

The military and democracy in Indonesia

Abstract for chapter 2

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In this chapter, the author states that in order to understand the Armed Forces of Indonesia (ABRI) and its attitude towards democracy, it is important to grasp the relationship between the military and the state in Indonesia.

As well as the early history of the ABRI, the author gives details of Suharto's relationship with the ABRI, the early years under the New Order, and the more recent years as the ABRI faces an uncertain future.

In summary, the author doubts that there could be a radical departure from the current patterns of social and political control as practised by the New Order while ABRI continues to play such a prominent role.

Keywords

ABRI, civil-military relationship, democracy, Golkar, Indonesia, New Order, Soekarno, Suharto

2

THE MILITARY AND DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA

Michael R.J. Vatikiotis

At the close of the 1980s, Indonesia's military was in a state of flux. Over a decade of declining political fortunes for an institution considered the fulcrum of President Suharto's New Order regime was generating something of an identity crisis. Yet as the political edifice which the military helped erect in the mid 1960s showed signs of age and decline, the military moved awkwardly to adapt its image and role in order to preserve its perceived position as the principal body in the political constellation. In doing so, new interpretations of the civil-military relationship evolved.

To understand the Armed Forces of Indonesia (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* or ABRI) – and its attitude towards democracy – it is important to grasp the relationship between the military and the state in Indonesia. Basically, this relationship developed under stress. The earliest independent civilian government of the new republic, as Kahin (1952) and more recently Salim (1991) describe, hesitated to form a national army and prevaricated over its form. At the same time, the armed revolutionary youth groups (*pemuda*) which had launched the armed struggle almost as soon as the Japanese imperial occupation collapsed in August 1945 were suspicious of the civilian nationalists who not only hesitated to declare independence, but were keener to organise political parties than a national army. This reluctance on the part of the civilian government to deal with the army in the early days of the revolution created, Salim (1991:33) suggests,

a particular pattern of civilian military relations, and all subsequent efforts to bring the army completely under its control failed.

This bifurcation of the two most important elements of the Indonesian polity at so formative a stage of its existence provides a useful guide to the country's subsequent political history.

Essentially, the history of Indonesian government since independence has been the progressive emasculation of the multi-party, parliamentary democracy envisaged by nationalist leaders, like Soetan Sjahrir, imbued in various degrees with the European liberal socialist orthodoxy. Sjahrir, as expressed in his influential 1945 pamphlet *'Perjuangan Kita'* ('Our Struggle') specifically wanted to see Indonesia shun a one-party system under a monolithic executive.

He feared the development of a totalitarian government in Indonesia because of the legacy of feudalistic authoritarianism which had been kept alive and reinforced by the long period of colonial government (Kahin 1952 :166).

Herbert Feith (1962:313) argues that the adoption of a system of constitutional democracy in the first decade of independence reflected the influence of men like Sjahrir and Mohammad Hatta. But he is careful to distinguish between the idea of democracy as a 'legitimizing principle' and actual majority rule. There was never any substance lent to the 'characteristic principles and mechanisms of constitutional democracy'.

Imperfectly implemented, Feith argues that this early and only era of constitutional democracy in Indonesian political history was nonetheless reasonably effective. The parliament may not have been an elected body, but cabinets were accountable to it. The press was free, the courts operated independently, and a semblance of non-political bureaucracy emerged.

However, disillusionment with this system quickly developed. The 1955 general election, considered by many Indonesians to be the only genuinely representative election the country has ever held, etched out the country's religious and communal elements with alarming clarity. The two main Muslim parties obtained almost 40 per cent of the vote; the Communists 16 per cent and the Nationalist Party (PNI) just 22 per cent. The results laid bare potentially divisive forces in the infant republic. The country was already afflicted by regional rebellions and the army grew restless, forcing Soekarno to step in with an alternative to constitutional democracy in the form of 'guided democracy'. Indonesia turned its back on constitutional democracy and began developing the strong executive rule inherited by Suharto's New Order.

The military's attitude to this early period of post-independence politics was very much governed by its role in the independence struggle. ABRI considers itself the progenitor of the state, having fought a war of independence against the Dutch from 1945-1949. As stated in Law No. 20 on Members of the Armed Forces (1988):

The history of the Indonesian struggle has been a series of armed resistance put up by the people against colonialism.

As such ABRI projects itself as the guardian of the nation, a definition which, as Finer (1974:535) points out, imbues a tradition of loyalty to the state, rather than obedience to the rulers of the day. Indeed, as part of the soldier's oath taken by every member of ABRI, loyalty is sworn only to 'the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia that is based on *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution'. There is no mention of the government or the executive.

