

# Suharto and His Generals Indonesian Military Politics 1975–1983

David Jenkins



**Cornell Modern Indonesia Project**

Monograph Series

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Indonesian Military Politics 1975–1983

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Monograph Series  
(Publication no. 64)

**Cornell Modern Indonesia Project**

Southeast Asia Program  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York  
1984

Third Printing 1987

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ISBN 0-87763-030-5

PRICE: \$12.50

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This monograph has its origins in the four years I spent in Indonesia in 1976-80 as a correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* but is based more particularly on research carried out under a fourteen-month research grant at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore in 1981-82.

The number of people to whom I am indebted for help and advice is, of course, enormous. But I would like to express my particular thanks to all those Indonesians, both civilian and military, who took time out to explain, patiently and generously, something about the workings of the Indonesian political and military systems.

By its very nature, much of the research work centered on prominent retired officers who were critical of the way in which the New Order had, they felt, failed to live up to the expectations of 1966. Here, I am particularly indebted to General A. H. Nasution, who, despite his own heavy writing commitments, provided me with many insights into the role of the armed forces in both the Old and New Order periods. I also owe a very great debt to Brig. Gen. Abdulkadir Besar, Lt. Gen. H. R. Dharsono, Lt. Gen. G. P. H. Djatikusumo, General Hugeng Imam Santoso, Lt. Gen. Ibnu Sutowo, Lt. Gen. Mohammad Jasin, Col. Alex Kawilarang, the late Lt. Gen. A. J. Mokoginta, Lt. Gen. Ali Sadikin, and the late Maj. Gen. Achmad Sukendro. Other retired officers who provided invaluable insights included Lt. Gen. T. B. Simatupang and General Sumitro.

It would have been virtually impossible, however, to produce a rounded account of the internal debate over the military's role in society without the help and understanding of those officers still in power at the time this debate took place. Here, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Admiral Sudomo, General Benny Murdani, and General Mohammad Jusuf. I am also indebted to Lt. Gen. Alamsjah Ratu Perwiranegara, General Darjatmo, Maj. Gen. August Marpaung, Brig. Gen. (Hon.) Nugroho Notosusanto, Lt. Gen. Sutopo Juwono, General Supardjo Rustam, General Widodo, and General Yoga Sugama. A number of these senior officers expressed the view that a study of this kind, if it were to have any value at all, should present the picture "warts and all." If they feel that in writing this account I have included too many--or too few--warts, then I can only ask for their further indulgence.

Many Indonesian civilians also provided invaluable insights and background information, and in particular I would like to thank Ruslan Abdulgani, Sabam Siagian, Mohammad Natsir, Slamet Bratanata,

Harry Tjan Silalahi, and Jusuf Wanandi. I am also indebted to Toeti Adhitama, Alex Alatas, Amir Daud, Gunawan Mohomad, Fikri Jufri, the late Jusuf Ismail, Jusuf Ronodipuro, Aristides Katoppo, Lie Tek Tjeng, Mochtar Lubis, Adam Malik, Onghokham, Buyung Nasution, Subadio Sastrosatomo, Juwono Sudarsono, and Sudjatmoko.

Mention must also be made of Col. George Benson, a former United States defense attaché at the embassy in Jakarta and a man who traces his links with many of Indonesia's most senior military figures back to the days when they were captains and majors. He provided insights into the thinking of senior army officers over a quarter of a century and on one occasion arranged an interview with an officer not normally inclined to share his opinions with others. Col. Joe Uttinger, likewise defense attaché at the U.S. embassy for many years, was also very generous in sharing his knowledge about the Indonesian armed forces.

