



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

BACK TO THE BARRACKS: GETTING THE INDONESIAN MILITARY OUT OF POLITICS, 1998–2000

SYNOPSIS

In May 1998, Indonesia's armed forces, which had marched in lockstep with the Suharto regime for more than three decades, were poised to begin a stunning about-face. Suharto, a former major general, had resigned when antigovernment protests rapidly escalated, and his departure opened the door for a small group of military leaders to implement reforms they had discussed quietly for years. Agus Widjojo, one of the officers, drafted a plan that would change the relationship between civilian government and the armed forces. His New Paradigm reform agenda called for eliminating the military from many aspects of politics and governance in which it had long played a dominant role. From 1998 to 2000, the military severed its ties with the ruling party, agreed to reduce its representation in the parliament, ordered active-duty officers to leave many posts in civilian government, and separated the police from the armed forces. The changes represented a major break with the past and set the stage for civilian-led reforms to enhance elected government's control over military institutions and defense policy.

Tristan Dreisbach drafted this case based on interviews conducted in Jakarta in March and April 2015. Case published August 2015. A companion case study, [Cooperation and Conflict](#), examines the role of civilians in furthering Indonesian military reforms from 1999-2004.

INTRODUCTION

"Nobody ever expected Suharto to resign," recalled Agus Widjojo, a retired lieutenant general in the Indonesian military. "We had never prepared for a system that would succeed Suharto."

On May 15, 1998, Indonesian president Suharto cut short a trip to Egypt and flew home. While he had been away, long-running protests against his brutal and corrupt 31-year rule had intensified, and riots had spread through several cities, leaving at least a thousand people dead.

The economy was in tatters: Gross domestic product had shrunk by 12% in the first half of 1998, and currency value had dropped 85% in less than a year.¹ Demonstrators had taken over

the parliament building, 14 ministers had suddenly resigned their posts, international powers including the United States had stopped supporting the regime, and the speaker of the parliament called for the president to resign. It was clear Suharto had a decision to make.²

Suharto's authoritarian government had woven the military deeply into the fabric of Indonesian affairs. "They weren't just *part* of the regime. They *were* the regime," said Sandra Hamid, an activist at the time who had been a reporter and later led the Asia Foundation's work in Indonesia. Active-duty officers served in assigned posts in parliament, the civil service, and local government offices. And the president's dominant Golkar Party had a military faction that

exerted a strong influence over the choice of electoral candidates.

The armed forces exercised economic power through control of formal and informal businesses, though there were no clear data about the extent of the military's economic holdings. In 2007, the Indonesian government estimated that military foundations and cooperatives controlled businesses with gross assets of \$350 million, but the value may have been far higher prior to the 1997 financial crisis.³ Officers often extracted personal profit from those ventures and could also earn many times their modest official salaries by working for businesses in the timber, insurance, banking, construction, retail, or other industries.⁴

As the crisis unfolded in 1998, Suharto summoned Wiranto, whom he had appointed both commander of the armed forces and minister of defense and security. (Wiranto and Suharto, like many Indonesians, used only one name.) Wiranto, a general and the leader of the armed forces and the police, said that although the country's military and security services could restore order, the costs, including further loss of life, would be high. Suharto decided his time had come.⁵

"There were demonstrations all over Indonesia asking President Suharto to withdraw from leadership," said Suaidi Marasabessy, who at the time was a commander of Regional Command VII/Wirabuana in Sulawesi, an island east of Borneo. "On May 21, every regional commander was called by Wiranto to army headquarters at 8 a.m." There, Wiranto informed them that Suharto would resign. The president appeared on television that evening and made a brief statement that ended his 31-year military-backed autocratic regime.

When he stepped down, Suharto handed the presidency to one of his close confidants, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie. The new president was an unlikely leader—an aerospace engineer with no military background—whom Suharto had appointed as vice president just two months

earlier as part of an effort to shore up his administration by naming political allies to key positions. Despite his close ties to the former dictator, Habibie tried to establish credibility. He removed press censorship, legalized the formation of new political parties, and called for elections to be held the following year.⁶ "There was no censorship," said Djoko Susilo, who served in parliament with the National Mandate Party from 1999 to 2009. "People were free to support any political party they liked."

This environment of rapid change provided an opportunity for a small group of military officers who believed the Indonesian armed forces were too involved in politics and internal affairs. Among them were Widjojo and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Widjojo was the son of a general killed during an attempted coup in 1965. After graduating from the military academy in 1970, Widjojo began an army career involving the development of doctrine and strategy and including a stint as commandant of the Joint Staff and Command College, a school for officers. Yudhoyono, who would become president in 2004, was also the son of an army officer and had a similar reputation as a military intellectual, although he had served in command posts.

Both men had studied abroad and were part of a group of foreign-educated officers who had risen through the ranks to take leadership roles in the armed forces. For decades they had discussed, mostly among themselves, how to modernize and improve the military. By 1998, Widjojo and Yudhoyono had positions that enabled them to exert strong influence on military doctrine. With Suharto gone, they had the chance to implement their ideas.

THE CHALLENGE

Widjojo and Yudhoyono had to build support for modernization within a military institution that had been closely integrated into Indonesian life for decades. Thousands of officers thrived under that system, and they were not likely to embrace a drastic break with the

past. Despite public pressure for reforms, some people were likely to resist changes.

Military's outsize influence

The military's influence in Indonesian society was far greater than its size suggested. In 1998, the manpower of the armed forces, including the police, totaled 451,000 in a national population that numbered more than 200 million. By contrast, the United States, with a population of about 275 million, had an active-duty military that was more than three times larger, a figure that did not include police.⁷ But in contrast to many long-standing democracies, members of the Indonesian armed services held prominent positions in politics and government, the police were under the command of the military, and military units operated in parallel with civilian branches of government throughout the country. "We had the military in all walks of life, in all functions of the government," Widjojo said. After the fall of Suharto, Widjojo wanted to end the dual-function doctrine, adopted in the 1960s, that assigned the military significant roles in politics and government in addition to its defense responsibilities. That doctrine had its origins in the independence era of the late 1940s, when anticolonial fighters became the nation's political leaders. "The military, starting from its inception, was already political," Widjojo said.

