Indonesia: On a New Course?

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The dramatic resignation of President Suharto in May 1998, and the broader political crisis of which it formed a part, stimulated an unprecedented questioning of the political role of the Indonesian armed forces. Apparently stunned by the vehemence of public criticism, the military leadership announced a series of concessions and promises of reform. The next eighteen months brought dramatic changes in Indonesian political life. The first free elections in more than 30 years were held successfully in June 1999, and in October the new People’s Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat [MPR]) elected a civilian president, Abdurrahman Wahid, and vice president,Megawati Sukarnoputri. The new MPR also voted to accept East Timor’s separation from Indonesia, following a UN-sponsored referendum held in August in which East Timorese had opted overwhelmingly for independence despite powerful military opposition. By late 1999 the Indonesian military’s prestige was at a low ebb, and its position as the most powerful political institution in the country after the president was in serious doubt for the first time in more than three decades. In his first six months in office, President Wahid took a number of steps that appeared to weaken the military still further, appointing a civilian as minister of defense, appointing known reformers to senior military posts, and supporting the investigation and prosecution of military officers for alleged human rights abuses.

In one of his most daring gambits, in February 2000 Wahid suspended the former armed forces commander General Wiranto from his cabinet post pending investigations into his role in the referendum-related violence in East Timor.

Did these developments mark a major turning point in civil-military relations in Indonesia, or are the skeptics correct in seeing the changes as mere blips in a pattern of military dominance that is destined to continue far into the new millennium? In this chapter I seek to answer these questions by examining recent trends in light of the history of civil-military relations in Indonesia.

Two main propositions are advanced. The first is that relations between Indonesian military and civilian political authorities have indeed been set upon a new course since May 1998, primarily because of the growing confidence of Indonesian civil society, the willingness of President Wahid to use his power to assert civilian supremacy, and a marked shift in the international political and economic context. Domestic protests and international sanctions did not stop with Suharto’s resignation. On the contrary, they became more central to Indonesia’s political process than at any time since the 1960s. As a result of these pressures, the armed forces leadership was forced to adjust its political strategy and style and to make concessions to civilian authorities and institutions that would have been unimaginable before Suharto’s fall. As the speaker of the consultative assembly (MPR), Amien Rais, commented in February 2000, “You couldn’t imagine two years ago Mr. Wiranto being sacked by a civilian leader.” The emergence of a more confident Indonesian civil society—as well as an international community increasingly willing to intervene in the domestic affairs of sovereign states on issues of human rights and good governance—is likely to continue to place the Indonesian military leadership on the defensive in coming years.

At the same time, and this is the second proposition, adjustments in civil-military relations at the elite level had not yet altered significantly the position of the military vis-à-vis civil society by the end of 1999. Beyond the circle of Jakarta politics, and especially in remote “troubled” (mendekam) regions such as Aceh and East Timor, the Indonesian armed forces continued to operate according to the old standards, employing violence or the threat of violence against its domestic enemies. The persistence of these old patterns of behavior, as we shall see, stemmed from the fact that the military as an institution had become so deeply embedded in the structure and ideology of the Indonesian state over the previous 50 years. Accordingly, significant change in the relationship between the military and civil society is likely to be more difficult— and take far longer—than shifts in the relationship at the elite level. Nevertheless, in this sphere too, the changes are likely to be driven by demands from below combined with pressures from abroad. These propositions are developed in greater detail in the chapter’s three main sections.

The first section surveys the military’s involvement in politics since the declaration of Indonesian independence in 1945 and examines the essential doctrinal and institutional bases of military power that developed under the New Order regime of President Suharto (himself a career military officer) after 1965. It shows how military doctrine and institutions have in fact determined the character of the modern Indonesian state and, as well, how that process has affected civil-military relations to the present day. It also suggests that the means by which the military achieved political dominance—in particular its role in the coup of 1965 and the subsequent massacre of real and alleged communists—profoundly influenced its ethos and behavior thereafter and shaped the New Order regime. This historical process ensured that the ideology of the state became profoundly antimilitary, obsessed with national unity, and preoccupied with perceived threats of subversion. Above all, it institutionalized what may be called a “culture of violence” within the military and indeed within the state as a whole.

At least since 1965, the military’s enormous political power has been legitimized by the “dual function” (dual fungsi) doctrine, which stipulates that in addition to its strictly military function, the military is entitled to a direct role in the political life of the country. Both functions have been facilitated, and reinforced, by a cornerstone of national security doctrine: the strategy of “total people’s defense” calling for close cooperation between military forces and the civilian population in the defense against threats both external and internal. These aspects of Indonesian military doctrine have helped to justify, in the name of national security, military intervention in all aspects of political, economic, and social life.

Military power has been rooted in a variety of institutional arrangements as well, both legal and illegal. The unique “territorial” structure of the Indonesian army has ensured that the military presence is felt down to the village level in every corner of the country. That presence has been strengthened by the military’s near-exclusive control of the most powerful intel-
licensure bodies in the country and, too, by the existence of a number of elite combat units, notably Kopassus and Kostrad, which have been free to operate with little regard for domestic or international legal norms. In keeping with the dual function doctrine, the military has also had privileged access to key positions in the executive branch, the bureaucracy, and the legislature, as well as both formal and informal control of the judicial system. In addition to these legally mandated privileges, the military has been free to engage in illegal or semilegal activities, including a practice euphemistically called “unconventional financing” and the mobilization of thugs into official and semiofficial militias and paramilitary units.

The second section examines the constraints on, and challenges to, military power under the New Order (1965–1998). There were three key constraints. One was the independent power of the president, Suharto, who although a military officer himself, had taken political positions directly at odds with the expressed interests or wishes of the armed forces leadership. The second was the significant limits on the military’s political power that stemmed from tensions within the military elite. Third, the political power of the military under the New Order was subject to limits in the form of opposition and criticism from Indonesia’s own civil society and from the international community. As important as these constraints eventually became in the final years, for most of the New Order they did not significantly affect the relationship between the military and society at large. International pressure was generally muted, and domestic opposition was easily crushed. The extent of the military’s power under the New Order is highlighted by the government’s counterinsurgency campaign in the province of Aceh between 1996 and 1998. The study of Aceh during these years shows that the political constraints experienced by the military under the New Order had little, if any, effect on military behavior and norms outside of a small elite at the center. At the local level, the power of the armed forces had become so deeply entrenched that its authority with respect to ordinary civilians was virtually unlimited—and remained that way until Suharto’s final days.

Aceh was not unique in this respect. A similar pattern was evident in all areas designated as “troubled”—where there was an armed threat to the state—as in East Timor and West Papua (formerly Irian Jaya). In these areas the military employed counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare strategies that entailed the systematic use of terror and the mobilization of civilians against members of their own community. In such contexts, even the minimal restraints provided by law were removed to permit the military freedom of action. The lack of any effective civilian political or legal control over these operations meant that they frequently resulted in serious and systematic human rights violations. This was also the case in areas that were removed from public scrutiny, domestic and international. Rural areas, even on the island of Java, were especially vulnerable, but so too were poorer communities in the major towns and cities. In such places the military’s power in matters of security and sociopolitical affairs was not significantly constrained by civilian authorities. Thus as scholars and pundits of Indonesia’s New Order debated—in the manner of the Kremilinologists of old—the meaning of recent shifts in relations between the president and the armed forces leadership in Jakarta, for most ordinary people the relationship with the military did not change: the military remained the institution that governed, and in some cases ended, their lives.

The third section examines changes in civil-military relations that have occurred since the resignation of President Suharto in May 1998 and considers future trajectories. Although domestic protest, presidential intervention, and international pressures have significantly strengthened civilian authority since 1998, as we shall see, the changes have not completely undermined the most fundamental roots of military power. Moreover, the declining prestige of the armed forces after the fall of Suharto—and the possibility that its members may be brought to account for past abuses—may actually increase the prospects for military intervention in coming years. Such a development would be all the more likely if the newly elected civilian government failed to perform satisfactorily, particularly in the sphere of national security. It needs to be stressed, however, that military intervention is more likely to take the form of covert mischief-making or behind-the-scenes maneuvering than an open seizure of power such as occurred in Pakistan in 1999.

President Suharto’s resignation in May 1998 unleashed powerful pressures for reform of the armed forces that had been building for some time. Allegations, and in some cases official admissions, of systematic abuse of human rights by armed forces personnel under the New Order accentuated public demands. Domestic protests dovetailed with international pressures and added weight to the arguments of those within the armed forces, both active and retired, who had already begun to push for change. By early 1999, this combination of public protest, international pressure, and soul-searching within the military leadership itself had begun to affect relations between civilian and military authorities in Jakarta. The number of military seats in the legislature was reduced by half (from 75 to 38), military leaders apologized for past human rights abuses, some of the more notorious officers were dismissed, and there was a significant opening of the political system. These developments arguably marked the start of an unprecedented diminution of the military’s historical position and a unique opportunity for the assertion of civilian political power. President Wahid seized that opportunity, using his authority to promote officers who appeared committed to military reform, to dismiss or demote those whose loyalty he doubted, and to bring others to account for past human rights violations.

Yet at the same time there were powerful forces pushing in the opposite direction: toward a continuation or reassertion of military dominance. Beyond the glare of public scrutiny, old attitudes, patterns of behavior, and interests persisted within the military. Thus even if some among the military leadership in Jakarta appeared to move in the direction of reform, a great many officers and men seemed inclined to resist, or simply ignore, the changes. The past tendency (and continued capacity) of some units and commanders to engineer social violence, or to mobilize paramilitary forces, posed an especially serious threat to the transition to civilian rule. Also pushing in the direction of a restoration of military power were indications that some military authorities might be prepared to backtrack on reform plans in the face of mounting social violence and threats to national unity. Finally, notwithstanding proposals that it be dismantled, the territorial structure of the armed forces remained unchanged, ensuring a powerful military and intelligence presence in every neighborhood and village in the country.