Perhaps my greatest debt is to Prof. Herbert Feith and Prof. J. A. C. Mackie, who, when I was a very junior foreign correspondent in Jakarta in 1969-70 for the *Melbourne Herald*, and later at Monash University, opened my eyes to the study of Indonesian politics and generously shared their knowledge about the country. A number of people have read or commented on one or more draft chapters of the manuscript and offered many invaluable suggestions and criticisms. Apart from Herb Feith and Jamie Mackie, the others include Brig. Gen. Abdulkadir Besar, Benedict Anderson, Slamet Bratanata, Harold Crouch, Don Emmerson, Michael Leifer, General Nasution, Brig. Gen. Nugroho Notosusanto, Sabam Siagian, Lt. Gen. Simatupang, Leo Suryadinata, and Jusuf Wanandi. I am particularly indebted to Don Emmerson for his very valuable comments on the arrangement of the material in the opening chapters. Yuli Ismartono and Fatmi Ronodipuro helped me find my way through some of the more opaque writings on Indonesian military doctrine. Any errors or omissions are, of course, my own responsibility.

Finally, I would like to thank Prof. Kernial Singh Sandhu of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies for his kindness in arranging for me to spend fourteen months at the institute on a research grant, with provision for three one-month visits to Indonesia. I am also grateful to Derek Davies, the editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, who allowed me to take more than a year's leave of absence from the magazine. Without this, the monograph could never have been written.

## PREFACE

In writing this monograph I have been guided by two separate but interrelated goals. The first has been to provide an historical-descriptive record of the "challenge" posed to President Suharto within the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (ABRI) during the period 1975-82 and the debate that developed over ABRI's role in society. Although this debate sprawled across the whole canvas of military involvement in society, it can be said to have focused essentially on two key issues. The first, which was debated with considerable vigor during the period 1977-80, involved ABRI's relations with other social-political groups in society, and in particular the political parties. The center of this debate was the "contradiction" between ABRI's claim to be above all groups in society and the reality of its continuing support for Golkar, the political grouping which held a majority of the seats in the DPR (Parliament). Due largely to the intervention of the president, this debate was resolved in favor of the status quo and by 1980 it appeared unlikely that there would be any substantial changes during the remainder of the Suharto presidency.

The second issue, which became of increasing importance after 1980, centered on the appointment of military officers to nonmilitary functions. There were in the mid-1970s more than 20,000 military men serving in a *kekaryaan* (nonmilitary, or "functional") capacity, as ministers, ambassadors, parliamentarians, senior executives in government corporations, bankers, senior civil servants, university rectors, provincial governors, subdistrict heads, and even village headmen. Answerable to the chief of staff for functional affairs (Kaskar), they acted as "reinforcing rods" to ensure that the bureaucracy was responsive to the commands of those at the top--a role that was not unlike that of the Communist Party in many Communist states. In the view of the critics, ABRI's heavy involvement in *kekaryaan* activities, although understandable in terms of recent Indonesian history, was excessive and needed to be scaled back. On this front, some government concessions seemed possible, if only because the armed forces were short of manpower. Even so, any cutback in the *kekaryaan* ABRI was likely to be both slow and from the bottom up, with the commanding heights of the system remaining firmly in the hands of the military leaders.

A related--but less central--thread that ran through the debate was the need for "purification," this being a theme which found its fullest expression in the statements of a number of prominent retired officers, men who looked askance at what they saw as the moral dissolution of the times and who felt that widespread corruption was not

only being tolerated but encouraged by the contemporary armed forces' leadership.

These challenges, although brushed aside with comparative ease by the ruling group, raised fundamental questions about the sort of society that was being created in Indonesia. What developed was, in a sense, a debate between different factions within the outgoing Generation of '45, the officers who had fought in the independence struggle against the Dutch, about the sort of values that should be passed on to a new generation of military leaders, a competition for their attention.

Criticisms of the government came from a whole pantheon of former military leaders, including Nasution, R. Sudirman, Djatikusumo, Dharsono, Sukendro, Mokoginta, Kawilarang, Jasin, Ali Sadikin, and Hugeng. But it was much more than a campaign mounted by retired officers, most of whom were depicted by the ruling group as members of a so-called "Barisan Sakit Hati" (Sick at Heart Brigade). Two of the key officers in the command structure--the 1978-83 minister of defense, General Mohammad Jusuf, and the 1978-80 army chief of staff, General Widodo--were in sympathy with its aims, as were members of the teaching staff at Seskoad, the Army Staff and Command School in Bandung, and members of Lemhannas, the National Defense Institute, including Lt. Gen. Sutopo Juwono, the 1978-83 governor of that body.

