

INVOLVEMENT OF MILITARY IN INDONESIAN POLITICS

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Abstract

The Indonesian military's involvement in socio-political and economic sectors of the country is clearly enshrined in country's doctrine and ideology. Unlike other nations of the world whose military is handed over the only responsibility of guarding the borders, Indonesian military is given additional responsibility of serving the nation by guarding and managing socio-political affairs along with the protection of borders. After some reforms the military's role in socio-political and economic sectors were made limited but still Indonesian military plays a significant role of maintaining the peace within the country and defending the borders against any external threat. Although Indonesian military is legally and ideologically bound to carry out political responsibilities, many officers use their positions in advancements of their political and economic interests. In order to be true democratic, it is necessary for the military to adopt professionalism and confine itself to the external defense of the country.

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Introduction

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, situated in Southeast Asia is the largest archipelago state comprising more than 17,500 islands and islets of which about 6,000 are inhabited. This archipelago connects two oceans, the Pacific and Indian oceans, and two continents, Asia and Australia. Divided in three divisions, the islands of Java, Sumatra and Kalimantan, Indonesia have various ethnic groups residing in those divisions. For example, Acehnese, the Batak, Malays, Jambi, Palembang live in the island of Sumatra. Betawi, Javanese, and Sundanese live in island of Java. Whereas Dayak, Banjar, and Malays live in Kalimantan. The Javanese are the politically dominant and largest ethnic group. Islam is the major religion of Indonesia, whereas Hinduism and Buddhism were propagated by the Indian merchants and those who migrated and now these religions are very much present in Indonesian islands.¹

Despite being world's most populous Muslim-majority country, officially Indonesia is not an Islamic state, it's a republic with an elected parliament and president. Indonesia achieved its independence from Dutch after World War II through armed struggle in 1945. Since then Indonesia has been ruled most of the time by military rulers—first by Sukarno who was ousted by a communist coup in 1965, then by Suharto, a General, for more than 30 years. His government, was called the New Order, whereas, Sukarno's government was called Guided Democracy. However, during the governments of both the army rulers, there has remained the close relationship between Indonesian government and

Indonesian military. This paper will illustrate the Indonesian military's role in socio-political, economic and security sectors of the country.

Political Structure of Indonesia

Indonesia consists of 7 state organs according to amended 1945 constitution:

1. People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat-MPR*),
2. The House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat-DPR*),
3. The Regional Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Daerah-DPD*),
4. The State Audit Board (*Badan Pemeriksa Kellangan-BPK*),
5. The Presidency,
6. The Supreme Court (*Mahkamah Agung-MA*) and, 7. The Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi-MK*)²

1. **People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat-MPR*)**

The People's Consultative Assembly is the highest representative body at national level performing the functions of supporting and amending the constitution, inaugurating the president, and formalizing broad outlines of state policy. The assembly has also authority to discharge the president and vice-president during his/her term of office. The MPR

comprises of two houses, the House of People's Representative (DPR) and the Regional Representatives Council (DPD).

2. The House of People's Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat-DPR*)

The House of People's Representatives (DPR) consists of 550 members. The DPR passes legislation and monitors the executive branch. Its members are elected for five years term. The House of People's Representative meets annually and is led by a speaker elected from the membership.³

3. The Regional Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Daerah-DPD*)

The Regional Representative Council (DPD) consists of 168 members, is aimed at enhancing the democratic life and developing a mechanism of check-and-balance between legislative and executive bodies. The DPD is summoned annually, for discussing the bills concerning to the State Budget and tax, education and religious affairs.

4. The State Audit Board (*Badan Pemeriksa Kellangan-BPK*)

The State Audit Board carries out the financial functions of the government. The government's budget requests are approved by the DPR on the reports made by the State Audit Board.⁴

5. **The Presidency**

The President of Indonesia is the head of the state, commander-in-chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, and the director of domestic governance, policy making and foreign affairs and is assisted by a Vice-President. Both President and Vice-President are elected directly by the people and hold office for five year term, and shall be eligible for another term.

6. **The Supreme Court (*Mahkamah Agung-MA*) and 7. The Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi-MK*)**

The Judiciary of Indonesia consists of various courts working under the supremacy of the Supreme Court that is country's highest court and that hears final cassation appeals and conducts case reviews. These courts are: State Court for most the civil disputes; High Court hears the appeals; Commercial Court for handling the bankruptcy and insolvency; State Administrative Court to hear administrative law cases against the government; a Constitutional Court to hear disputes concerning legality of law, general elections, dissolution of political parties; and a Religious Court for specific religious cases. ⁵

