



Policy Brief

SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO AND HIS GENERALS

by Leonard C. Sebastian

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indonesian National Military (TNI, *Tentera Nasional Indonesia*) may no longer be the most dominant player in Indonesian politics but has pragmatically incorporated a strategy that enables it to play a significant “behind the scenes” role. The situation in Indonesia today has closer parallels with the state of civil military relations in Germany between the two World Wars or France in 1958.¹ In analysing the TNI relationship with the Yudhoyono presidency, this paper argues that Dr Yudhoyono enjoys the loyalty and trust of the TNI elite. The current relationship can be defined as partnership where the President protects the institutional interests of the TNI while insulating it from excessive reform measures that might impede its effectiveness and in return benefits from the assurance that the TNI will secure his Presidency.

BACKGROUND

Indonesian society since 1945 was either under military rule or under

a civilian government where the special position of the armed forces allowed it autonomy to reserve power enabling the TNI to play a leading role in politics or mediate between political contenders. The TNI’s preeminent position was a reflection of its special entitlement owing to its role in the war of independence (1945-48) where its defence of the Republic ensured that the returning Dutch colonialists would not be able to subdue the independence movement by military means.

The situation in Indonesia since 1998 is delicately poised where civilian leadership throughout the archipelago is weak and divided allowing the military the possibility to grab some measure of power. There are three possible scenarios for military intervention in politics. First, civilian intrusion in matters considered within the realm of internal military autonomy and prerogative. Second, prolonged conditions which compromise the welfare of a TNI soldier due to an elected government’s inability

to provide the military with an adequate budget. Third, if a civilian government is unable to maintain national stability and unity. Particularly in the third scenario, the likelihood that the TNI will temporarily re-enter the political arena in partnership with other like-minded social and political forces to stabilize national politics cannot be discounted. The mindset of the officer corps has not changed drastically despite the abolition of its Dual Function role in 2000. There remains a deep contempt for civilian rule and a belief that only the TNI is capable of rising above the petty rivalries and self-interested behaviour characteristic of post-Suharto era civilian politicians. Such thinking will prevail for sometime. Presently, those assuming pivotal command positions were middle ranking officers in 1998 holding ranks of Colonel or Lieutenant Colonel and serving either as Chiefs of Staffs in sub-region military commands (Korem); Assistants to the Regional Military Commander (Kodam); in middle management positions at the Armed Forces

¹ See Leonard C. Sebastian, *Realpolitik Ideology: Indonesia’s Use of Military Force* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006): p. 350.

or Army Headquarters; or as Commanders of District Military Commands (Kodim). In 1998, these officers were in their forties and will be expected to be in active service until they reach the age of 58 years.

Indonesia today is a proto-democracy² while employing processes that preserve its democratic image, in reality the current political model is fraught with disadvantages that encourage new forms of military participation. For example, military officers still hold prominent positions in cabinet; intelligence agencies are poorly regulated; military officers manage considerable economic resources; populist nationalist causes are also espoused by military leaders; paramilitary forces continue to be instruments for social control; the military's presence in the provinces has been enhanced by strong patrimonial ties with local elites and coupled with poor conditions of public administration in the provinces allow them significant latitude to manipulate local political processes. Such advantages allow the military considerable leverage to weaken democracy by steering social forces in directions that benefit their interests. The TNI sees itself an instrument of the state and guardians of the constitution. Its political role though diminished and not immediately obvious, will be present if the need arises.

Doctrinal statements since the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998 further emphasize my point. TNI's history shapes its

self perception and despite its withdrawal from politics, the officer corps retains a mindset that they are entitled to assume leadership if civilians cannot effectively protect the national interest. Note then TNI commander General Wiranto's carefully worded statement during Armed Forces Day in 1998 when he introduced the TNI's "new paradigm" stating that the "TNI would shift its role in politics and the national development process by not always being at the front of leadership, not to occupy but to influence, not in a direct way but indirectly, based on the willingness for political role sharing with other national groups in Indonesia". The military's withdrawal is tactical and we can safely assume conditioned or predicated on the state of national security in Indonesia. President Yudhoyono then Chief of Territorial Affairs (KASTER) under Wiranto will continue to support such a role for the TNI.