In crude terms, ABRI still regards itself as a people's army. Central to ABRI thinking, however, is a doctrine crystallised in the soldiers' oath, or *Sapta Marga*, which endows the army with guardianship of the state. To justify this, ABRI must be shaped as a people's army, using a strategy of close cooperation with the people. In summary, the strategy of total defence and the *Sapta Marga* theoretically positions ABRI with the people and above the state. To understand why this is so, some consideration of national history, as seen through ABRI's eyes, is essential.

ABRI considers that independence was achieved by the armed struggle against the Dutch, which not only had to contend with the colonial army, but also the treachery of Indonesian communists, and the weakness of civilian nationalist leaders who were prepared to fall back in the face of Dutch aggression. One of the events of the war most drummed into army cadets is the 19 December 1948 capitulation of the civilian government after the first capital, Jogjakarta, was occupied by the Dutch. It was only ABRI's resolve to continue the fight 'with or without the government', that persuaded the world that Indonesia would not return to Dutch hands, the cadets are taught. The implication is clear; ABRI, not the civilian government, saved the infant republic.

Soon after independence the army was called on to suppress a series of regional revolts which threatened the unitary state. Barely had these revolts been suppressed when another threat to the state in the shape of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) loomed. The events of 30 September 1965, which lit the short fuse to the end of President Soekarno's rule, saw the military once again step in to restore order and save the nation. This view of their own history has endowed the military with a deep suspicion of politicians and dissenting groups.

The birth of the New Order brought ABRI for the first time a leading role in Indonesian political life. As Sundhaussen points out, the army's entry into formal politics came after twenty years of civil-military tensions (Sundhaussen 1982: 257). Underlying this tension, as senior commanding officers of the period have subsequently described, was a perpetual hesitancy on the part of senior officers to be dragged into running the country. It may have been that opportunities were scarce, or that prior attempts at intervention were unsuccessful. But former army chief of staff T.B. Simatupang argues that there was a distinct aversion to military rule among the military intellectual elite:

During the 1950s there was originally a strong reluctance and a feeling of scepticism and uneasiness among the army leadership when the army had to perform an expanded role in view of the continuing political instability. They were haunted by the spectre of creating what was perceived then as a 'Latin American situation' in Indonesia (Simatupang 1989:135).

Suharto and his somewhat less educated, less travelled followers were clearly not imbued with such notions. As Crouch (1978:26) aptly points out, they represented a new class of officer from small towns in Java, less formally educated but with strong claims to prominence because of their role in the struggle against the Dutch. Though much questioned by his detractors, Suharto participated as a local military commander in some of the key actions against Dutch forces in and around Jogjakarta. If he was not, as claimed, a key figure in the campaign, he certainly played a role.

Yet it would be incorrect to assume the New Order core group clustered around Suharto was intent on the crude seizure of power. To this day, Suharto is adamant that his accession to power after the 11 March 1966 Order did not amount to a *coup d'état*. Rather, he argues in his 1988 ghost-written autobiography, he was pushed along by events beyond his control:

I was pushed in an atmosphere of political conflict to step forward. Some politicians were impatient for a change of leadership to the point of proposing that I assume power just like that. I responded to this proposal at once; 'If that's the way things are, I'd better step down. Such a method is not good. Seizing power by military force will not bring about lasting stability. I am not going to bequeath a history indicating that there was once a seizure of power by military might' (Suharto 1989:185).

This highlights one of ABRI's persistent concerns under the New Order. For one of the key inputs to civil military relations has been the legitimising of ABRI's intervention in 1965 in ideological, nationalistic terms. At the outset there seemed to be an awareness that Soekarno's sudden ouster could set a dangerous precedent, and every effort was made to cloak it in constitutional trappings. Suharto may have assumed executive powers in March 1966, but it was not until 1968 that he was formally appointed president of the republic, and not until 1971 that a general election was held.

Delicate manoeuvres to remove Soekarno – whom many suspected could still command substantial popularity even within the armed forces (Legge 1972:405) – was followed by a reworking of ABRI's doctrine. At an Army Seminar in 1966, ABRI's dual political and military function (*dwifungsi*), which was first proposed in the late 1950s, was sharpened. Earlier definitions of ABRI's dual role had

sought to establish ABRI's right to participate in national development using the dual function principle formulated in 1958. According to Simatupang (1989:136), it was 'an attempt to provide a rationale . . . at the same time laying down limitations to the expanded role'.

The events of 1965 elevated ABRI's right to assume a non-military role from a choice into an obligation. The seminar declared that ABRI was forced by circumstances to stand by the people, because 'all the people's hopes for well-being are focused on the armed forces in general, and the army in particular'. As Jenkins (1984:4) points out, the 1966 seminar acted as timely ideological justification for what in effect the army was already practising.