Military Structure of Indonesia

The military refers, generally to country's armed forces or sometimes, more specifically, senior officers running them. Military of any country usually works for national defense and security, whereas in Indonesia, military is assigned the duties

of maintaining the political and social integrity of the nation along with national defense and security. Armed forces of the Republic of Indonesia ABRI (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*) under the New Order and renamed TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*- Indonesian National Military) in 1999 consist of three military services-the Army, Navy, and Air Force- and the police (until its separation in April 1999).⁶ The GDP of Indonesia in 2006 was about 3,143 trillion Indonesian Rupiah or US\$346 billion. The defense budget was near 23.6 trillion Indonesian Rupiah or US\$2.59 billion. The total number of military personnel is 923,000 out of which 302,000 are active personnel, who are divided in 233,000 Army, 45,000 Navy and 24,000 Air Force and along with this 280,000 are in paramilitary.⁷ Indonesian military arsenal possesses 613 Aircrafts, 969 Armor, 700 Artillery Systems, 91 Missile Defense System, 1,790 Infantry Support Systems, 121 Naval Units, and 750 Merchant Marine Strength.⁸

Involvement of Military in Indonesian Politics

Indonesian military plays a critical role in country's socio-political and economic life. It also played a vital role in history by keeping country united at the time of revolutionary struggle against the Dutch. Thus, the military structure of Indonesia shows how it designed itself according to its most serious concern that security and integrity of the nation. Therefore, the country's military structure is an inherently political one.

Military of Indonesia has since very beginning held the top positions in political structure of the country and had represented itself at various levels of state, provincial and local administration. Many administrative positions have been held

by retired army generals and other officers. President Suharto ruled the country for a very long period of more than 30 years. He was an army general and supported strongly by the military establishment. During his time most of the cabinet membership was from military establishment. Military officers held posts starting from village chief, sub-district head, regent, mayor, governor, up to ministers. The military officers possessed seats in the DPDs and DPRs without being elected by the common people denying the fact that all legislative seats must be won by elections.

During President Suharto era, the military was given a doctrine called “dual function or *dwi fungsi*” in Indonesia. According to this doctrine, the military of Indonesia has the double role, one of internal and external security of the country, and other as an active component of the social and political life of the state. ⁹ The Indonesian military considers *dwi fungsi* to be the heart, soul and spirit of the military, as it believes that the security and socio-political development is inseparable. This concept was first developed in seminars at the Indonesian General Staff and Command College in the early 1960’s. It was tried to make *dwi fungsi* an official policy when Suharto assumed power in 1966. But in 1982 *dwi fungsi* became official policy when the ‘Basic Provisions for the Defence and Security of the Republic of Indonesia’ became law.

The Military’s Perceptions of *Dwifungsi*

First Function		Second Function	
<i>is called the</i>			
1.	Defense role	1.	Socio-political role
2.	Professional role	2.	Patriotic role

3. Primary role	3. Secondary role
4. Security role	4. Functional role
5. Role as protector	5. Role as struggler
6. Role as security apparatus	6. Role as social force
7. Role as instrument of state	7. Instrument of revolution
8. Role as security force	8. Role as freedom fighter
<i>is concerned with</i>	
9. Military affairs	9. Civilian affairs
10. Nation-defending	10. Nation-building
11. Preventing disintegration	11. Seeking integration
12. Security	12. Prosperity
13. Protection	13. Development
14. Discipline	14. Cooperation
<i>can be described as</i>	
15. War-oriented	15. Peace-oriented
16. Authoritarian	16. Paternal
17. Stabilizing	17. Dynamizing
18. Oriented towards law enforcement	18. Oriented toward law making
19. Government-oriented	19. Populace-oriented
20. Status quo-oriented	20. Modernization-oriented
21. Subordinate to Parliament	21. Political leadership
22. Intermittent role	22. Continuous role
23. Singular role	23. Multi-faceted role
24. Fighting role	24. Conciliatory role
25. The will to resist	25. The will to grow
26. Universally accepted	26. Sceptically accepted

Source: Sukardi Rinakit, *The Indonesian Military after the New Order*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Denmark, 2005, p. 36.

The active role of military in political affairs of the country is not mentioned in the constitution but as the country is mostly ruled by the army generals, the military is assigned the role, whatever those generals wished the military to play. And as the constitution of Indonesia clearly states that all citizens are equal before law and are obliged to respect the law and government, and as every citizen has right to take active part in defense of the country, the military can also freely participate in government and business along with the other citizens of Indonesia.¹⁰ The military, and state and society of Indonesia have very deep relationship with each other, which is very much apparent from another doctrine that is basically army's basic military strategy called 'Universal People's Defence'. According to this doctrine, the people and army will fight together against any possible threat to the independence and sovereignty of the nation.

Besides playing the two roles of a professional army and a social force, Indonesian military also plays an active role in economic sector of the country, by having control over state owned companies and cooperatives. Alongwith the functions of defense and security, according to the 1945 constitution, the armed forces are supposed to contribute their efforts in fields outside defense and security. In this regards, the armed forces form a functional group to take part in the determination of state policy. The main role of the armed forces being functional group is thus to take active part in most of the state affairs that is politics, economy, and social affairs.¹¹

