

Border Security Governance in Transition: The Uneven Impact of Ibu Kota Negara on West and North Kalimantan Borderlands

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Abstract

Indonesia's decision to relocate its national capital to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) represents a major reconfiguration of state space with significant implications for border governance and the enactment of sovereignty. Although previous studies have largely emphasized the urban and economic dimensions of the relocation, limited attention has been given to how the IKN project reshapes border security governance and why its effects vary across different frontier regions. Drawing on critical geopolitics, border studies, and the security–development nexus, this study compares two segments of the Kalimantan–Malaysia border: West Kalimantan, encompassing Entikong, Aruk, and Badau, and North Kalimantan, encompassing Sebatik and Nunukan, before and after the IKN decision. The study employed qualitative content and discourse analysis of official documents, with the state's border security strategy and enactment of sovereignty serving as the units of analysis. The findings demonstrate that the uniform, Indonesia-centric geopolitical reframing associated with IKN is enacted unevenly across the frontier. West Kalimantan emerges as a relatively mature yet neglected corridor of border formalization, whereas North

Kalimantan constitutes a geographically proximate but underdeveloped frontier undergoing active reterritorialization. This divergence reveals a spatially differentiated gap between the governance and operational management of border security. The study concludes that capital relocation should not be interpreted as a uniform state-building project, as its security and territorial effects are mediated by distinct historical, infrastructural, and geopolitical conditions across border regions. These findings contribute to critical geopolitical and border studies by demonstrating how national spatial restructuring produces differentiated forms of sovereignty and border security governance.

Keywords: Border Security Governance; Ibu Kota Nusantara; Kalimantan Borderlands; Security–Development Nexus; Sovereignty

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's border areas have long been positioned at the margins of the state, despite their strategic role as gateways for mobility, trade, and security. As an archipelagic country with extensive land and maritime boundaries, Indonesia faces persistent challenges in managing its border regions. These challenges are characterized by uneven development, limited infrastructure, weak public service provision, and fragmented institutional coordination (Newman, 2006; Scott, 2012). In many cases, border areas are not only geographically distant from the national center but are also politically and economically marginalized within national development priorities. As a result, disparities between central and peripheral regions remain significant. Recent studies have further emphasized that border marginalization in Southeast Asia is not only infrastructural but also institutional, reflecting uneven state capacity and governance fragmentation (Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Horstmann & Wadley, 2006; Jones, 2012).

These conditions are particularly evident in Kalimantan's land borders with Malaysia, especially in regions such as Nunukan, Entikong, and Sebatik. In these areas, everyday life is shaped by a combination of formal and informal cross-border interactions. Local communities are often dependent on cross-border trade, labor mobility, and kinship networks that extend beyond national boundaries (Puryanti, 2019). In some cases, stronger economic linkages are established with neighboring Malaysian regions than with domestic markets in Indonesia (Eilenberg, 2012; Paul et al., 2026). This situation reflects a condition

where local economic practices are not fully aligned with national economic systems. As a result, a gap is created between formal state sovereignty and the lived realities of border communities. Similar dynamics have been observed in other Southeast Asian borderlands, where cross-border economies often operate beyond formal state control and challenge conventional notions of sovereignty (Eilenberg, 2012; Walker, 1999).

In response to these challenges, border areas have gradually been reframed by the Indonesian government as the “front porch” (beranda depan) of the nation. Through this framing, border regions are expected to function as spaces where sovereignty, national identity, and state presence are clearly demonstrated. Various policy initiatives have been introduced to support this transformation, including infrastructure development, institutional strengthening, and improved coordination among agencies. In particular, the establishment of Pos Lintas Batas Negara (PLBN) has been promoted as a key instrument for managing cross-border activities (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan, 2026). These initiatives are intended to enhance both security and welfare in border areas. However, their effectiveness has remained uneven across different regions.

The development of PLBNs in locations such as Entikong, Badau, and Aruk has been widely presented as a symbol of state presence and modernization. These facilities are not only designed to regulate cross-border movement, but are also used to demonstrate national authority in border regions. In addition, border areas have been identified as priority regions in national development plans, with increased attention given to infrastructure investment and economic development (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan, 2023). Despite these efforts, structural challenges continue to be observed in many border areas. Unequal access to infrastructure, limited economic opportunities, and weak local institutional capacity remain persistent issues (Badan Strategi Kebijakan Luar Negeri, 2021; Seran et al., 2025).

A new dimension has been introduced through the decision to relocate Indonesia’s capital from Jakarta to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) in East Kalimantan. This policy has been officially framed as a response to environmental challenges in Jakarta, including flooding, land subsidence, and overpopulation. At the same time, the relocation has also been justified as a strategy to promote more balanced and Indonesia-centric development. Through this policy, the national center is expected to be shifted closer to eastern regions, including Kalimantan (Wibowo & Hadi, 2024). This shift is considered to have significant implications

for regional development and governance. As a result, changes in spatial and institutional arrangements are expected to occur. Recent scholarship has also highlighted that IKN represents not only an urban development initiative but a broader geopolitical strategy aimed at redistributing national power, reconfiguring spatial hierarchies, and strengthening state control over resource-rich regions (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Bachechi, 2024; Hudalah, 2023).