Proof that the TNI still retained its substantial autonomy and influence in the Yudhoyono era is irrefutable: there were five senior officers as cabinet ministers; a prominent number in political parties, Yunos Yosfiah, Andi Ghalib, Amir Syarifudin, Muchlis Anwar (PPP), Theo Syafii, Agus Widjojo, Slamet Supriyadi, Adang Ruchianta (PDI-P), Suwarno Adi Widjojo (PAN), Wiranto, Prabowo Subianto, Budhi Harsono, Afifudin Thaib, Yahya Sancawira, Soemarsono (Golkar), Soeroto, E.E. Mangindaan, Sutadji, Budi Utomo (PD) thereby allowing some influence in the post Suharto legislative

process; the territorial structure allowed the Army considerable latitude at the regional level and facilitated its involvement in local business leading to the expansion of informal business activities; there were few if any serious efforts to root out the military personnel that were involved in the human rights violations; and there was also no signal that the TNI would abandon the security approach to conflicts, consequences of which were evident in recent violence in Papua and the general obstruction of government attempts to solve the Aceh conflict by peaceful means from 2000-2003 until the Tsunami struck in December 2004.¹

ANALYSIS

Officers that will figure prominently within the TNI over the next five years are products of three reshuffles, in October 2003, February 2004 and February-March 2005. Prominent in the October 2003 promotions were the top performers of the military academy classes 1974 and 1975 some earmarked to be future leaders of the TNI. Class 1975 graduate Major-General Djoko Santoso, Kodam Jaya Commander became the new Army Chief of Staff placing him in line to become the next Army Chief of Staff. His successor, a Class 1974 graduate Maj Gen Agustadi became Kodam Jaya Commander. The same promotion exercise also resulted in a Class 1977 officer becoming general for the first time. Col Hotma Marbun was named Deputy Commander of Army's elite Special Forces (Kopassus).

If East Timor was the stepping stone for an older generation of officers from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s, then service in Aceh had now become an important testing ground for the emerging TNI elite. All officers promoted in the May 2004 reshuffle took up their new appointments one year after the declaration of martial law in the province. An Ambonese officer, well regarded in intelligence circles B.G. George Toisutta, the head of the Military Operations Command in Aceh became Commander of Kostrad's First Infantry Division. Also promoted in a minor reshuffle in January 2005 were two Aceh Korem commanders, Col Gerhan Lantara and Col A.Y. Nasution currently commanding units in Kostrad. With the cessation of hostilities in Aceh, it is likely that Papua will become the next proving ground for a new generation of TNI leaders.

The most significant reshuffle took place in February-March 2005 which involved the replacement of the three service chiefs. The removal of hard-line Army Chief of Staff Ryamizard Ryacuddu and the promotion of Lt Gen Djoko Santoso as his successor signaled a resolve of the new administration to develop a new strategy for dealing with the Aceh crisis. Ryamizard's pronouncements had constantly compromised the government's peaceful attempts at conflict resolution when Yudhoyono was Coordinating Minister of Security during the Megawati presidency. Having assumed office in October 20, 2004, Yudhoyono took incremental steps to sideline Ryamizard. His strategy involved

extending Gen Sutarto's term of office with the intention of having him oversee the TNI's withdrawal from Aceh. This action had the added benefit of allowing the three service chiefs, one of whom, earmarked to become the Armed Forces Commander time to gain enough experience in order to be presented as a credible candidate.

Djoko Santoso's appointment as the Army Chief of Staff was the first indication of the President's strategy to reshape the TNI elite. The new service chiefs of the Navy, Admiral Slamet Soebijanto, and Air Marshall Djoko Suyanto of the Air Force were Yudhoyono's classmates in the military academy (Class 1973). Apart from the new service chiefs, the Aceh Commander Maj Gen Endang Suwaryo (Class 1973), became Deputy Army Chief of Staff. Yudhoyono's brothers in law – Maj Gen Erwin Sujono and Brig Gen Pramono Edhie Wibowo were promoted a month later. During this period newly promoted Maj Gen George Toisutta assumed command of the strategically significant Trikora Kodam in Papua. A further two officers were handpicked for service in the Presidential Palace or Istana. Col Kurdi Mustofa became the President's private secretary and Maj Gen Bambang Sutedjo took up the position of presidential military secretary. Both officers are well known to the President. The promotion pattern was influenced by three factors: field experience in Aceh; the emergence of the Class of 1977 officers; and personal influence or preferences of President Yudhoyono.⁴ The officers of Classes

1974 to 1976 still hold the largest percentage of strategic positions at the TNI Headquarters, Army central and regional commands. Most of the officers in Class 1977 are currently colonels and Korem Commanders. Many are expected to be promoted to the rank of brigadier generals.

