



General Tyasno Sudarto inspecting ground forces.

AP/Wide World Photos (Dita Alangkara)

To Change a Military— The Indonesian Experience

By JOHN B. HASEMAN

There is no better example of military transformation today than the Republic of Indonesia. Since 1997 that nation has undergone dramatic change in political leadership, economic status, and social relations. The armed forces, *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI), is the most dominant sector in Indonesian

life, but it is faced with tremendous pressure to transform.

Indonesia is inherently centrifugal. The world's largest archipelagic state, it is fragmented geographically into over 17,000 islands and some 300 ethnic and linguistic groups. The largest Islamic nation, it has significant minorities of Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists. Glaring imbalances in economic distribution and social levels add friction. Each of these components of diversity is reflected in the military.

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Indonesian Regional Military Command (KODAM) Geographic Areas



A Sea of Change

Indonesia’s political power structure is going through the greatest change in three decades. The economy has been hit with its worst depression since the early 1960s. There are also intense social problems. TNI is encountering these challenges while it retains responsibility for maintaining security, defending the country, and implementing change within its own structure.

Indonesia has discovered that it is extremely difficult being the third largest democracy in the world after more than 30 years of autocratic rule. The reasons are numerous and intertwined. Key to meeting these challenges is a secure and stable environment within which to implement political, economic, and social reforms.

The nation does not face any significant external threat. An increasingly assertive China looms as the most worrisome regional danger. The

most serious foreign problems involve overlapping claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea between Indonesia and its fellow members in the Asso-

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ciation of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China. Indonesia itself has no such claims.

The military leadership has always identified internal stability as the greatest security issue. Violence between ethnic and religious groups vexes reform. Clashes between Ambonese Moslems and Christians, Dayaks and Madurese, and Sumatran Bataks and Flores Catholics constitute only the most recent outbreaks to wrack the country. Ethnic leaders have

been hard pressed to organize constituencies because the government often assumes that they intend to compete against the ruling party and

authorities or other ethnic groups. Traditional ethnic leaders were stripped of power, and their responsibilities

were passed to government-appointed leaders at the regency and village level who frequently managed interethnic relations by calling out the army or police.

In short, many current problems were caused by three decades of tight political autocracy during which it was impossible for any type of alternative authority to emerge, practice leadership, or develop a following. The resulting vacuum at the head of emerging political, ethnic, and social groups has encouraged demagoguery and violence. Indonesia needs a strong central

Republik Indonesia

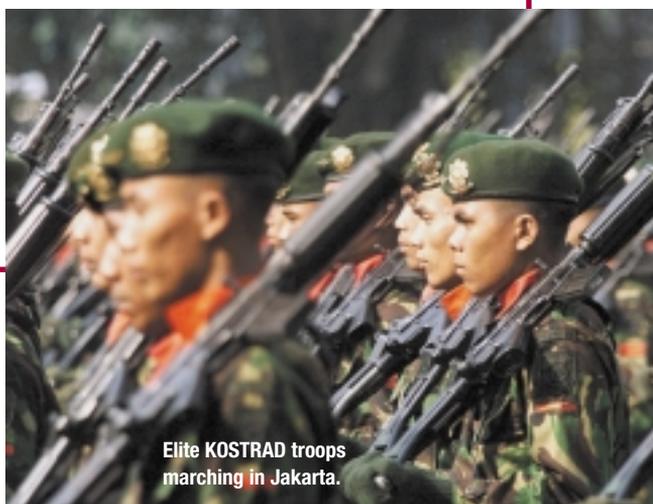
Defense Budget: Estimated at \$2,271 million for 2000; the gross domestic product in 1999 was \$140 billion (\$4,000 per capita).

Manpower: With a population of 206,213,000, Indonesia has a total of 28,809,000 men between 18 and 32 years of age. Active military strength is 297,000. Reserve forces number 400,000. Selective conscription is authorized for 2 years.

Armed Forces: Indonesia has an army with an estimated strength of 230,00 and some 355 light tanks; a navy with 40,000 sailors and 2 submarines, 17 surface combatants, 36 patrol/coastal craft, 12 mine warfare vessels, a force of 13,000 marines, and naval aviation with 1,000 personnel (but no combat aircraft); and an air force with 27,000 airmen and an inventory of 108 combat aircraft.

Paramilitary Formations: An estimated 195,000 personnel serve in various police, security, and special units.

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2000-2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2000).



AP/Wide World Photos (Charles Dharapak)

government to keep its volatile population at peace with itself.