Beyond its administrative objectives, the relocation of the capital can also be understood as a broader spatial and political transformation. By relocating the center of government to Kalimantan, a new spatial configuration of the state is being constructed. In this context, border areas that were previously considered peripheral may be repositioned as more strategically important regions. This transformation is likely to influence how border areas are perceived, governed, and managed within national policy frameworks. At the same time, new forms of connectivity and infrastructure development are expected to link border regions more closely with the national center.

A growing body of literature has examined the implications of IKN from various perspectives. Environmental impacts such as deforestation, land-use change, and ecological risks have been widely discussed (Syaban & Appiah-Opoku, 2024). In addition, studies on urban planning and governance have highlighted challenges related to funding, institutional capacity, and long-term sustainability (Hudalah, 2023; Prabowo & Pepinsky, 2026). These studies have provided important insights into the internal dynamics of IKN as a development project. However, limited attention has been given to its implications for border governance and security. While recent studies have expanded discussions on IKN's developmental and environmental dimensions, its intersection with border security governance remains largely underexplored in contemporary scholarship.

At the same time, research on Indonesia's border regions has focused on cross-border interactions, local governance challenges, and the role of infrastructure development in shaping border dynamics (Badan Strategi Kebijakan Luar Negeri, 2021; Makmur, 2025). These studies have highlighted the complexity of border life and the limitations of state-led development efforts. However, the impact of major national transformations, such as capital relocation, has rarely been incorporated into these analyses. As a result, the relationship between IKN and border governance has not been sufficiently examined. This gap suggests the need for a more integrated analytical approach. It also suggests a comparative question,

since existing accounts tend to treat the Kalimantan frontier as a single space and leave unexamined why the effects of capital relocation vary from one border segment to another.

This gap is particularly significant because capital relocation is not only an administrative decision, but also a geopolitical process that reshapes national space. Through this process, the relationship between the center and the periphery is likely to be redefined. Border regions may be repositioned within national development and security agendas. At the same time, new forms of governance and policy coordination may be introduced. These changes are expected to influence both policy design and implementation in border areas. Therefore, the implications of IKN for border governance need to be examined more systematically.

In International Relations, border security governance is generally understood as the institutional and policy frameworks through which borders are managed and regulated. In contrast, border security management refers to the operational practices implemented on the ground. These two dimensions are closely related, as governance provides the structure, while management reflects implementation. Understanding this distinction is important for analyzing how policies are translated into practice in border areas. It also helps clarify the analytical focus of this study.

This study draws on critical geopolitics, border studies, and the security-development nexus as analytical frameworks. Through these perspectives, the transformation of border governance in the context of IKN is examined. Particular attention is given to how border areas are repositioned, how governance arrangements are reconfigured, and how development and security objectives are combined in border management practices. These frameworks provide a basis for analyzing both structural and operational dimensions of border governance. In addition, they allow for a more comprehensive understanding of policy transformations.

Accordingly, this article asks how, and why differently, the geopolitical reframing of national space through IKN reshapes border security governance and the enactment of sovereignty along the Kalimantan-Malaysia frontier. It pursues three questions: how the IKN reframing is translated into border-security governance strategies; why these strategies produce divergent bordering and security-development configurations in West Kalimantan and North Kalimantan; and what this divergence reveals about the relationship between the governance of border security and its operational management. By comparing two frontier

segments rather than treating Kalimantan as a single case, the study moves from description toward an account of why a uniform national strategy yields uneven territorial outcomes, contributing to debates on sovereignty, bordering, and the security-development nexus in International Relations. The article argues that this uniform reframing is enacted unevenly, appearing as corridor consolidation in West Kalimantan and as accelerated reterritorialization in North Kalimantan. The remainder of the article develops the conceptual framework, sets out the comparative document-based method, presents the two-segment analysis, and draws out its theoretical implications for border security governance.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs three main conceptual approaches as analytical tools, namely critical geopolitics, border studies, and the security-development nexus. These concepts are used to analyze how border areas are redefined, governed, and managed within Indonesia's policy framework, particularly in the context of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN). In International Relations, borders are no longer understood solely as fixed territorial lines, but as dynamic spaces shaped by political, social, and economic processes. Consequently, border governance is examined as a multidimensional process involving policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, and operational practices. By integrating these conceptual approaches, this study aims to capture both structural transformations and everyday practices of border governance, while also situating Indonesia's experience within broader debates in contemporary International Relations. Figure 1 summarizes how these three approaches interrelate in analyzing the transformation of border governance in the IKN context.

Critical Geopolitics and the Reframing of National Space

Critical geopolitics is used to understand how geopolitical ideas are constructed, represented, and mobilized through political discourse. According to Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996), geopolitics is not a neutral or objective description of space, but is socially and politically produced through narratives and representations. In this perspective, the state plays a central role in defining which regions are considered strategic, peripheral, or central (Elden, 2013; Sack, 1986). These classifications are not fixed, but are continuously shaped by political interests and policy agendas.

More recent scholarship further emphasizes that geopolitical narratives are actively used by states to legitimize large-scale spatial transformations, including capital relocation and infrastructure expansion (Dodds, 2019; Hudalah, 2023). In this sense, policies such as

the relocation of Indonesia's capital to IKN can be interpreted as both material and discursive projects that aim to reshape national spatial hierarchies. The shift from a Java-centric to an Indonesia-centric development model reflects a broader effort to redistribute political and economic power across regions. Consequently, Kalimantan is increasingly framed as a new center of governance, while border areas within the island are repositioned as strategically significant spaces within national policy agendas.