On reflection, though, it is important to note that civilian aspirations at the time also helped the army assume control of the government. Civilian intellectuals and professionals bore the brunt of Soekarno's relentless politicisation of society; his so-called 'politics as commander' strategy which forced people to choose sides as the Indonesian Communist Party grew in strength and numbers. The prominent writer and journalist, Goenawan Mohamad recalls :

Recurrent calls for '*indoktrinasi*' (indoctrination) took place in almost every political circle, with Marxism and Sukarno's writings being the main components of the teaching. No one, it seemed, was free from them. 'Revolution' became a highly hypnotic word: it could immediately make one either combative or submissive (Mohamad 1989:72).

The atmosphere prevalent at the time helped ABRI acquire a political role. First, because before Soekarno's fall, the military, with encouragement from friendly Western powers, had begun setting up social organisations to counter the spread of Communist influence. One of these, Sekber Golkar, eventually formed the nucleus of the New Order's principal mass political organisation, Golkar.

Once in power, however, ABRI also found that popular reaction against the politicisation of the Soekarno era aided moves to dismantle civilian political structures, among them most of the political parties of Soekarno's 'Old Order'. Quite simply, the civilian elite was willing to see the army assume power in the hope that order and stability would be restored. Such was their desire for stability, many civilians were blind to the implications of army rule for the function of democratic institutions enshrined in the 1945 constitution.

It would also be misleading to assume ABRI had a plan or strategy for the execution of their role in politics. It now seems clear from contemporary diplomatic reports that ABRI was divided over what to do about Soekarno's headlong tilt towards the Communist fold. Concern about the situation ran up against a

reluctance to intervene and actually usurp power, probably because no one was certain whether any attempt to do so would attract solid backing within the military.

Once in power, the military had no clear idea of how to proceed either. Some elements of the armed forces, probably an intellectual minority led by chief of staff General A.H. Nasution, envisaged their political role as only temporary, in line with the original 'middle way' formulation of the dual function. He was overruled by Suharto and his group, who seemed to have an informal popular mandate to restore order and stability as quickly as possible and using whatever available means.

For all practical purposes . . . during the initial period of the New Order, national leadership was identical with army leadership, not as the result of a usurpation of power through a *coup d'état* or the like, but simply because the alternative would have been anarchy and chaos (Simatupang 1989:135).

As measure of the confused thinking about the army's role, it is interesting to note how some of those who participated in the early development of the New Order are capable of reconsidering ABRI's position.

It was never the philosophy of ABRI to perpetuate the crisis situation that existed in October 1965. The intensity and involvement of ABRI in political life is completely dependent on the political situation of the moment. If we feel it is no longer needed, we have to release all jobs to civilians (interview with General (ret'd.) Sumitro, 6 February 1988).

If thinking along these lines existed among the ranks of senior ABRI officers when the New Order came to power, it should not be confused with the aims of the core group clustered around Suharto, which proceeded to erect the New Order's political edifice. In fact, judging from the early disaffection of officers like Nasution, Kemal Idris, H. Dharsono, and others who supported Suharto in his rise to power, there was disenchantment over how the New Order was proceeding right from the beginning. Subsequent interviews with these men reveal a common thread; they felt that civilian functions of the government should have been restored and fostered. Instead, Suharto and his men proceeded slowly but steadily to dismantle the civilian political infrastructure, first by banning the parties which existed in the Soekarno period, and then by gradually introducing stringent legislation controlling the freedom of political expression.

Yet if certain quarters in ABRI felt the New Order was taking the dual function too far, neither was ABRI given a free hand to run the state. Instead, the state became progressively dominated by Suharto and his inner circle. Probably unsure

of ABRI loyalties, Suharto deployed tactics of divide and rule which often favoured civilian bureaucratic interests at the expense of ABRI. Thus ABRI began losing power almost as soon as they achieved it. To understand why, the Suharto-ABRI relationship must be looked at in more detail.

Suharto and ABRI

President Suharto dates his official entry into the Indonesian Army on the same day it was founded, 5 October 1945. His subsequent military career bears some examination, because it tells us something about his own attitude towards the army and the army in politics. Suharto drifted into the new republic's army after brief service in the Dutch colonial army (KNIL) and a spell in the Indonesian militia organised by the Japanese occupation forces. Like many young men in Java at the time, he claims to have been drawn to the cause of fighting for independence. His prior formal military experience under the Dutch and Japanese almost certainly explains why he was given a local command in Central Java.

