



# DEMILITARISING THE STATE

THE SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST  
ASIAN EXPERIENCE

RSIS Monograph No. 25

Editors

Rajesh Basrur and Kartik Bommakanti



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Editors

**S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies**

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Nanyang Technological University

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Telephone: 6790 6982 Fax: 6793 2991

E-mail: [wwwrsis@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:wwwrsis@ntu.edu.sg)

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# CONTRIBUTORS

## THE EDITORS

**Rajesh Basrur** is Professor of International Relations and Coordinator of the South Asia Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. He is the author of *South Asia's Cold War* (Routledge, 2008) and *Minimum Deterrence and India's Nuclear Security* (Stanford University Press, 2006) and has edited *Challenges to Democracy in India* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

**Kartik Bommakanti** is Senior Research Analyst with the South Asia Programme at S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). He is the author of "Control and Coercion: Explaining India's Victory at Kargil" (*India Review*, Vol. 10 No. 3, July – September 2011, pp. 283–328) and "Satellite Integration and Multiple Independently Retargetable Reentry Vehicles Technology: Indian-United States Civilian Space Cooperation" (*Astropolitics*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 7–31, 2009).

## THE AUTHORS

**Ayesha Siddiqi** is an Islamabad-based independent social scientist. She is the author of *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (Pluto Press, 2007), *Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Buildup, 1979–9: In Search of a Policy* (Palgrave, 2007); and "Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy: Separating Friends from Enemies" (*Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2011).

**Bhumitra Chakma** is Senior Lecturer and Director of the South Asia Project, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Hull. He is the author of *Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons* (Routledge, 2009), *Strategic Dynamics and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation in South Asia* (Peter Lang, 2004) and editor of *The Politics of Nuclear Weapons in South Asia* (Ashgate, 2011).

**Isgindarsah** is Researcher at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta. Previously, he was Research Analyst at S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore. He is the author of “The Cocos Islands Plan and Indonesia’s Dynamic Equilibrium” (Strategic Weekly Analysis, Future Directions International, 26 April 2012) and “Indonesia’s Democratic Politics and Foreign-policy Making: A Case Study of Iranian Nuclear Issue, 2007-2008” (RSIS Working Paper, No. 236, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 19 April 2012).

**Paul Chambers** is Research Director and Lecturer in the Southeast Asian Institute of Global Studies (SEAIGS) at Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand. He has published widely on democratisation and civil-military relations in Southeast Asia as well as the political economy of the Mekong region. He is the author, with Thein Swe, of “Cashing in” Across the Golden Triangle: Thailand’s Northern Border Trade with China, Myanmar, and Lao PDR (Silkworm Books, 2011), and co-editor, with Aurel Croissant, of Democracy under Stress: Civil-Military Relations in South and Southeast Asia (ISIS, 2010).

**Renato De Castro** is Professor at the International Studies Department, De La Salle University, Manila, and the holder of the Charles Lui Chi Keung Professorial Chair in China Studies. His recent works include: “The Philippines in 2011: Muddling through a Year of Learning and Adjustment” (Asian Survey, January/February 2012), “The Aquino Administration’s 2011 Decision to Shift Philippine Defense Policy from Internal Security to Territorial Defense” (Korean Journal of Defense Analysis, March 2012) and “The Obama Administration’s (Neo-Liberal) Engagement Policy in East Asia: Implications for U.S.-China Relations in the 21st Century” (Issues and Studies, June 2011).

**Leonard C. Sebastian** is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Indonesia Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. He is the author of Realpolitik Ideology: Indonesia’s Use of Military Force (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005).

# INTRODUCTION

Rajesh Basrur & Kartik Bommakanti

Several countries in the post-colonial era went through social and political upheavals and came under military rule or experienced nominal civilian control with varying degrees of military dominance. With the passage of time, military regimes or military-dominated governments were unable to effectively exercise power and progressively relinquished power to elected civilian representatives. How have the post-military regimes fared in South and Southeast Asia? This volume, which revolves around this central question, is the outcome of a workshop held in Singapore in March 2011 by the South Asia Programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). The objective of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of civil-military relations in post-military regimes.

In generic terms, this exercise in comparative civil-military relations offers several insights that are relevant to a wider understanding of the state of civil-military relations in developing societies. These insights evaluate a range of factors influencing the civil-military balance. These include the formal distribution of power between the civilian and military branches of government, the informal interaction between the two sectors, the extent of an external threat to the state, the degree of instability in domestic governance under civilian control; the effectiveness of civilian institutions and processes; the strength of civil society; the level of the military's penetration into civilian spheres of the state and society; and finally, the normative constraints on the military from within the military and from the society at large. The study examines the state

of civil-military relations in five countries: Bangladesh and Pakistan in South Asia; and Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand in Southeast Asia. It shows that the onset of civilian rule in South and Southeast Asia has had mixed results.

Ayesha Siddiqi's chapter shows how the Pakistani army has better organisational capacity than its civilian counterparts. The military has often used the leitmotif of national security threats to sustain its involvement in politics and assumes a centrality in the military's narrative. The military has forged ties with civilian elites. During periods of political turbulence, the profile of the military has increased. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto failed to create an alternative governmental power centre to the military. His performance in office testifies to the fact that he used the military against his political opponents. In subsequent years, the contest between Nawaz Sharif and the Army revealed the strength of the latter. In the current phase, after the fall of General Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leadership has failed to institutionalise leadership. Apart from that, the military enjoys external patronage from Saudi Arabia, China and the United States. An authoritarian political culture permeates Pakistani society and is predominant among Pakistan's civilian feudal elites. Overall, Siddiqi paints a pessimistic picture about the civil-military balance in Pakistan and sees no real prospect of the military being brought under civilian control.

Bhumitra Chakma shows how in Bangladesh civilianisation has in practice produced the militarisation of civilian politics. The appointment of serving and former officers to civilian posts under Generals Zia and Ershad is a case in point. Furthermore, Zia and Ershad sought to legitimise military rule through Islamisation. Both generals established political parties—Zia the Jatiyo Party and Ershad the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). Under Ershad, the size and spending of the military grew significantly. Chakma observes that though there was structural or direct control of the military under Khaleda Zia, the military nevertheless remained powerful. The reason for this was the combative rivalry between the major civilian political parties, which only served to facilitate the military's effective hold on power. Political parties have accentuated the problem by seeking military and ex-military personnel's support. The civilians have also intervened in matters relating to the appointment of military officers, thereby increasing the deep "politicisation" of the armed

services. Increased political violence has brought the military back into the civilian domain to maintain stability. Still, Bangladesh stands as an instance of 'partial success' in demilitarisation. This limited success is due to a high level of civilian political consciousness and resistance to military rule or domination. Furthermore, international pressure has forestalled or thwarted military takeovers. However, neither the military nor the civilians can bring economic growth and long term political stability. Chakma's account paints an outlook that is neither pessimistic nor strongly optimistic.

Paul Chambers, in his chapter on Thailand, observes that the military's power is a longstanding pillar of monarchical control. Weak civilian elites and weak democracy have allowed the military to reassert itself frequently. The strong opposition to former premier Thaksin Shinawatra testifies to this. The United States as an external power has either supported or tolerated military dominance. The continued role of the Thai military's involvement in politics is helped by domestic conflict between the pro-Thaksin and anti-Thaksin groups. The military under the 2007 Constitution has representation within the Thai Parliament. The Monarch plays a key role as a balancer between the civilians and the military. Generally, the Monarch has tilted towards the military, thereby creating a sustained monarchy-military nexus. As Chambers notes, Thai political culture has a strong authoritarian tradition that combines monarchical and military power. The military's influence permeates different sections of Thai society. For instance, the Thai military controls two major television channels and nearly half of all radio stations. The military also retains control over its organisation and related activities. External crises such as the territorial tussle with Cambodia have only served to augment the military's profile. Chambers concludes that a broad and deep political crisis persists between the traditionalists, including the military, and the rural-based civilian population. The military remains in control of an essentially authoritarian structure. There is very little sign of an improvement in the civil-military balance and Chambers concludes pessimistically that no visible change can be expected in the foreseeable future.

Leonard Sebastian and Iisgindarsah analyse the intrusion by the Indonesian military into the civilian political structure from top to bottom. The process of demilitarisation following the end of military dominance has been sluggish. The military has representation in the

executive, the legislature and in the government-supported Golkar Party. The military remains strong principally because civilians have sought its support for political survival—as was the case with Presidents Wahid and Megawati. Apart from that, weak democratic institutions have only facilitated the continued dominance of the military. Domestic violence in the restive region of Aceh and terrorist attacks has elevated the military's profile. Civilian power has also been reduced owing to the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The military has numerous entrenched interests and is resistant to reform. Equally, civilians have shown an unwillingness to develop expertise on defence matters. The military has, however, developed close ties with elites in local provinces. Overall, the authors demonstrate that demilitarisation is incomplete and that Indonesia is still a proto-democracy. They are optimistic in tone, but not assertive in implying that demilitarisation is still a work in progress.

Renato Cruz de Castro, in his analysis of civil-military relations in the Philippines, shows that the role of the military has two functions: civilian and military. The military's role has increased because of insurgent movements, especially in Mindanao, in the form of the MNLF, the MILF and the Islamic insurgency led by Abu Sayyaf. Under the martial law regime of Marcos, the military stayed firmly under civilian control, but it also produced a pervasive penetration of the military into the civilian sphere. In subsequent years, the military's role in the overthrow of Marcos established its legitimacy in a non-authoritarian government. As the author observes, there have been periodic revolts and mutinies under weak civilian governments. In the period from 1986 to 1987, there were seven attempted coups, but the military remained loyal. The strengthening of the social foundations of democracy, including civil society has thwarted remilitarisation. The role of the military transformed to a more active external function after the United States vacated bases. Internal security gradually shifted to the police. But the renewal of insurgency in the late 1990s saw the revival of the army's role, thereby leading to the reprioritisation of domestic over external roles. Remilitarisation followed internal political instability. The military withdrew its support to President Estrada who was in the process of being impeached and Gloria Arroyo, Estrada's successor, forged an alliance with the military. The revival of insurgency in the South only accelerated the revival of the military's civilian role in affected areas.

There has also been a noticeable tendency on the part of civilian leaders towards military solutions rather than political ones in dealing with insurgency. The Philippines military has at times taken a critical view of the government and there has also been a commensurate politicisation of the military. Nevertheless, there are constraints on the military and a recognition that military rule does not provide an alternative to civilian rule. In addition, there is opposition in the form of the Philippines Congress and civil society and the military is conscious of the strong societal opposition to military rule. Overall, the outlook for civil-military relations in the Philippines can be reasonably described as optimistic. Nevertheless, several challenges lie ahead, but democracy in the Philippines has undergone considerable consolidation.

What patterns do we witness in this comparative analysis of civil-military relations in South and Southeast Asia? All the countries surveyed have experienced outright subordination of civilians by the military or at least the endurance of military power even under civilian dispensations. In South Asia, civilian control over the military is fragile in Bangladesh. In Pakistan, the dominant role of the military will continue for some time. The fragility of the civilianisation and civilian control in these two countries stems from weaknesses inherent in the polities of both states at the societal, institutional and political levels. Between Pakistan and Bangladesh, the latter at least experienced a strong independence movement that mobilised a significant proportion of the population, thereby creating a critical mass of citizens resistant to authoritarian rule. The problems besetting Pakistan are more challenging in that its civil society is in retreat, creating the space for radical forces that are hand in glove with the army, and its weak democratic institutions do not inspire confidence for the checking of the military's power. Furthermore, its socio-political culture, notwithstanding occasional assertiveness, is too stunted to resist frequent military interventions. Despite substantial challenges, Bangladesh—in contrast to Pakistan—has a greater opportunity to consolidate democratic rule and consequently civilian control over the armed forces.

The picture in Southeast Asia is mixed, but two of the cases, the Philippines and Indonesia, offer better prospects for civilian control. Thailand, however, faces far more daunting challenges in firmly establishing civilian control over its military. The monarchy-military nexus

of Thailand and the parallel feudal-military nexus of Pakistan forestall the emergence of strong civilian dispensations that could regulate the military and ensure that re-militarisation does not occur. A major difference between South and Southeast Asia inheres in the relative strength of civilians vis-à-vis the military. It is greater in the latter as opposed to the former. Bangladesh holds the greatest promise for civilian control over the armed forces among the two South Asian countries. On the whole, the volume demonstrates that demilitarisation of governance is not just an event, but a difficult and often long-drawn-out process. The study offers valuable lessons on the prospects for the embedding of democracy not only for the region examined, but more broadly for civil-military relations and indeed the authoritarian-democratic balance everywhere.



# PAKISTAN'S CIVIL-MILITARY BALANCE

## THE FOURTH ROUND

Ayesha Siddiqā

**A**fter 63 years of existence as an independent state and after recovering thrice from military dictatorships, Pakistan continues to be a democracy in transition. Its political institutions are weak and have limited capacity to challenge the power of the armed forces. Will Pakistani democracy become stronger? Will the political system manage to push the military back into the “barracks”? These questions continue to pose disturbing challenges. Answers to these queries are directly linked to the fourth round of contest between the civilian government of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and the army headquarters and how it will play out.