The military formally participated in politics and government in a variety of ways. It played a leadership role in the Golkar Party, which had won majorities in every national election from 1971 to 1997. Because the government directly appointed a portion of parliamentary seats and forbade public employees from supporting any party except Golkar, the party always won.

Although members of the military never had the right to vote in Indonesia, the Golkar Party ensured that the interests of the armed forces were well represented in government. Military officers formed the most powerful of the three groups represented in Golkar. The other two groups consisted of civil servants and party

members who did not work in the armed forces or government. The military negotiated with those groups to choose candidates for political office.⁸

The Suharto government also assigned military intelligence services the job of screening electoral candidates for all other political parties and empowered military intelligence services to disqualify those it considered politically unreliable.⁹

Those policies meant that many officers were deeply involved in party politics during the Suharto era. "This was really destructive to the military's professionalism at that time," said Kiki Syahnakri, a retired lieutenant general who served as army deputy chief of staff from 2000 to 2002. Further, military officers held a wide variety of administrative positions in nonmilitary government services. The government appointed them to posts as provincial governors, district heads, members of legislative bodies, functionaries in ministries, and ambassadors.¹⁰

At the time of Suharto's resignation, 75 of 460 members of the People's Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat), the most powerful of the country's two legislative chambers, were officers whom military headquarters appointed to represent the armed forces. A total of 15 of 26 provincial governors were military officers, as were 119 of the country's 293 mayors. More than 6,800 active-duty officers and 5,500 retired officers held positions in the civilian bureaucracy.¹¹

The military was tightly intertwined with the ministry that supposedly oversaw the armed forces. It was not until 1985 that a reorganization of the military separated the ministry from armed forces headquarters—but that move had little effect on the relationship between the two institutions.¹² Few civilians worked in the ministry, which was staffed primarily with active-duty officers appointed to their positions by military leadership. In 1998, Suharto appointed Wiranto to be both commander in chief of the armed forces and minister of defense and

security. After Suharto resigned, Habibie chose to retain Wiranto in both roles.

Influence on the police and local affairs

The military's influence was also extensive, compared with its size, for two reasons in addition to the dual-function doctrine. First, the military also controlled the police—which since 1966 had been part of the military command structure alongside the army, air force, and navy—and it dominated the national intelligence agencies, whose top ranks consisted primarily of military personnel. Field officers in the State Intelligence Coordinating Agency were accountable to both agency leadership and the military's intelligence body.¹³

Second, the military enjoyed broad geographic presence. There were military posts across the country, an archipelago consisting of more than 17,000 islands. The armed forces could influence local governments and local political affairs through its "territorial" command structure, whereby the organization of the armed forces largely paralleled civilian government down to the municipal level. "The military was the only organization other than civil servants who went all the way to the village level," said Hamid. "They were everywhere." Instead of being concentrated in bases, as was the case in modern North American and European militaries, Indonesian soldiers were dispersed throughout the country. Those local commands had no significant defense function and were used mainly for gathering intelligence and mobilizing support for the Golkar Party.¹⁴

Military's business ties

The military also controlled business interests that augmented its small official budget, provided a degree of economic autonomy from the government in Jakarta, and created perks for at least some of its members. In 1997, Indonesia's official military budget was 4.6 trillion rupiah (US\$1.9 billion), equivalent to less than 1% of Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁵

Such a level of spending was far below the percentage of GDP spent by neighboring Malaysia, which contributed more than 2% of GDP, and Singapore, at 4%.¹⁶

The business activities began during the fight for independence in the 1940s, when the newly created military had to pay its own way. Although organized smuggling and illegal levies provided some income, military commands also acquired stakes in legitimate private business ventures. In the 1950s, the military took control of Dutch companies nationalized following the withdrawal of Dutch forces.

During the Suharto era, officers close to the president benefited from connections with private business interests. Military commands established foundations and cooperatives that ostensibly operated for soldiers' welfare but whose interests grew rapidly. The armed forces had a central role in the nation's forestry industry and profited from both legal and illegal use of forest concessions.

The large number of formal and informal operations, many of them conducted far from Jakarta, made it very difficult for observers to estimate the level of military control over business and the Indonesian economy.¹⁷

The military's connection with private business extended to company security, protection, and the intimidation of workers. "From the perspective of people whose lives were marginalized by development at the time, military personnel used to protect investors," said Hamid, who researched disputes related to development on the island of Lombok in the 1990s. "A similar trend was also true in labor disputes.

Workers believed that local military leadership was used to oppress workers and back up management." Companies paid military officers for security services and used force to break up labor disputes.¹⁸

Civilians' lack of defense expertise

Even before Suharto stepped down, Widjojo envisioned a far different relationship between

the government and the military. During his studies in the United States, he had observed a system in which (1) civilians exercised control over defense policy, (2) the military obeyed the orders of civilian leaders, (3) the legislature exercised oversight over the defense budget, (4) civilians staffed the Department of Defense, and (5) the military generally did not involve itself in internal security matters.

In addition to the pushback he would likely encounter from those who fared well under the old system, Widjojo had to contend with the fact that few civilians had knowledge of defense policy. The Ministry of Defense and Security provided primarily administrative support for the military, Widjojo said. Active-duty officers in the military and the ministry developed and drafted defense policy and doctrine, and there was no culture of cooperation between soldiers and civilians when it came to national defense.

Widjojo and other reformist generals aimed to loosen the military's ties to Indonesian political life. To do so, they had to cultivate the support of military officers who benefited from the power and privileges of the very system the reformers sought to dismantle. They also had to place the Ministry of Defense and Security under civilian leaders respected by military officers.

FRAMING A RESPONSE

"Before 1998, nobody dared say explicitly that we would terminate dual function," Widjojo said, referring to the decades-old policy that assigned the military a significant role in politics and government as well as defense.