Suharto's actual role in the war of independence is a subject of controversy. The official history grants him a leading role in the 1 March 1949 'general attack' on Jogjakarta, when Indonesian forces surprised the Dutch and briefly occupied Jogjakarta. In his autobiography, Suharto relates how he was at the centre of things, discussing strategy with the revered army commander, General Sudirman. Others have subsequently cast doubt on his importance during the campaign, arguing that he was but one of many local commanders, and even casting aspersions on his capabilities in the field. General Nasution claims, for example, that Suharto was reluctant to follow orders, preferring to wait and see what others did first.

Naturally, both sides of the story are heavily cloaked in later political interpretations. Any objective assessment, however, must assume that Suharto's presence in Central Java at the height of the war placed him in a position to participate in significant military action, and the fact that soon afterwards he commanded troops to put down a regional revolt in Makassar suggests that his abilities and experience were recognised by the high command.

The more interesting period of his military career began with his transfer to Central Java in 1952. After a spell as chief of staff of the regional divisional command, he was elevated to regional commander in 1957, with the rank of full colonel. These were difficult times for ABRI. The fledgling state was unable to find funds to finance a fully-equipped professional army, so ABRI was encouraged to seek independent financing by establishing its own businesses. To do this, ABRI officers formed business liaisons with local Chinese businessmen.

The nationalisation of Dutch companies declared by Soekarno in 1957 also saw many lucrative enterprises fall into ABRI's hands.

Suharto demonstrated consummate skill at satisfying the quartermastering demands of the division, striking up a relationship with one businessman, Liem Sioe Long, who later became the largest corporate player under the New Order. Here too he established the core group of officers who were later to serve as his closest aides after 1966, men like Ali Murtopo and Sudjono Hurmurdani. The period was therefore formative for Suharto, and determined some of the methods he applied to his rule after becoming president. The conditions faced by Suharto in Central Java represented the harsh realities of ABRI's struggle to survive. Confronted by budgetary difficulties and the threat of Communist-led insurrection, ABRI was forced to adapt and deploy unconventional methods. The territorial system developed to combat regionalism and Communism ensured that the military presence was pervasive right down to the village level. Yet it was less a strategy of warfare than of the imposition of strict control over the population.

To fund military operations, deals were cut with local businessmen. They helped set up local foundations to act as fronts for the imposition of taxes on most economic activities. The activities of Suharto's division were so lucrative they attracted the attention of the Jakarta high command, which had Suharto quietly removed from the position in 1959 and sent to staff college. Suharto continued to use social foundations, *yayasans*, after coming to power; in fact they became a major source of funding for the military elite, and provide the lion's share of funds for important political institutions like Golkar. The fact that Suharto was effectively fired because the army considered these practices corrupt in the late 1950s, seems to have had no effect on the perception of the system as it is applied on a much larger scale today.

The important point is that Suharto brought with him to the presidency both the methods and the men from this period in Central Java. Neither was looked upon as orthodox by the intellectual military elite in Jakarta at the time. General Nasution relates that Suharto told him in 1968: 'General, my politics are at the point of a bayonet'. Nasution contends that from the beginning Suharto surrounded himself with men who were not from the army's mainstream:

Soeharto became more or less presidium of the army's political think tank, *Panitia Sospol*, led by Basuki Rachmat and Sutjipto. Into this Soeharto brought in Murtopo as his *asintel* (assistant for intelligence). With him came the Tanah Abang Group (mainly Chinese Catholic students under Murtopo's wing) with their strategic plans for the future. Not the army. We had no plans. In this sense, the army more or less

faded away in its influence on Soeharto (interview with General A.H. Nasution, 11 November 1989).

Nasution himself was perhaps by this stage less representative of the mainstream. But his point underlines the extent to which the generation of officers with more educated and intellectual backgrounds had been marginalised – or eliminated – by 1966.

1970-1988: ABRI Under the New Order

This brief look at Suharto's military origins provides a useful springboard from which to examine the development of ABRI's role and position under the New Order. For if the New Order is considered in general terms as a military-backed regime, closer examination of the more recent period reveals that it has been Suharto rather than ABRI which has reaped the fruits of power. Compounding this sense of impotency was the progressive division of ABRI thinking into two schools: one closely associated with Suharto and enjoying the benefits of his power and patronage, the other increasingly estranged from the ruling group and advocating ABRI's gradual withdrawal from politics (Jenkins 1984:255).