There were moments in Pakistan’s history when civilian actors were in a better position to re-negotiate political power with the military. There were three earlier potential turning points in Pakistan’s history: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s government (1972–1977), Benazir Bhutto’s return to power after the death of the military dictator Zia-ul-Haq in a mysterious air crash (1988–1990), and Nawaz Sharif’s second government (1997–1999). Currently, a fourth round is being played between civil and military forces under the PPP government led by Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gillani and President Asif Ali Zardari. Whether the civilian dispensation will manage to alter the balance will depend on their ability to interpret and overtake military’s plans to maintain its power. In this fourth round the civilian government has tried to expand its options and create a larger number of stakeholders in the survival of the democratic process. Most of the new stakeholders represent the

marginalised segment of the state. It is trying to create a narrative that may keep the military away from destroying the political government and process as the defence establishment has done in the past. The survival of the government and establishment of a sustainable process of basic electoral politics may help strengthen the democratic process and eventually change the civil-military balance. The government has also partnered with the country's external patrons to outweigh the military internally. Whether the civilian government will win the contest depends on its ability to not make the mistakes that were made in the last three rounds. Also, as the paper argues, a lot also depends on how effectively the PPP government manages to create a stronger alternative narrative to challenge the military's hegemony. It is like watching a game of chess.

### HISTORY OF CIVIL-MILITARY BALANCE

A glance at Table 2.1 will show that the military has controlled the state both directly and indirectly for almost half of the country's history. The only period where the armed forces remained relatively weak and allowed the civilian dispensation to complete its tenure was during the five years of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government.

The army's first direct intervention occurred in 1958 when its chief, General Ayub Khan, abrogated the first Constitution of 1956. The gen-

TABLE 2.1  
Patterns of rule in Pakistan

Type	Duration	Period
1 Direct military rule	17 years	1958–1962, 1969–1971, 1977–1985, 1999–2002
2 Elected government under a military President	15 years	1962–1969, 1985–1988, 2002–2007
3 Elected government under a civilian President “Rule of Troika”	14+ years	1988–1999 2008–to date
4 Supremacy of the non-parliamentary forces under the formal parliamentary rule	12 years	1947–1959
5 Civilian supremacy	6 years	1971–1977

Source: Mohammad Waseem, “Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan”, in Rajshree Jetly (Ed.), *Pakistan in Regional and Global Politics* New Delhi: Routledge, 2009, p. 185.

eral continued in power as a martial law administrator-cum-President (1958–1963), and later as an indirectly elected president with deep links with the army until 1969. Ayub Khan transferred power to General Yahya Khan, who in turn transferred power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto after the 1971 elections. The pattern was repeated five years later when then army chief, General Zia-ul-Haq, sacked the Bhutto government and grabbed the reins of power in 1977. In 1985, he held elections and introduced his version of “guided democracy”. However, the government was sacked after two years and elections held in 1988 following the sudden and mysterious death of the General in an air crash that year.

Zia’s departure ushered in a decade of elected democracy, but it was one in which civilian governments were dismissed every two years. The military manipulated the weakness of the political class to remain in power in order to guard its organisational interests. Moreover, the army chief remained a powerful figure and decisive in terms of domestic power politics. Mohammad Waseem describes the political reality in the 1990s as the “rule of the troika,”<sup>1</sup> consisting of the President, the Prime Minister and the Army Chief.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, this model proved to be unstable and a fourth military takeover took place in October 1999. This time, the Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf ruled the country until 2008. During this decade, Musharraf followed the pattern of developing partnerships with handpicked political and civil society players as in the past. These partnerships were also used to elect a civilian government and give the state the semblance of a democracy. But unpopular moves by the General, such as conciliation with India and a deep involvement with American war objectives in Afghanistan as well as the mistreatment of a pliant judiciary, made him highly unpopular, forcing his own army to abandon him. The political crisis in 2006–2007 resulted in Musharraf’s resignation as the army chief and as president. In 2008, elections were held again, resulting in a coalition government led by the PPP.

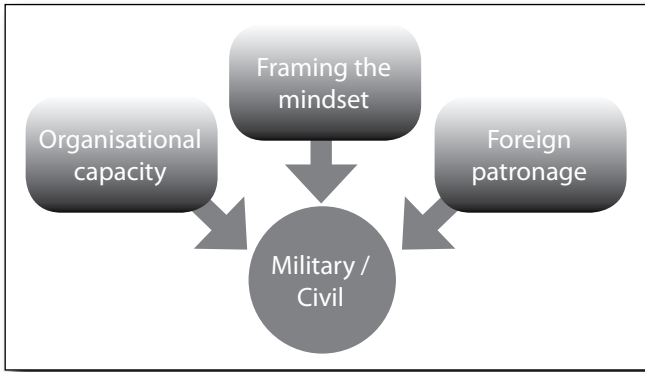
### **CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: RULES OF THE GAME**

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of the history of civil-military relations in Pakistan, it is essential to understand the basic drivers of Pakistan’s politics. Figure 2.1 presents a bird’s eye view of the three drivers of political power.

The civil-military balance depends on three factors: (a) the organi-

sational capacity of competing institutions, (b) capacity to dominate the national narrative and control the mindset, and (c) relationship with foreign patrons. The following sub-sections will briefly explain each one of these three categories.

FIGURE 2.1  
The power political framework



### ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

Capacity refers to the stakeholder's comparative organisational strength. The numerical strength and quality of manpower is consequential for how each actor can influence the state and society. The renowned Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal vociferously criticised the country's famous leftist sociologist Hamza Alavi's argument that the military has superior organisational strength vis-à-vis political institutions,<sup>3</sup> but she overlooked the fact that civilian political forces are less organised.

There are two dimensions of this comparative strength. First, quantitatively, the armed forces have greater power. There is not a single political party that can claim to have membership that could compare with the military's strength of 650,000. Considering that the military operates as a political force as well, its members add to its strength. Further, these are not 650,000 individuals but include their families, in some instances, extended families as well. In comparison, political parties have not built or developed their membership base. The PPP is the only party which can claim to have a constituency, but that too seems to have been eroded through a process of attrition. The party has not made

any effort to replace older with newer members.

Second, the military has a qualitative advantage as well. Its manpower is more organised, better educated and backed with firepower. The military's monopolisation of violence gives it an automatic advantage over other institutions. More importantly, such influence is further enhanced through the military's elaborate network of intelligence, which has now penetrated different groups at the grassroots level as well. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and its sister organisation, the Military Intelligence (MI), operate at the district level, giving the military greater capacity to control the political discourse.

### FRAMING THE MINDSET/DOMINATING THE DISCOURSE

The military's organisational strength is enhanced by its capacity to dominate the national narrative. This basically means that the armed forces have better capacity to legitimise themselves and have continued access to power. One of the primary reasons for this comparatively better position is the Pakistani nation's acute emphasis on national security threats. Since the early decision to spend 70 per cent of state resources of the central government expenditure on the armed forces in the first year after the country's birth,<sup>4</sup> the defence versus development equation has never really changed. Furthermore, the emphasis on national security threats ensures that the military dominates the state and society. Incidentally, political forces compete with the military in emphasising the external threat, especially from India, to legitimise their own policies. Ultimately, the political discourse has become an extension of foreign and security policies rather than the other way around.

Over the years, the military has acquired greater capacity than the political class. As is obvious from Table 2.1, the military has directly ruled the country for 17 years out of the 63 years of the state's existence. However, what is more significant is its ability to remain central to power politics through its capacity to forge ties with politicians and with members of other state institutions. In many ways, Pakistan's civil-military divide is both vertical and horizontal, which means that it is not just a clear divide between the civilians and the military but also that the powerless of Pakistan are confronted by the military fraternity and its civilian partners. It is not useful to think of military power solely in terms of the organisation's strength.

In comparison, civilian political actors have limited capacity to challenge the military's ever increasing power. The civilian leadership at all levels of the state and society has lost control over the national narrative. The military has managed to remain central to the idea of Pakistan more than any of the political actors or any other state institution primarily due to the significance of national security as the core objective of the state. As compared to the political leadership, which is largely viewed as corrupt and inept, the armed forces manage to re-package their image periodically and present themselves as the panacea for all ills and the only alternative and survivable institution of the state. The military's power in relation to other stakeholders also depends on how it manages to legitimise itself and justifies its excessive power and frequent political intervention. Although the Pakistani people support the idea of democracy and the democratic process, there is also the tendency to seek the military's intervention during periods of political chaos, a situation no different from the experience of Latin America. Since society seems to have militarised and turned praetorian, the ruling elite and general public, especially from the dominant ethnic group, accept the military's role as a political arbiter. Since independence, the armed forces have progressed from Amos Perlmutter's definition as an "arbiter" type military, to a "parent-guardian" type.<sup>5</sup> The latter definition implies that the military never returns to the barracks, but ensures the continuity of its influence through legal and constitutional means. Turkey and Indonesia also fall in the same category.<sup>6</sup>

### POWER OF THE PATRON

The comparative capacity of military versus civil power has resonance among the country's foreign patrons as well. The military's influence is not limited domestically. The defence establishment has managed to convince foreign patrons such as the United States, China and Saudi Arabia of the efficacy of partnering with the army as opposed to the political class. The perception of the patrons is important for Pakistan owing to the mercenary nature of the ruling elite and, hence, the state itself. Historically, Pakistan has depended on the flow of foreign resources. U.S. financial and military aid, the help rendered by multilateral aid donors like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (which are seen as extensions of American assistance), military and economic aid

from China, and Saudi aid in the form of selective financial help or supply of oil on a concessional basis play a significant role in determining the behaviour of the key political stakeholders in Pakistan. The financial gap is also filled through dependence on foreign remittances. Out of the three aforementioned foreign players, the United States seems to have the most significance.

American influence is critical to the degree that popular perception in Pakistan is that no major changes can be wrought internally without a nod from Washington. Ayesha Jalal is of the view that the Pakistan military's relative power can be traced to the support provided by the United States during the early years and later.<sup>7</sup> The aid from China does not have the kind of internal impact which the United States does. In any case, China and Saudi Arabia have greater dependence on Pakistan's military and do not seem to even superficially oscillate, as in the case of the United States, between civilian players and the military. A general observation is that even the United States now tends to depend more on the military for delivering results to meet American security objectives in the region.

### **THE FIRST ROUND: ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO, 1972–1977**

Before moving on to an analysis of the current situation, it is necessary to understand the history of civil-military relations in the country. Such an analysis will also use the aforementioned model of civil-military contestation.

The 1970s represented the only real opportunity historically for a civilian government to reduce the military's influence. This is when the first popularly elected prime minister had an opportunity to establish civilian dominance over a weakened military. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was popularly elected and received a lot of public support to cut the military down to size and establish the dominance of civilians. It ultimately turned into a missed opportunity because the ruling party and the political class's inability to create an alternative narrative and establish civilian superiority psychologically, socially and politically added to the problem.

In 1972 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government replaced a powerful military institution. The army general Head Quarters (GHQ) had enjoyed both indirect and direct rule for about 13 years. General Ayub Khan had imposed martial law in 1958. Later, he changed the political system by

introducing indirect elections to ensure his own selection as the country's president, a position in which he continued until 1969. As Ayub Khan ran out of popularity, he transferred power to the army chief, General Mohammad Yahya Khan. The 13 years of military rule was justified on the ground that it brought economic development, which the military believed it accomplished for the country at a time when civilian political dispensations had failed. From August 1947 to October 1958, Pakistan had seven prime ministers and a highly unstable political system. The military, nevertheless, ran out of legitimacy as tension grew in both wings of the country. Ayub Khan's development paradigm was based on inequitable distribution of resources between the two wings of the state. This resulted in deep political turmoil. An Indian military intervention in East Pakistan and the ensuing war between the two neighbours proved to be the last nail in the coffin.

In 1972, not only did the eastern wing break away and become an independent state (Bangladesh), the armed forces emerged from the war fairly demoralised. The reason for describing the 1970s as the "first round" is because this period offered the first opportunity for the political forces to improve the civil-military balance in their favour. There was an opportunity to force the military back into the barracks following Pakistan's military debacle in 1971. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tried to change the civil-military balance drastically. The white paper on "Higher Defence Re-organisation" produced during the early 1970s was meant to keep a firm control over the excessively powerful armed forces.<sup>8</sup> Bhutto certainly had the political credibility to do so. The civilian government built a stronger Ministry of Defence (MoD) and created the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC), which was meant to reduce the power of the Army Chief. The new structure also abolished the office of the independent commanders-in-chief of the three services that were renamed chief-of-staff with an equal status. The military would report to the civilian government through the JCSC and MoD. From the military's perspective, the final authority was the prime minister and the parliament. The 1973 Constitution made the prime minister the supreme commander.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Bhutto tried to limit the military's overall privileges as well. For example, military commanders were asked to return the agricultural land which they had acquired in certain areas in Bhutto's province of Sindh.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the 1970s was the only time when the defence establishment's net



of economic privileges was contained from growing out of proportion, as it did in later years.