In addition to this violence, internal security problems have involved separatist groups in East Timor, Aceh, and Irian Jaya. Some are guerrilla groups whose goal is to secede from the country and gain formal independence for their regions. Others represent a disaffected regional populace whose grievances center around economic and social exploitation by the central government but who do not advocate formal independence.

East Timor was the most trying security problem in 25 years. In the words of the Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, it was "a pebble in Indonesia's shoe." That pebble caused a major wound for the nation, damaging its international image and consuming countless billions of rupiah and taking thousands of lives. Under an internationally managed process the people of East Timor opted for independence, an effort that was beset by violence perpetrated by pro-Indonesian militias covertly supported by a small element of military and civilian hard liners.

East Timor is now a ward of the United Nations, pending independence.

Events in East Timor have encouraged separatists in the northwestern province of Aceh. The Acehnese have historically opposed rule from Jakarta whether by the Dutch or the independent government of Indonesia. Violence escalated dramatically after Soeharto resigned and many of the troops who had controlled the uneasy security environment in the province were removed.

The rise in confrontation is rooted in many causes. One is historical opposition to outside rule. Another is the legacy of violence inflicted by the Indonesian security forces under Soeharto and since. The tendency of the army to treat all civilians as actual or potential guerrilla supporters, which contributed to failure in East Timor, has harmed government pacification efforts. A record of egregious human rights violations on the parts of both the army and the separatist Aceh

Merdeka guerrillas has inflamed passions on both sides.

Unlike East Timor, only annexed in 1976, Aceh has always been part of the nation. And although problems in East Timor attracted only minor public attention in past years, today most Indonesians are keenly aware of the situation in Aceh and are adamantly opposed to permitting the province to split off.

A third cause of unrest is the diversion of wealth to the central government. The Acehnese resent the fact that only a tiny percentage of earnings from its huge natural resources return to the province.

Irian Jaya remains a security concern as well. Small and uncoordinated separatist groups have conducted antigovernment operations for years. With a change in government, those groups have begun to coordinate their efforts, increasing the threat of separation. However, it remains to be seen just how determined the collectively-named Free Papua Movement is about breaking off. As elsewhere, its grievances include the low return

the province receives from its natural resources as well as resentment of the government and military attitude toward the local tribal population.

Damaged Legacy, Daunting Future

Many will look at emerging political and economic policies for solutions to these problems. But the key to change lies, as always, with the armed forces and their ability to support reform and enforce domestic security. TNI has been the backbone for governments ever since independence. Often embroiled in political warfare during the Sukarno years, the military and principally the army became the primary instrument of power for the 32 years of the Soeharto order. But despite the years of dominance over political affairs the army never seized power and few believe that there is a coup in the

Significant Military Reforms

- Removing the national police from the military chain of command
- Abolishing staff positions in socio-political affairs at TNI headquarters and subordinate regional commands
- Abolishing the post of assistant for security and order at TNI headquarters (usually a national police officer)
- Requiring that all military personnel in civil government posts either retire from the armed forces or return to normal military duties
- Reducing dedicated military seats in Parliament from 100 to 75 in 1990 and to 38 in 1998, and totally eliminating them by 2004
- Prohibiting any role by the military in day-to-day political activity
- Prohibiting political party bias
- Maintaining neutrality in the 1999 general election and all future elections
- Revising doctrinal publications and instruction to reflect the changing role of the military in society.

making. Indonesia can be said to have a government with a powerful military, but not a military government.

The armed forces have a unique dual mission (*dwi-fungsi*). Instead of separating military and civilian political spheres of influence, this system combines them. For years the political role of the military was all-inclusive, intrusive, and the dominant force in the country's social and political life. This doctrine is now the focus of intense debate and demand for change.

The *dwi-fungsi* system and its territorial organizational structure, which parallels civilian government down to the village level, are the two primary instruments through which the military has dominated political affairs the past four decades. It is these two instruments which reformers, both within and outside the armed forces, target for change. And it is the degree of reform of these key instruments which encompasses the greatest range of debate within both the army and the civilian leadership. Military reformers agree that considerable change is needed, primarily in those aspects of behavior best categorized as political. But all except the most zealous reformers also feel that *dwi-fungsi* will remain, albeit in altered form.