In this study, critical geopolitics is applied as a tool of analysis to examine how the Indonesian government constructs and disseminates spatial narratives through IKN-related policies. Particular attention is given to how border regions are reframed from peripheral zones into strategic corridors within national development and security agendas. This approach allows for an analysis of how discourse shapes both policy priorities and spatial governance practices, as well as how such narratives influence the reconfiguration of state-periphery relations.

Bordering, Ordering, and Othering in Border Governance

Border studies provide a framework for understanding borders as dynamic and socially constructed processes rather than static territorial lines (Noak et al., 2024; Paasi, 2022). According to Henk van Houtum and Ton van Naerssen (2002), borders are produced through three interrelated processes: bordering, ordering, and othering. Bordering refers to the construction and reinforcement of boundaries, both physically and symbolically. Ordering involves the regulation of movement across borders through institutions, rules, and administrative procedures. Othering refers to the classification of individuals and activities as belonging either inside or outside the state, often based on legal, political, or security criteria.

Recent studies demonstrate that these processes are increasingly shaped by state-led infrastructure development, digital governance systems, and administrative technologies that extend state control beyond physical boundaries (Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Eilenberg, 2016). In Southeast Asia, border governance often reflects a hybrid system where formal state regulation coexists with informal cross-border practices. Local communities frequently engage in economic and social activities that transcend national borders, thereby challenging rigid state-centric definitions of legality and sovereignty.

In the Indonesian context, these processes are evident in the development of Pos Lintas Batas Negara (PLBN), as well as in the regulation of cross-border trade and mobility.

Through these mechanisms, the state seeks to strengthen territorial control while managing flows of people and goods. However, such practices may also marginalize informal economic activities that are central to local livelihoods and survival strategies. In this study, the concepts of bordering, ordering, and othering are used to analyze how infrastructure development, institutional arrangements, and administrative procedures shape border governance practices, as well as how tensions emerge between state regulations and local realities in border regions.

The Security-Development Nexus in Border Areas

The security-development nexus is used to explain the growing interconnection between development policies and security objectives in contemporary governance. According to Stern and Öjendal (2010), development and security are increasingly intertwined, particularly in regions perceived as vulnerable, peripheral, or strategically important. In this framework, development initiatives are often employed as instruments to enhance security, while security is considered a prerequisite for sustainable development.

More recent scholarship suggests that this nexus has become a central feature of governance in developing countries, particularly in frontier and border regions where state presence is uneven (Chandler, 2017; Denney, 2014; Eilenberg, 2014). Contemporary studies further argue that the security-development nexus has evolved into a governance approach that integrates infrastructure expansion, economic planning, and territorial control as part of broader state-building strategies (Berg & Shearing, 2020; Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). In this context, development is not only aimed at improving welfare but also at stabilizing and securing strategically important regions.

In Indonesia, this approach is reflected in border development policies that combine welfare-oriented programs with security objectives, particularly through infrastructure expansion, PLBN development, and inter-agency coordination (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan, 2026). The integration of border areas into national development strategies, especially in the context of IKN, reinforces the role of development as a tool for strengthening state presence and territorial control.

However, scholars have also highlighted potential limitations of the security-development nexus. When development policies are primarily driven by security concerns, issues related to social inclusion, local participation, and human security may be overlooked (Permadi et al., 2025; Syafi'i et al., 2025; Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007; Uyun et al., 2025).

This can lead to imbalances in policy outcomes, where state-centric priorities dominate over community needs. In the context of IKN, this dynamic becomes particularly relevant as border areas are increasingly framed as both development corridors and strategic security zones.

In this study, the security-development nexus is applied to analyze how development initiatives in border areas are linked to security objectives, and how this relationship shapes policy priorities and governance practices. This framework also enables the identification of potential trade-offs between state security agendas and the socio-economic needs of local populations.

Integrating Governance and Management in Border Analysis

In order to provide a more comprehensive analytical framework, this study distinguishes between border security governance and border security management. Border security governance refers to the institutional arrangements, policy frameworks, and coordination mechanisms through which border security is organized at the strategic level. In contrast, border security management refers to the operational practices implemented on the ground, including inspections, patrols, and the regulation of cross-border flows.

This distinction highlights the relationship between policy design and implementation, which is essential for understanding the effectiveness of border governance. While governance provides the structural framework, management reflects how policies are enacted in practice. Previous studies have shown that gaps between governance and management are common challenges in border regions, particularly in developing countries where institutional capacity may be uneven (Jones, 2016).

In the Indonesian context, governance is reflected in national policies, development plans, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms, while management is observed in the daily operation of border control facilities such as PLBN. In the context of IKN, changes in governance structures may not always be accompanied by improvements in operational capacity. Therefore, this study integrates both governance and management perspectives to examine how policy transformations are translated into practice.

By combining these conceptual approaches, this study develops a multidimensional analytical framework that captures the interaction between spatial narratives, institutional arrangements, and operational practices. This integrated framework enables a more comprehensive analysis of how border governance is transformed in the context of IKN,

while also contributing to broader discussions on state transformation, spatial politics, and border governance in International Relations.