However, such changes did not eventually change the civil-military balance because of Bhutto's political insecurity and personal power ambitions. The aforementioned structural adjustment could not deal with the structural flaws that Bhutto's regime suffered from. The prime minister's authoritarian tendencies and feudal instinct made the military central to his political imagination. Most importantly, his fixation with becoming a prominent leader of the Third World and the Muslim World required him to rebuild the military's war-fighting capacity. Consequently, he rebuilt the armed forces and diverted scarce national resources needed to re-build the state after the 1971 war. It must not be forgotten that despite his charisma and leadership qualities, Bhutto subscribed to the realist political paradigm, which means that he believed in confronting India and challenging the traditional rival militarily. Not surprisingly, Bhutto challenged India with a promise of a thousand years of war. In any case, Bhutto obtained the military's quid pro quo in national politics. The GHQ allowed democracy to be re-introduced in the country after 1971 with the guarantee that the prime minister would not be averse to the national security objectives of the state. Bhutto was certainly closer to the army's nationalist agenda.<sup>11</sup>

Politically, Bhutto never shunned authoritarianism. Although he tried to create alternative institutions to replace the army in providing him with access to power, which he could use against political rivals, the establishment of a paramilitary force, the Federal Security Force (FSF) showed that he was unwilling to delink politics and authoritarianism. Over time, he lost confidence internally. As the late General Gul Hasan Khan argued, Bhutto became increasingly dependent on the armed forces. Besides that, he could not "look the military in the eye", but became more dependent on its use domestically. General Khan claims that Bhutto contributed to his own weakness by involving the military in politics. He would call the corps commanders in his party meetings and seek their intervention against his political rivals.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, the corps commanders began to view him as weak, necessitating replacement.

Geopolitically, Bhutto's formula only added to the military's power. Moreover, as his power reduced domestically, he could not even convince

the country's external patron—the United States—to provide him support. Towards the end of the 1970s, Bhutto was caught in the middle of a politics which made for unhealthy relations with the patron which, in any case, was struggling to convince Pakistan to denounce nuclear weapons. The fact that nuclearisation was being introduced by a civilian government did not impress Washington, which seemed less keen to provide major conventional weapons to its South Asian ally. Since Bhutto could not get the Carter Administration to offer Pakistan anything other than the A-5s, his popularity waned.<sup>13</sup>

As the elected prime minister became weaker, he tried to strengthen his control of the military by nominating an apparently pliant individual as the army chief. A weaker service chief, he hoped, would ensure that the military stayed on Bhutto's side. Unfortunately, the weak military leader Bhutto assumed he selected in the form of General Zia-ul-Haq toppled him from power. The elected government was sacked on allegations of political corruption in July 1977. Later, Bhutto was tried and sentenced to death for allegedly organising the killing of a political rival.

Bhutto's removal from the seat of government and subsequent execution brought a sad end to a golden opportunity to discipline the military. However, such a suggestion may appear contradictory. After all, Bhutto was groomed by the military and, as it appears from Hussain Haqqani's seminal work on the military, was selected by the army to form a political government because he was less threatening than his rival, Sheikh Mujib. Ultimately, Bhutto could not change the national security narrative and produce a sustainable alternative to the armed forces. However, his peculiar brand of popular politics established political constituencies that the military would have to engage with for political legitimacy.

### **THE SECOND ROUND: BENAZIR BHUTTO, 1988–1991**

After sacking and then hanging Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the army stayed on for over 10 years until August 1988. The decade of Zia's rule was the most dramatic and oppressive period in the history of military rule in Pakistan. The army chief, who later decreed himself as the president, imposed restrictions on freedom of speech and politics. He banned student and labour unions and punished people for their association with Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. He also Islamised and radicalised Pakistani society. Zia had become such a terror that his death in August

1988 came as a surprise to ordinary folk, who dreaded that the dictator might never leave. This was indeed a highly destabilising moment for the military as it generated a leadership vacuum in the upper echelons of the Pakistani Army. Furthermore, Zia's politics had made the military unpopular to the degree that, despite his personal political ambitions, the succeeding army chief, General Mirza Aslam Beg, could not convince his army to support an extension of power. The reins of government were transferred to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's daughter and then leader of the PPP, Benazir Bhutto, who secured a majority in the 1988 elections.

But could Benazir Bhutto change the civil-military balance? Her strategy was not to confront the military, even though she held the institution responsible for her father's death. Ultimately, her government was sacked after two years on charges of corruption. More importantly, the army chief, Mirza Aslam Beg, used the ISI to destabilise her government. Where did Benazir Bhutto go wrong?

First, she was dealing with a military that was far more cunning and intelligent than the institution of the 1950s and the 1960s. Second, she was allowed back into power, but was not trusted by the GHQ. The army did not seem willing to allow the emergence of another popular political movement. Third, the army suspected her of deviating from the national security paradigm. She had tried to improve relations with India by initiating communication with her counterpart, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Bhutto's first tenure also led to an understanding on the Kashmir issue and improving relations with India, both of which threatened to eliminate the military's *raison d'être*. Fourth, the army viewed her as interfering with military matters. Reportedly, she confronted the armed forces on the selection of the Chairman JCSC. Finally, she continued to nurse the perception of senior generals regarding their organisation's nuisance value by continuing to give them perquisites and privileges. In fact, her husband, Asif Zardari, became linked with the military's business activities, though this did not necessarily mean that the generals considered him a business partner. The perquisites and privileges were sweeteners for the generals, which only added to their own sense of power.

Benazir Bhutto's brief tenure and the end of her government indicate that the sudden hiatus in military rule did not necessarily affect the organisation's power ambitions or its ability to challenge the ruling

dispensation. The military used its new partners, such as the provincial government in Punjab, to challenge Bhutto in Pakistan's largest province. The GHQ also sought partners in the media for building up a propaganda campaign against the civilian government. However, Bhutto's critics are of the view that she could have survived had she tended to her reputation and not allowed the party to engage in corruption. The jury is still out on whether her dismissal was a result of her government's inefficiency and corruption or whether her government was maligned. Interestingly, the Nawaz Sharif government, which followed her, and the later military government could not prove any allegations against her and her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who earned the title of "Mr Ten Per Cent".<sup>14</sup>

### THE THIRD ROUND: NAWAZ SHARIF, 1997–1999

Another opportunity arose during Nawaz Sharif's second government from 1997 to 1999. Being a popular leader from the largest province, Punjab, Sharif was considered a favourite for bringing about a change in the civil-military balance. His ethnicity and gender gave him an edge over Benazir Bhutto, whose greatest disadvantages were her gender, her association with the PPP and her Sindhi ethnicity. Furthermore, Sharif was considered closer to the GHQ as he was a product of Zia's military government. Senior civil bureaucrats still tell stories of how Zia had asked Nawaz Sharif's father to allow the dictator to take one of his sons under his wing.<sup>15</sup>

Nawaz Sharif's second term was different from his first term in power between 1990 and 1993. He had matured and managed to detach himself from his military patrons to the extent that he partnered with other political actors including Benazir Bhutto to repeal the controversial article 58 (2) (b) of the 1973 Constitution. This article had been introduced in 1985 to give extra power to the president to sack governments. It also transferred the power of being the supreme commander of the armed forces from the prime minister to the president. The extra powers of the president were invoked four times to dismiss various governments from 1988 to 1996.

During his second term, Nawaz Sharif understood the need to challenge the military's power, which was used directly or indirectly through the president. Zia-ul-Haq, being the army chief and president, had used the power himself in dismissing the government of Mohammad Khan

Junejo in mid-1988. The prime minister was seen as challenging the army's power when he announced an inquiry into the blast at an army ammunition depot in Rawalpindi. But his greater sin was that he tried to establish a direct link with the United States by agreeing to sign the Geneva accords that allowed for the pullback of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. General Zia-ul-Haq opposed this scheme, which did not guarantee Pakistan a greater stake in Afghan politics.

Following Zia's death, Presidents Ishaq Khan and Farooq Khan Leghari, who were not military officials themselves, used the president's special powers. Prime Minister Sharif understood that he could not reduce the army chief's power without (a) repealing the aforementioned amendment to the 1973 Constitution and (b) challenging the main reason for the military's significance or what helped the organisation capture the public's imagination. The prime minister began discussions with India with the intention of resolving disputes and altering the basic pattern of bilateral relations. The dialogue with India resulted in the historic visit of India's Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to Pakistan in early 1999. What made it even more exciting was the fact that Vajpayee was also the leader of the Hindu radical Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). His visit to Lahore and his famous speech about accepting Pakistan as a reality was meant to put the Pakistani mind at rest regarding the myth about India not accepting Pakistan's existence. Later, the two leaders signed a document called the "Lahore Declaration", in which the two governments agreed to start a composite dialogue with the intention of resolving all outstanding disputes, including the Kashmir issue.

Army Chief Pervez Musharraf, who was appointed by Sharif in the hope that he would be a more pliant commander, resisted Sharif's emergence as an alternative source of political power. There was silent friction between the prime minister and the army chief over the former's intervention in military matters. General Musharraf did not approve of Sharif developing an independent line of communication with individual generals. The relations took a plunge after the army chief launched Operation Kargil against India in early 1999 without taking clear approval from the civilian government. Although those close to the army claim that Musharraf had taken the prime minister into confidence, others believe that given the prime minister's limited attention span and lack of interest in such details, he might not have understood the consequences of such

an operation which his predecessor Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had refused to approve.

As temperatures rose in the Indian Subcontinent and the two neighbours fought a conventional war, Islamabad sought American help to solve the South Asian crisis. Sharif flew to Washington and apparently agreed to withdraw his forces in a manner which was not entirely approved of by the military establishment. According to Bruce Riedel, Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed, who was closer to the establishment back home, tried to control the negotiations on several occasions.<sup>16</sup> More importantly, the operation brought the civilians and the military into a direct and deep contest with each other from which recovery did not seem possible without a major confrontation between the two stakeholders. Sharif made every effort to buy time by making tactical adjustments such as appointing Musharraf as the Chairman JCSC as well. But the army was not inclined to appease the civilian government. Possibly the fear was that if Sharif was allowed to survive he would then be able to challenge the military more seriously. There was an apprehension about the prime minister ordering an inquiry into the Kargil crisis. In any case, Sharif, being a popular leader, could present a case against the army's interference in politics.

It is believed that after early 1999 both the prime minister and the army chief were waiting for the right moment to sack the other.<sup>17</sup> Sharif struck first when he tried to replace Musharraf and appoint another three-star general, Zia-ud-Din Butt as Musharraf's successor. Eventually, in the drama that played out on the eve of 12 October, it was Musharraf who managed to get his organisation behind him and forcibly overthrow the prime minister. The civilian government tried to divert the aircraft that was flying Musharraf back from his visit to Sri Lanka. Despite speculation about divisions within the army regarding accepting Sharif's decision to overthrow the army chief, it is believed that Musharraf and a few generals close to him managed to muster support in the critical quarters of the army such as the two strike corps in Mangla and Multan, the 10th Corps in Rawalpindi and the ISI and the MI. Ultimately the army chief won. Nawaz Sharif and his family were initially thrown in jail and later exiled to Saudi Arabia, which brokered a deal between the deposed prime minister and the army chief. Then on, the army ruled the country directly and indirectly for another 10 years until 2008.

The civilian stakeholders finally lost the contest despite Nawaz Sharif being seemingly in a stronger position to tame the army. His bribes to the military in the form of contribution to its perks and privileges just added to the sense of superiority of the generals. Moreover, Sharif could not plug holes in his own party by controlling senior members who actually were clients of the military. By the end of the 1990s, the army had begun to master the art of co-opting weaker or more ambitious politicians in all political parties.

### **THE FOURTH ROUND, 2008–**

The fourth round pertains to the current contestation between the military and the ruling party, especially the country's civilian president, Asif Ali Zardari. The civilian drive against the military draws its strength from separating the organisation from the support of the external patron. Whether the GHQ can counter this move depends on its capacity to re-package itself.

The current civilian president is a direct beneficiary of a deal struck between the former Army Chief and President, Pervez Musharraf, and Zardari's late wife, Benazir Bhutto. The National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) negotiated between them was meant to allow Bhutto to return to the country, with the military government to withdraw corruption cases against her in return for her support to Musharraf. The key negotiators of the deal, the United States and the United Kingdom, were keen to see him rule in Pakistan because Musharraf was considered a progressive leader who even tried to improve relations with India. He offered to de-link a solution to the Kashmir dispute from Pakistan's traditional stance of the matter being resolved in the light of UN resolutions.

Intriguingly, it was after he started conciliating with India that he also began to make huge political mistakes. Retired senior police officials even argued that the army had begun to conceal facts from him regarding the institution's support to the militants since 2004, dispelling the myth that an army's chief is the most powerful member of the organisation.<sup>18</sup> It was not until after Musharraf resigned from the positions of president and army chief that it became known that his Kashmir solution was not liked by the bulk of his officers.<sup>19</sup>

In 2006, Musharraf became entangled in a contest with his hand-picked chief justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Iftikhar Mohammad



Chaudhry. This led to unrest in the country with the rise of a limited urban-middle class (lawyers and students) movement. Although this public uprising cannot be compared with an earlier movement of the 1960s, which involved lower and lower-middle classes as well, and had participation of labour unions too, the public protest under Musharraf received a great deal of international attention. By then, most political parties had run out of steam to mobilise the public and initiate popular movements. Hence, all political actors got on the lawyer's movement bandwagon to improve their own image. This included Benazir Bhutto, who, technically speaking (as she had signed a deal with the dictator) could not have supported the lawyer's movement. However, after her return in October 2007 she realised that even she would have to support the public movement to gain political capital.