Some facets of the role of the armed forces in society are particularly subject to change. The process has already begun as profound transformation sweeps through the political, economic, and social environments. First, the military must be called to account for human rights abuses. Its actions in Jakarta, Aceh, Irian Jaya, and the former province of East Timor have galvanized

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public opinion and demands for action. Second, it must undertake basic reform in its overall political role, including the controversial *dwi-fungsi* doctrine, and in its structure and leadership.

Regaining Prestige

TNI has plunged to its lowest-ever level of public esteem. A proud institution born of the independence struggle against Dutch colonialism, its doctrine has always stressed the importance of its popular mandate as an army of the people.

Ironically, it was the dramatic move toward democracy—which could not have occurred without the role played by the military leadership in the resignation of Soeharto in May

1998—that led to the decline in the prestige of the armed forces. Today the national press is revealing a legacy of military complicity in human rights abuses. No longer under attack by international news media and foreign human rights activists alone, the armed forces are vilified by the domestic press as well as the public. Their reputation has also been damaged by serving as a political tool of the Soeharto government. Only after TNI regains popular respect can it effectively help to restore the economy and implement political reform.

Revelations of alleged military atrocities have stunned the rank and file of the armed forces and outraged the nation at large. TNI leaders are in a quandary. The government is determined to investigate crimes against citizens in Aceh and to institute legal proceedings against senior officers implicated in East Timor. It is understood by the armed forces that any scrutiny of past events must be perceived as fair and complete. This will be difficult. But it is essential to the restoration of military prestige that the probes move forward.

The investigation of such allegations could destabilize TNI leadership by summoning active and retired senior officers to the bar to account for their own actions and those soldiers who served under them. The concept of command responsibility, implemented only in the 1990s, is weak and unevenly applied. And the degree to which officers may be legally called to account for the actions of troops under their command in the past is unprecedented in Indonesian history.

Officers complain that they are criticized for human rights violations when taking forceful action to end or avoid violent confrontations yet are censured for failing to act. To a force poorly trained and equipped for non-lethal crowd control the issue is often stark: allow a town to be ravaged by a marauding, out of control mob or stop the damage with deadly force. There is seldom any middle ground.



Indonesians being briefed aboard USS Germantown.

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In 1999 the former commander in chief of the armed forces, General Wiranto (who is now coordinating minister for political and security affairs), issued a public apology for past military violence. According to press accounts, he told soldiers who peacefully secured Parliament during the election of President Abdurrahman Wahid and Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri, “We are sorry for the victims, and we will pray for them. We ask for forgiveness from people who feel we did wrong, from the victims, from the students. . . . The reform process is for the people, not the president, not for the head of the military, but for the people only.”

Wiranto has been implicated by the national human rights commission for being cognizant of the violence in

East Timor by pro-Indonesian militias—reportedly supported and controlled by hard-liners in special forces and intelligence operatives—and failing to control it. Prior to dropping his reelection campaign, Bacharuddin Habibie chose Wiranto as his vice presidential running mate. But the criticism of the general was so rampant that a group of senior officers informed him that they would not support his bid to secure the presidency or the vice presidency.

Doctrine and Leadership

TNI leaders issued a white paper that outlines transformation goals while also supporting political and social reform in government and society. A primary target is *dwi-fungsi*.

Internal reform has been a wrenching experience. While military personnel are trained and indoctrinated to take part in the political and social life of the country, reform stresses that they return to military tasks. Many officers have long advocated removing the armed forces from politics and providing more time to focus on professionalization. During the Soeharto era such thinking was anathema and its advocates found their careers stifled, but since then such officers have increasingly been advanced.

Not all senior officers support reform. The so-called status quo faction favors the longstanding system that provides perquisites and lucrative post-retirement government and quasi-business posts to senior officers. The TNI commander in chief has lately promoted both factions, advancing reformers and status quo supporters alike. His logic typifies the dilemma of balancing both varied approaches to reform and alternate power centers to control the rise of new leaders.

The contest for influence between reformers and status quo officers is only the most recent contest among senior ranks. The army in particular has been noted for loyalties among academy classmates and dominant personalities. During the 1980s the competing poles were represented by the charismatic armed forces commander in chief and intelligence czar, General L.B. (“Benny”) Moerdani, a Christian, and those opposed to the influence of the military intelligence community. Moerdani lost his post after criticizing the growing avarice of the children and cronies of Soeharto. The armed forces then went through a de-Moer-