Widjojo said he and Yudhoyono had discussed potential reforms to the military since the 1970s. The two envisioned a more professional military with a sharper focus on external threats and less involvement in internal affairs, but changing the armed forces' role in politics had been off limits during the Suharto years. Although there had been discussion of reform prior to Suharto's resignation, the plan

never got past the talking stage, Widjojo said. In developing his proposal after Suharto's departure in 1998, he said, he drew on his experience abroad rather than studying examples of other transitions from military rule. He had spent years in the United States, studying at the United States Army Command and General Staff College, the National Defense University, and George Washington University. He understood the relationship between civilian government and the military in the United States—one that strictly prohibited the involvement of active-duty military officers in politics.

Widjojo and Yudhoyono were among hundreds of Indonesian officers who participated in training programs abroad. Many became strong advocates of reform, said Sudrajat, a major general at the time. "Some went to Australia, but most joined the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program in the US." IMET, a training program funded by the US government, hosted more than 4,000 Indonesian military personnel from 1950 to 1992. The hosting ended because of American concerns about the Indonesian military's human rights record.¹⁹

"The thought of reform in the military was already a seedling in these young officers in the early to late 1970s," Sudrajat said. "So, after 20 years, in 1997, these officers had become generals, and the mind-set was there for democracy." Such foreign-educated officers, including Widjojo and Yudhoyono, rose to some of the top positions in the military under Suharto.

After Suharto stepped down, Yudhoyono, who was chief of staff for sociopolitical affairs, was in a position to push for reform in a country that was primed for change. His job was to assist the commander of the military on issues regarding the military's function in politics. "Yudhoyono was the primary assistant to General Wiranto as to the position of the military in various political dynamics," Widjojo said. Yudhoyono outranked Widjojo, general-planning assistant to the armed forces commander.

Widjojo recalled that Yudhoyono said to him after Suharto's departure: "We are approaching the 5th of October, the Military Day holiday. How about writing down in a sort of brochure what we have been discussing? Then we publish it on the 5th of October."

Widjojo's draft document called for a clear break with the dual-function system and an end to the military's involvement in politics, but Widjojo said Yudhoyono felt the reform would be too much too fast. "I knew he would not agree," Widjojo said. "I tried in that draft to directly disengage the military from the dual function. He recognized it and said, 'No, it's not the time yet.'"

At Yudhoyono's urging, Widjojo developed a proposal for gradual change that would be more acceptable to members of the military establishment—especially Wiranto, commander in chief and minister of defense and security, who would have to accept and order the implementation of the changes. If Wiranto backed the proposals, the officers he commanded would have to follow his orders. The reform agenda would become a command policy, and any military personnel who resisted could be subject to sanctions or punishment.

Widjojo's second draft, titled the New Paradigm, was a significant first step toward reforming the Indonesian military. Although the plan called for the military to step away from its leadership role in politics and social affairs, it did not call for a total break with the past. "The New

Paradigm was actually a softening of the practice of the dual function, but it was still dual function," Widjojo said.

Presenting general principles rather than specific policies, the document urged the military to (1) transfer its leading role in society to other institutions, (2) stop appointing military personnel to civil service positions, (3) end its direct involvement in day-to-day politics, and (4) share its social and political roles with other segments of the state.

To implement the principles, the military had to make fundamental changes, including (1) separating from the police, (2) terminating its political offices, (3) removing personnel who were serving in civilian government positions, (4) withdrawing from the Golkar Party, (5) maintaining neutrality during elections, and (6) revising internal doctrine.²⁰

Widjojo's document left two important areas untouched: It neither mentioned the military's business interests nor attempted any reform of the military's territorial command structure. Those areas were likely to encounter strong resistance from the military, and Widjojo feared their inclusion in the New Paradigm could spark a backlash among officers and sink the plan.

Yudhoyono accepted Widjojo's second draft, and the revised incremental approach also won crucial support by Wiranto, whom many officers viewed as having little ideological belief in the need for reform. However, Wiranto also was known as a pragmatist, and he recognized that, given the widespread public rejection of the Suharto regime, the relationship between the military and the government had to change. In August 1998, Wiranto said publicly that the military was ready for power sharing with civilians and that the armed forces did not have to play a central role in politics.²¹

"We were lucky we had General Wiranto as our commander in chief," retired general Sudrajat said. "He didn't have any background of education abroad, but he understood the issues, and the willingness to reform was there."

Wiranto signed Widjojo's document and announced the New Paradigm on September 1, less than four months after the resignation of his former boss.

Despite Widjojo's efforts to avoid the most contentious topics, his ideas ran afoul of many in the military. "At that time, some military officers did not support the New Paradigm because they already had stable careers," said retired lieutenant general Kiki. Widjojo's former colleague

Marasabessy added, “His opinion was considered radical.”

As commander of the military and minister of defense and security, Wiranto could sideline much of the opposition by issuing direct orders. Because the armed forces were well disciplined, officers were accustomed to following orders even if they personally disagreed. With Wiranto on board, the New Paradigm could be implemented from the top.

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

The New Paradigm’s initial reforms took place in a rapidly changing political atmosphere. The Habibie government began releasing political prisoners and stopped suppressing political opposition, thereby facilitating the formation of new political parties. The new president lifted censorship rules and free speech restrictions. By the first post-Suharto parliamentary elections in June 1999, there were 48 registered political parties, up from just 3 in 1997.²² “After being suppressed for many years by Suharto, political parties were like mushrooms in the rainy season,” Susilo said.

The Indonesian Democratic Party–Struggle, led by Megawati Sukarnoputri, a daughter of Indonesia’s first president, prevailed in the elections. Golkar came in second, a historic blow that spelled the end of its nearly 30 years of political dominance. Then the legislature elected a new president, Abdurrahman Wahid, member of the National Awakening Party and leader of Nahdlatul Ulama, the world’s largest Muslim civil society organization. Wahid was one of many former civil-society leaders who became strong political candidates in the post-Suharto era.