In hindsight, it seems that her changed attitude irked the military president, who then refused to provide her protection despite the fact that her welcome procession was attacked by a suicide bombing in which hundreds of innocent people were injured and about 140 died. A glance at the U.N. report on Benazir Bhutto's assassination points a finger at the military establishment.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever else the consequences of Bhutto's death, it definitely made the PPP leaderless. Due to the party's link with the Bhutto family and dependence on some icon linked with the Bhuttos, Benazir Bhutto's widower, Asif Ali Zardari, became her natural heir. Commentators believe that the army leadership willingly accepted this turn of events, as they perceived Mr Zardari as a weakling. With lots of skeletons in his cupboard (related to alleged involvement in corruption), Zardari, it was hoped, would never challenge the military's authority. He transformed the public sympathy for him after his wife's death into political capital, which he then used to become the country's fourteenth president in September 2008. This is when many had hoped that he might opt to remain outside the formal government and play the role of a guardian, as India's Sonia Gandhi is perceived to play.

Since becoming president, Asif Ali Zardari seems to have embarked on a choreographed collision course with the military. Having improved his links with the United States through Pakistan's ambassador, Hussain Haqqani, who is quite popular in American policymaking circles, Zardari seems to vie for a position of being a credible alternative to the military.



His support for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOt), assistance to the United States against the Pakistan military's opposition, and gestures of friendship towards India are meant to present himself as a dependable alternative political force that has a plan to change Pakistan's direction. Allegedly, in the most recent Raymond Davis affair (of a CIA spy caught in Lahore, Pakistan, after he killed two Pakistanis), the army was unhappy with Zardari for creating an opportunity for American spies to sneak into the country. The presidency had issued a directive to the country's missions in the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States to grant visas to Americans. It is believed that about 400 visas were issued mostly to American secret operatives or private security contractors. Zardari had also put pressure on his army to conduct a military operation in South Waziristan. He seems to be signalling to Washington to consider him rather than the army as the bulwark against terrorism in Pakistan and the region at large.

However, in the recent past Asif Ali Zardari seems to have lost some ground to the army. This is because while over-concentrating on appeasing an external client, the President forgot to attend to battles at home. For instance, he does not have the capacity to de-legitimise the army or challenge the organisation's narrative, which is the basis of its political legitimacy. In fact, he is currently confronted with two problems. First, organisationally, he is operating with a party over which he has weak control. Zardari's style of politics and the fact that he is not a Bhutto through bloodline makes him less of an icon in the eyes of the rest of the party leadership. Already, some of the old party leaders such as Aitzaz Ahsan, Makhdoom Amin Fahim (from Sindh) and, more recently, Shah Mehmood Qureshi have developed a political distance from Zardari. The feeling is that after Benazir Bhutto's death there is a dearth of leadership in the party. There is certainly no one who has enough power to consolidate the party. In any case, Zardari has an awkward relationship with the PPP, whose affairs he is trying to run with the help of close aides and family members like his own sister, who is a member of the National Assembly.

Second, Zardari has comparatively lesser potential to counter the military's hegemonic power (see Figure 2.2). Over the past four to five decades, the army has learnt to form partnerships among various civilian actors, which has helped neutralise any competition from a particular

source. Politically, the army has penetrated in the political party system and the political process in general through:

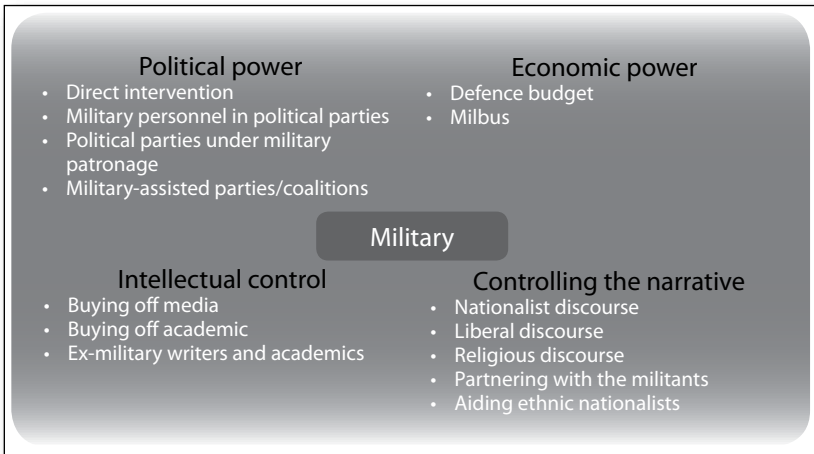
- (i) Direct intervention
- (ii) Partnering with civilian actors in political parties
- (iii) Absorbing former military officers in parliament and political parties

Although military presidents are known to provide patronage to and to take over existing political party structures, thus far, the military is not inclined, as in some Latin American countries or Bangladesh, to make their own political party. The army chief, General (retd.) Mirza Aslam Beg (1988–1992) established his own party, but it did not really take off in terms of popular support. General (retd) Pervez Musharraf has also recently launched his political party and hopes to seek support from among existing politicians. He believes that politicians from different parties will eventually come and join him.<sup>21</sup> His success, however, will depend on whether his own organisation is willing to back him up in his political adventure. The main policy remains building partnerships, an approach which is facilitated due to the presence of retired military officers getting elected to the parliament by aligning with the existing political parties.

A more critical dimension, however, pertains to the organisation's greater capacity to influence the national narrative, and through it, the public mindset. The defence establishment has managed to penetrate both the media and academia, nationally and abroad, forging partnerships to sell a particular narrative. Since a majority of people look up to the state for rewards and opportunities, they have little option but to become a partner. This is not just propaganda but a systematic build-up of a discourse that reduces the country's problems to being an externally generated conspiracy to destroy Pakistan through the help of dishonest local partners. Under the circumstances, Pakistani society has no other option but to support the army. The fear of an external conspiracy tends to force people to cling to the military. The propaganda regarding the inefficiency of the political class also feeds into this peculiar narrative.

The military's propaganda machinery has been sharpened and honed over the years and today it is not just a small component of the organisation but has multiple units. The ISI, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Strategic Plans Division and the Army Chief's office have all

FIGURE 2.2  
**Military hegemony**



become part of the large machine that controls the mindset. Individual academics and media personnel who cannot be controlled through simple bribes and coercion through the ISI are subjected to other sophisticated means. Interestingly, the “politicised” yet apolitical urban-middle class and upper-middle class have bought into this propaganda, which is a worrying development since this socioeconomic class has partnerships globally and their voice is heard more outside the country than in the lower classes of Pakistan. The fact that this class of people does not actively participate in politics by casting votes during elections makes their opinion a dangerous externality.

Another dimension of the military’s capacity is its ability to straddle the ideological divide. The religious militants and the political right are as much connected with the security establishment as is the liberal left. Both consider the military as being on their side with the will to turn the state into what they feel it ought to be.

Currently, the civilian government and the military are competing for greater space against each other. While Zardari has tried to build stakeholders in his own survival through an emphasis on the state’s multiple identities, especially ethnic identity, the military has been fanning the fear of an external threat that can only be countered through a more centralised vision of the state. The creation of a separate province of Gilgit-Baltistan through a presidential ordinance and renaming the North-West

Frontier Province as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to meet the demand of the Pushtoon population or endorsing the demand for a Saraiki<sup>22</sup> province are moves that are meant to create stakes for smaller provinces in the current government's survival. Indeed, local leaders sound more committed to the PPP government and its leadership.<sup>23</sup> Zardari seems to believe that the ethnicity card will help in his political survival.<sup>24</sup> But the civilian government's moves also include making structural changes such as introducing the 18th amendment to the 1973 Constitution to allow for provincial autonomy. This is meant to empower the provinces vis-à-vis the central government. This move, in turn, is meant to reduce the significance of the armed force and the state bureaucracy in general.

The other formula that the civilian government seems to be using is to complete its tenure. The ability to complete its period in government can help create a dent in the myth of the military's political control. Therefore, commentators believe that the President makes concessions and does not challenge the GHQ frontally. Thus far, he has surrendered all such powers that would make the army unhappy about his rule and use it as an excuse to sack his government.

Nevertheless, the civilian government appears to be weakening in the face of the propaganda machine of the security establishment, which is countering Zardari by offering a more centralised concept of the state, which allows greater space to deal with ethnic diversity. For instance, for a change, the army has begun inducting men from the smaller and neglected provinces like Baluchistan and Sindh. It is even making changes in cadet colleges and schools in the two provinces which that have a positive impact in the longer term.<sup>25</sup> But a more effective weapon is tarring the current civilian dispensation as corrupt and inefficient. It may almost sound like a cliché but the fact is that in the minds of the general public the Zardari-led PPP government epitomises corruption. Though there is no evidence to support such claims, the propaganda, however helps the security establishment in bringing in a political replacement for the PPP. There are rumours of the GHQ considering other political actors who are closer in spirit to the military's ideological-Islamic-national security narrative.

## CONCLUSION

The civilian government elected in 2008 is still struggling to complete its tenure. The regime's survival is one mechanism for strengthening civil-

ians, making the consolidation of the democratic process more sustainable. However, this is a very small step forward in breaking the military's dominance. Indeed, as this paper demonstrates, earlier governments in Pakistan have tried at least on three occasions to break the security establishment's stranglehold over power.

The first opportunity, which Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had in the 1970s, came to nothing because he did not strategise well regarding his contest with the GHQ. In addition, he suffered from certain personality traits and had a style of politics that resulted in strengthening the military. The first Benazir Bhutto government was a major opportunity lost. Interestingly, in Pakistan, which has suffered long spells of direct and indirect military rule, the political forces have not planned or even understood properly the need to build bridges among themselves to fight the military's power. The closest that the political forces came to attaining a consensus was in the form of the charter of democracy signed in 2006 between the PPP's Benazir Bhutto and PML-N's Mian Nawaz Sharif while both were in exile. This is certainly not because of some lack of intellectual acuity. As the Pakistani sociologist Hamza Alavi aptly puts it, the military remains central to the interests and politics of the dominant classes as an instrument of elite interests.<sup>26</sup> This is what Amos Perlmutter defined as the behaviour of a modern praetorian state which:

... favours the development of the military as the core group and encourages the growth of its expectations as a ruling class ... constitutional changes are effected and sustained by the military, which plays a dominant role in all political institutions.<sup>27</sup>

Pakistan falls in the category of a praetorian state with predatory elites. Irrespective of whether they are civilian or military, all segments of the ruling elite, which comprises the upper, upper-middle and intermediate middle classes, support some degree of authoritarianism. In fact, authoritarianism is part of the socio-political culture that permeates the middle classes who form the bulk of the ruling elite.

Given the parochial agenda of the army, it has managed to create a formidable propaganda machine that is very potent in shaping the national discourse. The military today is a far more powerful institution than its predecessor of the 1960s and the 1970s. This institution is not just a political force but also exercises intellectual control. Hence, it is not surprising that despite sporadic efforts of different civilian governments

during the 1990s to weaken the military, the generals remain powerful. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the status quo will alter in the foreseeable future.

### Notes

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1. Although Waseem's table does not comment on the more recent years from 2008-to date, this period also falls under the third category of "rule of troika" which basically indicates the power of the army chief in influencing policymaking.
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5. Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc, Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pp. 78–89.
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14. Profile: Asif Ali Zardari, *BBC News*, 16 December 2009; accessible at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4032997.stm>
15. Interview with former federal secretary Mukhtar Masood (Lahore, 12 November 2004).
16. Bruce Riedel, "American diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House", Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Policy Paper Series 2002; accessible at [http://media.sas.upenn.edu/casi/docs/research/papers/Riedel\\_2002.pdf](http://media.sas.upenn.edu/casi/docs/research/papers/Riedel_2002.pdf)

17. Interview with the former naval chief, Admiral (retd.) Fasih Bokhari (Islamabad, 2 January 2001).
18. Interview with senior retired chief of Punjab Police (Islamabad, 9 November 2009).
19. Discussion with former ambassador Riaz Khokhar (Islamabad, 10 June 2009).
20. *Report of the United Nations Commission of Enquiry into the facts and circumstances of former Pakistani Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto*, accessible at [http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Pakistan/UN\\_Bhutto\\_Report\\_15April2010.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Pakistan/UN_Bhutto_Report_15April2010.pdf)
21. Interview with General (retd.) Pervez Musharraf (Washington, D.C., May 2010).
22. "Saraiki Province to be included in next manifesto: Gilani". *Dawn*, Vol. LXV No. 72, 14 March 2011, p. 12.
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# DEMILITARISATION

## THE BANGLADESH EXPERIENCE

Bhumitra Chakma

The theoretical possibility of military intervention in politics in post-colonial states like Bangladesh lies in the tradition and organisational structure of the armed forces, which they inherited from the colonial era. British India, for example, used the military not only to defend the country from external threats; it also used the armed forces to maintain internal law and order. Such a tradition defined the “political” role of the military as “the custodian of law and order” in many post-colonial states, including Bangladesh.<sup>1</sup> The Bangladesh army additionally became “politically conscious” in the context of the war of independence in 1971.