For much of the 1970s and early 1980s, ABRI found itself torn between these two poles. The steady consolidation of the Suharto group saw military men attain considerable power and prestige, but in the process, arguably, the military tenor of the regime became diluted. If one examines the methods of men like Murtopo and Sudharmono – two of Suharto's closest aides over this period – much of what they achieved was at cross-purposes with the military. Murtopo's *opsus* (special operations group) favoured unorthodox methods of intelligence and subterfuge to execute policy, often leaving the military high command in the dark. Sudharmono's legalistic mind helped erect an array of legal props to Suharto's legitimacy and gradually strengthened the civilian bureaucracy at the expense of the military. He engineered a presidential order (number 10) which deprived ABRI of considerable financial clout by diverting lucrative government tenders to businessmen close to the palace.

Those on the periphery of the ruling group grew steadily uncomfortable with what they saw as Suharto's entrenchment in power. Some have since suggested that Suharto was not expected to last by the military elite.

I never thought he would last so long. In 1971 I expressed the view that the president should run only for two years, because otherwise his vested interests would take over. Suharto may also have seen the sense in this, but those around him told him to go on (interview with General Kemal Idris, 16 January 1990).

The effect this had on ABRI's relationship with the leadership and the civilian elite cannot be underestimated. Arguably, growing disaffection towards Suharto in certain ABRI quarters by the mid 1970s lent strength to the view that ABRI should be less engaged in politics, for this implied a distancing from the leadership. In doctrinal terms, it produced by the late 1970s a move to purify ABRI's position in the state above all groups.

Suharto's grasp of the implications of such a position in terms of loyalty to the leadership prompted him to lash out at ABRI in 1980 for failing to see that defence of the constitution could not be achieved without supporting the New Order. Therefore, he said, ABRI must choose sides; it could not consider voting for any group other than Golkar, of which ABRI is a component part. The implications shocked many senior officers: ABRI a part of the Golkar family? ABRI serving the New Order? Such notions flew in the face of ABRI doctrine. But realistically speaking, they accurately located ABRI's position under Suharto.

Against this background of diverging views and loyalties within ABRI, questions about ABRI's role in politics and support for a more democratic style of government in Indonesia began to surface. From the above, it would appear that the stimulus for ABRI's questioning of its political role was derived from the realisation in certain quarters that Suharto's entrenchment in power was no longer serving ABRI's interests, and indeed was hindering ABRI's own ability to serve the people. Initial attempts to put a distance between ABRI and the Suharto regime surfaced in the mid 1970s. Suharto was able to check these potential threats to his position by his judicious manipulation of senior appointments in ABRI. Those generals considered a threat were sidelined. But this served only to define more sharply the distinction between those in ABRI who believed the military should play a less overtly political role, and those – considered close to Suharto – who had no intention of altering the status quo.

In his seminal monograph on the Indonesian military, David Jenkins concludes that however divided ABRI was becoming because of the power struggle at the top, ABRI was, as he put it, 'dug in on the commanding heights of the political, economic and social landscape' (Jenkins 1984:263). The anatomy he presents of the debate about ABRI's role seems dominated more by semantics than substance. Arguably, the concerns were more political than real. Can the same be said of the more recent period? Is ABRI moving any closer to significant change in attitude towards its role in politics?

1988-1991: ABRI Faces an Uncertain Future

The end of the 1980s saw Indonesia recover its composure after the disastrous

fall in oil prices which sent the economy hurtling into decline. A combination of artful macro-economic reform and full support from the country's aid donors not only has helped the economy to recover, but also shows signs of at last living up to its considerable potential. But with the economic boom of the late 1980s came calls for political liberalisation. Some intellectuals saw little point in granting the private sector more freedom without accompanying political reforms.

Pressures for political reform surfaced against a background of mounting concern in elite circles about Suharto's tenure in office. Soon after his re-election for a fifth term of office in March 1988, debate focused on the succession. Suharto entered his seventieth year in 1991 showing no signs that he intended to retire before the next election in 1993, and behaving as if he wanted to stay the course for a sixth term. This intensified concerns about how to manage the succession smoothly. Talk of succession has been a perennial feature of the New Order's political cycles, but this kind of talk surfacing so soon after Suharto's 1988 re-election suggested new urgency. Altogether, calls for more openness and debate over the succession generated a highly charged political atmosphere, one in which ABRI found itself to some extent intellectually outclassed and encumbered by anachronistic ideas.

While senior ABRI officers continued to harp on vigilance against the Communist threat and 'national discipline' as the keys to stability, civilian intellectuals were arguing that democratisation was needed to renew and preserve the New Order. It was not long before certain military leaders saw the political advantages of adjusting to this new thinking and coopting those who were behind it. Far from being ideologically inspired – or necessarily committed to democracy – as will be argued below, ABRI needed a political constituency.