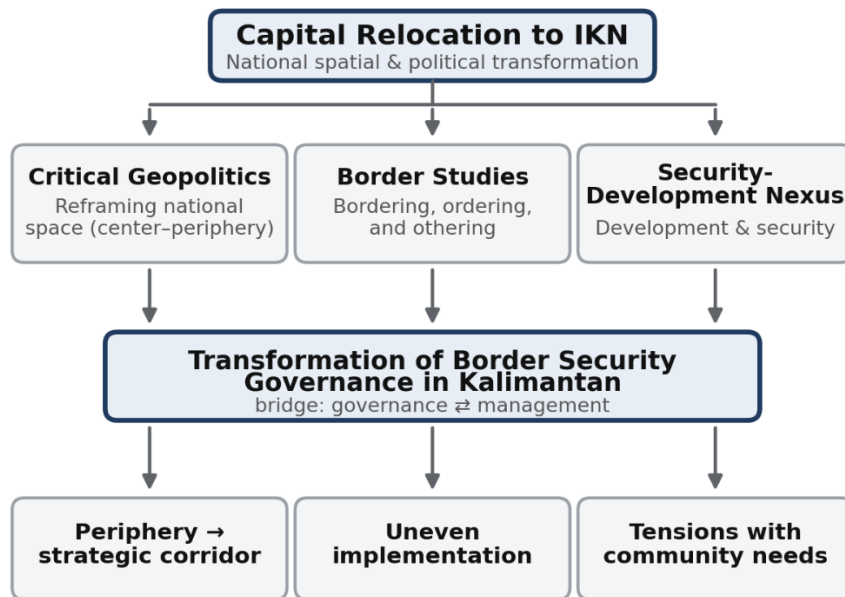


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Ó Tuathail (1996), van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002), and Stern and Öjendal (2010).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine how the relocation of Indonesia's capital to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) influences border security governance and management. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as the study focuses on understanding policy processes, institutional arrangements, and spatial transformations rather than measuring numerical variables. This approach enables an in-depth analysis of complex interactions between development policies and security practices in border areas.

The research is designed as a comparative qualitative case study. IKN is treated as a central policy transformation whose effects are traced across two segments of the Kalimantan-Malaysia frontier, West Kalimantan and North Kalimantan, before and after the 2022 relocation decision. Comparing two segments within the same national policy setting holds the national strategy constant while allowing the study to examine why its territorial enactment varies, rather than describing a single case. This design provides analytical leverage on the relationship between spatial restructuring and border governance.

The comparison is structured around two frontier segments. West Kalimantan is represented by the established crossings of Entikong, Aruk, and Badau; North Kalimantan by Sebatik and Nunukan. The two segments are held comparable through a symmetric documentary backbone, since the same national instruments, notably Presidential Regulation No. 118 of 2022 and BNPP planning materials, specify priority locations (Lokpri), National Strategic Border Areas (PKSN), outstanding boundary segments (OBP), and border-post placement for both. Region-specific studies are used as illustrative rather than foundational evidence, and the analysis rests primarily on the documentary corpus.

Data for this study are primarily collected through document analysis. The data sources comprise three categories of official documents, complemented by secondary academic literature (journal articles, books, and policy reports). Document-based research is particularly suitable for this study as it focuses on policy frameworks and institutional arrangements rather than individual-level perceptions.

The primary corpus analyzed consists of: (1) statutes and regulations on the capital relocation, in particular Law No. 3 of 2022 on the State Capital (Republik Indonesia, 2022b) and its amendment, Law No. 21 of 2023; (2) presidential and ministerial regulations on cross-border infrastructure, particularly those governing the Integrated National Border Posts (Pos Lintas Batas Negara/PLBN); and (3) border-management documents issued by the National Border Management Agency (BNPP), including its Grand Design for the Management of State Border Areas 2011-2025 and the corresponding Rencana Induk.

The data collection process is conducted by systematically selecting documents based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the research objectives. Key themes such as border governance, infrastructure development, security policy, and institutional coordination are identified and used to organize the data. To ensure analytical rigor, the study prioritizes official publications and peer-reviewed academic sources.

The data are analyzed using qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis is used to identify patterns in policy priorities, institutional arrangements, and development programs related to border areas (Saldaña, 2016). Meanwhile, discourse analysis is applied to examine how border regions are framed in official narratives, particularly in relation to development and security, drawing on approaches developed by Fairclough (2010). These methods are closely aligned with the study's use of critical

geopolitics, as they allow for the examination of how spatial narratives are constructed and mobilized in policy discourse. The resulting coding scheme is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Coding scheme applied in the analysis

Category	Description	Example indicators in documents
Spatial reframing	Repositioning border areas from periphery to strategic space	'beranda depan'; center-periphery; Indonesia-centric
Strategic corridors & connectivity	Integration of borders into corridor-based development and IKN linkage	'koridor pertumbuhan/pemerataan'; Lokpri; PKSN; connectivity
Infrastructure & PLBN	Border posts and physical infrastructure as symbols of state presence	PLBN; roads; 'wajah negara'
Security-development integration	Combining welfare programmes with security and territorial control	'keamanan dan kesejahteraan'; defense buffer
Governance-management gap	Coordination, institutional capacity, and uneven implementation	inter-agency coordination; 'rendahnya konektivitas'; uneven
Community tensions / othering	Reclassification of informal practices; community exclusion	informal cross-border trade; displacement; indigenous land

Source: Authors' construction, developed from the study's conceptual framework and Saldaña (2016).