In the past four decades, the Bangladesh army has intervened on three occasions and ruled the country for 17 years. The first military intervention took place in 1975 within four years of the country’s independence and military rule on this occasion continued until General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) was assassinated in a military coup in May 1981 (though the coup leaders could not capture state power). Following a brief interlude of civilian rule, the army chief, Lieutenant General Hussein Mohammad Ershad, forced the civilian president, Justice Abdus Sattar, to hand over power to him in March 1982. General Ershad ruled the country for about nine years before he was forced to resign in a mass uprising in December 1990. Following the fall of the Ershad regime, three democratically elected civilian governments ran the country from 1991–2006. In January 2007, the army intervened again before the scheduled general elections and imposed a quasi-military rule. Without taking over directly,



the military installed a Non-Party Caretaker Government (NPCG) and ruled the country from behind it for two years, eventually ceding power to the elected civilian government in January 2009.

In this chapter I make the following observations about demilitarisation and prospects for democratic governance in Bangladesh. First, no generalisation can be made as to why the military ceded power to the civilian authorities because a multitude of factors have paved the way for demilitarisation in Bangladesh. Second, while demilitarisation of the state has made progress in the past two decades as civil-military relations have progressively been redefined in favour of the former, the army remains a force to be reckoned with in the governance of the country and in the political process. The army is particularly determined to protect its corporate interests. Third, the period of indirect military rule in 2007–2008 represents two competing tendencies in civil-military relations. It highlights, on the one hand, the army's attitude as "the custodian of law and order" or "saviour" of the state as manifested in the attempt to institutionalise its role in state policymaking and the army chief's willingness to assume the presidency.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, it is evident that the army eventually had to cede power to the civilian government and accept civilian control over the military. As conditions stand now, it is highly unlikely that the Bangladesh military will seize state power directly in the foreseeable future although it will continue to be a formidable factor in the country's governance.

To explain the above observations, this paper adopts a puzzle-driven approach,<sup>3</sup> which seeks to explain questions or puzzles concerning the issues of militarisation and demilitarisation in Bangladesh. The advantage of this approach is that it gives enough flexibility to address questions in the absence of a dominant variable or a generalised proposition. The paper proceeds as follows. First, it discusses the dynamics of the first two military regimes led by Zia and Ershad in order to identify the legacies left by military rule, which had a profound bearing on the demilitarisation process. This section also analyses the reasons for the army's withdrawal from politics in the wake of a mass uprising in 1990. Second, it explains the course of demilitarisation during the three civilian governments from 1991–2006, identifies the relevant causal variables and evaluates the outcomes reflected in the civil-military relations of that period. Third, it explains the factors that led to the third military intervention in Janu-

ary 2006, the military's attempt to redefine civil-military relations and the reasons for Bangladesh's return to the democratic path. Finally, the paper sums up its major findings and sets out the implications for the future of civil-military relations in Bangladesh.

### **MILITARY RULE: ZIA AND ERSHAD, 1975–1990**

Bangladesh emerged as an independent state in 1971, seceding from Pakistan after a nine-month long bloody liberation war.<sup>4</sup> Within four years, the founding father of the state—Mujibur Rahman (Mujib) was assassinated in August 1975. Following the assassination of Mujib, two generals—Zia and Ershad ruled the country for 15 years with a brief interlude of civilian rule in 1981–1982. Eventually, the army went back to the barracks in 1990 in the wake of a mass agitation. The changes that the two generals introduced in the administration, politics and other structures of the state left far-reaching consequences for Bangladesh politics in general and civil-military relations in particular.

#### **Zia regime, 1975–1981**

A group of young army officers assassinated Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members in the early hours of 15 August 1975. Several explanations are advanced for this development. First, members of the coup team were motivated to settle personal scores against Mujib and some of his family members and relatives. Second, it was a reprisal against apparent neglect of the military by the Mujib government.<sup>5</sup> Third, the army exploited the Mujib government's failure to tackle a political, economic and social downturn as well as lawlessness, rampant corruption and in particular the 1974 famine. Fourth, factionalism within the "politicised" army prompted the August coup and subsequent coups and counter-coups in 1975.<sup>6</sup> Bangladesh decisively, for better or for worse, took a new course with the advent of military rule.

The 15 August coup did not automatically put Zia on top of state power. A series of coups and counter-coups orchestrated by various factions within the army following the August coup eventually catapulted the army chief to the helm of the state.<sup>7</sup> Once in that position, Zia moved quickly to secure his power base. He disbanded the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (JRB), a para-military force created by the Mujib government and a source of much "discontent" within the army, and purged the left factions,

including the one that wanted a Mao-style “productive force”, from the armed forces. Zia increased the salaries, allowances and other facilities of the armed forces. The defence budget was raised from \$42 million in 1975 to \$140 million in 1978,<sup>8</sup> a pattern that was to follow in subsequent years.

Partly to gain legitimacy and partly to ensure his legacy, Zia brought about sweeping changes in state structures and in the character of the state. The 1972 constitution declared Bangladesh a secular state. Under the Proclamation Order of 1977 (Article 8, Clause 1), Zia replaced secularism with the principle of “absolute faith in the Almighty Allah.” He also redefined the character of the Bangladesh state by inserting the phrase, “*Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim*” [in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful] at the top of the Constitution before the Preamble. Furthermore, Zia replaced the previous government’s principle of “Bengali” nationalism with “Bangladeshi” nationalism. The Zia regime lifted the ban on communal political parties imposed by the Mujib government. This facilitated the operation of Islamist political parties like the Jamat-I-Islami Bangladesh (JIB). The Fifth Amendment of the constitution, adopted on 5 April 1977, gave constitutional validity to these measures. The measures polarised the Bangladesh polity, a factor that would influence the country’s politics in the years to come.

Zia initiated the militarisation of civilian sectors of the state, a process that was expedited by the next military regime. The regime appointed serving military personnel to top administrative positions, including the Foreign Service. In 1980, the Zia regime increased the number of military officers to occupy top civilian posts from 41 to 79.<sup>10</sup> The General did this to keep the army satisfied and secured his power base. He also expected that it would forestall the military coup against him.

Zia began the process of militarisation of Bangladesh politics with a concerted effort to “civilianise” his regime. The General was aware that he could not rule as a military dictator for long. Hence, he needed to establish a veneer of civilian rule to gain legitimacy and continue to rule. Zia kicked off the civilianisation process by holding a referendum on the validity of his presidency on 30 May 1977, which he “won” overwhelmingly, securing 99.5 per cent of the votes.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, he adopted a two-pronged strategy to civilianise his regime: party building and holding elections.<sup>12</sup> At an opportune stage, he gave up his uniform and floated a

political party—the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)—in September 1977. Zia not only inducted retired military officers into his party, but also extensively used the military and the military intelligence agencies in building the party. The intelligence agencies bought opposition politicians on his behalf and conspired to undermine the opposition's unity. When the party gained strength, he held elections at various levels, in which the military played a vital role.

Various constitutional measures introduced by Zia changed the character of the Bangladesh state and his drive to civilianise the regime militarised the country's politics. As will be discussed below, the process of militarisation of the Bangladesh state initiated by Zia grew in intensity under the Ershad regime.

### **Ershad regime, 1982–1990**

A disgruntled faction of the army assassinated Zia in Chittagong on 31 May 1981. Vice President Justice Abdus Sattar took over the presidency. In an election held in November 1981, Justice Sattar regularised his position as president. As soon as Sattar assumed the presidency, Army Chief General Ershad began to press the president to institutionalise the role of the military in policymaking. President Sattar acquiesced to the demand of the army chief and constituted a National Security Council (NSC) comprising the chiefs of the three services, the prime minister, the vice president and the president as its head.<sup>13</sup> Although the NSC was formed, the Sattar government had no intention of implementing the decision and hence delayed the operationalisation of the NSC. The army chief found a reasonable pretext in the NSC issue to seize state power and eventually deposed the elected government on 24 March 1982.

General Ershad survived in power for nearly nine years from March 1982 to December 1990 despite the fact that he had less legitimacy compared to his predecessor, Zia.<sup>14</sup> He confronted serious challenges and stiff resistance from the very beginning of his tenure. The question arises: how did he manage to survive for such a long period of time in extremely adverse circumstances? The answer to the puzzle of Ershad's survival primarily lies in his ability to keep the army on his side. And what did he do to keep the military on his side for nine years? The simple answer is that he did everything possible to keep the army satisfied.<sup>15</sup> But in the process Ershad heavily militarised the state and gravely harmed

democratic norms. During his tenure, Ershad, like his predecessor Zia, consistently maintained a high level of defence expenditure and indeed increased it over the years. During the period from 1975–1989, the defence budget of Bangladesh increased by 18 per cent on an average each year, although the expenditure in all other sectors increased by only 14 per cent.<sup>16</sup> Needless to say, the primary objective of maintaining such a high level of financial allocation for defence was to keep the army satisfied.

Ershad gradually expanded the size of the armed forces, a process that had begun during the Zia regime. The force increased from 60,000 in 1975–1976 to 101,500 in 1988–1989.<sup>17</sup> The salary and other benefits of the army personnel were disproportionately increased compared to their civilian counterparts. Furthermore, Ershad not only followed his predecessor's policy of appointing military personnel to crucial civilian jobs, but also went a step further and formalised the entry of military officers in the Foreign Service and other civilian positions by creating a quota system. For example, 25 per cent of the Foreign Service positions were reserved for army officers.<sup>18</sup> Ershad appointed military personnel to head 14 large corporations out of 22, including important ones such as the National Economic Council, the Committee of Food, Agriculture and Rural Development, the Energy and Mineral Resources Committee, the Export-Import Committee, the Government Purchase Committee, the Promotion and Service Restructure Committee, and the Pay Fixation and Administrative Reorganisation Committee. When recruitment was restricted, Ershad reappointed 1,500 retired army officers in various positions of the government.<sup>19</sup> He even tried to induct army officers into the district councils in 1987, which he could not implement due to stiff opposition from all sections of society. The militarisation of the administration had long-term implications for the governance of the country and for demilitarisation in Bangladesh.

Ershad introduced a sweeping Islamic orientation in Bangladesh politics. Two measures are particularly noteworthy. First, he attempted to create a mosque-centric society. Second, he declared Islam as the state religion.<sup>20</sup> While the former was promoted informally, the latter was formalised by the adoption of the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution on 7 June 1988 (Article 2, Clause A). Ershad's Islamisation policy was driven by his motivation to gain legitimacy. His Islamisation policy

not only created tension among various communities, it also further polarised Bangladesh politics and made it even more violent.

Ershad lacked public trust and legitimacy, and was dependent on the support of the military to continue his rule. This condition led him to embark on the path of civilianisation. His civilianisation effort was almost identical to that of his predecessor. On 21 March 1985 he held a referendum to legitimise his position until the next presidential election. Subsequently, he resigned from the post of the army chief and announced the formation of a political party—the Jatiyo (National) Party (JP) in January 1986. In forming the “king’s party”, Ershad extensively used the military intelligence services, who extended allegiance to the party and split the opposition. The biggest success in splitting the opposition came when the Awami League agreed to participate in the May 1986 parliamentary elections.<sup>21</sup> In the process of building the party, Ershad gave money and arms to trade unions and student bodies.<sup>22</sup> Ershad’s party building introduced a violent political culture in the country.

Ershad held a presidential election on 15 October 1986, which he “won” and subsequently assumed the presidency as a “civilian”. He then withdrew martial law (on 10 November), which he had imposed in the wake of his takeover in 1982. Despite his vigorous drive to civilianise his regime and all efforts to establish a modicum of legitimacy, Ershad never gained public trust and acceptance. In general, all elections during his tenure were regarded as farcical and managed by the military. Hence, he had to survive basically through the support of the military.

As stated earlier, from the very beginning of his tenure, Ershad confronted sharp opposition from various quarters, namely students, lawyers, human rights activists, political parties and the civil society. His position began to seriously weaken from 1987 onwards when opposition political parties—an eight-party alliance led by the Awami League (AL), a seven-party alliance led by the BNP, and a five-party alliance of pro-Beijing leftists—came together to oppose his rule and jointly called a number of successful *hartals* (strikes) demanding his immediate resignation.<sup>23</sup> On 19 November 1990, the three alliances issued a joint statement, which demanded that Ershad must resign, appoint a new vice-president (under Article 51 of the Constitution) acceptable to the three alliances and hand over power (under Article 55) to the newly appointed vice-president who would serve as acting president. The acting president

would form an impartial government, which would supervise free and fair elections.<sup>24</sup> Ershad initially resisted and sought the support of the army, but eventually could not survive as the configuration of domestic and international forces went against him. He eventually resigned on 5 December 1990.<sup>25</sup>

A number of factors were responsible for the downfall of the Ershad regime. Firstly, in a rare demonstration of unity, the political parties of the country came together to overthrow the military dictator. Without such a unity, it is arguable it would have been difficult to remove Ershad from power. It highlighted the politicised and resilient nature of the Bangladesh polity and the strength of civil society. It also meant that any future takeover of state power by the military would not be an easy ride. It would face resistance from the people.