The year 1988 taught ABRI just how low their political stock had sunk under the New Order. A move to pass a new soldiership law through parliament was blocked in late 1987 after the executive branch mobilised the parliamentary factions to raise objections to the draft. The draft bill included alterations to the soldier's oath which emphasised allegiance to the constitution and by implication de-emphasised loyalty to the government of the day. It also sought to neutralise the president's notional powers as supreme commander by sharpening the authority of the ABRI commander. The draft bill, for instance, proposed increasing the mandatory retirement age from 55 to 60 (Vatikiotis 1987:35). Subsequent revisions to the draft were forced on ABRI after lengthy debate in parliament, which ironed out these conspicuous attempts – using constitutional means – to enhance military power, and the bill was passed.

Worse was to come. When ABRI signalled its objection to Suharto over his choice of vice president in the 1988 presidential election, they once again found

their influence much weakened. Suharto had earlier indicated he wanted Sudharmono, the chairman of Golkar and state secretary, to have the job. Sudharmono, the shrewd ex-Army lawyer who was the architect of much of the New Order's legal and bureaucratic edifice, was considered unsuitable by ABRI. As Golkar chairman he had worked assiduously to reduce ABRI's influence over the party. Using the state secretariat, he had effectively drained a good deal of ABRI's pool of extra-budgetary funding. In the eyes of the military, Sudharmono represented a dangerous threat to their political supremacy.

ABRI was overruled. By demonstrating so openly his disregard for ABRI's advice, and insisting on Sudharmono becoming vice president, Suharto demonstrated that he no longer needed ABRI as a prop to sustain his power. The political fallout made a deep impression on the military and triggered introspection on ABRI's role in politics and its relationship with the national leadership on one side, and the people on the other.

ABRI's catharsis was expressed in two ways. The political setbacks of 1988 almost immediately led to further disaffection within the ABRI leadership. Most notably, the former ABRI commander, General L.B. Murdani, smarting from his curt dismissal before the presidential election, signalled that his patience with Suharto was wearing thin. He joined the ranks of the dispirited, but retained a cabinet position as Defence minister. Showing how much more important personalities can be than institutions in Indonesian politics, as ABRI commander Murdani overshadowed the Defence minister. Once he was in the job, the position once more assumed importance.

Murdani, aided by his extensive intelligence network, set about laying ambushes for Sudharmono almost as soon as he was elected vice president. Rumours surfaced, for example, of his involvement in the Communist uprising at Madiun in 1948. Sudharmono took these seriously enough to publicly deny his Communist sympathies in late 1988. For a political culture steeped in the art of discretion, the anti-Sudharmono campaign broke all the rules. One prominent retired general even refused to hang his portrait beside that of President Suharto.

Arguably, though, the ABRI leadership's sniping at the vice president was wasted ammunition. For Suharto, the advantage was two-fold: the campaign against Sudharmono drew some of his opponents out into the open, and it also drove a wedge into Golkar. Ironically, this was useful because it served to weaken Sudharmono's strong grip over the party – thus denying him a power base. He lost the chairmanship of Golkar in November 1988, in spite of a furious campaign mounted by his supporters. It also ensured that some of the smart – and increasingly popular – civilian politicians fostered by Sudharmono would not fall into the arms of ABRI. Interviews with senior Golkar officials, like Secretary General

Rachmat Witoelar, and his predecessor Sarwono Kusumaatmadja, conveyed a sense of ambiguity towards ABRI, despite the traditionally close relationship between the two institutions. Sarwono's view in May 1988 was:

In a tactical sense, the army is losing out. Suharto is increasingly civilian in his outlook, if not by concept then by association (interview with Sarwono Kusumaatmadja, 16 May 1988).

The boldness of such views jeopardised popular attitudes towards the military simply because of the influence Sarwono and other prominent civilians in Golkar were beginning to have on the debate about the country's political future. At the same time ABRI also embarked on a re-appraisal of its role and standing in society.

There seems little doubt that the younger generation of ABRI officers harboured misgivings about the dual function. This has been apparent since at least the early 1980s, when Jenkins (1984:261) detected that younger officers took more pride in their professional role as soldiers and paid less attention to their socio-political role. The logical consequences of this trend were partly offset in the past by the fact that many such officers once injected into the socio-political role soon lost their misgivings about the system.