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, this study employs a form of source triangulation by comparing multiple types of documents, including policy texts, institutional reports, and academic literature. This approach helps reduce potential bias and ensures a more comprehensive understanding of border governance dynamics.

Through this methodological approach, the study examines how border areas are repositioned within Indonesia's governance framework in the context of IKN. It analyzes the interaction between development policies and security objectives, as well as the relationship between governance structures and operational practices. By combining document analysis with discourse-oriented interpretation, this study provides a systematic and theoretically grounded analysis of border transformation in Indonesia.

RESULTS

TRANSFORMING BORDER GOVERNANCE IN THE IKN ERA

Reconfiguring Border Spaces in Kalimantan

This section presents the main findings of the study on the transformation of border security governance in the context of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN). Drawing on qualitative

content analysis and discourse analysis, the findings are organized around recurring policy themes that appear across national planning documents, institutional reports, and academic sources. Particular attention is given to how border areas are represented in official narratives, how governance priorities are restructured, and how these changes are linked to broader security and development agendas. In line with the analytical framework outlined earlier, the discussion focuses on the relationship between spatial narratives, institutional arrangements, and implementation practices.

Reframing National Space

The analysis of policy documents shows that IKN has been discursively framed as more than an administrative relocation project. In official narratives, Jakarta is consistently represented as a space marked by environmental degradation, congestion, and infrastructural pressure, while Kalimantan is constructed as a more balanced, strategic, and future-oriented alternative (Bachechi, 2024). Through this contrast, a shift from a Java-centric model toward a more Indonesia-centric spatial configuration is promoted. This narrative is repeatedly reflected in planning documents that emphasize spatial redistribution, equitable development, and stronger national integration. As a result, a new geopolitical imagination of national space is being produced through the IKN agenda. This official framing is reproduced in national and international reporting, which depicts Jakarta as a sinking, congested, and environmentally stressed city while presenting the relocation as a path toward more balanced, Indonesia-centric development beyond Java (Moeller et al., 2026). This objective is codified in the capital-relocation law itself, which lists among its stated aims changing the orientation of national development “from Java-centric to Indonesia-centric” (Republik Indonesia, 2022b).

This spatial reframing also affects how border areas in Kalimantan are positioned within national policy. The findings indicate that border areas are no longer described only as remote, underdeveloped, or peripheral locations. Instead, they are increasingly represented as strategically important spaces that support connectivity, national integration, and territorial presence. This shift can be observed in the growing inclusion of border areas within development planning, infrastructure priorities, and state-led coordination mechanisms. In this sense, border areas are being repositioned not simply as outer edges of the state, but as spaces with expanding political and developmental significance. As a result, their role within Indonesia’s spatial and governance framework is being redefined. This shift is stated

explicitly in official planning: the Grand Design frames its objective as changing the position of border areas from the nation's "backyard" (beranda belakang negara) into its "front porch" (beranda depan negara), with "a strategic role in driving regional and national economic development" (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan, 2011).

At the same time, the findings suggest that this new spatial narrative is not implemented evenly across all border areas. Planning frameworks and government reports indicate that border areas are being incorporated into broader development strategies associated with IKN, particularly through infrastructure planning and regional connectivity programs (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan, 2026). However, the extent to which these priorities are translated into actual development remains uneven due to differences in local capacity, institutional coordination, and access to resources. In some areas, stronger policy attention and infrastructure investment can be observed, while in others the effects remain limited. This pattern shows that the discursive elevation of border areas does not automatically produce equal transformation on the ground.

The main shifts identified in this study are summarized in Table 2, which outlines how border governance has been reoriented in the context of IKN. Although the transition is still ongoing, the comparison helps clarify the broader direction of policy change. In particular, it shows that border areas are increasingly being linked to strategic planning, development corridors, and state-centered governance objectives. The table should therefore be read not as a fixed division between two periods, but as an analytical summary of an evolving policy transformation.

It should be noted that several of the elements summarized here—most notably the development of PLBNs and the 'front porch' (beranda depan) framing of border regions—predate the 2022 decision to relocate the capital. The 'Before/After IKN' comparison should therefore be read as an analytical periodization rather than a strict causal claim: IKN is interpreted as consolidating, reorienting, and accelerating pre-existing trajectories of border governance rather than initiating them from scratch.

Table 2. Transformation of Border Governance in the IKN Era

Aspect	Before IKN	After IKN
Spatial Position	Border areas were positioned as peripheral and marginal within national development.	Border areas are increasingly discursively repositioned as strategic spaces within national spatial and development frameworks.
Policy Orientation	Governance focused primarily on territorial control and state security.	Governance reflects an integrated security-development approach, combining control with development objectives.
Infrastructure Development	Infrastructure was limited, uneven, and weakly connected.	Infrastructure is expanded through PLBN, connectivity networks, and corridor-based development strategies.
Economic Integration	Economic activities were largely informal and weakly integrated into national systems.	Border areas are increasingly incorporated into formal economic networks and cross-border development systems.
Governance Structure	Institutional coordination was fragmented across multiple agencies.	Governance is becoming more integrated, with strengthened inter-agency coordination and policy alignment.
Role of Border Areas	Border areas were treated as outer edges or backyards of the state.	Border areas are framed as gateways, strategic corridors, and symbols of state presence and territorial integration.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the document analysis

Emerging Strategic Corridors

The analysis of policy documents indicates that strategic corridors have been consistently framed as key instruments for integrating border areas into broader national and regional networks. Within official planning frameworks, these corridors are constructed not only as physical infrastructure systems, but also as strategic mechanisms that connect economic activities, governance priorities, and territorial integration. In the context of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), border areas in Kalimantan are increasingly positioned within these corridor-based development strategies. This positioning is reflected in policy narratives that emphasize connectivity between IKN and border districts such as Nunukan and Entikong (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan, 2024). As a result, border areas are no longer treated as isolated or peripheral spaces, but as integral components of national development configurations. The Rencana Induk itself operationalizes this through “a growth-corridor and equity-corridor approach based on island regions” (Republik Indonesia, 2022a).