Secondly, in the late 1980s, the international environment was gradually becoming unfavourable for military rule in the wake of changes in the communist bloc. Crucially, the Ershad regime had lost the support of the major donor countries by the late 1980s and they were putting pressure on the regime to respect human rights and the democratic aspirations of the people. There were reports in the Voice of America (VOA) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) during the mass uprising that Japan and Great Britain had made it clear to the Ershad regime that they would stop all aid if the emergency that had been imposed was not lifted.<sup>26</sup>

Thirdly, and most crucially, Ershad lost the support of the armed forces. The Bangladesh military had realised that any further support to the Ershad regime would harm its corporate interests. Of particular significance was the fact that junior and mid-rank officers within the army opposed the military's involvement in the on-going political crisis.<sup>27</sup> It was evident to the military high command that the people would not accept another period of martial law; even worse, they feared that propping up the Ershad regime might lead to civil war.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, it was apparent to the military that the international environment was changing fast and it would not be easy for a military regime to survive in the emerging international milieu. The Western donor countries were already using the aid card to promote democracy in various parts of the world. The "aid club of Bangladesh", led by the United States and European countries, had already expressed its displeasure over the prevailing circumstances in



the country. In the late 1980s, 90 per cent of Bangladesh's annual budget was dependent on external aid.<sup>29</sup> The military, to protect its corporate interest, had no alternative but to abandon the unpopular Ershad regime.

A prolonged period of military rule in the immediate years following independence, which should have witnessed democratic consolidation for a newly emerging state that had achieved its independence through a bloody war of liberation, deflected Bangladesh from the path of normal democratic growth. Sweeping changes in the structure and character of the state made the country's politics communalised, polarised and divisive. Military rule massively militarised various sectors of the state and led to the growth of a violent political culture as both military rulers strived to civilianise their regimes. Indeed, long years of struggle against the Ershad regime and the use of violence by all sides led political parties to become leader-centric and hoodlum-centric.<sup>30</sup> Fifteen years of military rule distorted the normal democratic growth of the state, and allowed non-democratic norms to take root. These fallouts of the military rule, as will be discussed below, would significantly affect the demilitarisation of the state.

Despite prolonged military rule, the army failed to gain clear supremacy in civil-military relations. General Ershad tried to have a formal, constitutionally-mandated role for the military in the policymaking process, but was restrained from doing so owing to strong opposition from inside and outside the parliament.<sup>31</sup> Even though the army failed to acquire such a role and retreated in the wake of the 1990 uprising, it remained a robust force that retained the ability not only to protect its corporate interests, but also to intervene if it became necessary.

### CIVILIAN RULE AND DEMILITARISATION, 1991–2006

General Ershad handed over power to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Shahabuddin Ahmed on 5 December 1990. The three alliances gave Justice Ahmed the mandate to take appropriate steps to hold free and fair elections of the *Jatiyo Sangsad* (National Assembly) within three months. Accordingly, general elections were held on 27 February 1991. In the elections, the BNP emerged victorious and formed the first elected government after 15 years of military rule. It was followed by two other civilian administrations in 1996 and 2001 led by the AL and the BNP respectively before the army intervened again in January 2007. How successful was demilitarisation during the tenure of the three civil-



ian governments? What was the nature of civil-military relations during this period?

The years of military rule had privileged had tilted the civil-military balance considerably in favour of the armed forces. Once the elected government took office, it became necessary to rebalance civil-military relations. It was, however, not an easy task. As noted above, while the fall of the Ershad regime and the beginning of civilian rule was a victory for the civil society over the military, the latter remained a significant force bent upon and capable of protecting its corporate interest.

### Rebalancing civil-military relations

The new Khaleda Zia government followed a cautious approach regarding military affairs and carefully undertook a number of measures to establish civilian control over the military. To watch over the military, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia herself took charge of the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Although the role of the MoD had already been substantially reduced, giving it the authority only to deal with accounts and civilian aspects of defence,<sup>32</sup> it still provided an avenue to the Prime Minister to assert control over the military. The important functions concerning the military were moved to the Armed Forces Division (AFD) under the prime minister's office.

The prime minister, as the chief executive of the government, took control of the all-important AFD, which had been under the control of the president during military rule. The change occurred because the country had moved from the presidential system to the parliamentary form of government following the end of military rule.<sup>33</sup> In 1991, the parliament amended the constitution to change the form of government. The genesis of the AFD can be traced back to the 1970s, when its progenitor was created as the Supreme Command Division (SCD) and used to function as the secretariat of the chief martial law administrator.<sup>34</sup> Subsequently, the SCD was incorporated into the president's office as both military rulers—Zia and Ershad—later assumed the presidency as “civilians”. Zia retained the SCD when he became president and brought it under the president's office ostensibly for the efficient management of military affairs, but the key reason was to keep a close watch on the military for fear of a coup against the regime. Ershad used the SCD for similar purposes. Khaleda Zia moved the department to the Prime

Minister's office and renamed it the Armed Forces Division. She used the AFD for the same purpose as the military rulers.

The AFD thus far remains the most effective avenue through which the Prime Minister maintains control over military affairs. It functions as the coordinating body for the affairs of the three services—the army, the navy and the air force—and is responsible for devising defence policies. It monitors pacts and agreements, controls the movement of units, deals with the posting and promotion of senior army officers, and manages the procurement of weapons and the mobilisation of troops during national emergencies.<sup>35</sup> It is evident that the functions of the MoD are now being performed by the AFD.

Effecting changes in the institutional set-up, civilian governments asserted substantive control over the military during the period of civilian rule from 1991 to 2006. Both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, who alternately served as prime minister in the three civilian governments, took great care in the appointment of the army chief, the Principal Staff Officer (PSO) and the Director General of Field Intelligence (DGFI).<sup>36</sup> They ensured the allegiance of the people they appointed to those positions which helped maintain control over the military and minimised the risk of a military coup.

All the three civilian governments during this period utilised these mechanisms to assert civilian control over the military and redefine civil-military relations. While the civilian governments were able to establish substantial control over the military, they had to tread carefully as they were aware that the military remained a powerful force in the governance of the country. They needed to preserve the corporate interests of the armed forces. This was evident in the continuity of high allocations to the defence sector in the yearly budget and in the civilian leaders' frequent expression of commitment to build a modern, strong army.

### **Explaining the army's continued influence and gradual reassertion**

Despite civilian governments' apparent edge over the military, the army retained its considerable influence in the country's governance and politics and indeed gradually resurrected its power, culminating in the indirect military takeover of state power in January 2007. A key factor for the army's resurrection was that both the AL and the BNP tried to pull the army to its side in the struggle for power in addition to inducting

retired army officers into their parties. In doing so, they politicised the military and aided the army to return to a position of influence.

### *Politicisation of the military*

The rivalry between the two major parties—the AL and the BNP—is bitter, and in a sense hysterical, in the political arena in general and in elections in particular.<sup>37</sup> This, in combination with their failure to deliver socio-economic progress, has led them to seek the favour of the military in their struggle for power and has paved the way for the army's gradual reassertion. Consequently, the efficacy of the civilian governments' measures to redefine civil-military relations has gradually eroded.

The general perception within the AL and the BNP about the role of the military in the country's political process is that the military's leaning to a particular side plays a crucial role in determining the outcome of elections. Hence, they compete to earn the support of the military in their struggle to capture the government.<sup>38</sup> For example, in the campaigns of all three general elections, both the AL and the BNP have repeatedly expressed their resolute commitment to build a modern, strong army. Such a commitment from Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia is indeed intriguing given that the former lost her parents and siblings and the latter her husband in military coups.

The competition between the AL and the BNP to get the army on their side in their political struggle resulted in the politicisation of the military, touched new heights in 1996, when a “coup-like” situation emerged. The episode began when President Abdur Rahman Biswas, a BNP appointee, sacked two high-ranked army officers, Major-General G. H. Morshed Khan (the General Officer Commanding, Bogra Division) and Brigadier Miran Hamidur Rahman (Deputy Director-General of Bangladesh Rifles) on 18 May for their alleged political involvement with the AL. Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant-General Abu Saleh Mohammad Nasim refused to obey the order because, as he later put it, the President did not follow the normal rules and procedures and did not give the sacked officers an opportunity to defend themselves. Moreover, the army chain of command was not consulted and informed about the decision before the order was issued. General Nasim asserted that by refusing to obey the sacking order he was merely trying to protect the interests of his officers and the military.<sup>39</sup>

When his order was not carried out, the president in an unscheduled address on national television on 20 May announced that he had retired the army chief and the two senior army officers whom he had previously sacked.<sup>40</sup> He asserted that the refusal to obey his order and the mobilisation of troops towards Dhaka by the army chief was tantamount to mutiny. The president appointed Major-General Mahbubur Rahman to replace General Nasim as the new army chief.<sup>41</sup>

The incident sparked tension in various cantonments of the country. Reportedly, troops were mobilised in support of General Nasim, on the one hand, and the president and the new army chief, on the other. Troops revolted in Bogra, Mymensingh, Comilla, Jessore and Jaidevpore cantonments in favour of General Nasim, while soldiers in Savar and Dhaka cantonments were mobilised in support of the President and General Mahbubur Rahman.<sup>42</sup> Tension eventually declined when General Nasim handed over power to the new army chief.

The incident exposed the polarised and confrontational nature of Bangladesh's political culture and the willingness of politicians to involve the military for the sake of party gains disregarding democratic norms.<sup>43</sup> It also carried significant implications for the evolving civil-military relations, in which the army found an opportunity to reassert its influential position in the civil-military equation.

The saga did not end with the retirement of General Nasim. Once the AL was elected to power in the next general elections, the new government immediately revoked the retirement order and allowed General Nasim to undergo a proper retirement. Moreover, the new government removed the army chief, General Mahbubur Rahman, who had been appointed by the previous government, and replaced him with General Mustafizur Rahman by promoting him to a senior rank. It is noteworthy that General Mustafizur Rahman was a freedom fighter and allegedly an AL sympathiser. His appointment is believed to have been a reward for his sympathetic attitude towards the AL. The AL government also promoted the air chief, Jamal Uddin Ahmed, to the rank of Air Marshal, probably a reward for his favourable attitude towards the AL. When the BNP returned to power by winning the 2001 general elections, it immediately sacked the army and air chiefs that the AL government had appointed and stripped them of their senior ranks. Such actions by both the AL and the BNP deeply politicised the military and paved the way for the military's next intervention.

### *The Chittagong Hill Tracts and the army*

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is an area in the south-eastern corner of Bangladesh, which is inhabited by a non-Bengali and non-Muslim population of 13 ethnic groups. Soon after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the people of the CHT demanded regional autonomy, to which the Mujib government refused to accede. Soon an insurgency developed in the region led by the *Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti* (United Peoples' Organisation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, PCJSS) that continued until a peace accord between the Bangladesh government and the PCJSS was signed on 2 December 1997.<sup>44</sup>

In countering the ethnic movement in the CHT, Dhaka massively militarised the region. By the mid-1980s, a total of 115,000 military and para-military personnel were deployed in the CHT—one soldier for five to six hill persons, virtually turning it into “a vast military camp”.<sup>45</sup> The civil and development administration of the region were also heavily militarised and all decisions regarding the CHT were made by the military.<sup>46</sup> Although a peace accord was signed in December 1997, the region has yet to be demilitarised. The army still remains in control of the region and civilian governments have not regained control of its administration.

The military control of the CHT has considerable implications for civil-military relations in Bangladesh. During the tenure of the three civilian administrations, the region was under the absolute control of the military, which meant that state policy towards the CHT was made by the armed forces. It did not help the demilitarisation of the state in post-military Bangladesh in the 1990s and afterwards.

### *Failure in democratic consolidation and robust institution building*

Overall, the civilian governments and political parties failed to consolidate the democratic process during the period between 1991 and 2006 as was expected subsequent to the fall of the Ershad regime. A cursory glance at this period indicates that gains in terms of democratic consolidation and institution building were minimal except that three relatively free and fair general elections were held and power was transferred from one government to the other peacefully. Indeed, political parties failed to live up to the expectations and hopes that were generated with the return of civilian rule. Corruption was rampant. Lawlessness, rising inflation and increasing crime were the hallmarks of civilian governments. *Hartal politics* left deep scars in the political development of the country.<sup>47</sup> In

2002, “Operation Clean Heart” was launched with the assistance of the military in order to tackle the deteriorating law and order situation. In 2004, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), staffed by para-military and police forces was constituted. The failures of the civilian governments were becoming increasingly apparent.

The intense, somewhat reckless, rivalry of the political parties made democratic consolidation difficult. The rivalry especially became nastier at the time of elections. To tackle the problem, the constitution was amended in March 1996 and a system of Non-Party Caretaker Government (NPCG) for holding free and fair elections was constituted. It provided that at the end of each parliamentary term, a non-partisan caretaker government would be headed by a “chief advisor” (the chief justice was to normally hold this position), whose primary responsibility would be to hold free and fair general elections. The NPCG would be collectively responsible to the president; the chief advisor was to be appointed by the president and other advisors would be appointed on the recommendation of the chief advisor.<sup>48</sup> Notwithstanding such an arrangement, a major controversy, discussed below, erupted during the January 2007 elections, which paved the way for military intervention.

During this period, Bangladesh politics remained very polarised, divisive, violent and basically devoid of democratic norms. There was little effort to strengthen democratic institutions and a commitment to resolve political issues through the democratic process utilising institutional means (i.e. parliament). The political parties remained personality-based and failed to become democratic institutions. Even after three general elections following the fall of General Ershad, major political parties failed to foster an acceptable democratic process that would ensure democratic power transition peacefully. The failure to strengthen democratic norms and process immensely harmed the demilitarisation of the state in post-Ershad Bangladesh.