However, by the end of the 1980s the government was faced with a chronically demoralised civil service, low on esteem because all the plum jobs went to ABRI personnel. Civilian elements in the cabinet clamoured for the injection of more *esprit de corps* and some sort of career-track policy. They argued that the government's economic reform programme would be jeopardised without the back-up of a more efficient, dedicated civil service. In response, the government took steps to limit the number of ABRI personnel in civilian posts. Ironically enough, one man who helped implement the policy was a former army chief, General Rudini, in his new capacity as Home Affairs minister. In August 1990 Rudini announced that military appointments to civilian posts, known as *karyawan* – 'cadres' – would be decreased gradually 'in areas where they are not needed'. Already in force was a policy which reduced the number of military district officers to 40 per cent of the total, and insisted that posts below that of deputy governor in provincial seats must now be held by civil servants. His argument drew on ABRI's historical justification for political intervention :

... *kekaryawan* is a small part of the dual function. It existed because of the situation and conditions. In 1965, after the coup, many civilian officials were afraid to execute their jobs. They were afraid of Communists. Only ABRI wanted to do the job. After the situation stabilised, everyone agreed that *kekaryawan* could decrease step

by step in areas where they are not needed (speech by General (retd.) Rudini to the Jakarta 'Executive Circle', 7 August 1990).

While the actual participation by the military in civilian administration was being reduced, there was no sign that the military was relinquishing its function as a 'dynamiser' of society. Senior military officers, if anything, intensified their efforts to influence society by speaking up on a range of political issues. However, in a marked departure from the familiar ABRI catechism on security, stability, and the need for national discipline, senior ABRI leaders began echoing the debate in civilian intellectual circles about openness.

The change often seemed more of a nuance than a *volte face*. For example, in a speech he made on 20 May 1987, with the title 'National Discipline and Development of our Democracy', Murdani started out with the familiar theme of national discipline. 'The role of discipline in national and constitutional life is to guarantee the creation of peace and order in daily life', he intoned. But later in the speech he noted :

Discipline must not cause initiatives and creativity to disappear. Obedience and loyalty must not produce passive ... people ... there is indeed the fear that the obligation to do everything with full obedience and loyalty might produce humans who are like robots/automotons that move only when commanded (speech by General L.B. Murdani, 20 May 1987).

By 1989, with the debate on openness in full swing in civilian intellectual circles, Army chief of staff, General Edi Sudrajat had this to say:

Having enjoyed better education, our people want differences discussed more openly. As such they want more active participation in the decision-making process on national problems and in social control (speech by General Edi Sudrajat, at Magelang Military Academy, 5 December 1990).

In December 1990 Sudrajat presided over an army seminar which attempted to project the make-up of what was euphemistically termed the 'human resources' (*sumber daya manusia*) of Indonesia in the years ahead. Some of the seminar's recommendations and conclusions indicated the army's understanding of society's more liberal urges:

1. The concept of development should not be static.
2. The people will become more critical and desire more participation as society becomes more open.
3. They will want more of a say in electing the leadership.
4. Current social and political institutions are not fully developed.

5. They are characterised by too much paternalism.
6. Education is unevenly distributed.
7. Officials must know when to step down.
8. Their period of office must be clearly defined.

ABRI's embrace of the need for more openness, and acknowledgement of the need for reforms in this direction took some people by surprise. In the first place, the perception prevalent among the civilian elite was that ABRI's continued belief in a 'security approach' to the safeguard of national stability ruled out their espousal of so-called 'Western liberal ideas of democracy and free speech'. More savvy commentators understood ABRI's strategy as less to change the system as to bring about a change of leadership:

Apparently the game, even at this late hour still seems to be to try again with words to trigger somebody's senses into realising that it is time indeed to change (*Indonesian Observer*, 5 December 1990).

Indeed, some of ABRI's actions appeared to contradict the new political rhetoric of its leaders. Whilst tacitly supporting student demonstrations on campuses in Central Java, West Java and Jakarta, in the course of 1989 the incidents of local discontent were dealt with in the familiar harsh fashion dictated by the 'security approach'. In March 1989 a minor disturbance in the South Sumatran province of Lampung resulted in an army assault on alleged Muslim extremists in a village, leaving at least forty, and possibly as many as two hundred, dead.

ABRI's decision to adopt a kinder, gentler approach to the people of East Timor after international diplomatic pressure forced the government to open up the disputed province in early 1989, did not bring a halt to army intimidation of those suspected of disloyalty to the state. Faced by increasingly militant Timorese youth in urban areas, the army showed little leniency. On 12 November 1991, troops fired on mourners in a cemetery on the outskirts of the capital, Dili, leaving by a later official account at least fifty dead. When a low-level insurgency re-erupted in the North Sumatran province of Aceh in early 1990, the army's response was as fierce and uncompromising, leaving hundreds dead.