The chapter concludes with a brief case study of East Timor in the post–New Order period, highlighting many of the trends described earlier. On the one hand, the events of 1999 in East Timor revealed that there were significant elements in the armed forces prepared to defy official government policy—and to do so by resorting to old tricks, such as the use of terror and paramilitary forces. On the other hand, the fact that a popular consultation was successfully held in August—and the consultative assembly (MPR) voted to accept the result in October—testified to the power of a courageous civil society and a new willingness to intervene on the part of the international community. These developments also suggested that in
Indonesia generally, the shift away from military dominance may proceed more vigorously and swiftly than anticipated.

**THE ROOTS OF MILITARY POWER**

Under the New Order, the Indonesian armed forces (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia [ABRI]) became the most powerful political institution in the country next to the president. The political power it attained and the particular manner in which it exercised that power were not rooted primarily in constitutional provisions or legal documents. Rather, they were the product of a historical process of state formation in which the armed forces played a central role. By virtue of the military's close involvement in that process, its ideology and institutions became deeply embedded in the makeup of the state itself, thereby giving the armed forces a uniquely powerful position and making any challenge to the military tantamount to a crime against the state.

**History and State Building**

Indonesia's military has never been purely professional in the sense of being an apolitical institution that receives and implements orders from a civilian political leadership. Ever since the Indonesian struggle for independence from the Dutch colonial authorities (1945-1949), the Indonesian military—in particular the army—has always played an important role in the political, social, and economic life of the state. This is not to say that the military's road to political dominance has been easy or uncontested. But the experience of political involvement has been there from the outset and has inevitably shaped its outlook, character, and interests. At the same time, the military's involvement in the earliest phases of state formation inevitably shaped the structure and ideology of the state itself.

Although Indonesians served in the Dutch colonial army and in a variety of Japanese military auxiliary bodies (1942-1945), it was only during the revolutionary period (1945-1949) that a national armed force emerged. The experience of fighting for national independence was critical in forming the essential doctrines of that force, and in shaping the worldview of the officers who would implement them over the next 40 years. By the time independence was achieved in 1945, many military officers had developed a deep contempt for the country's civilian political leaders, whom they viewed as weak for their willingness to negotiate with the Dutch. By contrast, military officers believed that by continuing to fight the Dutch they had saved the nation and had thereby earned a right to play a central role in political life after independence. Their ambitions were temporarily frustrated, however, by the establishment in 1957 of a parliamentary form of government under civilian control.

After a period of relatively strong civilian authority in the early and mid-1950s, the military's political power expanded significantly with the declaration of martial law in 1957 and the imposition of "guided democracy" two years later. Both of these initiatives were supported by the military leadership on the grounds that civilian political authorities were incompetent and corrupt and, moreover, that the parliamentary democracy in place through the early and mid-1950s had proved inappropriate to Indonesia's cultural and political condition. These were debatable claims and may have obscured some less noble motives. But they echoed President Sukarno's views and hence became the basis for a major shift in the constitutional and normative foundations of the state as well as the relations between civilian and military authorities.

By expanding its political and administrative authority, martial law also gave the military authority over substantial new economic resources and extended its links with the Indonesian state. When Dutch and other foreign-owned plantations and properties were expropriated by the state in the late 1940s and early 1950s, for example, the army used its authority to assume effective ownership of them. Martial law also increased dramatically the opportunities for bribery and rent seeking by military authorities entrusted with the granting of licenses, permits, contracts, and so on. Thus by the time martial law was officially ended in 1965, the military had developed a powerful stake in the economic status quo and had strong reasons to cling to its political and state power.

The system of guided democracy—portrayed by Sukarno as a uniquely Indonesian alternative to parliamentary democracy—deepened still further the political involvement of the armed forces. By guaranteeing military representation alongside political parties in all major legislative and executive bodies—and by restoring the 1945 constitution, which enshrined the principle of competitive representation by "functional group"—guided democracy strengthened the armed forces' position and stake in political life and set the stage, institutionally and normatively, for its further expansion after 1965. Paradoxically, guided democracy also benefited the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia [PKI]), thereby accentuating simmering tensions between at least some parts of ABRI and political forces on the left.

ABRI's position was further consolidated by the "coup" and counter coup of October 1, 1965, which led to the destruction of the PKI, the massacre of as many as 1 million alleged communists, and eventually the ouster of President Sukarno. Debate continues over the identity and motives of those ultimately responsible for the initial coup attempt. The official government version claims it was masterminded by the PKI, but many serious scholars contend it was actually orchestrated by elements in the army as a pretext for a counterattack on the PKI and Sukarno. Although questions remain about the coup, there is no doubt whatsoever about the identity of the man who launched the counter attack—or about the consequences of his actions. The chief architect was Major General Suharto, the man who would eventually remove his military regime and serve as president until May 21, 1998. Supported by a range of anti-communist civilian parties and groups, Suharto instigated the destruction of the army's chief political rival, the PKI, and the establishment of the New Order regime.

Significantly, Suharto's seizure of power was warmly welcomed by the United States and other anti-communist governments. Indeed, there is substantial evidence that the United States and its allies actively encouraged army officers to seize power and crush the PKI, and then provided significant material and political support to help them consolidate their victory. Over the next three decades, the New Order regime continued to benefit from strong support from governments and financial institutions that saw Suharto's authoritarian rule as a guarantee of economic opportunity and political stability in the region. The impressive economic growth achieved during these years was seen by many observers as evidence that authoritarianism worked—and was often used to justify the heavy restrictions on civil and political rights that were the hallmark of the New Order regime.

The coup of October 1965, and the massacre that followed, tipped the balance between civilian and military authorities in favor of the military, and further shaped the evol-
ing Indonesian state. In the first fifteen or twenty years of the New Order regime, the armed forces leadership—in particular the army officers—served as Suharto's loyal partners and played a leading role in virtually every aspect of political and national security decision making and implementation. The New Order also provided unparalleled opportunities for the expansion and entrenchment of ABRI's economic interests in these years (Kristiani 1999: 104). During the same period, civilian institutions and leaders were pushed to the margins of political life and deprived of meaningful decision-making authority.  

The manner in which Suharto and his allies crushed the October 1965 coup and destroyed the PKI prefigured a new style of governance characterized by a near-hysterical anticommunism, an extreme intolerance of dissent, and the intensive use of political surveillance. Perhaps most significantly, the brutal manner in which the New Order came to power set in motion, and helped to institutionalize, what I call a “culture of violence” within the armed forces and within the state as a whole. In using the term “culture of violence” I do not mean to imply that Indonesian peoples are inherently violent. Rather, I use the term to suggest that after 1965, violence—and the threat of violence—became a defining element of the system of norms and patterns of behavior within the Indonesian military and within the New Order state itself. Thus it was not only relations between civilian and military authorities that were affected by the transition of 1965, but the relationship between military authorities and civil society more generally.

**Doctrine and Ideology**

The military's political power has been buttressed by an array of ideological constructs pertaining to the armed forces' own position within the state, to the definition of national threats, and to national security strategies. The military's central role in state formation has helped to ensure that these constructs have become integral to the ideological infrastructure of the state itself. For this reason, challenges to these doctrines have historically been viewed as acts of subversion against the state—a fact that makes the challenges of recent times all the more noteworthy.

The military's central role in the political life of the country has been justified primarily through the doctrine of “dual function.” Originally articulated in 1931 as the doctrine of the “middle way” by the army chief of staff, General Nasution, it was formalized and refined in 1956-1958 and finally enshrined in law in 1982. As outlined in the 1982 law, the dual function doctrine prescribes two related functions for the armed forces: a conventional military role as an enforcer of national defense and national security and a second role as arbiter of the country's social and political affairs.

The middle way doctrine stipulated that ABRI would neither abstain from politics nor directly seize political power. However, shortly after it was articulated, and particularly after the 1965 coup, the idea degenerated into a slogan that justified military involvement in the most minute details of political and social life. The dual function doctrine, in other words, was much the product of an emerging military political dominance as it was the basis for an expanded military role. That is to say, the idea of dual function could scarcely have emerged, or persisted for so long, in the absence of a near-exclusive military jurisdiction in social and political affairs and national security.

Nevertheless, by virtue of its long use as the ideological foundation of extensive military power, the dual function doctrine arguably developed an independent significance during the New Order. The flood of public protests after May 1998 demanding an end to dual function suggests that it has never been fully embraced by civilians. Yet clearly the doctrine has affected the self-perception of generations of military officers. Among other things it has helped them adjust to—and even take pride in performing—functions that military officers in other countries would consider inappropriate, unprofessional, or both: regulating the internal affairs of social and political organizations, for example, and managing non-defense-related businesses.

The political power of the Indonesian military has been strengthened by the reality and the definition of national security threats. Indonesia has not faced a serious external threat for many years, nor does one appear likely in the future. Accordingly, Indonesian national security doctrine has been dominated by strategies for the detection, prevention, and repression of internal threats. Paramount among these, in the military's view, have been the threat of subversion by a resurgent communism or an extremist religious movement, and the threat to national unity posed by ethnic conflicts and regional rebellions, such as those in Aceh, West Papua, and, until late 1999, East Timor.

Also important in legitimating the military's involvement in political and social affairs and national security has been the doctrine of “total people's defense.” A legacy of the guerrilla struggle against the Dutch from 1945 to 1949, this doctrine calls for the close cooperation of regular military forces and the civilian population in defending the country against both external and internal threats. “Total people's defense” is arguably a sensible approach where budgetary and geographical constraints render conventional military forces insufficient to defend against perceived threats. Nevertheless, this doctrine has helped to blur the distinction between legitimate defense against external and internal threats, and an ever deeper encroachment of military authorities into political, social, and economic affairs.