## Evaluation

Three successive civilian governments led by the BNP and the AL alternately ran the country from 1991–2006 before the military intervened again. Following the fall of the Ershad regime in December 1990, the army took a back seat, ushering in an environment that would allow the civilian governments to redefine civil-military relations and con-

solidate the democratic process. The civilian governments undertook various institutional and non-institutional measures to demilitarise the state and were able to establish some control over the military. In the demilitarisation process, several factors worked in favour of the civilian governments. For one thing, the fall of the Ershad regime dampened the appetite of the military for taking over state power directly. The fall of the Ershad regime also made it clear that any future military intervention would face resistance from the politicised Bangladesh population. Further, the international environment was most unfavourable for military rule in the 1990s. With the end of the Cold War and the rise of a new democratic wave throughout the world, it was all too apparent that the army takeover of state power in Bangladesh would be unviable. This was particularly due to the fact that the country was, and still is, too aid-dependent. The problem was greatly exacerbated by the poor performance of the economy.<sup>49</sup>

However, the army still remained a force to be reckoned with and a formidable factor in the country's governance and politics. It was not easy to demilitarise quickly after 15 years of military rule when the state structures were heavily militarised and the army had established a privileged position compared to its civilian counterparts. It was clear that the civilian governments would need to protect the corporate interests of the military. This became evident in the allocation of a relatively greater share of the state budget to the military sector and in the commitment of major parties to build a modern, strong army. The military also demonstrated its determination to protect the corporate interests of the institution.

It is evident that the military, during the tenure of civilian administrations gradually reasserted itself. This was facilitated by the bitter political rivalry of the two dominant parties—the AL and the BNP. As noted earlier, the two parties vigorously vied to earn the favour of the military in their struggle for power. In doing so, they politicised the military, harmed the demilitarisation process and opened the door for the military to reassert itself and intervene in the political process. Moreover, the army's reassertion was made possible by the failure of the political parties to strengthen democratic institutions, consolidate democratic norms and improve the quality of living of the population. Against such a backdrop, the army stepped in and installed a caretaker government on 11 January 2007, which the people in general welcomed.



## THE MILITARY-BACKED NPCG, 2007–2008

Notwithstanding some controversies, the general elections and the transfer of power conducted under the NPCG system in 1996 and 2001 were relatively smooth. The composition of the NPCG in 2006, however, raised serious controversy. The AL and its allies complained that the BNP was preparing to rig the elections by stacking the caretaker government and the Election Commission with its supporters and padding voter lists with bogus names.<sup>50</sup> Chief Justice K. M. Hasan was to become the chief advisor as the constitution mandated, but the AL and its allies refused to accept Justice Hasan in that position on the ground that he was an active member of the BNP prior to his joining the judiciary.<sup>51</sup> The BNP and its allies, on the other hand, posited that if Justice Hasan was not made chief advisor it would violate the Constitution. On 3 January 2007, the AL-led alliance announced that it would boycott the election and prevent it from taking place. Instead of seeking a compromise, both sides chose the street to make their points. The uncompromising stance of the two alliances culminated in the worst street violence in Bangladesh since the fall of the Ershad regime.

As the controversy raged and violence broke out, Justice Hasan announced that he would not take up the position of chief advisor. Consequently, President Iajuddin Ahmed himself assumed the responsibility of chief advisor and constituted an NPCG. But violence continued as both sides pressed the president to fulfil their demands. The AL-led alliance advanced two demands: reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC), which they considered partisan; and a new voter's list. The BNP and its allies, on the other hand, opposed these demands and pressed the president not to acquiesce to the pressure of the AL-led alliance. Hence, violence continued unabated and intensified.

Against this backdrop, the army intervened on 11 January 2007 and forced President Ahmed to reconstitute the NPCG with Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, a former World Bank executive and previous governor of Bangladesh Bank, as the chief advisor. In the wake of these developments, emergency was declared, the 22 January general elections were cancelled and restrictions were imposed on political activities. Civil society supported the army-backed NPCG. The new NPCG also garnered the support of the international community. Even the bickering political parties, who were responsible for the army's intervention, hailed it as a "victory



for democratic forces”<sup>52</sup> President Iajuddin Ahmed reacted by asserting that “the military will always stand by the government for the complete flourishing of democracy”<sup>53</sup>

The formation of the Fakhruddin NPCG with the support of the military meant that the army had once again returned to run the state, albeit with a civilian façade. The army denied that it was running the affairs of the state. The country was run by the NPCG, the army chief claimed, and the role of the armed forces was only supportive. However, the fact of the matter was that the army was the main source of power for the NPCG and few “doubt that anybody but the generals are calling the shots behind the scenes”<sup>54</sup> The army deputed its officers to major institutions of the government, including in the NPCG, the Election Commission and the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission. A hard-line general headed the National Coordination Committee against Corruption and Severe Crimes (NCC) and a retired army chief took charge of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). Indeed, the Director General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) became “the driving force behind [the] military rule”<sup>55</sup> Although the NPCG ran the technocratic aspects of the government, the hard-line NCC and the DGFI were in charge of political decisions and the ACC prosecuted those decisions.<sup>56</sup> During the two-year period of the Fakhruddin NPCG, there should be little doubt, the army was the main source of power of the NPCG and its survival was more through the support of the army than the support of the people.<sup>57</sup>

Once in the driving seat of state power, the army attempted to institutionalise the role of the military in policymaking. It proposed, like former army Chief General Ershad, to set up a National Security Council (NSC). Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed extended his support to the idea of forming such a body with a 13-member committee.<sup>58</sup> The army, however, could not impose and implement such a proposal because the Bangladesh polity was inherently opposed to the idea of military intervention in the political realm.

When it intervened, the army pledged to address three critical areas of national importance. First, it would introduce necessary reforms in the “political sector”. Second, the country would be freed of corruption. And third, crime would be brought under control. Army Chief General Moeen Uddin Ahmed consistently emphasised the need for constitutional review, for which a “constitutional commission” would be

constituted for preparing new laws and mechanisms to ensure accountability and effective governance.<sup>59</sup> His vision was to chart a new political direction for Bangladesh and reinvent a new system of governance with new leadership at all levels.<sup>60</sup> In the drive to “cleanse” politics, the NPCG attempted to permanently sideline Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, top leaders of the AL and the BNP respectively, by sending them into exile. But this approach, also known as the “minus-two solution”, failed as both leaders refused to take that path. The NPCG brought corruption charges against them and put them in jail and attempted to replace Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia with senior leaders of their own parties. It also tried to institutionalise intra-party politics. Both steps failed. Subsequently, the NPCG attempted to replace the “old” political parties by creating new ones. For example, the government extended its support to Nobel Laureate Dr. Mohammed Yunus to float a new political party, Nagorik Sakti (Citizens Power), in February 2007 through which it hoped to introduce a new brand of politics in the country. This approach went nowhere.

In its anti-corruption drive, the government arrested 170 members of the political “elite” and “15,000 political underbosses, local government officials and businessmen” on corruption and tax evasion charges in the first nine months of its tenure.<sup>61</sup> Initially, the anti-corruption drive of the government garnered praise from various quarters. Subsequently, however, allegation of human rights abuses surfaced as a number of people died in custody.

The NPCG (indeed the army) eventually could not implement the reform agenda that it wanted to pursue for a number of reasons. Firstly, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia remained popular. The attempt to replace the traditional political parties did not work because both the parties remained strong at the grassroots level and the NPCG-backed newly created political parties were no substitute for them. Most crucially, the economic conditions of the general populace gradually worsened during the tenure of the Fakhruddin NPCG, which led to the decline of public support for the government. Hence, public pressure grew on the NPCG to step aside and facilitate the democratic process. The NPCG had to back down from its strong commitment to clean the political order. Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia were subsequently released from jail and the ban on politics lifted. Indeed, the Fakhruddin NPCG spent its final few months looking for a graceful exit strategy.

In the meantime, international pressure to return to the democratic process grew. At the time of the emergency's declaration, Western diplomats in Dhaka warned the army that they must not take over directly by imposing martial law, not acquiesce to rigged elections, and hold general elections within two years. During this two-year period, it seems that the pressure from the international community restrained the army from taking over state power directly and held substantive sway over the army's behaviour. Of particular concern for the military was that a direct takeover of state power would jeopardise the financially lucrative and professionally prestigious UN peacekeeping missions.

Additionally, the High Court also directed the NPCG to hold elections by 31 December 2008. Therefore, the NPCG was under the legal obligation to hold general elections by the end of 2008. Of course, it is true that the NPCG itself was committed to hold general elections within two years of its taking over of the government.

As public resentment and international pressure grew stronger, the army also realised that any further support to the NPCG would damage the corporate interests of the military. So the military acquiesced to popular pressure and compromised on the key issues of the NPCG agenda, such as reforming the political sector and creating a corruption-free country. The army chief championed some new ideas such as balancing the power of the prime minister and the president, and setting up an NSC, but these ideas failed to gain enough public support.<sup>62</sup> Conversely, the ideas of the army chief made many people sceptical about the motives of the army. Eventually, without pushing for those reforms, the army compromised and found no other way but to allow the release of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

General elections were held on 29 January 2009 in which the AL won a landslide victory. Although it is still in power, the usual pattern of Bangladesh politics has not ended. The biggest opposition party, the BNP with its allies, has refrained from participating in parliamentary deliberations. It means that Bangladesh will continue to struggle to foster a clear democratic path.

Several implications of two years of quasi-military rule are significant. One, despite the existence of reasonable conditions for a direct military takeover in 2007, it did not occur. This can be explained in terms of the inherent opposition in the Bangladesh polity to military rule and an

unfavourable international environment. It implies that it is unlikely that the army will seize state power directly in the foreseeable future. Two, although the military gained an upper hand in civil-military relations during the tenure of the Fakhruddin NPCG, the return to democratic rule meant that civilians have retained an edge in civil-military relations. Three, the recurrence of military intervention, albeit indirect, meant that the armed forces would continue to remain a significant factor in the governance of the state so that when civilians fail seriously, an army takeover may occur.

## CONCLUSION

Bangladesh may be viewed as a case of partial success in the demilitarisation of the state. Several factors are accountable for this success. Among them, two clearly stand out. The first is the high level of political consciousness among the Bangladesh citizenry, which grew out of a long tradition of political movements that predates the creation of Bangladesh. The war of independence in 1971, representing a long and sustained struggle to establish democratic rights, was a milestone in raising political consciousness. Since 1971, *muktijuddher chetana* [the consciousness of the liberation struggle] has frequently been evoked in the context of democratic movements in Bangladesh. Secondly, the international factor has played an important role in the army's withdrawal from politics and in the subsequent demilitarisation process. In the post-Cold War environment, the military takeover of state power has in general been viewed as unviable.

Notwithstanding some success, Bangladesh confronted several serious challenges in the demilitarisation endeavour. Long years of military rule from 1975 to 1990 militarised state structures, leaving behind an enduring legacy. Even after the army withdrew from politics in 1990, it remained a robust force in the governance of the state. The failure of the political parties to strengthen democratic norms and improve the socio-economic condition of the population added to the list of challenges. This failure had a crippling impact on the demilitarisation process of the Bangladesh state.

It is unlikely that the military will take over state power directly in the foreseeable future. This prospect was underlined when the military ceded power to the civilian authorities in January 2009 after two years of

quasi-military rule. There is a risk of the army re-establishing its power through indirect means. For instance, members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) staged a mutiny in March 2009 against the Bangladesh armed forces in which 57 army officers were killed. During this episode, the army was seen to be acting at the behest of the civilian government.<sup>63</sup> In the future, the demilitarisation of the state will mostly be defined by the actions of civilian politicians and their commitment to democratic norms rather than by the military.

### Notes

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1. For a discussion on this point, see Emajuddin Ahmed, "The Military and Democracy in Bangladesh", in R. J. May and Viberto Selochan (Eds.), *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific* (London: C. Hurst and Co, 1998).
2. International Crisis Group, "Restoring Democracy in Bangladesh", *Asia Report*, No. 151, 2008, available at [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/bangladesh/151\\_restoring\\_democracy\\_in\\_bangladesh.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/bangladesh/151_restoring_democracy_in_bangladesh.ashx)
3. I borrow this perspective from T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 3.
4. On the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan, see Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure of National Integration*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Robert Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990).
5. Many army officers were not happy with the Mujib government's neglect of the armed forces. Allegedly, he was reluctant to build a strong army and paid no heed to rebuild the cantonments and military institutes that were destroyed during the liberation war. During his tenure, Mujib progressively reduced the budget of the armed forces. It is alleged that Mujib viewed a big army as nothing more than an extravagance. On this point, see Lawrence Ziring, *Bangladesh: From Mujib to Ershad: An Interpretive Study* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 97. In addition, the Mujib government created the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (National Defence Force, or JRB), a paramilitary force trained by Indian assistance with legal powers and protection, which was conceived by the military as a threat to its corporate interests. See Mohammad Ibrahim, *Sena Bahinir Abbhontore Atash Bachor* [Twenty-eight Years within the Military], (Dhaka: Mowla Brothers, 1999), p. 29.