While ABRI debated openness and democracy with intellectuals in Jakarta, senior officers were maintaining that when it came to threats to national security, ABRI was above the law (attributed to a senior ABRI staff officer by a representative of a humanitarian organisation in Jakarta October 1991). In this respect, ABRI's true orientation with regard to the democratic tendencies emerging in Indonesian society was not easy to define. Some observers felt that the assertive action taken by the military against irredentist movements in Timor and Aceh

was partly a product of knowing no other means to deal with the situation. Political enlightenment may have seeped into the upper ranks, but at the local command level the legacy of basic training which emphasised the use of brute force to deal with social disturbances still prevailed. Some recognition of this by 1990 was evident after the military sanctioned for the first time the use of civilian university teachers to enhance the curriculum at the military academy at Magelang.

ABRI's Dilemma

Arguably, by the beginning of the 1990s ABRI was confronting a dilemma. The New Order with which the military rode to power in 1966 was under pressure to renew itself. In common with other long-serving regimes in the region, it was fast becoming a victim of its own success. There was a limit to how much longer the people could be convinced of the need for stifling order and stability at the expense of individual freedom to sustain national development. For once national development had been achieved to the successful degree so evident in the ASEAN states, the people possessed more materialistic means for assuring their own security, however intrinsically unstable the fabric of society was deemed to be. In this context, ABRI was torn between the reality of its role and the ideals of its doctrine.

To resolve this dilemma, the ABRI leadership sought a way of preserving its political pre-eminence in advance of the coming succession struggle. Thus ABRI's articulation of the need for more openness seemed to be driven less by a desire to relinquish power, than by the necessity of maintaining their relevance in politics to enhance their popularity. As suggested above, this latter period of the New Order was characterised by a blending of society's desire for political change with the elite's more narrow concerns about political succession. In this respect, it remains to be seen whether ABRI's commitment to political change survives the change of leadership.

Whether the future prospects for democracy are linked to the military's reduced role in any future Indonesian power structure is a tempting area of speculation. Based on the above analysis it seems reasonable to assume that ABRI will be reluctant to yield its position as a key political institution and its role as guardian of the state. As stated by one senior officer in 1980:

... it is clear that the armed forces would never abandon what it perceives to be its responsibility towards the people, which is to be active in the total life of Indonesian society (Nugroho 1980:95).

In fact, the signs are that though its room for manoeuvre has been weakened by Suharto's canny use of divide and rule tactics, ABRI continues to dominate the competition for power at the top. Few Indonesians believe that the next president will not be drawn from among its ranks. Although the notion of a civilian vice president gained currency towards the end of President Suharto's fifth term, the most likely contenders for power in a post-Suharto power-struggle are either in the armed forces, or are retired senior officers.

Indeed, Suharto's selection of former armed forces commander General Try Sutrisno as vice president in March 1993 was interpreted in ABRI circles as a signal that a military successor was guaranteed. But nothing in politics is guaranteed, and Suharto's concession to ABRI esteem was skilfully counterbalanced by his promotion of civilian interests soon after his re-election as president in March.

As Suharto embarked on his sixth presidential term, he seemed once again to be juggling his political support, and keeping the military at bay. The political leeway he granted to men like Professor B.J. Habibie, the artful minister of Research and Technology whose ambitious – not to mention costly – schemes for Indonesia's technological development irked the innately conservative military establishment, had parallels with Sudharmono's role in the previous five-year period.

In political terms, the licence Suharto appeared to grant Habibie guaranteed that ABRI would be preoccupied with attempts to block him, leaving Suharto free to focus on his broader national and international agenda. The succession question was, in this way, neatly shelved for the time being.

The crucial question is whether the current democratisation debate, and the slight relaxation of freedom of expression accompanying it, is a function of this competition for power, or a manifestation of actual progress towards more democracy in Indonesia. One of Indonesia's most respected civilian political figures, head of *Nahdlatul Ulama*, the vast rural-based Islamic organisation, is optimistic:

Once you open the door you can't shut it completely – that's the lesson, what happened to Nikita Krushchev after he opened the door by criticising the Communist Party. It accumulates you see, during the Brezhnev era and after that Gorbachev and then the emergence of Boris Yeltsin. All those things show that, however little, sediments of democratic spirit will come through the filter and accumulate. So I don't think the next government will be able to reverse the situation (interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, *Inside Indonesia* October 1990, pp. 4-6).

Such optimism may be justified in the light of the changing global situation,

and specifically in the light of persistent international pressure on the Indonesian government after the 12 November 1991 incident in East Timor. But so long as the armed forces act as the principal agent in the filter Wahid refers to, it is hard to imagine a radical departure from the current patterns of social and political control practised by the New Order.