This corridor-based approach is further supported by the expansion of infrastructure projects, including road networks, port development, and logistics systems. These initiatives are designed to facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people across regions, while also strengthening economic linkages between border areas and the national center. In

addition, development programs aimed at promoting trade, investment, and regional competitiveness have been introduced in selected border areas. Through these measures, border areas are increasingly incorporated into both national and cross-border economic systems. This reflects a broader shift in policy orientation toward connectivity-driven development.

However, the findings also show that the implementation of corridor development remains uneven across border areas. Infrastructure expansion tends to be concentrated in regions that are already relatively accessible or economically active, while more remote areas continue to experience limited development. In addition, variations in local institutional capacity and resource availability affect the extent to which these policies can be effectively implemented. As a result, some border areas are more fully integrated into corridor systems, while others remain marginal within the same policy framework. This uneven pattern highlights the gap between policy narratives that emphasize integration and the realities of differentiated development outcomes. Therefore, corridor-based development should be understood not only as a strategy of spatial integration but also as a process that reproduces uneven governance dynamics across border areas. This gap is acknowledged in the plan itself, which points to “the still-low connectivity and transport-infrastructure services ... in Priority Location (Lokpri) sub-districts and National Strategic Border Areas (PKSN)” (Republik Indonesia, 2022a).

Infrastructure Expansion and PLBN Development

The analysis shows that infrastructure expansion has been positioned as a central component of border governance in the context of IKN. Policy documents consistently emphasize the development and upgrading of Pos Lintas Batas Negara (PLBN) as key instruments for regulating cross-border movement and strengthening state presence in border areas (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan, 2026; Fauzan, 2024). These facilities are not only designed to manage the movement of people and goods but are also framed as symbols of sovereignty and territorial control. In this sense, PLBN development can be understood as a process through which physical boundaries are reinforced and institutionalized. As a result, border governance is increasingly materialized through infrastructure-based interventions. This sovereignty framing is articulated explicitly in official statements: in inaugurating a new set of integrated PLBNs in 2024, President Joko Widodo

characterized the border posts as 'the face' of the nation and as buffer zones for national defense (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2024; Tempo, 2024).

In addition to physical infrastructure, the findings indicate that administrative and institutional mechanisms have also been strengthened alongside PLBN development. Standardized procedures, digital monitoring systems, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms have been introduced to regulate cross-border activities more systematically. These measures are intended to improve efficiency, enhance surveillance capacity, and ensure greater control over border flows. Through these developments, border governance is not only enforced physically but also operationalized through administrative and regulatory systems.

Beyond PLBN, infrastructure expansion also includes the development of roads, bridges, and public facilities aimed at improving accessibility and supporting economic activities in border areas. In some locations, improved infrastructure has facilitated increased mobility and economic interaction, particularly in areas with existing cross-border linkages. However, the findings also show that these outcomes are not evenly distributed. In more remote or less developed areas, geographical constraints and limited local capacity continue to restrict the effectiveness of infrastructure projects.

Border Development Programs

The findings further indicate that border areas have been increasingly designated as priority zones within national development strategies. Policy documents show that a range of programs has been implemented to improve economic conditions, public services, and institutional capacity in border areas (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan, 2023). These programs include support for small-scale enterprises, agricultural development, and the provision of education and health services. Through these initiatives, border development is framed as an integral component of national policy aimed at reducing regional disparities and enhancing welfare.

At the same time, economic initiatives have been introduced to reduce dependence on informal cross-border activities. These include market development programs, financial assistance schemes, and capacity-building initiatives for local communities. Institutional strengthening efforts have also been implemented to improve governance and service delivery at the local level. However, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of these programs varies significantly across different border areas. While some regions have

experienced measurable improvements, others continue to face structural challenges related to limited resources and institutional capacity.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that coordination among institutions remains a persistent challenge in the implementation of border development programs. Multiple government agencies are involved in planning and executing these initiatives, often leading to overlapping responsibilities and fragmented governance structures. Differences in institutional priorities and resource allocation further complicate coordination efforts. In some cases, coordination mechanisms are not sufficiently developed to ensure effective implementation on the ground. As a result, development programs do not always achieve their intended outcomes. This highlights the complexity of governance arrangements in border areas, where multiple actors operate within overlapping policy frameworks.

Divergent Frontiers: West and North Kalimantan Compared

Reading the frontier as a single space obscures how unevenly the IKN reframing is enacted. Comparing West and North Kalimantan across the pre- and post-IKN periods reveals two distinct configurations of bordering and sovereignty, summarized in Table 3.