**Military Institutions**

The penetration of ABRI authority into nonmilitary realms has been facilitated by a variety of institutional arrangements that have evolved together with—and become integral to—the Indonesian state.

At the heart of the military's power are certain unique aspects of its command structure. In accordance with the doctrines of dual function, and total people's defense, the Indonesian Army is organized primarily along territorial lines. Roughly two-thirds of its forces are deployed throughout the country in a structure that descends to the village level. Under the current arrangement, the country is divided into ten Regional Military Commands (KODAM). Each KODAM is further divided into a series of successively smaller geographical command units: Resort Military Commands (KOREM); District Military Commands (KODIM); and Subdistrict Military Commands (KORAMIL). At the village level, the armed forces are represented by a noncommissioned officer known as a "Babinsa.”

This territorial structure runs parallel to the structures of civilian political authority down to the village level. In this way it ensures military involvement in and, if necessary, dominance over the formulation and implementation of policy. It also permits the armed forces to engage in relative ease in continual surveillance or intelligence gathering and to intervene directly in all kinds of political, social, and economic matters, including the internal affairs of political
parties, labor disputes, business deals, and so on. "In practice," Crouch writes, "the territorial structure serves as a means of political control."11a

Military dominance in the realm of national security has also been given effect through a range of centrally commanded institutions with substantial resources and autonomy from control by civilians other than the president. Among the most powerful institutions of the New Order was the Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (Kopamitab), created by Suharto in the immediate aftermath of the 1965 coup. With virtually unlimited powers of surveillance, arrest, and detention in the name of restoring order, Kopamitab became a byword for the abuse of military power and the suppression of internal dissent. It was finally dismantled in 1989—just as Suharto was seeking to assert greater control over the military as a whole—and then immediately replaced by the slightly less powerful Bakorstatan.

The preoccupation with internal threats in Indonesian national security doctrine has also permitted the armed forces to claim near-exclusive jurisdiction over the tasks of political surveillance and domestic and foreign intelligence. This power has found expression in a pervasive domestic intelligence network that with only minor exceptions has been controlled by the armed forces.16 Through its control of these important tasks and institutions, the military has been in a position to exercise a dominating influence in areas of political policy that in other contexts might be considered to fall within the realm of civilian authorities.

Finally, mention must be made of the various centrally commanded elite combat units that have been deployed to prevent, control, and crush perceived security threats—particularly in the Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troubled. The two that stand out in recent times are the elite Special Forces areas considered troub...
transitional justice—an arrangement ensuring that its officers are seldom brought to justice for serious human rights violations and thereby perpetuating a pattern of impunity and reinforcing the cycle, and the culture, of state violence.

"Unconventional" and Illegal Activities

Apart from its roles in national security management and sociopolitical affairs, the Indonesian military has historically been involved in semilegal or illegal activities ranging from "unconventional financing" to the mobilization of gangs and paramilitary organizations. Both activities have been linked to corruption and to mafia-style crime and have contributed to the entrenchment of military power. But as long as the abuses stemming from such activities have undermined the prestige of the armed forces, they have also contributed to growing popular opposition.

In absolute terms, and as a percentage of the national budget, state funding for the Indonesian armed forces has been surprisingly modest. In fact, the portion of the national budget allocated to defense and security declined from 27 percent in 1969–1970 to just 6 percent in 1988–1990, after which it remained somewhere between 6 percent and 8 percent until the mid-1990s (Kristadi 1999:101). Similarly, unofficial figures suggest that the standard remuneration package for soldiers and officers is very low, leaving a significant number of soldiers below the official poverty line. This apparent underfunding of the most powerful institution in the country is less puzzling when it is understood that budget figures conceal critical sources of military revenue—funds secured through the military's direct involvement in business enterprises and through corruption.

Military reliance on such unconventional financing dates from the revolutionary period and became commonplace during the 1970s, when unit commanders were responsible for routine military expenditures and soldiers' welfare. As noted earlier, the practice intensified with the imposition of martial law in 1967 and with the consolidation of military power after 1985. Military involvement in business took various forms under the New Order. Some officers were appointed as directors of huge public corporations such as the state oil company, Pertamina, and powerful state regulatory bodies such as the National Logistics Board (Bulog). Many others took advantage of their considerable political power—and their influence over the granting of licenses, permits, and bank loans—to establish lucrative enterprises and enter joint ventures with experienced businessmen. Another favored mechanism for generating revenue was the establishment of "foundations" (\textit{kebon}) that allowed the accumulation and investment of capital on a tax-free basis. The pervasive nature of military power down to the village level permitted, and perhaps encouraged, officers and soldiers to make money through a variety of corrupt practices including bribery, kickbacks, and protection rackets. Although there is no way of knowing the precise amount of revenue generated from these sources, anecdotal evidence suggests that under the New Order it was substantial.

Closely related but perhaps more worrying from the point of view of ordinary citizens has been the military practice of mobilizing thugs and petty criminals into official and semi-official militias and paramilitary units. Often justified as a means to maintain order, these units have frequently been used to intimidate political opponents, to provoke violence to achieve political ends, and to take part in clandestine military operations aimed at detaining or killing alleged opponents of the government. With only minimal training, such militia forces have been responsible for serious human rights abuses. More generally, the reliance on such groups has arguably contributed to the spread of a culture of violence in society as a whole.

The mobilization of illegal or semilegal violence by military leaders has a long and rich history in Indonesia. Military-sponsored thugs, paramilitary units, and plainclothes officers are known to have been involved in many of the most serious instances of political violence, rioting, and social upheaval under the New Order. Military units such as the RPKAD encouraged "civilian" groups to take part in the campaign to annihilate the PKI in 1965–1966 and in many instances provided them with arms and other logistical support to do so, thereby contributing to the vast scale of the killing. Demonstrators and thugs under the influence of high-ranking military officers are thought to have been responsible for igniting the widespread mass murder in mid-1990s known as the Malari Affair. In an officially sanctioned campaign of mass murder in the mid-1990s, known by the acronym PETRUS, soldiers in plainclothes shot dead as many as 5,000 petty criminals. In East Timor and Aceh, military commanders and staff officers are known to have mobilized thousands of local youths into paramilitary units over many years and trained them to spy on, terrorize, and kill fellow citizens suspected of antigovernment sympathies. In the final years of the New Order, military authorities habitually mobilized ABRI-affiliated youth organizations and gangs in order to disrupt otherwise peaceful demonstrations. They are widely believed, for example, to have organized thugs to storm the national headquarters of the PDI in July 1996, triggering what was at the time some of the worst rioting in twenty years.

Historically, the resort to such activities—the provocation or engineering of social conflict and violence—has often occurred when struggles for political power emerged within the New Order political and military elite. These methods were also used, and proved to be grimly effective, in preventing or diverting opposition and criticism of the regime by civil society. Whatever the reasons, the military's capacity to employ such tactics was an important source of its political power under the New Order, but at the same time an important reason for its deep unpopularity with ordinary people.

Constraints on Military Power

Under the New Order, the political power of the military was not unlimited. It was constrained by the constitutional and personal authority of the president, by tensions and conflicts within the military itself, and by opposition and criticism both from abroad and from Indonesia's own civil society. During the late New Order, these forces dovetailed in ways that weakened military authority and ultimately helped to undermine the regime itself. As the case of the 1998 crisis clearly demonstrates, however, even in the late New Order these limits did not significantly constrain the military in its relations with the vast majority of the population.

Presidential Power

Under the Indonesian constitution the president, as supreme commander, holds ultimate authority over the armed forces. Although that authority did not significantly impinge on
ABRI's power through the first two decades of the New Order, starting in the mid-1960s, the military leadership often found itself in competition with the president for jurisdiction over key areas of state policy, such as senior political and military appointments, decisions over defense procurement, and the definition of the armed forces' appropriate role. In these battles, the military leadership did not always prevail.

In the realm of senior political appointments, President Suharto's vice-presidential choice in 1968, Sudharmono, was selected against the powerful objections of the ABRI leadership. In 1969, Suharto again managed to have his vice-presidential favorite, B.J. Habibie, selected against the wishes of active and retired military officers. Some of the opposition to Habibie's candidacy among military leaders can be traced to yet another policy battle they had lost to civilian authorities. In the early 1970s Habibie, as minister of state for research and technology, had arranged for the procurement of 39 aging naval vessels from the former East German fleet, apparently without consulting the military leadership or at any rate against their objections. This case was symptomatic of a general decline in the military's political influence at the center in the last five years of the New Order. Other signs of that decline were the reduction in the number of cabinet posts and governorships allocated to military men (Kristiadi 1999: 109).

Instances of ABRI's declining authority in relation to the president were evident, too, when it came to senior military appointments. Exercising his ultimate authority over military promotions and assignments, President Suharto succeeded in sidelining a succession of potential challengers while rewarding officers considered personally loyal. Suharto's most conspicuous victory over the military was his sacking of the powerful ABRI commanders, General Murdani, in 1993 and the subsequent purge of Murdani loyalists from key command posts. The success of the "de-Benny-initiation" campaign was a clear reminder that even the highest military authorities were subject to the authority of the president. Indeed, some observers consider that after Murdani's ouster, ABRI became little more than a "fire brigade" dispatched by the president to smother the fires he had started (Grouch 1998: 2).