As those sweeping changes were taking place in Indonesian political life, the military was changing its ways. Initial reforms included the end of active duty officers’ participation in civilian government, the end of the military’s ties with Golkar, and separation of the police from the military. Civilian government also took steps to assert its primacy over the armed forces, and

soldiers’ training was updated to better reflect international human rights standards.

Getting out of civilian government

In late 1998, Wiranto ordered the withdrawal of military officers from posts in civilian government by April 1999. In June 1999, he announced that military headquarters had given 6,002 officers in civilian posts three options: to resign their commissions and become civil servants, leave their civilian posts and remain in the military, or retire. Wiranto’s order applied to most of the roughly 6,800 officers serving in government, with the exception of several hundred serving in posts pertaining to national security and defense, such as in the Ministry of Defense and Security and intelligence agencies.²³

Of the first 2,514 officers to make their decisions, more than half (1,393) retired, 593 resigned their commissions, and 528 left their civilian posts and returned to the military.²⁴ Relatively few of those first movers chose the last option because there were more opportunities for advancement in civilian government than in a military institution crowded with a large number of officers. In addition, officers who had spent years in civilian government had few personal connections at military headquarters and would face an uncertain future in the armed forces.²⁵

Although only a small fraction of Indonesia’s 451,000 active-duty military personnel served in civilian government positions, the officers who chose to return to the military from those posts presented a logistical challenge for Wiranto. Many had spent years in civilian government and did not have jobs waiting for them at military headquarters. To handle hundreds of new personnel, military headquarters created temporary special staff positions under regional military commanders, said Kiki, the retired lieutenant general who served as army deputy chief of staff from 2000 to 2002. The positions had no clear responsibilities beyond providing general support for officers until other work became available. “If we didn’t have jobs for

them, we had ‘parking-lot’ structures,” Sudrajat said of those positions. “All of them went to the parking lot before the military formation had slots for them. This was a big project.”

Wiranto’s order marked a major change in many officers’ career opportunities. “A colonel may have dreamed of becoming chief of a district,” Sudrajat said. “A regional military commander might have dreamed of becoming a governor. Now they had to give up those ambitions. Military is military. In the past, if I didn’t have a good career in the military, I could jump over to the civilian side.”

In November 1998, the military leadership announced that the position of armed forces chief of staff for social and political affairs had been abolished. The position had directed the military’s operations in civilian government.²⁶ Yudhoyono, who had held the position, took the newly created job of chief of staff for territorial affairs.

Other changes to the military’s political role followed. In March 2000, newly elected president Wahid and military leaders agreed to abolish Bakostranas, the military intelligence service that had surveilled and suppressed political dissent under Suharto. About 500 officers and civilians lost their jobs in the move, including three generals.²⁷

Bowing out of formal politics

To remove itself from formal political activity, the military had to break its strong institutional ties with the Golkar Party and the Suharto political system. But not all of the reforms could be implemented by the military alone; some required action by civilians in government or the parliament. One such reform was a reduction in the size of the military’s parliamentary bloc, the seats that military headquarters filled by direct assignment.

Although top-level military officers recognized that they would have to accept a significant reduction in their representation in

parliament, many were not yet prepared to completely abandon that important pillar of their formal political power. In late 1998, negotiations began between military leadership, the Golkar Party, and other parties represented in parliament. The final agreement slashed the military’s parliamentary representation roughly in half—to 38 seats from 70—in the 700-member People’s Representative Council and halved the military’s allotment in the regional and municipal assemblies to 10% of seats from 20%.²⁸ The agreement took effect with the 1999 elections.²⁹

In early 1999, Wiranto implemented another aspect of the New Paradigm by ordering the military’s withdrawal from the Golkar Party, by declaring the military’s political neutrality, and by pledging to work with all parties regardless of the outcomes of elections.³⁰ The military had been one of the Golkar Party’s three so-called functional groups that chose nominees, a position of huge influence because Golkar had won majorities in every election since 1971. By decreeing that military personnel could no longer be members of the party, Wiranto eliminated a central aspect of the military’s political power. The move came ahead of the much-anticipated June 1999 elections, the first to be held under Indonesia’s newly democratic, multiparty electoral system.

Although Wiranto’s order marked an abrupt break with past practices, officers said compliance went smoothly for several reasons. After protests led to Suharto’s resignation, military leaders recognized that their role in the dominant party was over. They followed orders and accepted that the political environment in Indonesia had changed in a way that made perpetuating the Suharto-era political system impossible. “Wiranto said the military is out of politics,” said former lieutenant general Sudrajat. “We gave up all involvement of the military in any political infrastructure.” He added that officers who had political ambitions had to leave the military. “If you were going to join a political party, you had to retire.”

Formal political activity had been the domain of a group of military elite serving in Golkar, and it was not a major concern among most members of the armed forces. Indonesian law forbade military members from voting in elections, meaning that the average soldier had no voice in formal politics.

Underscoring the success of Wiranto's initiative, the military appeared to have no influence on the outcome of the 1999 elections. Observers from the US-based Carter Center and the National Democratic Institute, two organizations that perform election monitoring, reported that the results were credible.³¹ Indeed, the political landscape changed radically that year. Golkar survived as a political party, but its share of the vote sank to 22% from 75% two years earlier.³²

In 2000, parliament passed a law decreeing that the military would have to withdraw its faction from the legislature by 2009 at the latest.³³

Separating the police from the military

In October 1998, Wiranto had announced that by April 1999, the police would separate from the armed forces. He also said that at the same time, the official name of the military would change from Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, meaning *Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia*, to Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), meaning *Indonesian National Army*. TNI had been the military's name during the war for independence against the Netherlands, and military and civilian leaders meant for the new name to reflect a new role for the armed forces.³⁴

Because the complete separation of the police from the military required parliamentary approval, Wiranto's initial actions aimed to prepare for the eventual split of the two services. First, he removed the police from the military command structure and placed it under the provisional control of the Ministry of Defense and Security. "The people wanted the police to be completely separate from the military," Sudrajat said. "Wiranto said, 'Not now, but let's take the

first step. The police will not be under military headquarters but in the Ministry of Defense.'"