In West Kalimantan, state presence was already materialized before IKN through the integrated posts at Entikong, Aruk, and Badau, operational since 2016 and 2017, while unresolved boundary segments (OBP) at Jagoi Babang and Bengkayang kept sovereignty an active and contested matter (Bioktava, 2026; Republik Indonesia, 2022a). After the relocation, this segment is folded into the connectivity narrative, yet formal consolidation outpaces welfare: governance disparities and an erosion of local loyalty persist despite a dense institutional apparatus (Seran et al., 2025), and formalization reconfigures rather than eliminates informal crossings (Fauzan, 2024). Here the gap between governance and management takes the form of institutional density without commensurate legitimacy.

North Kalimantan presents the opposite configuration. Before IKN, and indeed absent from the 2011 Grand Design because the province was established only in 2012, its border was comparatively porous and kinship-based, most visibly on the split island of Sebatik (Puryanti, 2019). After IKN, proximity to the new capital raises the segment's strategic salience: it is written into the connectivity plan through posts such as Long Midang, Long Nawang, Labang, and Sei Nyamuk (Peraturan Presiden No. 118 Tahun 2022, p. 38), and the state actively reterritorializes a previously fluid space (Puryanti, 2019). Yet reterritorialization outpaces infrastructure, as acute service deficits push residents toward

Malaysia (Makmur, 2025). Here the gap takes the form of tightened territorial claims without the material capacity to sustain them.

The contrast is not one of more or less state presence but of two modes of enacting sovereignty. Unresolved boundary segments persist along both the West Kalimantan-Sarawak and North Kalimantan-Sabah lines, so sovereignty remains contested across the frontier (Bioktava, 2026); what differs is the institutional context in which that contestation unfolds. West Kalimantan shows sovereignty materialized yet hollowed by neglect; North Kalimantan shows sovereignty asserted faster than it can be built. That a single, uniform reframing produces these opposite tensions indicates that the security-development nexus is not applied evenly but refracted through pre-existing bordering regimes. Capital relocation, in this reading, does not standardize the frontier so much as differentiate it.

Table 3. Comparative configuration of bordering and sovereignty, West and North Kalimantan.

	Before IKN	After IKN
West Kalimantan (Entikong, Aruk, Badau)	Established integrated posts (2016-2017); unresolved boundary segments (OBP); formal control alongside informal crossings	Folded into IKN connectivity; formal consolidation outpaces welfare; governance disparities and eroded local loyalty; sovereignty materialized but neglected
North Kalimantan (Sebatik, Nunukan)	Porous, kinship-based border; absent from 2011 Grand Design (province created 2012); informal cross-border economy	Raised strategic salience near IKN; active reterritorialization; connectivity posts planned; infrastructure deficit; sovereignty asserted but under-built

Source: Authors' analysis of Perpres No. 118/2022, BNPP materials, and region-specific studies.

DISCUSSION

A number of limitations should be acknowledged. This study relies exclusively on document analysis and does not include fieldwork, interviews, or direct observation in border areas. Its findings therefore concern how border governance is framed and structured at the level of policy discourse and institutional design, rather than how policies are experienced by border communities in practice. Claims regarding the everyday needs and lived realities of border populations are accordingly interpretive and require corroboration through future empirical, community-level research. Moreover, because several border-development initiatives predate the IKN decision, this study interprets IKN as a reorienting and accelerating factor rather than the sole cause of the transformations observed. A further

limitation concerns the comparison itself: the secondary literature available for the two segments is uneven in kind, with North Kalimantan documented more through community-level studies and West Kalimantan more through governance and policy analyses. The comparison therefore rests primarily on the symmetric documentary corpus, with region-specific studies used only to illustrate.

Reframing Space through Critical Geopolitics

The findings of this study suggest that the relocation of Indonesia's capital to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) can be understood as a geopolitical project that actively reconfigures national spatial hierarchies. Rather than being limited to administrative restructuring, IKN is discursively constructed as a strategy to redistribute political and economic centrality beyond Java. Through this process, Kalimantan is positioned as a new center of governance, while border areas are simultaneously reframed as spaces of strategic importance within national development agendas. This transformation reflects the central concern of critical geopolitics, where spatial meanings are produced through political narratives and policy discourse. As a result, the repositioning of border areas is not merely a consequence of development planning, but a reflection of broader efforts to reshape the spatial imagination of the Indonesian state.

At the same time, the findings indicate that this spatial transformation remains uneven and contested in practice. While border areas are increasingly represented as strategic and integrated spaces, the extent to which these representations are realized varies across different local contexts. This suggests that geopolitical narratives do not operate in a uniform manner, but are mediated by institutional capacity, resource distribution, and local conditions. In this sense, the IKN project highlights the gap between discursive constructions of space and their material implementation. Therefore, the transformation of border areas should be understood as an ongoing process shaped by both policy narratives and governance realities. This unevenness becomes clearest when the frontier is disaggregated: the Indonesia-centric reframing is enacted as corridor consolidation in West Kalimantan but as accelerated reterritorialization in North Kalimantan.

Bordering, Ordering, and Othering

The transformation of border governance observed in this study can also be interpreted through the processes of bordering, ordering, and othering. Infrastructure expansion, particularly through the development of PLBN and connectivity networks,

reflects an intensification of bordering practices in which territorial boundaries are materially reinforced. At the same time, the introduction of standardized procedures, digital systems, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms represents forms of ordering that regulate the movement of people and goods across borders. Through these processes, border governance is increasingly institutionalized and systematized within state-led frameworks.