The fire brigade metaphor highlights an important aspect of the relationship between the military and the president under the New Order. Although touted as an institution above politics, whose sole duty was to the nation and the state, the armed forces were increasingly used in a regime maintenance function, that is, to keep Suharto in power. That often meant using military force and intelligence capacity to identify, detain, torture, or kill government opponents. Such activities were by no means confined to the notorious trouble spots Aceh and East Timor but took place literally throughout the country. One of the more notorious instances of the pattern, for instance, was the 1997-1998 kidnapping and murder of several student activists by elements of the armed forces near Jakarta.

Civil Society: Domestic and International

In the final years of the New Order, the principal challenges to military power in social and political affairs, as well as national security issues, came from Indonesia's emerging civil society and from the international community. There were at least two related processes stimulating the development of a stronger and more assertive civil society in Indonesia during the late New Order. First, domestic critics emerged with increasing force in response to the actions of the state itself. Through their direct experience as victims of systematic human rights violations, for example, members of different social, class, and ethnic groups began gradually to perceive the military—with its "security approach," its pervasive intelligence network, and its contempt for the law—as the principal and common cause of their problems. Second, a growing impatience with the political status quo developed alongside changes in the class or social structure stemming from rapid economic change. Particularly important in this regard was the significant growth in the late New Order of the professional, educated middle class—lawyers, teachers, journalists, students, artists, NGO workers, and others—who were uniquely capable of articulating the general impatience with the status quo. Not surprisingly, their commitment to political change grew dramatically as the regime began increasingly to target them for repression.

Tensions and conflicts within the military and political elite also enhanced the power of civil society. Observers of Indonesian military politics have noted several different lines of division over the years: conflicts between corrupt "financial officers" and the reputedly cleaner "professional officers"; generational tensions, especially between the "1945 generation" of officers who emerged from the revolution and younger officers trained in military academies; friction between officers considered loyal to the president and his entourage ("the palace") and those seen as critical of it; ideological-religious differences between Islamic-oriented ("Green") officers and those with a more secular-nationalist ("Red and White") orientation; and rivalries of a largely personal nature between high-ranking officers that end up involving their respective followers.

Each of these lines of tension within the elite has had the potential to encourage competing factions to seek civilian allies. And each, therefore, has also had the potential to be exploited by civilians seeking to influence policy or even to challenge the military or the regime itself. In connection with his growing animosity toward the palace in the early 1990s, for example, General Murdani is believed to have encouraged civilian opposition to Suharto. Meanwhile, Suharto took advantage of public protest on certain issues to advance his own agenda against Murdani. The strong domestic and international criticism that followed the November 1999 Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor, for example, provided Suharto with a perfect opportunity to purge a number of Murdani supporters from the military while winning credit by appearing to respond to public concern over human rights violations.

In the final years of the New Order, the challenge to the existing pattern of civil-military relations—and to the regime itself—was also stimulated by conditions outside of Indonesia. For much of the first 30 years of Suharto's rule, strong international support had helped to buttress military dominance and systematic human rights abuses. With the end of the cold war, however, a majority of Western governments began to espouse open concern for human rights and democratization. Although this rhetoric was not always matched by concrete action, it did present an important opportunity for international and domestic groups to advance their concerns. Moreover, in some instances, the rhetoric of Western governments was backed by open criticism and threats of economic sanctions.

Mention should also be made of the impact of international economic developments. Here again it must be recalled that economic interests had encouraged most foreign investors and lenders to remain silent in the face of political abuses and rampant corruption until roughly 1998. Although the economic crisis of 1997-1998 was in significant respects the product of flawed Indonesian government policy and endemic corruption, international economic pressures compounded the problem. Because success in economic development had been the New
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Order’s main source of legitimacy, the collapse of the economy began very swiftly to undermine the regime’s credibility and, with it, the position of the military.

Embedded Power

Yet if, at the center, military authority was to some extent circumscribed or undermined by the president, by friction within the military, by domestic protesters, and by the international community, these constraints did not appreciably diminish ABRI’s effective power in relation to the population at large under the New Order. The problem was most pronounced in areas considered troubled, where the military was given even greater than normal autonomy. As already noted, however, military dominance and abusive behavior were by no means confined to these areas. Although a discourse of political reform and concern for human rights gave the impression that things were changing in the early 1990s—an impression largely accepted at face value by Jakarta-based journalists and diplomats—serious investigations found no clear evidence of improvement.

The military’s dominance persisted because the task of ensuring national security continued to be regarded, even by civilians, as the legitimate preserve of military authorities and, moreover, because that task had historically been so broadly defined. The military’s de facto power at the local level was further strengthened by the fact that some military officials were prepared to use—and rarely were punished for using—violence and other illegal means to pursue their interests and policies. Thus, although the assertion of presidential authority and occasional domestic and international political criticism may have begun to limit the political authority of the military in the late New Order, it did not significantly alter the relationship between the military and the vast majority of the population. Given the military’s considerable arsenal of doctrinal, structural, and institutional authority, such a state of affairs was hardly surprising.


This characterization of civil-military relations under the New Order is highlighted by events in Aceh between 1989 and 1998. During these years the Indonesian government conducted a counterinsurgency campaign aimed at crushing an armed independence movement known as Aceh Merdeka. In the course of that campaign, an estimated 2,000 civilians were killed and countless others were arbitrarily detained, tortured, and raped.

The events of these years confirm, first, that although ABRI’s authority was constrained by the president and by domestic opposition, such limitations did not significantly diminish the capacity of military commanders to carry out military operations in the name of national security. Indeed, in their relations with civilians in Aceh, military authorities had the ultimate authority. Second, the events in Aceh demonstrate clearly that a culture of violence had become deeply embedded in the Indonesian military by the late 1980s and, too, that the use of terror against civilian populations had become standard practice. Third, they give some sense of the ways in which unrestrained military power was linked to the practice of unconventional means of which the international context encouraged patterns of military abuse and unrestrained power vis-à-vis civilians.

Indonesia: On a New Course?

Constraints That Did Not Matter

The government counterinsurgency campaign in Aceh, it now seems clear, was initiated by President Suharto himself. Apart from a genuine concern to put down a rebellion, the presidential command that was perceived to be too autonomous and perhaps even involved in drug trade and other criminal activities. So in mid-1990, on Suharto’s order, the regional military commander was replaced, and some 6,000 additional troops were deployed to the region.

This evidence tends to support the contention that particularly in the late New Order, decisions of the president and his immediate circle. Yet, although the president may have been which units ought to be deployed, it is clear that once the troops were on the ground, the military An essay on the war and the military. The political authority of the armed forces, considerable civilian and military authorities deployed in Aceh were therefore free to use virtually any means deemed necessary to destroy the [rebel movement].

A Culture of Violence

In deciding how to proceed against the rebels, military commanders applied standard ABRI doctrine and used strategies that had been developed and refined in other theaters of operations considerably in large part thanks to the experience gained by crushing the PKI and the East Timorese resistance. The strategy employed in Aceh—and the behavior of the troops there—differed from that in Aceh by this time, particularly within Kopassus and other elite combat units. Two distinctive elements were employed in Aceh that had been tried and refined in other operations, most notably in East Timor: first, the systematic use of terror as a means of dealing with perceived threats to national security; and second, the forced mobilization of civilians to serve as auxiliary soldiers. These methods also encouraged exceptional violence and resistance in local society and inflicted wounds that would prove exceptionally difficult to heal.

Among the first outside troops to arrive in Aceh in mid-1990 was a Kopassus unit under the command of Col. Prabowo Subianto. Within a few days of their arrival by parachute in Aceh Utara, this unit began to burn down the houses of families suspected of supporting Aceh Merdeka. This was only the start. In subsequent weeks, this unit and others began a systematic campaign to remove civil populations in areas of perceived rebel strength. Their methods included armed intimidation, house-to-house searches, arbitrary arrest, routine torture of detainees, the rape of women believed to be associated with the movement, and public execution.
Among the most chilling examples of state-sanctioned terror in Aceh were targeted killings and public executions. For a period of about two years after the start of combat operations, the corpses of Acehnese victims, generally young men, were found strewn in public places—beside main roads, near village security posts, in public markets, in fields and plantations, next to a stream or a river—apparently as a warning to others not to join or support the rebels (Amnesty International 1993: 18). Many victims of summary execution were simply shot and thrown into mass graves, at least one of which reportedly contained as many as 200 bodies (Amnesty International 1993: 18). But if the method of disposal was different, the intent of the mass killings was the same: to sow terror, to create an atmosphere of pervasive fear, and to ensure that witnesses to such crimes remained silent.

Equally important in generating political violence in Aceh was the New Order strategy of "civil-military cooperation"—a euphemism for the policy of compelling civilians to participate in intelligence and security operations against real or alleged government opponents. Like the use of targeted killings, corpse display, and rape, this strategy was not unique to Aceh; it had been developed and refined, for example, in counterinsurgency operations in Irian Jaya and East Timor. Among the most notorious examples of the strategy were the "fence of legs" operations in which "ordinary villagers were compelled to sweep through an area ahead of armed troops, in order both to flush out rebels and to inhibit them from returning fire" (Amnesty International 1993: 12). The military also led campaigns encouraging all civilians to spy upon, turn in, or kill any suspected member of an alleged enemy group. This tactic was an essential element in the dynamic of violence in Aceh. In November 1990, for example, the regional military commander, Maj. Gen. R. Pramono, said, "I have told the community, if you find a terrorist, kill him. There's no need to investigate him. Don't let people be the victims. If they don't do as you order them, shoot them on the spot, or butcher them. Tell members of the community to carry sharp weapons, a machete or whatever. If you meet a terrorist, kill him." 4

In accordance with standard ABRI practice, military commanders also mobilized local vigilante units and night patrols. Recruits received basic military training and, after being armed with knives, spears, and machetes, were told to hunt down Aceh Merdeka supporters. As they had done during the anticommunist campaign in 1965–1966 and counterinsurgency operations in East Timor, military authorities also organized mass rallies in Aceh at which civilians were exhorted to swear an oath that they would "crush the terrorists until there is nothing left of them" (Amnesty International 1993: 13–14). Failure to participate in such campaigns—and to demonstrate a sufficient commitment to crushing the enemy by identifying, capturing, or killing alleged rebels—often resulted in punishment and sometimes public torture and execution.