Officers had differing accounts of the level of military support for the separation. Marasabessy said civilian demands for police reform constituted the main impetus. "It was part of the civilian reform requests. I thought that was a dominant factor," he said. But "from the military perspective, the police could not be controlled if they were separated."

"There was a national consensus," said Susilo, a civilian who served as a member of parliament from 1999 to 2009. "We wanted to separate the police from the military. There was almost no debate."

"The democratization movements wanted to see the police separated," Widjojo said. This opinion developed during riots and mass protests, when citizens did not want the military, which they had long distrusted and feared, in charge of internal security. "The argument was that this is a police function."

Widjojo said the need for the separation was obvious. "We knew way back when it was still under President Suharto," he said. "It's not difficult to see that the police should not be part of the armed forces." It was clear to reformist military officers that the internal law-and-order function of the police had little role in national defense. "We agreed that the police should be separated from the military," Sudrajat said. "They had their own responsibility to public security."

The police themselves supported the move, as it gave them independence from military headquarters. "The police were very excited to split from the military," Sudrajat said

In August 2000, parliament enacted two laws that formed the legal basis for fully separating the police from the military. The decrees stated that the military and the police were separate institutions, with the military responsible for national defense and the police for internal security, and that the police would report directly to the president.³⁵ "It was not only the command who ordered that separation," said Marasabessy.

Box 1. Missing the Point: The 2002 Police Law

Parliament formally separated the police from the military in 2000 and then passed the 2002 Police Law to specify the structure and responsibilities of the police force. In the years following, civil society members, legislators, and members of the military criticized the statute for not providing sufficient oversight over the police, who numbered more than 410,000 in 2012.

The law called for the chief of police to report directly to the president rather than to a ministry, as is common in many countries. The statute established a nine-member police commission that had an advisory role but no clear oversight authority. The commission's duty under the law was "to assist the president in determining directions of policies" of the police.

Kusnanto Anggoro, a lecturer at Indonesian Defense University, said the need to separate the police from the military overshadowed questions of how the police should be structured. "The priority in 1999 to 2002 was how to separate the national police from the military chain of command," he said. "We didn't really think seriously about institutions." The Ministry of Home Affairs may have been the proper authority to oversee the police, he said, but that ministry had been highly politicized under the Suharto government. Giving the ministry authority over the police would have raised concerns among legislators and civil society.

"We gave too much power to the police without proper oversight, without proper control," said Susilo, who was in parliament when the law passed. "At the time the situation was, we don't like the military, and we will give something to the police. Giving the police special privileges was an attempt to compensate after so many years under the military. The feeling at that time was, now the police deserved better treatment."

"The law was basically drafted by the national police itself," Anggoro said. Civil society had little input on the content of the legislation.

"The role of the commission is only like an advisory board," Susilo said. The head of the commission usually had been a police officer, Anggoro said, and the other members were most often civilian academicians.

"Considering the background of the commissioners, it would be very difficult to imagine that the commissioners could control the national police," Anggoro said. "Their expertise and experience are less than required."

Sources: Arientha Primanita, "SBY Wants 25,000 More Police Personnel to Handle Indonesia's Communal Conflicts," *Jakarta Globe*, July 25, 2012;

<http://thejakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/archive/sby-wants-25000-more-police-personnel-to-handle-indonesias-communal-conflicts/>;

The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 2 Year 2002; <http://www.track.unodc.org/LegalLibrary/LegalResources/Indonesia/Laws/AML%20laws/Indonesia%20Law%20No%202%20Concerning%20the%20State%20Police%202002.pdf>.

It was a political decision by the president and the government. Whether it wanted to or not, the military had to obey the president's orders." (See Box 1 for details.)

The two parliamentary decrees also barred active-duty members of the police and military from seeking political office.

Strengthening civilian control

Shortly after taking office in October 1999, Wahid moved to consolidate civilian control over the armed forces by splitting the two positions that Wiranto had held since the waning days of the Suharto regime: commander of the armed forces and minister of defense and security.

Wahid chose Juwono Sudarsono to be Indonesia's first civilian minister of defense and security since the 1950s. Sudarsono, a political scientist who held graduate degrees from European and US universities, had taught midlevel officers at Indonesian National Defense College from 1995 to 1998. The new minister had earned the military's respect, and he had personal connections with the country's rising generation of military leaders, many of whom perceived him as a moderate willing to work with them. Widjojo and Kiki said the appointment was well received by military officers. "Juwono understood the military and understood relations between civilians and the military," Widjojo said. Kiki added, "Juwono Sudarsono was the perfect person because he deeply understood defense issues."

Although officers accepted the switch to civilian leadership in the ministry, the laws defining the relationship between the military and the ministry remained on the books. This meant the minister of defense and security remained outside the military's command structure, and the commander of the armed forces continued to enjoy the status of a cabinet-level minister with direct access to the president and cabinet meetings. Plus, orders to the commander had to come from the president, not the minister.³⁶

At the same time, Wahid made history by appointing navy Admiral Widodo to be commander of the armed forces, a move that signaled the president's desire to reduce the influence of the army. The position had been held by army generals since the 1960s and had represented one aspect of the army's dominance over the other military branches (the air force, the navy, and, until 1999, the police). The appointment of a navy admiral was also noteworthy because the navy had historically been more politically liberal and less repressive than the army.³⁷ Much of the military's political and economic power had been concentrated in the army, which held most of the military's seats

in parliament and controlled more foundations and business ventures than the other branches did. Army officers held the majority of the military's positions in government, and they staffed most of the important interservice command positions in the military. With Widodo's appointment, Wiranto retired from the military and moved to the cabinet as coordinating minister of political affairs and security.