However, these developments also reveal the persistence of othering processes in border areas. Informal cross-border practices that have long been embedded in local livelihoods are often reclassified within formal regulatory frameworks, leading to their marginalization. This creates tensions between state-defined legality and the everyday socio-economic practices of border communities. The findings suggest that border governance is not solely a technical or administrative process, but also involves the negotiation of social and political boundaries. Therefore, the transformation of border governance reflects not only increased control, but also the redefinition of inclusion and exclusion within border areas. These processes take different forms across the frontier, as formalization reconfigures long-standing crossings in West Kalimantan while a previously porous, kinship-based border is tightened in North Kalimantan.

Security-Development Nexus

The findings further demonstrate that the transformation of border governance in the IKN context is closely shaped by the integration of development and security objectives. Infrastructure expansion, economic programs, and institutional coordination are not only implemented to improve welfare, but are also used to strengthen state presence and territorial control in border areas. This reflects the operation of the security-development nexus, where development is mobilized as a strategic instrument for achieving security goals. In this context, border areas are increasingly positioned as spaces where economic integration and territorial governance are pursued simultaneously.

Nevertheless, this integration also produces important tensions and limitations. When development is primarily driven by security considerations, issues related to social inclusion, local participation, and human security may receive less attention. The uneven outcomes observed across border areas indicate that not all communities benefit equally from development initiatives. In some cases, development enhances connectivity and economic opportunities, while in others structural constraints limit its impact. This suggests that the security-development nexus, while effective in strengthening state control, may also

reproduce inequalities in new forms. Therefore, a more balanced approach is required to ensure that development in border areas addresses both state priorities and community needs. Read comparatively, the nexus appears in West Kalimantan as institutional density without commensurate welfare, and in North Kalimantan as territorial assertion outpacing infrastructure.

Bridging Governance and Management

The findings also highlight the importance of understanding the relationship between governance and management in border security. While governance frameworks define policy objectives, institutional arrangements, and coordination mechanisms, their effectiveness ultimately depends on how they are implemented at the operational level. In the context of IKN, the transformation of governance structures is not always accompanied by corresponding improvements in management capacity. Infrastructure and policy reforms may be introduced, but limitations in local resources and institutional capacity continue to affect implementation outcomes.

This gap suggests that effective border governance requires a more integrated approach that aligns strategic planning with operational capabilities. Strengthening coordination among institutions, improving local capacity, and ensuring consistency between policy objectives and implementation practices are essential for achieving more effective governance outcomes. In this sense, the distinction between governance and management is not merely analytical, but has practical implications for policy effectiveness. Therefore, addressing both dimensions simultaneously is necessary to ensure that the transformation of border governance in the IKN era can be sustained and made more inclusive.

Read comparatively, this uneven enactment also speaks to wider debates on capital relocation. Studies of purpose-built administrative capitals, including Putrajaya, suggest that such projects tend to redistribute rather than dissolve peripheral inequalities (Yumasdaleni et al., 2025). The Kalimantan frontier refines that claim: the direction of the redistribution depends on the bordering regime a relocation encounters, formalized but neglected in one segment and porous but securitized in the other. The gap between the governance and the management of border security is therefore not a single deficit to be closed, but a spatially differentiated relation that any inclusive border strategy must address segment by segment.

CONCLUSION

The relocation of Indonesia's capital to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) represents a significant transformation in the country's spatial configuration and governance structure, particularly in relation to the Kalimantan-Malaysia frontier. Comparing West and North Kalimantan, this study finds that border areas are increasingly repositioned from peripheral spaces into strategically significant zones within national development and security agendas, though unevenly across the two segments. Through infrastructure expansion, corridor-based planning, and policy narratives, border areas are being integrated into broader state strategies aimed at strengthening connectivity, territorial control, and national integration.

However, this transformation remains uneven and complex. While policy narratives emphasize integration and development, their implementation varies across border areas due to differences in institutional capacity, resource distribution, and local conditions. The integration of development and security objectives reflects the operation of the security-development nexus, where development functions both as a tool of economic growth and a mechanism of state consolidation. As a result, spatial transformation may reproduce inequalities, particularly in areas where structural constraints limit policy effectiveness (Syafi'i et al., 2025; Yumasdaleni et al., 2025).

The findings also highlight the importance of bridging the gap between border security governance and management. Although governance frameworks have been strengthened, their effectiveness depends on implementation at the local level. Persistent gaps between policy design and operational capacity remain key challenges in border areas. Therefore, a more integrated approach is required, one that strengthens coordination, improves local capacity, and aligns policy objectives with implementation.

This study contributes to the literature by showing how capital relocation operates as a geopolitical and governance strategy that reshapes borders unevenly. By comparing West and North Kalimantan, it demonstrates that a uniform, Indonesia-centric reframing is refracted through divergent bordering regimes, producing sovereignty that is materialized but neglected in one segment and asserted but under-built in the other. Rather than a single frontier transformed by IKN, the analysis reveals a differentiated frontier, and cautions against reading capital relocation as a uniform state project. Because the comparison rests on document analysis and uneven secondary evidence, its conclusions about local experience remain provisional and call for ground-level, segment-specific research.

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