**Military as Mafia**

Aceh's status as a Military Operations Area (which lasted from 1990 to 1998) created untold opportunities for the emergence of a semi-official mafia with close links to the military and to Kopassus in particular. Members of units stationed in Aceh were able to enrich themselves serving as enforcers, debt collectors, security guards, and extortionists. 50

Stories of such operations began to abound as Kopassus became firmly established in Aceh in the mid-1990s. In 1993, for example, a local human rights organization reported the case of a man named Abdul Hamid bin Itam, who had been detained by three Kopassus soldiers late at night on September 14, 1996, in the town of Sigli. After being taken to the local Kopassus post, Abdul Hamid had been badly beaten and then shot in the head; his mutilated body was found a few days later about 200 kilometers from Sigli. Although at first this appeared to be a standard summary execution of an Aceh Merdeka suspect, it was later discovered that the dead man had been detained in connection with a private dispute he had had with a local government official in Pulic. The official had evidently hired the Kopassus soldiers to "resolve" the dispute. 51

Although evidence for the existence of such a military mafia remains largely anecdotal, its existence would be in keeping with patterns in other parts of the country, especially in other areas of long-term military operations. It would also help to account for the extraordinary reluctance of the armed forces to leave Aceh long after Aceh Merdeka had been crushed as a military force.

**International Context**

The military response to the Aceh Merdeka uprising was also shaped by the international context. The crackdown began more than a year before the November 1991 massacre at Santa Cruz, East Timor, in which as many as 270 people may have died, and the unprecedented criticism at home and abroad that stemmed from it. That criticism, and the unusual decision to reprimand some senior officers, would eventually send shock waves throughout the armed forces, shaking its sense of invulnerability for the first time in decades. But in the years and months before Santa Cruz, leading military figures displayed a remarkable confidence about the success of their terrorist methods.

This was a time, too, when international criticism of the New Order's human rights record had reached a low ebb. Stimulated by a desire to capitalize on the burgeoning economics of the region, Western governments were reluctant to voice concern about or take concrete measures against the violations committed by Indonesian government forces. In these years Western governments routinely argued that the human rights situation in East Timor was improving and that it was pointless, even irresponsible, to question the territory's political status. About human rights violations occurring in Indonesia itself, there was even less concern.

In short, the counterinsurgency campaign in Aceh was set in motion at a time when military authorities felt confident that the brutal methods they had used elsewhere could again be used to good effect and without serious political cost. They were not far wrong. Long after the Santa Cruz massacre had forced recognition of the seriousness of the problem in East Timor and at least some sort of response from the New Order, the widespread violations of human rights in Aceh received scarcely a mention either abroad or within Indonesia. The world's decision to maintain an unseemly silence—to conduct business as usual with the New Order—unquestionably helped to ensure that military operations, and human rights abuses, continued in Aceh for nearly a decade.

**AFTER THE NEW ORDER**

The public and international clamor for reform that finally triggered President Suharto's resignation in May 1998 accelerated in the weeks and months after his demise and led to wide-
spread criticism of the armed forces, both for its record of human rights abuse and for its association with the New Order. The military leadership responded to the new situation with proposals for reform and with promises of a thorough reconsideration and reorientation of ABRI's role. Meanwhile, the Indonesian political system lurched unsteadily toward civilian rule. Perhaps the most powerful symbol of that change was the successful, and largely peaceful, national election of June 1999—the first free and fair election in Indonesia since 1955. Also emblematic of the change was the election by the new MPR of a civilian president and vice president, Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri, respectively, in October 1999.

It is too early to say definitively whether these developments signal a lasting change in civil-military relations in Indonesia. What follows, therefore, is a modest attempt to detect some of the more significant trends that have emerged in the post-Suharto period, and on that basis to make some suggestions about the future trajectory of civil-military relations in Indonesia. This analysis of current and future trends is followed by a case study of East Timor since the end of the New Order.

The Trend toward Civilian Power

At least on the surface, the initiatives taken by the Indonesian National Defense Forces (TNI) after May 1998 appeared to reflect a genuine shift in thinking within the armed forces leadership. By June, a number of high-ranking military officers had prepared detailed proposals for political, legal, and economic reform. In August 1998, General Prabowo and two of his associates were sacked for their alleged involvement in the kidnapping and murder of democracy activists earlier that year. The same month armed forces commander General Wiranto issued a public apology for human rights violations committed by ABRI in Aceh and declared an end to the ten-year-old military operation there. In late 1998 Wiranto announced that the dual function doctrine would be reconsidered and that the military would henceforth be operating according to a “new paradigm.” As a sign of this commitment to change, in November 1998 the name of ABRI’s chief of staff for social and political affairs was changed to chief of staff for territorial affairs. In 1999 the military leadership acquiesced in the reduction of the number of ABRI seats in the DPR (and MPR) from 75 to 38. In April, the police were separated from ABRI, and the new streamlined armed forces were renamed the TNI. Most surprisingly, perhaps, the military leadership publicly accepted President Habibie’s January 1999 proposal to let East Timorese vote on their political future and in October joined other factions in the MPR in accepting the result, leading to East Timor’s independence.

With the selection of Abdurrahman Wahid as president in October 1999, the shift toward civilian supremacy appeared to gain further momentum. Wahid immediately asserted his authority over the military with a series of bold appointments and rotations at the highest levels of the TNI. Breaking with the long tradition of army domination, he immediately appointed a civilian, Jovono Sudarsono, as minister of defense and a navy officer, Admiral Widodo, as TNI commander. In January 2000 he dismissed the armed forces spokesperson, Major General Sudrajat, after he made statements questioning the president’s authority over the military. At about the same time, Wahid ordered that in accordance with a 1999 MPR decision on khataman, the four active military officers in the cabinet would have to retire from the TNI by the end of March; and all did so without objection. In his most daring move, in February, he suspended the former armed forces commander General Wiranto from his cabinet position, pending investigations into the general’s role in the previous year’s violence in East Timor.

Wahid’s willingness to face down the military was also evident in his handling of the continuing political crisis in Aceh. As early as November 1999 he resisted strong military demands for a declaration of martial law in the province, saying, “There is no need for that. Martial law will only create more problems.” Wahid also lent his full support to the prosecution of human rights violators in Aceh, leading to an unprecedented trial that ended in April 2000 with the conviction of 24 soldiers and police and one civilian for the July 1999 murder of more than 50 civilians. Although critics noted that the prosecutors had failed to bring charges against commanding officers, the trial nevertheless represented a significant departure from the cycle of military impunity that had prevailed under the New Order.

President Wahid’s tough posture seems to have stimulated further serious thinking within the TNI leadership. At a special meeting in April 2000, some 150 top TNI leaders decided that the military should begin to withdraw from its involvement in political affairs and instead focus on its external defense role. That meeting was followed by the news that the Ministry of Defense had begun a review of the national security doctrine and of the 1961 law on dual function. In May some 50 generals took part in a seminar at which the need for serious doctrinal change was debated. At least on paper, then, it seemed that the armed forces were prepared to accept the need for fundamental change and even to consider altering their core doctrine of dual function.

Viewed more systematically, these moves toward greater civilian power have been rooted in four related trends: first, the new confidence of Indonesia’s emerging civil society, expressed in vibrant, public political action; second, the willingness of Indonesia’s civilian presidents to use the considerable power of their office to face down the military; third, a degree of honest soul-searching within the armed forces leadership itself; and fourth, a recent shift in international norms and practices characterized by a greater willingness to intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states in support of good governance and human rights. If these trends persist, there is room for optimism that the move toward civilian power in Indonesia will continue. Each of these trends, and their implications for the future, are discussed in greater detail below.

The sudden collapse of the New Order—and the central role of mass public demonstrations in bringing it about—gave a new political confidence to Indonesia’s civil society while significantly weakening the military’s political position and self-confidence. The relative strength of civil society was discernible not only in the bold demands for change that emerged after May 1998, but in the political breadth of the groups advocating them: NGO activists, spiritual leaders, new political parties, government bureaucrats, and former military officers all spoke out against the very essence of the military’s long-standing mission. They called forcefully for an end to the dual function doctrine, the policy of khataman, the “security approach,” and the allocation of reserved DPR and MPR seats to the military. They also demanded full investigations into past human rights violations, and the punishment of military authorities found responsible.

Before May 1998 these sorts of demands were not only uncommon but would have been grounds for arrest and imprisonment. By the second half of 1998 they had become part of national political discourse, a trend that continued into the new millennium. Moreover, as we have seen, by early 1999 at least some of these popular demands had actually been met, and by 2000 the shift toward civilian supremacy was well underway. Although some critics com-
plained that the reforms had not gone far enough, it was clear that the TNI leadership had been forced to respond to the demands of civil society. That response in itself signaled a profound shift in the balance between military and civilian power. Accordingly, there would appear to be hope that the continued expression of popular dissent might help to promote further genuine reform and shift the balance even further toward civilian authority.

Important as public protests have been, the shift toward civilian supremacy has arguably depended at least as much on the willingness of Presidents Habibie and Wahid to use the considerable power accorded them under the 1945 constitution in the interest of democratization and civilianization. Although commonly characterized as a Suharto crony, Habibie made some decisions that openly challenged military power and military thinking. The most dramatic was his proposal to hold a referendum in East Timor, discussed in more detail below. Wahid’s approach has been only slightly less dramatic but, as already noted, in his first year in office he went farther than most imagined possible in establishing the principle and the practice of civilian supremacy.