Changing military conduct

Military leadership also changed officers' and soldiers' training curriculum to better conform with international human rights standards. That change focused on differentiating between combatants and noncombatants, and the controversy surrounding the postreferendum violence in East Timor demonstrated that a change had to be made. "When TNI conducted operations in East Timor, when they met anybody in the forest, they immediately shot them," said Kiki, who had served 11 years as a field officer in East Timor.³⁸ "It was against humanitarian law if the victim was a noncombatant. So the curriculum teaches them the difference between combatants and noncombatants and what they have to do."

In 2000, the Indonesian military partnered with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to reform its curriculum, Kiki said. Together they established a working group on military education, and the military sent officers to Europe for training in the new curriculum.

"The military on the ground now said no, even if there are some riots, first they have to receive orders," said Edy Prasetyono, a lecturer at the University of Indonesia who had also taught officers at Indonesian military service academies. He said ICRC representatives had visited Indonesia to meet with military officials about how to integrate humanitarian law into the armed forces and create new rules of engagement.

Little progress resulted from advancing military training and education in fields other than

human rights, however. The curriculum remained largely the same as it had been prior to Suharto's resignation.³⁹

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Although most officers in Indonesia's armed forces had the military discipline required to endure the conversion to civilian control, tensions grew under the country's first two civilian presidents. The tensions started because of the military's initial uncertainty about the power transition, worsened during brutal fighting in separatist East Timor during Habibie's term, and culminated when tanks rolled through the streets of Jakarta in a display of military force that preceded the parliament's impeachment of Wahid.

East Timor was one of several areas of the country that had separatist movements. The situation had boiled since 1975, when Indonesia invaded and occupied the region not long after Portugal relinquished control of its former colony. Thousands had died during more than two decades of conflict.

In 1999, after talks with the United Nations and Portugal, Habibie made a bold decision: to allow East Timor voters to decide whether they wanted independence or autonomy in Indonesia. The president's decision did not sit well with many political leaders or with much of Indonesia's population, who felt that East Timor should remain part of Indonesia.⁴⁰

The idea also stunned many military leaders, whose troops had been deployed in East Timor for more than 20 years. "All of a sudden, President Habibie announced that the government will pursue a policy to give popular consultation to the people of East Timor," Widjojo said. "This was a surprise. That was in January 1999, and the referendum was to be held in August 1999—a very tight time frame."

After the referendum results showed a landslide (78.5%) in favor of independence, chaos erupted in East Timor. Accounts of the violence vary, but international rights organization Human

Rights Watch said there was evidence that Indonesian military leaders were complicit in attacks by pro-Indonesian Timorese armed groups against independence activists. More than a thousand people died in conflicts with anti-independence militias. Attackers burned homes and committed acts of sexual violence. Human Rights Watch accused the Indonesian military of being involved in the forced displacement of 300,000 East Timorese within East Timor and the expulsion of 200,000 into neighboring West Timor, out of a prereferendum population of about 850,000.⁴¹

Apart from the alleged complicity of military officers, the East Timor situation in 1999 illuminated the shortcomings of Indonesia's armed forces and police. Prior to the referendum, Habibie's government had assigned the police to maintain order. "This was the first time that the police were given an independent mission separate from the armed forces," Widjojo said, but neither the military nor the police were well trained in new rules of engagement for the post-Suharto era. "The security forces were confused," Widjojo added. "If something happens, what should we do? We cannot kill them anymore."

In January 2000, Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights in East Timor, which had been established by a presidential decree in 1993,⁴² concluded that Wiranto had full knowledge of the violence in East Timor. The commission asserted that Wiranto, as the military's commanding officer, was responsible for the bloodshed along with six other commanders.⁴³ In February, Wahid removed Wiranto from the cabinet due to the allegations.⁴⁴

The military's relationship with civilian government continued to weaken when President Wahid, who served from 1999 to 2001, sought to exert personal control over promotions and appointments in the armed forces. Many officers, especially those who had been displaced or passed over, resented civilian interference in what the military had long perceived as its internal affairs. "This was against our system," Sudrajat

said. "It cannot be done like that. It would destroy our doctrine."

Some officers said Wahid made those personnel decisions to promote officers he felt were politically loyal. Widjojo recalled that Wahid "was always looking for that group: those officers who seemed to indicate allegiance to his political power." Indeed, Marasabessy said some officers carried the president's favor to build their careers. "Some of us were trying to use the reform process to get positions and promotions," Marasabessy said of military officers. "Some of us exploited the reform for personal interests."

Rizal Ramli, an economist who served in several positions in Wahid's government, said the president was trying to exert civilian control over the armed forces by taking a personal role in military appointments and promotions. Wahid removed both Sudrajat and Marasabessy from their posts during his time in office, but Sudrajat later took a new position in the Ministry of Defense and Security.

"The promotions in the military at the middle and basic levels should be given to the military itself and should be based on merit," said Kiki. "They shouldn't be determined by the president. However, at the time, Wahid insisted on directly appointing military officers—even down to the level of district-level military commander. The chief of Kostrad (Army Strategic Command) at the time, Agus Wirihadikusumah, had been appointed by the president. He was supposed to be appointed by internal military consensus, by merit. It caused very strong resistance from within the military." Wirihadikusumah advocated further institutional reforms in the military, and his promotion was unpopular with officers close to Wiranto and Widodo, who was then commander of the armed forces.⁴⁵

Wahid's casual leadership style clashed with the rigid adherence to protocol that defined the military. "There was no formality," Sudrajat said. "He was [a nongovernmental organization] person, an activist, and when he came to the

presidential palace, he ran it just like Nahdlatul Ulama," the large Islamic group he had led prior to becoming president. Sudrajat said Wahid made himself too available to a variety of people who wanted the president to act in their favor. "Everybody can come; everybody talks," Sudrajat said.

Although officers said there was no direct conflict with Wahid, military leaders took a clear position against the president during a political crisis in 2001. By 2001, a coalition had formed in parliament that wished to remove Wahid from office. Wahid's government was suffering from allegations of corruption and concerns over what critics said was his erratic leadership style. Continued disorder and poor economic performance contributed to his loss of support.⁴⁶ At the time, Wahid was also in poor health and nearly blind.

