance inefficiencies and the complexities of Indonesia's administrative structure. While these roles were envisioned to address specific strategic challenges, their overlapping mandates with existing ministries have exposed critical systemic issues that undermine their intended purpose. Public perception of PSRs is deeply divided; on the one hand, they are seen as mechanisms to provide specialized expertise and enhance the president's ability to address urgent issues. On the other hand, they are criticized for contributing to a "bloated" cabinet structure, adding layers of bureaucracy without clear value addition. This criticism is particularly pronounced in domains where PSRs operate in parallel with ministries, such as food security, religious harmony, and small business development. The PSR for Food Security, for instance, has been tasked with coordinating food programs, a function that overlaps with the National Food Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture. Similarly, the PSR for Religious Harmony mirrors the responsibilities of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which already runs well-established programs like the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB).

These overlaps lead to inefficiencies, delays, and resource wastage, exacerbating public concerns about the government's ability to manage its administrative apparatus effectively (Gaus et al., 2017; Sajida, 2024). Policymakers, too, are divided on the matter. Supporters argue that PSRs bring agility and focused intervention to governance, while critics highlight the risks of inefficiency and redundancy, particularly in a cabinet that has expanded to 48 ministries. These concerns are compounded by the absence of clear coordination mechanisms and

performance evaluation frameworks, making it difficult to assess the actual contributions of PSRs. To address these challenges, it is imperative for the government to establish clear role delineations, implement formalized collaboration channels, and streamline the cabinet structure to ensure that the roles of PSRs are complementary rather than duplicative. Moreover, enhancing transparency and accountability in the appointment process could help rebuild public trust and demonstrate the government's commitment to effective governance (Kosack & Fung, 2014; Sajida et al., 2023). By addressing these systemic inefficiencies, the government can optimize its administrative framework, align its policies with national priorities, and ensure that the contributions of PSRs genuinely enhance Indonesia's governance outcomes.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the complexity and challenges associated with the introduction of Presidential Special Representatives (PSRs) in Indonesia's governance framework, particularly within the Merah Putih Cabinet. While PSRs were designed to address strategic issues requiring specialized attention, their overlapping mandates with existing ministries underscore systemic inefficiencies and ambiguities in role delineation. These overlaps, coupled with public and policymaker concerns about transparency and accountability, reveal the need for structural reforms to optimize governance. The analysis suggests that clear role definitions, improved coordination mechanisms, and regular performance evaluations are essential to ensuring that PSRs contribute positively to administrative efficiency and policy implementation. However, this study is not without limitations. The analysis relies heavily on secondary data, including government regulations and public statements, which may not fully capture the internal dynamics of PSR operations or the perspectives of those directly involved. Future research should incorporate primary data, such as interviews with policymakers, PSRs, and ministry officials, to provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with these roles. Additionally, comparative studies examining similar positions in other countries could offer valuable insights into best practices and alternative models for addressing overlapping authorities. By addressing these gaps, future research can further inform efforts to enhance governance effectiveness and accountability in Indonesia.

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