In short, the political inclinations of the two civilian presidents, and the power accorded them under the current (1945) constitution, have been crucial in recasting the pattern of civil-military relations in the direction of civilian supremacy. The main concern in this regard is that as Suharto so clearly demonstrated, the power that the constitution grants presidents can, and might yet, easily be used to achieve the very opposite objective.

A third encouraging trend for those who favor civilian supremacy is indications that some in the TNI leadership sincerely support that option. Although a measure of skepticism is warranted about the motivation for the TNI reforms after May 1998, the military leadership’s claim that these initiatives were genuine cannot be dismissed out of hand. There were, in fact, military officers who had begun to urge a process of reform well before Suharto resigned. The most prominent among this group, sometimes referred to as the military’s “intellectuals,” was Gen. Bambarh Yehuyono, the author of a comprehensive proposal for reform issued in June 1998.

Suharto’s resignation and the torrent of public criticism it unleashed undoubtedly gave added momentum and credence to the views of this group of reformers.45 So too did the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid. Within a few months of his appointment, Wahid had moved a number of known reformers into key positions within the TNI leadership, while simultaneously removing officers thought to be more supportive of the status quo.

One of the most outspoken and controversial of the reformers introduced into the inner circle by Wahid was Maj. Gen. Agus Wirahadikusumah. In late 1999, when he was still a KODAM commander, Major General Agus had gone on record advocating drastic changes in the structure and doctrine of the armed forces, such as the dismantling of the territorial system, and an end to TNI involvement in political affairs. Without such changes, he said, the TNI would go the way of the dinosaur and would be abandoned by the people. At about the same time, Agus openly supported calls for the investigation and prosecution of high-ranking officers for past human rights abuses in Aceh, East Timor, and elsewhere. When Kostrad commander Lt. Gen. Djaja Suparman ominously warned that the trial of generals might anger soldiers, leading to unpredictable consequences, Agus retorted that “TNI soldiers do not serve their generals but the TNI as an institution and the state.”

Such attitudes and proposals for reform were shared by a number of other officers whom President Wahid had placed in positions of some power. They included Gen. Tyasno Sarana (army chief of staff), Admiral Widodo Adinugroho (TNI commander), and Maj. Gen. Riyadi Rasyad (Jakarta regional military commander). Their hold on these key posts was by no means guaranteed. It remained a possibility that they would be replaced by officers much less sympathetic to the reform agenda, of whom there were still a great many. Nevertheless, the fact that these reformers occupied key TNI positions at such a critical juncture undoubtedly helped to tip the balance in the direction of civilian supremacy.

Finally, a word about the international context is necessary. In a marked change from the New Order years, international conditions provided a strong push in the direction of greater civilian power after May 1998. The economic crisis continued to leave the regime vulnerable to the demands of foreign creditors, and as of 2000 there was no indication that these creditors favored a return to the corrupt authoritarian system, which many blamed for the crisis. In response to continuing evidence of corruption at the highest levels, such as the Bank Bali scandal of late 1999, and to the disgraceful behavior of the armed forces in East Timor, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank actually suspended some of their lending programs.

Likewise, the avalanche of evidence of wrongdoing, past and present, left foreign governments and international political institutions such as the UN with little choice but to support the process of reform and civilianization. While expressing some concern about mounting social violence, for example, the U.S. government appeared to give notice that any overt move toward the reassertion of military control over political life would not be welcome. During a visit to Indonesia in early March 1999, for example, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright voiced strong U.S. support for the June elections and the hope that the process of democratization would ultimately succeed. A similar message of support for civilian supremacy was delivered by the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, in January 2000. Responding to widespread rumors of a military coup, he said pointedly, “We would view with the greatest possible concern any such event. It would do Indonesia immense, perhaps irreparable damage.”

As we shall see, the international response to the violence in East Timor after the August 1999 popular consultation was even more resounding. Some governments, including the United States and the European Union, openly blamed the TNI for supporting the militias, and they temporarily suspended military ties and arms transfers. In a rare move, in mid-September 1999, the UN Security Council authorized a multinational armed force to use “all necessary measures” to restore order in the territory.

Military Power Resurgent?

As encouraging as these developments may seem to advocates of civilian rule, there is room for pessimism about the permanence of the shift away from military dominance. Two problems are especially large. First, the moves toward civilian supremacy, together with other political developments, have begun to produce a backlash within the military, either because they are seen as compromising national security, or because they directly threaten the material and political interests of the TNI itself. Indeed, such concerns have even led to rumors of military coups, first in late 1999 and then again in February 2000. Thus, as is so often the case in the transition to civilian rule, efforts at reform have helped to stimulate the preconditions for further military intervention.
A second problem is that the post-1998 reforms have not completely undermined the key institutional and ideological foundations of military power. Not only does this mean that much of the country's norms and behavior of the military have not appreciably changed, it also means that military officers who oppose reform or who have some other axe to grind still have the capacity to disrupt political life and to push for a reassessment of military power. These problems and their possible implications for the future are examined in greater detail below.

Notwithstanding sincere efforts by civic leaders to prevent it, after May 1998 the country faced a serious threat of disintegration and descent into widespread social and political violence. Not only did violence erupt in distant places such as Maluku, Aceh, West Papua, and East Timor, it broke out repeatedly right in the capital city, Jakarta, where it resulted in at least a dozen deaths and scores of injuries in 1999 alone. The emergence in 2000 of new armed paramilitary groups—some of them with thousands of members—and their mobilization on behalf of political causes further compounded the danger. The threat and reality of social violence and regional rebellion raised troubling questions about the course of reform and the nature of civil-military relations; and it appeared to open the door to a reassessment of military power in the name of security, order, and national unity.

Was it wise, some began to ask, to weaken the armed forces and to further undermine morale at a time when it was perhaps the only body capable of maintaining order and guaranteeing national unity? Critiques answered that military behavior had always tended to cause or contribute to social and political violence, so that a further weakening of the armed forces could only improve the situation. However, many of those in positions of authority—both civilian and military—took a more cautious view and supported initiatives aimed at enhancing the capacity of the armed forces and limiting the power of civilian society.

Two such initiatives were especially ominous. The first was an instruction by TNI commander General Wiranto in February 1999 empowering armed forces personnel to “shoot on sight” rioters and others deemed to be disrupting the peace. The potential dangers of this policy were immediate evident to human rights advocates, and it was not long before several people had been shot dead by security forces. Nevertheless, anxiety about social and political chaos was so widespread that there was remarkably little criticism of the policy. Indeed, key civilian opposition figures—including Abdurrahman Wahid, who would later become president—reportedly spoke out in favor of the shoot on sight order. Civilian support for harsh, even draconian, measures continued in 2000. Responding to an outbreak of rioting in Lombok and to fears that it might spread to neighboring Bali, house speaker Abdur Tanjung urged strong measures against suspected troublemakers: “Find and detain them. If needed, shoot them on sight so they will not repeat the crime.”

The second major initiative was a new state security law, submitted to the legislature in September 1999. Although some argued that it was an improvement on the existing regulations of 1959, the new law did give almost unlimited political and judicial power to the TNI in conditions of emergency and crisis. Formulated and fully backed by the TNI, the draft law was vehemently opposed by pro-democracy activists on the grounds that it represented a brazen reassessment of military power. It was opposed by the police, as well, who felt that the law gave the army an unacceptably broad authority to take over police functions. Despite these objections, the draft law was passed by the old legislature in September 1999 as one of its last acts before disbanding. Only President Habibie’s last-minute decision, in the face of strong popular pressure, to postpone signing the bill kept it from being made law. But as social and political violence continued in 2000, pressure again began to mount for the passage of the new emergency law, or some variation of that law, and it seemed only a matter of time before President Wahid would have to sign it.

In addition to concerns over violence and national security, by late 1999 it was clear that some military officers and soldiers saw the reform agenda as a threat to the integrity and autonomy of the TNI as an institution and to the political and material interests of individual officers. First and foremost, many were deeply concerned by the Wahid administration’s efforts to investigate and prosecute TNI soldiers and officers for past human rights–related offenses. They feared the government-backed investigation into military violence in East Timor particularly disturbing because it named six generals, including former TNI commander Wiranto, as probable suspects in serious criminal offenses, including crimes against humanity. In the view of many military officers, that investigation established a dangerous legal and political precedent that could ultimately land many of them in the clock. It was perhaps more than coincidence, therefore, that rumors of a military coup began to circulate immediately after the results of the investigation were released in late January 2000.

Second, many lower- and middle-ranking officers were dismayed by a 1999 MPR decision on kekayaan that required TNI officers assuming civilian posts to retire from active duty. Reforming the practice of kekayaan might appeal to a handful of “intellectual” generals whose careers and futures are secure. But for the vast majority of middle- and lower-ranking officers, such reforms threaten to take away everything they expected to be theirs. After all, most joined the military in the expectation that they would enjoy the customary economic benefits of membership and probably in the hope that they would one day secure a pleasant, and perhaps powerful, civilian post. This group of officers, therefore, has a strong motive to support moves against reform and further civilian control. They may also have an added incentive to engage in various types of unconventional financing—both legal and illegal—a sphere so far untouched by reform efforts.