In May 2001, Wahid threatened to dissolve parliament by decree and declare a state of emergency. Kiki said Wahid tried but failed to gain the military's political support. "The military and the police refused to support the decree because there would be a clash in society," Kiki said. Army chief of staff Endriartono Sutarto took a public stand against such a move, which he said was "against democracy."⁴⁷ Ryamizard Ryacudu, head of army strategic command, also aligned himself with parliament, as did the chief of police.⁴⁸ Mohammad Mahfud, who was minister of defense and security at the time, criticized the military for disloyalty to the president and said such actions could lead to jail time. President Wahid had appointed Mahfud, a civilian lawyer, to the position in August 2000.⁴⁹

Every political party in parliament except for Wahid's voted in May 2001 to begin impeachment proceedings. The military faction abstained from the initial vote, but military leaders expressed their support for parliament.⁵⁰ As the political pressure grew, Wahid again threatened to declare a state of emergency. Yudhoyono, whom Wahid had appointed coordinating minister of political affairs and

security in August 2000, publicly opposed such a measure. Wahid removed him from the cabinet in June 2001.⁵¹

After Wahid appointed a new police chief without seeking the necessary parliamentary approval, the conflict between the president and the parliament boiled over, and the military took an active role in the political battle. Ryacudu said the military was united in supporting parliament, and he mobilized troops. In a show of force, more than 2,000 soldiers from the army, the air force, and the navy deployed with tanks near the presidential palace in Jakarta. Early on July 23, Wahid announced that he was suspending the parliament, but military officers did not comply.⁵² The military and police faction in parliament joined all but two members of parliament in a vote to reject the state of emergency.⁵³

On July 23, all 591 members of parliament, including the military and police faction, voted to impeach Wahid.⁵⁴ Widjojo said it was a lose-lose situation for the military. "How do we vote? If we vote in support of parliament, we will be taking sides," he said. "We will still be in politics. We will be partisan. If we take sides against parliament, again we will still be partisan. We actually had stated that we are on our way out of politics, and that was in the early days of our new role out of politics, but ironically, the political dynamics were so intense."

Parliament immediately replaced Wahid with Megawati, his vice president and a daughter of Indonesia's first president. Megawati was less assertive about civilian control over the military and did not seek the same degree of control over promotions and appointments.⁵⁵

ASSESSING RESULTS

Reforms initiated in the armed forces and continued by civilians made clear gains in setting Indonesia's government on track toward becoming a more democratic system free from involvement of the military in political affairs. Such institutional changes destroyed much of the old military-dominated political system.

By 2000, active-duty officers no longer served in most ministries, and the military bloc in parliament was far smaller. The military removed itself from formal party politics, severing ties with the Golkar Party and declaring its neutrality in the 1999 elections. The military relinquished control of the police. And the leader of the armed forces publicly proclaimed that the military was no longer the leading influence in Indonesian social and political life. Indonesia's civilian-led government appointed a civilian to head the Ministry of Defense and Security and abolished the military's secret-police institutions.

Those changes brought Indonesia closer to the model of civilian-military relations described by democracy theorists. First, the military must be accountable to civilian government: top generals take orders from the executive, and the military's budget and defense policy are subject to legislative oversight. Second, active-duty members of the military should not run for elected office or hold posts in government. Third, the military must not have business interests or otherwise control a significant portion of a state's economy. Finally, the military must accept democratic rule and obey elected officials.

The reforms implemented from 1998 to 2000 succeeded in making the military more accountable to a civilian government. Prior to the New Paradigm reforms, the line between the government and the military was blurred, and most citizens perceived no distinction. After 1998, a system began to evolve that separated the military from government and created opportunities for civilians to exercise control over defense affairs. The military also forced most of the active-duty officers to choose being in either the civil service or the armed forces and agreed to reduce its presence in parliament. Although the continued presence of officers in parliament remained problematic, the sharp reduction in their numbers indicated progress toward the goal of eliminating armed-forces active participation in legislative matters.

Still, reform efforts left certain significant challenges unresolved. The New Paradigm did not address the military's control of business interests. The territorial command structure remained intact as well, leaving the military with a strong presence throughout the country and creating opportunities for influencing local governments. In addition, in the first few years of its implementation, the New Paradigm document was not supported by any legislation that formally codified changes to the military's role in society and its relationship to civilian government.

Although *structural changes* to the military were relatively easy to implement from the top down, *cultural transformation* in both the military and Indonesian society was much slower. Widjojo said Indonesian citizens did not immediately understand that the military should no longer intervene in internal affairs—including in security threats like terrorism or separatist movements in Aceh and Papua—without orders from the civilian government. “It’s not a task for the military,” Widjojo said. “That has to be repeated again and again and again to be realized in the public opinion.”

Impunity for military personnel also remained a problem. Human Rights Watch criticized the Indonesian court system for acquitting officers and soldiers accused of crimes or for not issuing sufficiently harsh punishments when military personnel were found guilty of misconduct.⁵⁶

Although the separation of the police from the armed forces was effective in removing the military from many internal security responsibilities, Wahid’s decision to have the police report directly to the president created problems. “We really missed putting them in their proper place under a political authority,” Widjojo said.

“When we split the police, we didn’t have police officers with a reform mind-set,” Sudrajat said. “This was out of the control of the military. The president had the responsibility.” Following separation from the military, the police were

widely viewed by citizens as corrupt and unprofessional. The 2013 Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer reported that 91% of Indonesian respondents said the police were corrupt.⁵⁷

Although many military officers left civilian government, active-duty personnel remained dominant in the Ministry of Defense and Security (a 2002 law renamed it the Ministry of Defense). More than a decade after Suharto’s fall, few civilians worked in the ministry. “Civilians getting into the Ministry of Defense are very limited,” said Anggoro, lecturer at Indonesian Defense University, in 2015. He said civilians held only 25 to 30% of top-level positions in the ministry and only 10 to 12% of lower-level positions.