On the other hand, it should not be supposed that this issue divided the army down the middle to such an extent that it transcended everything else. Most officers at the middle and lower levels, although comprising the "audience" that each side was seeking to reach, were "apolitical" in the sense that for one reason or another they did not take sides. In the final analysis, the silent majority could be expected to follow whatever dictates came down from on high--at least for the time being. The debate took place very much at the apex of the military pyramid and the sympathies of most of the key figures there were well enough known, at least to those within the system. Even at that level, however, there were officers who managed to commit themselves to neither side.

This debate brought forth (and was in turn reflected in) a series of papers which dealt at some length with the army's role in society. The first such paper, produced by members of the teaching staff at Seskoad, appeared in mid-1977, shortly after the general elections. Reacting to the "excesses" of Golkar's 1977 election campaign, the authors of the "Seskoad paper" urged that ABRI refrain in the future from siding with one of the contestants in a general election. Instead, they said, it should return to its "pure" role as a body which was not the property of any one group in society but belonged to the nation as a whole. In the period that followed, papers produced by Fosko, a "forum" for retired senior army officers, came to broadly similar conclusions, as did papers produced by the Institute for the Promotion of Constitutional Awareness (LKB), an association of "retired generals and retired politicians," which counted

amongst its founders Dr. Mohammad Hatta, the former vice president, as well as General Nasution, the former minister of defense.

The second major army paper--issued by the army chief of staff, General Widodo, in October 1978--came to almost identical conclusions. Indeed, the "Widodo paper" incorporated much of the thinking that had been present in the earlier Seskoad document, as well as material from Fosko and Lemhannas. But the Widodo paper was much more than this. Prepared after close consultations with senior army staff and command officers, it put forward an interpretation of the military's *dwifungsi* (dual function) that appeared to be starkly at odds with the thinking of the ruling Suharto group.

During the period from late 1978 until early 1980, General Jusuf was conducting a widely publicized campaign aimed at reunifying ABRI and the people and stressing, as the Seskoad and Widodo papers had done, that ABRI was not the property of any one group in society but was above all groups, an assurance that gave hope to many that the armed forces would not throw their weight behind Golkar in future elections.

It will be argued in this paper that Suharto, aware of the widening gap between the armed forces and society and knowing that something had to be done about this, lent a degree of support to the Jusuf campaign to "reunite" ABRI and the people and have it stand above all groups in society. However, it will be suggested that Suharto, who appeared to see the interests of ABRI and Golkar as indistinguishable and who had had himself elected chairman of the Golkar "politburo" in October 1978, had no deep-seated commitment to the notion of ABRI standing above all groups. Further, it will be suggested that Suharto relied on Admiral Sudomo, one of the members of his inner circle, to undermine much of the Jusuf campaign almost from the start.

By 1981, it will be shown, the ruling group had reasserted itself and dealt with the various heresies that had been taking root. Widodo, a favorite of neither Suharto nor Jusuf and a man whose performance as chief of staff had come under criticism from other members of the inner group, had been pushed into retirement and replaced by his deputy, General Poniman, a bland and malleable command officer. Jusuf had had the rug pulled out from under him when Suharto, addressing the RAPIM ABRI (Armed Forces Commanders Call) in March 1980, had made it plain that ABRI would again support Golkar and not stand above all sociopolitical groups. Fosko had been "frozen" and its members rebuked (and later penalized) for the criticisms they had continued to launch. Nasution and other members of the LKB who had signed a "Petition of Fifty" strongly critical of Suharto had likewise been dealt with.

It only remained for the ruling group to formulate their own counter to the Seskoad and Widodo papers. This they did when a "Hankam paper"--*Fighters and Soldiers: The Concept and Implementation of ABRI's Dual Function*--was issued in 1981. Prepared by a



team of trusted senior officials, the Hankam paper sought to provide an ideological justification for the status quo and defend the way in which the dwifungsi was being implemented.