In addition to questions of motive, certain political habits or tendencies remain from the New Order that have the potential to spark renewed military intervention in politics. One of these is the persistence of conflicts within the highest reaches of the TNI and between military and civilian leaders. The most conspicuous rivalry in the immediate post-Suharto period was between General Wiranto and former Knasrad commander General Prabowo, and their respective supporters. By late 1999, that rivalry had been eclipsed by serious tensions between a group of officers loyal to General Wiranto and another closely linked to President Wahid. And it seemed very likely that new lines of friction would continue to emerge.

The substance of these rivalries was arguably less important than the manner in which they were played out. In both cases, there was concern that they might contribute to a reassessment of military power, either through direct action in the form of a coup or through subterfuge and provocation. Of these two possibilities the latter was the more likely. Most of the protagonists in these affairs controlled—or formally or informally—considerable body of officers, men, and paramilitary forces and were in a position to provoke social and political violence. So, as political violence began to flare throughout the country in late 1998, there was strong suspicion—though limited concrete evidence—that some of it had been deliberately provoked by Prabowo loyalists in order to undermine General Wiranto and President Habibie, and per-
happ to justify a reassertion of military power. **Similarly, in late 1999 and early 2000 Wiranto and his group were widely alleged to be provoking unrest and violence—in Maluku, Aceh, and elsewhere—as a way to weaken Wahid’s authority and perhaps restore a measure of military power. Indeed, both the minister of defense and the president himself made such allegations, though neither mentioned any TNI officers by name.**

In short, there are elements within the military with strong motives—ideological, institutional, and personal—for resisting the trend toward civilian rule. And there are political dynamics at work within the TNI—in particular, intra-elite tensions—that might actually encourage such military intervention in politics. Just as importantly, however, the post-1998 reforms have left largely intact the ideological and institutional foundations of military power already described, so that those who oppose reform and civilian rule still have the capacity to make mischief. It is worth recalling what those foundations consist of, before looking in more detail at how the resilience of TNI power has played out in East Timor.

Arguably the deepest foundations of military power are ideological and doctrinal. Although it is true that the dual function doctrine has been openly challenged by civil society in recent years and that some within the TNI itself have recognized the need for a thorough review of the doctrine, there is a very long way to go before its influence is no longer felt. The reason is that the dual function doctrine is not simply an empty slogan but a principle that has shaped the very structure of the Indonesian state. Simply changing the law regarding dual function will not change habits and practices that have become embedded in that state over five decades.

Just as importantly, real change will require a complete overhaul of long-standing national defense and security doctrines—something that appears to be a long way off. The doctrine of total people’s defense, for example, which lies at the heart of the territorial system and justifies military involvement down to the village level, has scarcely been discussed let alone challenged. Likewise, there has been little serious questioning of the role of the military in maintaining internal security and order. To the extent that these issues remain a pressing concern of civilian leaders and society at large—as they seem very likely to do—the military will be able to retain an important element of its authority, notwithstanding reform in other spheres. In short, as long as these basic military doctrines remain as unquestioned elements of the Indonesian state, military withdrawal from political life will never be more than partial.

On the institutional front, a continuing source of military power is the block of seats reserved for the TNI in the legislature (DPR) and the consultative assembly (MPR). The number of guaranteed seats was halved in 1998 from 75 to 38, and in 1999 the TNI agreed, under pressure, to withdraw completely from the DPR and MPR by 2004. More recently, however, the military has sought to retain its guaranteed seats in the MPR beyond 2004, claiming that it is still entitled to play a role in shaping state policy. Quite understandably, some observers worry that the military might use its seats in the MPR to influence the outcome of key votes, such as those for the president and vice president, or those on constitutional amendments.

Even less affected by the post-1998 reforms has been TNI control over the country’s most powerful and potentially dangerous military institutions. The TNI continues to dominate all of the main domestic and international intelligence bodies. Likewise, its control over the formidable elite combat units, Kopassus and Kostrad, is so far unchallenged, despite Wahid’s efforts to bring them for a time under the command of more reformist officers. The size and capability of these units, and the fact that each is commanded by a single officer, makes them a serious potential threat to civilian rule. That danger is further compounded by the fact that these units have long experience in mobilizing semigal and illegal paramilitary groups and in using them on questionable political purposes.

Perhaps the most important institutional base of military power so far unaffected by the post-New Order reforms is the "territorial" command structure of the TNI, and the vast network of military units in Indonesia. The structure, put forward by Maj. Gen. Agus Wirahadikusumah in late 1999, was met with unsympathetic reactions from many senior officers, and it has been met with resistance, especially within the military. The territorial structure and the military as an institution retains its capacity to intervene—lawfully or otherwise—in the affairs of the state and society. As Crouch wrote in 1998, "Even if the president were to withdraw from legislatures and bureaucracy, the military command structure remains intact."

Beyond these ideological and institutional foundations, TNI power continues, as in the past, to be conditioned by the international context. Recent changes in that context appear likely to enhance military power and to undermine the incentives to reform. Although the international community remains committed in principle to civilian rule, in early 2000 key governments began to reconsider the sanctions imposed in response to the violence in East Timor. In January, for example, the European Union (EU) ended the embargo on arms sales and military ties with Indonesia. The U.S. State Department announced that full military-to-military ties had been restored. Both the EU and the US. government argued that the lifting of sanctions was done in recognition of the Indonesian government’s proven commitment to reform. The Indonesian government’s investigations of TNI officers had actually produced tangible results—the internal TNI compliance with the reform agenda.

**CASE STUDY: EAST TIMOR AFTER THE NEW ORDER**

The combination of a confident and fluid civil society and a defensive but still powerful military, and its implications for civil-military relations in Indonesia, are highlighted by the momentum and political developments in East Timor since the fall of Suharto.

In a dramatic break with 42 years of New Order and military policy, President Habibie proposed in late January 1999 that the people of East Timor should be given a chance to express their views on the political future of the territory. Specifically, he suggested that East Timorese should be asked whether they accepted or rejected a plan, drawn up under UN auspices in mid-September, in particular the TNI, for which the retention of East Timor and the preservation of national unity at all costs were fundamental articles of faith.

Habibie’s proposal led swiftly to an accord between Indonesia, Portugal, and the UN—known as the May 5 Agreements—under which East Timorese would be asked to accept or reject the
offer of a special autonomy package. The rejection of special autonomy, the agreements made clear, would set East Timor on the path toward independence. In short, notwithstanding Habibie's perceived weaknesses vis-à-vis the TNI, he had fundamentally altered a centerpiece of Indonesian government and TNI policy and had opened an unprecedented opportunity for resolution of the East Timor issue. Both his detractors and his supporters suggested that Habibie's proposal was a bid to win the sympathy of the international community, the support of which Indonesia badly needed if it was to rebound from financial crisis. Habibie's initiative was not simply a response to international pressures, however, but was arguably driven equally by his desire to gain legitimacy as a reformer with a domestic constituency. Facing demands for his resignation on the grounds that he was nothing more than a Suharto crony, his dramatic initiative on East Timor could be understood as a bold, though ultimately unsuccessful, political gambit to gain popular legitimacy.

The TNI's Double Game

More puzzling than Habibie's decision to back 24 years of New Order and military policy on East Timor was the TNI leadership's acquiescence. If ever there were an issue on which one might have expected TNI opposition, perhaps even direct military intervention, this was it. Yet the TNI commander, General Wiranto, assiduously avoided any open challenge to Habibie, citing his constitutional responsibility to support the president. Although serious doubts must be raised about the sincerity of Wiranto's support for the new policy (or for Habibie personally), his reluctance to challenge the president on the issue did provide just enough breathing room for the policy to fly and become the basis for a binding international agreement.

Wiranto's official support for the policy did not mean that all TNI opposition to the policy evaporated, of course, or that he gave it his wholehearted support. On the contrary, by the time the government had agreed to a UN-sponsored popular consultation on the question in early May, military authorities in East Timor had already embarked on a wholesale effort to thwart it. In doing so, they had turned to the trusted repertoire of strategies and practices developed during the New Order and described earlier, including the mobilization of armed paramilitary gangs and the deliberate use of terror against the civilian population. Indeed, as early as January 1999 there were credible reports that militias had killed several supporters of independence, and their acts of terror had forced thousands to flee their homes. After May, when UN personnel began to deploy in East Timor, eyewitness reports and other evidence of such activities continued to mount. By July, some 50,000 people had been forced to flee their homes, dozens had been killed, and the UN headquarters in Dili was consistently reporting that militia terror was the central impediment to the conduct of a free and fair vote.

The extent of TNI complicity in the violence became even clearer after the result of the vote—an overwhelming victory for the independence option—was announced on September 4. Over the next few days, TNI soldiers openly joined militia gangs in a coordinated campaign of violence and destruction that even for East Timor was unprecedented. Facing strong international criticism and the threat of UN military intervention, on September 7 President Habibie declared martial law in the territory. An old East Timor hand, Maj. Gen. Kiki Syahbubin, was appointed martial law commander, and several battalions of elite Kopassus troops were deployed ostensibly to restore order. From improving, however, the security situation worsened further in the following days. Dili and other towns, and most villages, were burned to the ground. Warehouses, shops, and homes were looted, their contents loaded onto TNI trucks or ships and taken to West Timor. Real or alleged supporters of independence, including religious leaders, were threatened and others were killed. By the middle of September, an estimated 500,000 people—more than half of East Timor's population—had been forced to flee their homes, and several hundred, at least, had been killed. The destruction was brought to an end with the deployment of a multinational force in late September, and the subsequent withdrawal of TNI forces and their militia allies. Yet even then, the TNI continued its efforts at disruption—allowing, perhaps encouraging, militia men to intimidate the tens of thousands of East Timorese who had been forced to flee to refugee camps in West Timor. In early 2000, moreover, there were credible reports that TNI troops had actually taken part in a series of cross-border attacks against UN peacekeeping soldiers.