The small number of civilians in the ministry meant the armed forces remained the primary driver of military doctrine. Widjojo said he favored a greater role for civilians, but he also said there was good reason for the continued imbalance. “We lack civilians who understand problems of defense and the military,” he said. “Without experience it’s not easy to understand the nitty-gritty of the internal workings of the military and defense.”

The Indonesian reform process did not attempt to hold military personnel responsible for crimes or human rights violations committed during the Suharto years. An analyst who did not wish to be named said Indonesians were eager to put the past behind them. “The trade-off is, do you want to face them head-on immediately when reform actually takes place, in 1998 or 1999, or basically negotiate with them and say we’re not going to do anything,” the analyst said. “Indonesia chose the latter. We’re not going to fight you, we’re not going to impoverish you, but we want to move forward. To some extent, you could see that as a strategic decision, it was the right decision. However, the real costs were the lives and rights of those who had been harmed in the past, and there was no justice for them.”

Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer regularly reported that

Indonesian citizens viewed the military as less corrupt than the police, political parties, the legislature, and the courts, but 41% of respondents in the 2013 report, the most recent available in mid-2015, still said the military was corrupt.⁵⁸

REFLECTIONS

Indonesia's military was able to implement early reforms quickly—in part because it was an institution in which changes could be ordered from the top. In a disciplined military, soldiers respect the orders of their superiors, even if they do not personally agree with them. “In the military, it's unlike a political organization where you have an open debate,” said Agus Widjojo, who drafted the New Paradigm document while an officer at military headquarters. “The structure of the organization is a command hierarchy. So, if it is ordered by the commanding general, that's good enough.”

The military had broad freedom to pursue initial reforms on its own, without much negotiation with civilians. Civil society was interested primarily in socioeconomic issues and the basic elements of democratization, and it paid less attention to institutional changes in the military. That distinction may have smoothed the way for initial reforms because the changes required no public discussion.

Widjojo emphasized that the initial reform agenda had come from within the military, not from the outside, and he said that that was a key to its success. “The politicians were in confusion,” Widjojo said. “The politicians were not concerned with the military, so the military had the luxury of drawing the blueprint for reform by ourselves. There was a *de facto* vacuum of political authority overseeing the military then.”

In a situation that involved activist military officers, the absence of civilian involvement likely helped streamline the early reform process. “Reform is most likely to succeed when it is initiated from within an institution. Reform

cannot be forced by external elements,” Widjojo said. “The military took advantage of an opportunity. Reform was initiated by the military and decided in the small circle of its headquarters, and once it was decided, it was directly implemented as a command policy.”

Sudrajat, who was a lieutenant general when the reforms began, also said military reform driven from within the armed forces was an important reason for Indonesia's success in moving from authoritarianism to a more democratic system. Civilians, he stressed, could not have initiated the changes by themselves. “The inner core of the reform is in the military,” he said. “If the military didn't agree, how big would the push from civilians be? They could easily have been dominated by the military.”

“The reform had come from very few generals,” Sudrajat said. “But the military is the military, and the subordinates had to follow what their superiors said.” Once a few top leaders were on board, the reforms could be implemented.

“Even the process of reform itself was discussed [primarily] in the circles of the headquarters of the commanding general and his commanding assistants,” Widjojo said.

Military officers' foreign training, too, had a positive impact on the reform process. Indonesia benefited from a group of officers who had had years of exposure to other military cultures and institutions. Several officers said such background was an important aspect in their desire to develop the Indonesian military into an institution that respected the norms of civilian-military relations witnessed in the United States, Australia, and other democratic countries.

The reform process also benefited from an approach that was more evolutionary than revolutionary. Because the early reform agenda was gradual, the changes did not stir the resistance of conservative officers who could become spoilers. Instead of erasing the dual-function system by eliminating the military's nondefense role, the reform plan instead called for the armed forces to play a less-active role in

Box 2. Factors Contributing to Success

Following orders: The Indonesian military was already professional in major respects. Officers in the Indonesian military respected the command hierarchy and followed orders from their superiors. Even if some did not personally agree with the reforms that the leading generals implemented, they did not contradict their commanding officers. In less-disciplined armed forces, there might have been more resistance to change within military institutions.

Internal will to reform: At the time of Suharto's resignation, advocates for reform held positions in the armed forces hierarchy overseeing the political role of the Indonesian military and the development of military doctrine. Although Wiranto did not strongly champion reform, he was pragmatic and willing to listen. Without a will to change from within the military, the armed forces could have acted as a spoiler by disrupting civilian-led efforts to reform the military-dominated political system that was in place under Suharto.

Gradual approach to reform: Instead of pursuing a reform agenda that would have rapidly eliminated all of the military's political and economic privileges, military and civilian leaders took a more gradual approach. Although it meant that important problems in civilian-military relations would remain unaddressed for at least the short term, it diminished opposition from conservative officers. The military and civilian leaders began with a set of reforms that made important changes to the relationship between the military and the civilian government, but they refrained from taking on the military's economic interests or immediately eliminating the military's representation in parliament.

Indonesian political and social life. The internal reforms the military pursued from 1998 to 2000 helped pave the way for civilians to implement further reforms in subsequent years.

Predictable problems emerged from civilians' lack of knowledge in the area of defense issues, a deficiency that stemmed from the closed nature of the long-running Suharto dictatorship. Because military officers perceived that lack of relevant knowledge among civilian policy makers, cooperation was problematic. "It's a huge problem because you cannot lead a defense institution if you don't understand defense issues," said Kiki Syahnakri, a retired lieutenant general who served as the army's deputy chief of staff from 2000 to 2002.

Sudrajat said he shared Kiki's concern. "We need real civilian capacity for sitting at the table designing how the military should be," he said. "So far, our backbone consists of those who graduated from military academies. We need a backbone coming from universities. We're working on it, but it takes time."

Widjojo said more could have been done to enhance civilian capacity in government. "You have to prepare for the situation after the reform," he said. "You have to prepare the capacity of the institutions that will replace the military or that will undertake those roles that before the reform, the military had. We were late in this."

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