Defense spending in the national budget is only 3 percent of the GDP but is supplemented by revenue from many military-

run businesses and foundations, including those in the areas of natural resources and agribusiness, finance, real estate, manufacturing and construction. The armed forces of Indonesia are even alleged to be involved in the black marketing, smuggling, and illegal mining and logging. Though this black marketing was used to finance the armed forces but now it has become the source of personal enrichment of many senior officers.¹² Hundreds of companies are run by the army, navy and the air force of Indonesia in every field of life, such as, holding companies, trading companies, forestry, food and beverages, chemicals, metal products, construction, industrial real estate, banking and finance, fisheries, air services, plantation, wood, manufacturing, mining, textiles, pharmaceutical, transportation, education, tourism/resorts, property (offices / shopping centre).¹³

As Indonesia faces more internal threats than external threats, therefore, the military of Indonesia continues to play internal role more than the external one as Indonesia has not faced any external threat since its independence in 1949. Indonesian military is assigned three types of operations according to the Indonesian army doctrine for national defense: intelligence operations, combat operations and territorial operations. Intelligence operations are conducted by the TNI to seize an area occupied by an enemy, the combat operations has the purpose to destroy the enemy, whereas territorial operations are to create or restore political, economic, social or cultural order.

The territorial operation is further divided into two types: Territorial operations (Constructions) that are directed to

improve the condition of a particular area considered being at risk of political and social instability, and Territorial operations (Opposition/Resistance) are those efforts and energies directed to restore or impose political and social stability. Those territorial operations are mostly used by Indonesia particularly in the areas where separatism seems to be in process like East Timor, Aceh, and Papua (Irian Jaya).¹⁴ The power of military can be seen in the existence of territorial commands. For the purpose of carrying out territorial operations, the TNI has established some territorial units following the bureaucracy hierarchy: (i) Kodam (*Komando Daerah Militer*-Military Command Areas) for social development and security role, for which it performs intelligence and internal security functions and maintains contacts with local officials, (ii) Kostrad (*Komando Cadangan Strategik Angkatan Darat*-Army Strategic Command), it is TNI's primary combat unit, by which the TNI can engage in higher-level military actions, (iii) Kopassus, the elite Special Forces Command, which performs the functions related to human rights abuses and state terrorism. It is mostly known for its counter-insurgency activities against separatist movements in East Timor, Aceh and Irian Jaya.¹⁵

Indonesia because of being so ethnically and religiously diverse faces great threats of separatism most of the time. The separatism does not only threaten the security of the particular country but the region as a whole as it encourages other separatist movements as well. In Indonesia, the independence to East Timor encouraged Acehnese and Papuans to fight for their cause more strongly. In this context the national integrity becomes the major factor and major concern for policy makers. The province of Aceh in Indonesia is rich in oil and gas

reserves, producing highest wealth whereas the share of income and consumption per person is perhaps the lowest in the national ranking.¹⁶ Papua experienced an armed independence movement due to exploitation of the island's vast gold, copper and other mineral resources, and insensitivity to local culture and land ownership practices. East Timorese started resisting Indonesian government after it invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975. The strict control over the resources of the East Timor resulted in famine and disease in the province, which created strong criticism among the international forum causing so many problems for national integrity.¹⁷ At the time of all these instances of strong opposition against the government, Indonesian military played a significant role in maintaining the integrity of the region, failing only in one case of East Timor, which achieved its independence due to huge international criticism and support.

One of the three defense operations of Indonesian army doctrine--the territorial operations allows Indonesian army to carry out operations against anti-government or separatist movements. The creation and restoration of internal order has become Indonesian military's major responsibility because of various separatist movements present in the archipelago.¹⁸ This sense of separatism among various ethnic and religious groups residing in Indonesia could have caused secession of more provinces or regions if the military of Indonesia would not have played its major internal role of maintaining peace and order in the country and ensuring the national integrity.

Conclusion

The military of any country when gets so much involved in the other sectors of the country other than the external defense, brings positive as well as negative consequences to the nation. The involvement of Indonesian military in politics often fosters the military's domination over the civil bureaucracy and exposes its militaristic culture and behavior in various social matters. The critics believe that the military's involvement in business and economic matters of the country is just to raise profit for their companies functioning all over the country. Despite its efforts in maintaining peace and law and order in the areas where separatist movements are very much active, the TNI or Indonesian military is often criticized on human rights bases as it gives the monopoly over the use of arms. On the other hand, the *dwi fungsi* doctrine of Indonesian military according to which the TNI performs dual function, one of internal and external security of the country, and other as an active component of the social and political life of the state is not only praised within the country but other multi-ethnic countries of Southeast Asia are also planning to import such doctrine in their respective country's policies to handle numerous ideological challenges to the government and to keep the nation united.

However, like most of the democratic countries of the world, the role of military in Indonesia should also be limited to the external defense only, so that military could not exploit its monopoly over the use of arms and human rights violations should not take place. The armed forces should focus and utilize its resources on external threats such as piracy, border

clashes, and possible encroachment on Indonesian maritime resources. Besides this, the national police should be given full authority and training to deal with the insurgencies and internal security problems. The armed forces should come to assistance to the national police if in any case the police are unable to handle the situation. To some extent, the armed forces are restricted to the external defense only but the TNI is still involved in counterinsurgency operations in East Timor and Irian Jaya, but still there is the need of change.

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