The second goal has been to provide an analytical-speculative conclusion that seeks to characterize the regime and estimate the future role of the armed forces within it. This looks not just at the twin themes of "elevation" (ABRI above all groups), which got nowhere, and at the limited military disengagement from ostensibly civilian positions, which did get somewhere, and which, if only for reasons of ABRI's self-interest, might well make further progress during the remainder of the 1980s. It also looks at generational change, the prospects for intramilitary conflict along generational lines and at the wider subject of the character and future of Suharto's military regime as a whole. Looked at in another way, the manuscript is about two levels of conflict. One is about the identity and role of the armed forces; the second is more basically about the exercise of power. The aim has been to merge and separate the two as judiciously as possible.

In considering these various issues, the study draws heavily on two kinds of evidence: documentary (doctrinal) and recollected (events). Basically, the latter is used to illustrate the former, and vice versa. To limit oneself to the former would be to assume that scripture and reality were synonymous, while to focus only on the latter would be to dismiss the importance, however limited, of the doctrinal debate in a welter of recollection and anecdotal material.<sup>1</sup>

In preparing the manuscript, I was fortunate in having been provided by key participants in the debate with copies of all the major papers that were prepared during the 1975-83 period on ABRI doctrine and ideology. Even more fortunately, I was able to interview, in most cases on tape, a broad cross-section of senior military officers, both active and retired. To these men I owe an enormous debt. Not only were they exceedingly generous with their time but they spoke with remarkable candor--and with the benefit of first-hand knowledge--about the key issues under discussion. What is more, they were willing in all but a very few instances to have their views attributed, a rare phenomenon when one is dealing with matters of policy and planning that are often quite sensitive. As a result, it has been possible to provide a sense of the personalities behind the debate and to give an idea of which officers lined up on which sides of certain key issues.

In an earlier paper,<sup>2</sup> I made an attempt to trace the development of Indonesia's military doctrine over the years 1945-75 and to show how the increasingly elaborate formulations of that doctrine in

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1. I am indebted to Don Emmerson for making this point.

2. See David Jenkins, "The Evolution of Indonesian Army Doctrinal Thinking: The concept of *Dwifungsi*," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, [Singapore], 11, 2 (1983); 15-30.

the years after 1957 were related to, and helped legitimize, the army's expanding role in political and economic affairs; a brief outline of that process is set out in the Introduction, as is an outline of the estrangement which has developed since independence between the army and the forces of political Islam. Chapter One reviews some of the literature on patrimonialism and praetorianism to orient the subject matter of subsequent chapters, which is not the regime as a whole but the particular role of the army within it. The chapter then describes the "core group" of senior officers around Suharto, their ideology and outlook and the institutions over which they preside. Chapter Two looks at the way in which Suharto has restructured the political landscape in the years since 1966 and at the way in which he has come to depend on the loyalty of the government administrative structure--in particular the Departments of Defense and Home Affairs--to implement his designs. The following four chapters trace government attempts to ensure a satisfactory outcome during the 1977 general election; the initiatives for reform that were coming from various quarters, both inside ABRI and outside; the various bodies that were created to give expression to this concern; the way in which Golkar was brought still more firmly under the control of the president during its 1978 national conference, and the way in which Jusuf attempted to ensure that ABRI was at one with (*manuggal*) the people.

Chapter Seven looks at Suharto's decisive March 1980 speech at Pekanbaru, in the course of which he ruled out suggestions that the armed forces should in fact be above all groups in society and stressed that ABRI should "choose friends" who truly supported Pancasila, the five-point state ideology, and the 1945 Constitution. The remaining chapters look at the Hankam paper, in which the ruling group in effect put forth its own view of ABRI's role, at the views of General Nasution, the founder of the dual function doctrine and a prominent critic of Suharto and his system of government, and at the other retired officers who clashed with the ruling military leaders during this period. As indicated above, an attempt is made to draw these threads together in the Conclusion and to look at ABRI's likely future role in Indonesian society.

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