Changing Face of Indonesia's Military Leadership

Position	Soeharto Era Incumbent	Wahid Era Incumbent
Armed Forces Commander	General Wiranto	Admiral Widodo
Army Chief of Staff	General Subagyo	General Tyasno Sudarto
Commander, Army Strategic Reserve Command (KOSTRAD)	Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto	Lieutenant General Djadja Suparman
Commander, Special Forces Command (KOPASSUS)	Major General Muchdi	Major General Syahrir
Commander, Jakarta Regional Military Command (KODAM)	Major General Syafrie Syamsuoddin	Major General Ryamizard

Intervention in East Timor

In May 1999 Indonesia authorized the United Nations to organize and conduct a consultation to determine whether East Timor would accept special autonomy within the republic. In June 1999 the Security Council established the U.N. Mission in East Timor (UNAMET). In agreements reached one month earlier, UNAMET was tasked to oversee a transition pending a decision.

The East Timorese voted in August 1999 to begin a process leading toward independence. The Security Council then authorized the International Forces East Timor (INTERFET), under a unified command structure led by Australia, to restore peace and security in East Timor, protect and support UNAMET, and facilitate humanitarian assistance within force capabilities. At its peak, Operation Stabilize drew on almost 10,000 personnel from 47 countries. In support of the operation, the United States established U.S. Forces INTERFET. During this effort, a U.S. joint force of 425 servicemembers was deployed to Darwin, Sydney, and East Timor, supported by 5,000 naval personnel on board five ships.

The U.N. Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was formed in October 1999 to exercise legislative and executive authority during the transition. Immediately thereafter the mission set up headquarters in Dili. The change of command from INTERFET to UNTAET was completed in February 2000 and its operations are ongoing.

JFQ

danization process in which intelligence officers and Christian officers perceived as loyal to Moerdani had their careers blocked. The so-called tactical professionals were beneficiaries as field experience and tactical command became more important for advancement than assignments in the military intelligence service.

Meanwhile, the ambitious Prabowo Subianto, first in his class at the military academy and the U.S. Army Special Forces Officer course,

contests for power have distracted many officers from addressing issues of professionalism

soon became recognized as a future leader. The son of a preeminent economist and, far more significantly, Soeharto's son-in-law, he gathered friends and classmates around him who combined professional competence with ruthless ambition.

The opposite pole was a larger group of competent officers whose careers were carefully balanced against Prabowo but who were always one step behind or had one good assignment too few. Prabowo's overweening ambition and arrogance soon antagonized most senior officers. He was accused of complicity in the disappearance and death of antigovernment activists as well as in leading troops suspected of atrocities in East Timor and Aceh. Prabowo and his clique lost power and any hope of leadership after Soeharto left the scene.

Today the contest is between those loyal to Wiranto, now a senior cabinet member, and reformers, loosely coalesced around Major General Agus Wirahadikusumah and to a greater extent Lieutenant Generals Agum Gumelar and Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono. But in a demonstration of power, Wiranto placed Gumelar and Yudhoyono in the Wahid cabinet where they are less likely to be competitors. Wirahadikusumah is a regional commander in far-off Sulawesi, where his reformist influence is less than it would be in policymaking circles in Jakarta. Wiranto is stained by his own inability

or unwillingness to control pro-Indonesia militias in East Timor, and he may find himself under judicial scrutiny for his role in the violence.

Contests for power among senior military officers have distracted many Indonesian officers from addressing issues of professionalism and reform. Perhaps more significantly, the leaders are so personally concerned with political maneuvering that they have not devoted sufficient attention to developing a vision for the future of the armed forces.

Senior TNI leaders have always attended to military politics under a controlled system that promoted approximately equal numbers of officers from every defined faction and cohort group so competition would prevent any individual from dominating the armed forces. Soeharto was master of this tactic. He and several of his commanders in chief practiced this version of divide and rule to ensure dominance of the military.

The rise of contenders usually produced a commander who either secured the loyalty of all groups or whose personal loyalty to the president was so unquestioned that he had the legitimacy to control the armed forces. The same practice exists in the post-Soeharto era. There continues to be a balance among groups of senior officers competing for influence. The new government has cleverly juggled key positions.

In contrast to the Soeharto era, when the president commanded the loyalty of the country's five most powerful officers, the leadership today is more diverse. Although unquestionably loyal to the institution of the presidency, these senior officers do not have personal loyalty as a group to either the most powerful military figure in the country, General Wiranto, or even to the president.

TNI leaders, whether intentionally or not, have returned to the traditional practice whereby divided loyalty is deliberately perpetuated to ensure that no officer has the complete allegiance of the armed forces. Thus the advent of democracy in Indonesia has resulted in a return to apolitical institutional loyalty. TNI will support the presidency but not the individual in uniform



Protesting for independence of Aceh province.

the armed forces in every facet of government.