For the time being, President Yudhoyono has managed to avert a possible dispute by ensuring that the number two spot in the Armed Forces hierarchy stays with the Army. Since the collapse of the Suharto regime, the position of Kasum TNI has consistently been given to non-Army officers. Endang Suwaryo's appointment as Kasum TNI ensures that while an Air Force officer, Air Marshall Djoko Suyanto may be Armed Forces Commander, the Army retains supreme control of all sections of TNI Headquarters. Those who implement policy at TNI Headquarters from echelon II level on down are predominantly from the Army. As initiators of the Aceh peace process, both Yudhoyono and his Vice President Jusuf Kalla have a vested interest in supporting an Air Force officer as TNI Commander convinced that a potential flare-up there would be more likely with an Army officer in that position. Kalla has also benefited by advancing the promotion of one of Suyanto's subordinates, the ethnic Bugis two star Marshall Muhammad Basri Sidehabi as Suyanto's assistant for security. Djoko Suyanto's promotion also reinforces the President's reformist credentials by breaking with a Suharto era precedent of no longer discriminating the Air Force. Furthermore by rotating the Armed

² A proto-democracy is a transitional model after the demise of the predecessor regime though moving towards a more democratic situation.

³ The general consensus both in domestic and international circles after the Tsunami disaster was the need for peace to prevail in Aceh so that the urgent task of rebuilding and rehabilitating the province could continue unhindered. Such opportune conditions opened a window of opportunity for Yudhoyono to sideline hard-line elements within the TNI.

⁴ "Current Data on the Indonesian Military Elite", *Indonesia* Vol. 80 (October 2005): p. 129.

Forces Commander position among the various services, the President abides by the “spirit of reform” within the TNI, more importantly, communicating that there is equal opportunity for all military officers in all the three services and further consigning the antagonism between the Army and the Air Force over the latter’s alleged role in the abortive 1965 coup to history.

CONCLUSIONS

There are three points to consider why Djoko Suyanto’s accession to TNI Commander ensures that President Yudhoyono will retain the support and undivided attention of the TNI in the event of an emergency. First, the role of patrimonial links in consolidating control: in the Indonesian military, merit can only carry a person so far. Patrimonial links often determine career advancement. Djoko Suyanto and navy chief Slamet Soebijanto trained together with Yudhoyono when they were cadets at Akabri in 1973. Djoko Santoso served under Yudhoyono when he was *Danrem* for Yogyakarta. Having witnessed at close hand how fractious executive-military relations can compromise a Presidency when he was a minister in the Wahid cabinet, Yudhoyono understands that trusted allies within the military are critical. Hence, he prizes character traits like loyalty and trust, qualities he believes can only be nurtured over the years through shared experiences, be it through tours of duty or training.

Second, by promoting Suyanto the president secures the allegiance of all branches of the military. Supporting Santoso as Army Chief of Staff ensures the continued backing of the Army in security

matters and while officers close to Ryamizard remain a disgruntled element, the bulk of the TNI, loyal to their respective service chiefs who in turn are Yudhoyono allies will follow orders. For political expediency, Yudhoyono may use Air Marshall Djoko Suyanto as a stop-gap later appointing a senior officer from the Army as Armed Forces Commander when the 2009 general and presidential elections draw near. An Air Force officer cannot deal with the problems of the Army and Lt-Gen Djoko Santoso may be the candidate most suited to step up into the position of Commander in Chief in order to ensure the military’s neutrality during the elections.

Third, Indonesia’s 2003 Defence White Paper argued that Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW) or *Operasi Militer Selain Perang* is within the military’s jurisdiction and claimed that the Army is responsible for internal security. This emphasis now enshrined in Law No. 34/2004 mandates that the TNI undertake MOOTW with an emphasis on internal security operations like overcoming armed separatist movements, combating terrorism, and actions to deal with piracy and illegal immigration. Despite civil society opposition to the possible expansion of the TNI’s role, President Yudhoyono in a speech to mark Armed Forces Day on October 5, 2005 boldly requested the TNI to assist the government in the fight against terrorism. The military promptly responded by offering to reinvigorate its territorial commands for high intensity surveillance and establishing a new anti-terror detachment deployed in several regional military commands. As an

ex-general, President Yudhoyono is in a stronger position than a civilian elected president to determine how the TNI will be used in MOOTW contingencies. It is likely though that he may give the Army leaders enough leeway to craft an appropriate MOOTW doctrine that could exploit the loopholes evident in Law No. 34/2004 that give the TNI Commander wide scope to interpret how it will be employed for MOOTW operations. Through Santoso, the president has control over the Army. In a sense, the appointment of an Air Force officer as TNI Commander is a subtle reminder to Suyanto that it is Yudhoyono and not the TNI Commander that controls the Army.

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