In meetings with UN officials and diplomats through 1999, Wiranto steadfastly denied that the TNI was behind the militias or the violence. A series of orders issued by the military commander for East Timor between April and August 1999 likewise suggested an official TNI policy of cooperation with the UN. But Wiranto's denials and the official paper trail were fairly contradicted by the eyewitness accounts of UN officials, by film footage and other documentary evidence, and even by the statements of local military officials and militia leaders themselves. The real question was not whether there was TNI support for the militias—unequivocally there was—but how far up the chain of command that support ran. On this question, and on evidence gathered by the UN at that time, was based on extensive first-hand accounts and documentation—concluded as follows:

Evidence gathered by United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) analysts since May 1999 demonstrates unequivocally that military (TNI) and police (Polri) officers from the village to the provincial level had been directly involved in planning and committing acts constituting grave violations of human rights. It also strongly suggests that the TNI and Polri officers at the provincial level and above were involved in planning such acts. Senior TNI officers and civilian officials were aware of the pattern of systematic human rights abuses but failed to take adequate measures to stop it.

Very similar conclusions were reached by a UN Commission of Inquiry and by the official Indonesian human rights body, whose findings were released at the end of January 2000. The military was Maj. Gen. Zacky Anwar Makarim, who had been sent to East Timor in May 1999 involved in establishing militia gangs in Ateh during the counterinsurgency campaign of the early 1990s. In January 2000 Zacky admitted that TNI soldiers had committed murder and arson. He of Indonesia's "army culture." Also thought to be involved were the regional military commander for East Timor, Maj. Gen. Adam Damiri, the subregional commanders in East Timor, and several of the thirteen district military commanders.

As of early 2000 there was no concrete evidence directly linking General Wiranto or any other member of the military high command to the militia violence. But the involvement of so many TNI officers in these activities makes it a virtual certainty that General Wiranto and others knew precisely what was going on. If that was indeed the case, the question may fairly be
asked: why did Wiranto permit the violence to continue? The most reasonable explanation is that Wiranto, like most TNI officers and men, wished to ensure that East Timor did not become independent but did not want to express his open opposition to government policy. His approach allowed him to appear statesmanlike while, in Jakarta, Habibie could be blamed for a policy that led to chaos and violence and, ultimately, to the “disintegration” of the country.

**Civil Society Prevails**

The remarkable part of this story is that despite the coordinated and costly effort to derail the popular consultation process, the TNI and its militia allies ultimately failed. The consultation went ahead more or less as planned, achieving something that for more than two decades had been considered impossible: a legitimate act of self-determination for the people of East Timor. Even the TNI-sponsored rampage after the ballot failed to stop the process from running its course. And notwithstanding a good deal of nationalist bluster, when the MPR finally met in October 1999, all the major parties and factions—including the armed forces faction—voted to accept the result of the popular consultation, thereby ending Indonesia’s claim to East Timor. The final touch came in February 2000 when President Wahid visited East Timor and offered his apologies for past abuses.

Although it may appear obvious, it is worth stressing that this outcome was largely made possible by the people of East Timor, who showed enormous courage and resolve in the face of militia and TNI violence. It also depended on the emergence of a new set of international norms, or more precisely, on a new willingness on the part of the international community to intervene in the domestic affairs of sovereign states in the interest of human rights and good governance. For the first time in more than three decades and after 24 years of virtual silence on East Timor, the international community openly confronted the government of Indonesia on these issues by threatening economic and military sanctions and even direct military intervention.

In the face of this unparalleled diplomatic and financial pressure, on September 12 the government of Indonesia agreed to accept a multinational force (MNF)—a move that only days before had been considered out of the question by the Indonesian government and most observers. Shortly thereafter, the UN Security Council passed a resolution lending its support to a swift deployment of the MNF. That resolution, moreover, invoked Chapter 7 of the UN Charter and gave the MNF authority to use “all necessary means” to restore security, facilitate humanitarian assistance, and permit UNAMET to carry out its mandate. Notwithstanding earlier suggestions that a force would take months to assemble and deploy, the MNF was on the ground within a week.

Meanwhile, within days of the MNF deployment, UN agencies and private NGOs had set in motion a major humanitarian relief effort. Simultaneously, UN staff in Darwin were meeting East Timorese leaders, including Xanana Gusmao, and plans were being drafted there and in New York for an accelerated transfer from Indonesian to UN authority. At the same time, a rare special session of the UN Human Rights Commission was convened and a resolution passed calling for the formation of an international commission of inquiry to investigate possible crimes against humanity and breaches of international humanitarian law in East Timor.

Now there was a chance that East Timor might have an international criminal tribunal, like those established for Rwanda and Yugoslavia, and that men such as Maj. Gen. Zacky Ainar

**Implications and Conclusions**

The case of East Timor serves to highlight many of the general claims made here about civil-military relations in the post-New Order period and provides some clues about their future trajectory.

The evidence from East Timor confirms, first, that civil-military relations have indeed been set on a new course since the fall of Suharto in May 1998, with the military appearing to how to civilian authority for the first time in decades. Moreover, it neatly highlights the historical forces that have been critical in bringing about this change: the vitality and courage of civil society in Indonesia and East Timor; the emergence of a new set of international norms that condone intervention where there are serious human rights or humanitarian concerns; and the willingness of Indonesia’s civilian presidents to use the considerable power of their office to make decisions that run against the interests of the military. Less evident in the case of East Timor, but certainly important in explaining change generally, has been the presence of influential military reformers within the TNI leadership.

To the extent that these four trends hold in the coming months and years, the prospects for further movement toward civilian supremacy are quite good. There are, however, some weak links in the chain. The most obvious, perhaps, is President Wahid, whose skill and courage in facing down the TNI have been instrumental in restoring civilian rule. If for reasons of health or politics Wahid does not last as president—and particularly if he is replaced by Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who is far less enthusiastic about reforming the military—there is a strong likelihood that ground will be lost. Also worrying were moves by the international community in early 2000 to restore normal relations with the Indonesian military before serious reform had really taken root and before domestic human rights investigations had borne fruit. These moves seemed likely to slow the process of reform by removing the strongest incentive the TNI has ever had for acquiescing in it. Such a trend could serve to undermine the still weak civilian authority at a critical stage in its rebirth.

The evidence from East Timor also points to the potential for a serious backlash against civilian authority by the Indonesian military, and for a reassertion of TNI power. It highlights, in particular, how the post-1998 reforms have provided the military with powerful new motives for political intervention, while leaving essentially intact the real bases of its power. In the case of East Timor, the motives for military intervention in 1999 included a concern about order and territorial integrity rooted in national security doctrine; anger at a perceived imposition by civilians and foreigners on the political and operational autonomy of the TNI; and worry over possible financial and material losses by TNI units and individual officers. The threat of prosecution for human rights–related offences, undertaken in the aftermath of the August 30 vote, compounded military anger and added a powerful new motive for further resistance to civilian dominance.
These are, more or less, the same concerns that have been at the heart of military opposition to the process of reform since May 1998, and they are the concerns that may ultimately drive some element of the TNI to seek a reassertion of military power in the coming years. The possibility that a civilian government, backed by the international community, might bring TNI officers to account for past human rights violations or for corruption will provide an especially strong motivation to resist any genuine move toward civilian rule. So too will moves to dismantle the territorial system, to implement the new agreement on kekapuran, to seriously limit TNI control of elite combat units such as Kostrad and Kopassus, or to remove high-ranking officers resistant to reform. In other words, the initiatives that will be most essential in establishing civilian supremacy will inevitably also provide elements within the armed forces with a powerful motive to strike back.

The events in East Timor also serve as a grim reminder of the considerable institutional power that remains at the disposal of the Indonesian military, regardless of policy changes or sentiments articulated by some officers at the center. It is sobering to think that notwithstanding the dire international consequences that were bound to follow, elements of the TNI leadership were prepared to use this power to thwart government policy. Moreover, the manner in which they sought to do so—a perfect example of the culture of violence in motion—demonstrates the dangerous institutional inertia that, outside of a handful of reformist officers, seems to characterize Indonesia's military. As an Athenian human rights activist noted in late 1999, “It will take a long time to change their culture of violence. They are used to thinking they are the only segment of society that is capable of saving the nation. But in fact, the opposite is happening; they are destroying it.”

In seeking to undermine central government policy in East Timor, TNI officers made use of a powerful institutional infrastructure that remains essentially untouched by the post-1998 reforms. That infrastructure includes the time-honored territorial system that permits a permanent military presence to be maintained in every village; a pervasive military intelligence apparatus that allows for the surveillance and interdiction of proindependence political activity; and autonomous control of thousands of Kostrad and Kopassus soldiers trained in counterinsurgency warfare. In addition to these legal and institutional foundations, in East Timor the TNI made ample use of the semilegal and illegal strategies and practices developed during the New Order, including the mobilization of armed paramilitary gangs and the deliberate use of terror against civilian populations. All of these institutions and methods remain available for use by elements of the TNI should they wish to intervene in politics at some future date.

In short, although the balance of power appeared to shift toward the civilian side after May 1998, the evidence from East Timor and elsewhere suggested that, outside a small handful of reformers in Jakarta, military authorities continue to behave according to old patterns. Given the TNI's considerable ideological and institutional power, and given the deep historical roots of its culture of violence, the persistence of these old patterns is scarcely surprising. At the same time, the developments in East Timor offer grounds for hope that even the deeply embedded political power of the Indonesian military might still be overcome. For despite their ample resources and their considerable repertoire of dirty tricks, the TNI and its militia allies ultimately failed in their efforts to derail the popular consultation in East Timor. And they failed, it would seem, because of a combination of international and domestic political pressures that in their seriousness were unknown in Indonesia's recent history.