There is considerable belief that this doctrine remains valid. A respected senior civilian official in the Wahid government told the author:

There is still no substitute for the army territorial structure in rural Indonesia, where the civilian government is simply not adequate. The [noncommissioned

Indonesia's armed forces—*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (ABRI)*—consist of the army, navy, air force, and police. A reorganization carried out in 1985 modified the chain of command. Four multi-service Regional Defense Commands (KOWILHANS) and the National Strategic Command (KOSTRANAS) were disbanded and the Military Regional Command (KODAM) or area command was established as the key organization for strategic, tactical, and territorial operations conducted by all services. The chain of command now flows directly from the ABRI commander in chief to the ten KODAM commanders. **JFQ**

officer] in the village still has a role to play. But in urban [areas] there is now an adequate civilian structure and some changes should be made there.

Justified by *dwi-fungsi* as a sociopolitical force, in reality this structure enabled the armed forces to keep tabs on potential and real opponents of the government, stifle traditional local leaders, control campuses, censor regional newspapers, and ensure support for Soeharto through the Golkar Party. In return, the military on every level gained extra-budgetary income for troop support—and lined the pockets of many officers.

This territorial structure is the subject of controversy. Most civilians realize that it is needed to some degree for internal stability. But the military role in the political system is being reduced and the *dwi-fungsi* system is under pressure. The territorial structure is its most visible component and is thus among the easiest to attack. The central position of this organizational

(Wiranto) most likely to be in a position of power. This circumstance should support a slow but steady trend toward political and military reform.

Future Organization

An internal debate is underway as to how the armed forces should be organized to carry out their missions under a democracy. The exchange is most pertinent to the army, which because of the *dwi-fungsi* doctrine has been organized for both territorial/political and tactical/operational roles. More than half of the army is assigned to the territorial structure, which parallels civil government from province

level—where major generals head regional commands—down to noncommissioned officers responsible for one or more villages. The structure is based on the military's experience in guerrilla warfare, in which intimate knowledge of the terrain, population, and resources is vital.

The official explanation for the structure is that it allows commands to learn every detail of each region to prepare for an outside invasion, when the army would melt into the countryside and conduct guerrilla warfare. In reality, the Soeharto era changed the thrust of the territorial structure to population control. An extensive domestic intelligence effort gathered data on every aspect of life and involved

AP/Wide World Photos (Dita Alang-kara)

structure is now at the heart of an unprecedented public debate among senior officers.

Under the Habibie government, in response to high levels of ethnic and religious violence across the country before and after Soeharto resigned in May 1998, the armed forces made plans to add up to eight two-star regional commands to maintain order. These new commands would have returned the territorial structure to the level that existed through 1981 (when streamlining reduced the number of regional commands from sixteen to ten).

Status quo officers claimed that expanding the territorial structure would improve security. Their argument was flawed because the military had already committed itself to a reduced political role; expanding rather than reducing the territorial structure would reverse that trend. But under the status quo, officers also covet the perquisites of service in the structure: personal power, income, and political stature.

Reformers countered expansion plans by decrying the costs of establishing new commands and emphasizing the military commitment to reducing its political prominence. These officers think that some province-level commands should be consolidated, and one leading reformer called for all the territorial structure below province level to be abolished. This plan would save money in a time of economic difficulty and make more resources available for traditional tactical units.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both sides of this issue, but the significant point is that such a debate is underway at all. It never would have occurred during the Soeharto era and is a positive indication that reformist tendencies are expanding in the formerly closed universe of the armed forces.

Senior military leaders have not made a final decision, but some form of reduced presence seems most likely. The newly-appointed army chief of staff, General Tyasno Sudarto, has implied that lower level territorial structure should be abolished in urban areas but retained in rural districts. He



Security forces blocking demonstrators near Parliament.

AP/Wide World Photos (Dita Alangkara)



U.N. commander in East Timor conferring with Admiral Widodo.

AP/Wide World Photos (Joel Rubin)

has also indicated that regional commands will become more flexible in adjusting to the social tenets of the various regions.

The Indonesian armed forces remain the single most powerful segment of national society. Though small in numbers, their influence is widespread. Unprecedented internal debate

is underway which provides reassurance that military reform is moving forward. The psychological consequences of change can be overcome and will result in transforming TNI into a more responsive, responsible, and representative institution. **JFQ**