6. The Bangladesh military in the early years following independence was a highly politicised and factionalised force. This condition was a consequence of the 1971 liberation war. The military was factionalised on different lines. There were “freedom fighters” (those who fought in the war of liberation) and “repatriates” (those who were in West Pakistan during the period of liberation war and returned to Bangladesh in 1973–1974). Also, there were forces who wanted a “productive army” (like Mao Zedong’s Red Army) and those who wanted a strictly professional army (like in Western countries). For details on factionalism within the Bangladesh army in the first decade of the country’s independence, see Marcus F. Franda, *Bangladesh: The First Decade* (New Delhi: South Asia Publishers, 1982).
7. For a discussion on events in 1975, see Talukder Maniruzzaman, “Bangladesh in 1975: The fall of the Mujib regime and its aftermath”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 16 No. 2 (February 1976), pp. 119–129.
8. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* (London: IISS, 1985), p. 172.
9. Government of Bangladesh, *The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh* (as amended up to 30 June) (Dhaka: Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, 1994), p. 10.
10. Ali Riaz, *State, Class, and Military Rule: Political Economy of Martial Law in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Nadi New Press, 1994), p. 228.
11. Syed Serajul Islam, “The state in Bangladesh under Zia (1975–1981)”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 24 No. 5 (May 1984), p. 562.
12. Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1980), pp. 201–226.
13. Amena Mohsin, “Bangladesh: An uneasy accommodation”, in Muthiah Alagappa (Ed.), *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (Stanford: California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 216.
14. Several key differences between the two personalities are noteworthy. Zia was a freedom fighter and announced the independence of Bangladesh on behalf of Mujib on 26 March 1971. Contrarily, Ershad was an “expatriate” and was in Pakistan at the time of independence war. Zia did not seize state power directly, but Ershad deposed an elected government. Zia had a very good image in the public as being an honest leader, while Ershad was generally considered corrupt, dishonest and power hungry.
15. Talukder Maniruzzaman, “The fall of the military dictator: 1991 elections and the prospect of civilian rule in Bangladesh”, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 65 No. 2 (Summer, 1992), p. 204.

16. Maniruzzaman, "The fall of the military dictator".
17. Maniruzzaman, "The fall of the military dictator", p. 204.
18. On Ershad's measures to satisfy the army, see the chapter "Politics: Bangladesh", in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 219–222.
19. Chowdhury R. Abrar, "The Military in Bangladesh", in Viberto Selochan (Ed.), *The Military, the State, and Development in Asia and the Asia and the Pacific* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 193.
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21. Craig Baxter and Syedur Rahman, "Bangladesh military: Political institutionalization and economic development", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 26 No. 1–2 (1991), p. 52.
22. Mohsin, "Bangladesh: An uneasy accommodation", p. 216.
23. *The Daily Ittefaq*, 4 September 1987.
24. For the full text of the statement, see *Holiday*, 23 November 1999.
25. For a discussion on the fall of Ershad, see M. A. Hakim, *Bangladesh Politics: The Shahabuddin Interregnum* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1993); B. M. Kabir, *Military Rule and Dilemmas of Democratization in Bangladesh* (New Delhi: South Asia Publishers, 1999).
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32. Mohsin, "Bangladesh: An uneasy accommodation", p. 219.
33. Smruti S. Pattanaik, "Re-emergence of the military and the future of



- democracy in Bangladesh”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 32 No. 6 (November 2008), p. 981.
34. Mohsin, “Bangladesh: An uneasy accommodation”, p. 219.
  35. Pattanaik, “Re-emergence of the military and the future of democracy in Bangladesh”, p. 981.
  36. Mohsin, “Bangladesh: An uneasy accommodation”, p. 219.
  37. For a discussion on the rivalry of the two parties, see M. Rashiduzzaman, “Political unrest and democracy in Bangladesh”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37 No. 3 (March 1997), pp. 254–268.
  38. Pattanaik, “Re-emergence of the military and the future of democracy in Bangladesh”, p. 981.
  39. Bhattacharyya, “Unrest in the Bangladesh army on May 18–20, 1996”.
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  46. For example, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Chittagong Division was the chairperson the CHT Development Board from 1976 onwards.
  47. Rashiduzzaman, “Political unrest and democracy in Bangladesh”, pp. 255–260.
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60. "Bangladesh to have own brand of democracy, army chief says", *The Daily Star*, 3 April 2007.
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62. Nizam Ahmed, "Party politics under a non-party caretaker government in Bangladesh", p. 40.
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# TROUBLE IN THAILAND

## FAILED CIVILIAN CONTROL AMIDST FRUITLESS DEMILITARISATION

Paul Chambers

Definitions of demilitarisation range from the mere exit of the military from the seat of political power to “the complete abolition of the armed forces as an institution”, though the term is generally conceived of as “broadly signifying a transition from the military dictatorships of the past towards a more democratic model of civil-military relations”.<sup>1</sup> In Thailand today, any drive towards demilitarisation has faltered as the armed forces has experienced a resurrection of privileges and autonomy unseen since 1991. Indeed, despite the return to elected governance in 2007, armed forces authority has continued—though behind the scenes. The power of the arch-royalist military continues to be on the rise amidst diminished civilian control and erosion in pluralism. Ultimately, formal civilian rule in Thailand is now more a case of possible survival than a genuine attempt to exert control over soldiers. As such, any drive towards demilitarisation remains futile.

It is in this context that this study aims to analyse four questions:

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This paper reflects a presentation at the Workshop “Demilitarizing the State: the South and Southeast Asian Experience”, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 24-25 March 2011. It represents a modified portion of a revised draft of a book chapter on Thailand in a monograph on *Democratization and Civilian Control in Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming), co-authored with Aurel Croissant, David Kuehn and Philip Lorenz. More in-depth theoretical and conceptual discussions, empirical analyses, intra- and inter-regional comparisons are provided in Croissant et al. The research, which has led to this study, was part of a research project sponsored by the German Research Fund (DFG, grant number CR 128/4-1).

1. What is the formal and informal balance of power between the civilian and military segments of government?
2. What factors have shaped Thailand's civil-military relations?
3. To what extent does Thailand's military today represent a threat to non-military sectors?
4. What are the constraints to its influence and what does this mean for demilitarisation?

## HISTORY

Thailand's armed forces have long dominated most attempts at civilian control while pluralism has been slow to develop since 1932. From 1947 until 1992, the monarch and military generally dominated the country alongside civilian bureaucrats in an alliance of convenience. Elected governments during these years were headed by civilian elites who held very little real power. Other than force of arms and support from the palace, the 1947 coup group solidified its control thanks partly to acquiescence from the United States, which, amidst an emerging Cold War, feared political instability in Southeast Asia. After 1947, enhanced U.S. backing was essential in entrenching the armed forces as a dominant political actor.<sup>2</sup> Only with the end of the Cold War in 1991 did such patronage begin to diminish.

In 1980, arch-royalist General Prem Tinsulanond became unelected Prime Minister and Army Commander concurrently. From 1980 to 1988, Prem dominated the armed forces while a weakly institutionalised civilian Lower House was permitted to exist.<sup>3</sup> In 1988, civilian elites became increasingly united in favour of an elected Prime Minister and the military was facing diminished security concerns. As such, Prem stood aside and allowed an elected Prime Minister to assume the premiership, a post which he held for three years. Meanwhile, Prem joined the King's Privy Council in 1988, but continued to exercise influence over the military. During this time, the armed forces became increasingly suspicious of the new premier. Growing military perceptions of civilian interference in its domain eventually led to a coup in 1991.<sup>4</sup> Thus ended at a critical juncture the fourth attempt aimed at establishing long-term civilian control.

The 1991 coup group worked to cement its power over Thai politics, building its own political party and competing in the March 1992 elections. The elections resulted in Army Commander Gen. Suchinda Kraprayoon being elevated to the post of prime minister and it appeared

certain that the military would further extend its power. However, mass civilian protests commenced in May 1992 aimed at forcing the military from power. As the armed forces sought to suppress the demonstrations, soldiers killed numerous protestors and the King intervened to ease Suchinda out of office.<sup>5</sup> The massacre, known as “Black May”, had lasting effects on the armed forces.

Ultimately, modern civil-military relations in Thailand emerged out of the 1887–1992 period. This era witnessed the military’s rise to become a pliant power-sharing partner of monarchical supremacy; the military’s 1932 monopolisation of political power; the 1947 re-emergence of palace-military power sharing; and finally the post-1963 re-ascendance of the monarchy as the dominant actor over both soldiers and civilians. From this period, four factors had an enormous impact upon Thai civil-military relations in the post-1992 era: a monarchy with deeply-ingrained power over Thai society; a traditionally authoritarian military subservient to the monarch which concentrated on internal security; a very weak and intermittent history of pluralism overseen by civilian elites; and finally, after 1947, a close alliance with the United States, which provided much military assistance and guaranteed external security.

However, the military’s 1992 massacre of civilian demonstrators tarnished the armed forces’ image, severely diminishing their influence. In post-1992 Thailand, the palace and Privy Councillor (ret. Gen.) Prem Tinsulanond overshadowed the military until the election of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001. Thaksin succeeded in exerting his own robust levels of control over the armed forces. Yet Thaksin’s attempts to control the military combined with his increasingly personalised authoritarian government contributed to a 2006 coup against him which was endorsed by the palace and Prem.

In 2007, elections were held again. The civilian-led governments that have come to office since then have been especially weak vis-à-vis the military. In the post-coup order, new laws strengthened the influence of soldiers while the military enjoyed a higher degree of informal autonomy from civilian supremacy. In 2008, the armed forces refused to protect a pro-Thaksin government from anti-Thaksin demonstrators. Later that year, senior military officers influenced a transition in civilian rule by helping to cobble together an in-coming civilian government. In 2011, soldiers continued to wield enormous influence across civil-military relations.

## THE BALANCE OF DECISION-MAKING IN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Civil-military relations refer to those interactions between the military and civilian actors that in some way relate to the power to make political decisions.<sup>6</sup> This definition is significantly narrower than the paradigm of “security sector governance” since the latter, policy-oriented framework is often too all-encompassing to be of analytical use.<sup>7</sup> This study defines civilian control as that distribution of decision-making power where civilians alone can decide on domestic political issues.<sup>8</sup> “Under civilian control, civilians alone have the right to delegate decision-making power and the implementation of specific policies to the armed forces and the military has no autonomous decision-making power outside those areas that were specifically defined by civilians.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, civilians must decide which policies the military implements and possess sanctioning power vis-à-vis the armed forces.<sup>10</sup> Thus, “the failure of civilian control of the military is sufficient to account for the existence of non-democratic regimes in many countries.”<sup>11</sup>

To determine Thailand’s civil-military continuum in decision-making power and systematically assess the degree of civilian control, this study uses a framework for understanding civil-military relations that focuses on the balance of decision-making between soldiers and civilians. Civilian control is on one pole of the continuum which refers to the distribution of decision-making power under which the “civilians make all the rules and can change them at any time”.<sup>12</sup> On the other pole of the continuum is the military regime, in which the military controls all decisions concerning political structures, processes, and policies and the civilians do not possess any autonomous political decision-making power. In this sense, civilian control is a relative condition. This continuum can be analysed in five areas: elite recruitment, public policy, internal security, national defence and military organisation.

Elite Recruitment refers to the core defining aspects of the political regime, namely the rules, criteria and processes of recruiting, selecting and legitimising the holders of political office. Civilian control exists where the military is proscribed from establishing an alternative channel for access to political office while the processes of elite selection in terms of the formation and duration of political leadership are not directed by the military.<sup>13</sup>

Public Policy comprises the rules and procedures of the processes of

policymaking and policy-implementation regarding all national policies except for security and defence policy. To determine civilian control, it must be analysed to what extent the armed forces can assert their interests in the processes of agenda setting and policy formulation, and can exert influence on state administrative agencies charged with implementing political decisions.<sup>14</sup>

Internal Security involves the use of armed forces in a purely domestic environment, which includes public order in emergency situations, preparation for counter-insurgency warfare and terrorism, domestic intelligence gathering, daily policing and border control.<sup>15</sup> Civilian control exists where civilians have the right to make the decisions on the range, duration and frequency of all internal military operations as well as the civilian institutions, and are able to monitor their implementation.<sup>16</sup>

National Defence includes all aspects of defence policy, ranging from the development of security doctrines to the deployment of troops abroad and the conduct of war. Civilian control can be gauged by analysing to what degree civilians can effectively devise and decide on defence policy; and to what extent they are able to effectively oversee the military's implementation of defence policies.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, Military Organisation comprises decisions on all organisational aspects of the military as an institution, including the "hardware", i.e. the military's institutional, financial and technological resources, and the "software" of military organisation, for instance decisions on military doctrine, education and personnel selection. Civilian supremacy depends upon its control over this "hardware" and "software" and set the boundaries for military autonomy.<sup>18</sup>

Using this five-area combined framework across Thailand for the 1992–2010 period, this study distinguishes varying levels of civilian control over the military. Complete civilian control requires that civilian authorities enjoy uncontested decision-making power—both formal and informal—in all five areas, while in the ideal-type military regime, soldiers rule over all five areas.

## FACTORS AFFECTING CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

In emerging democracies, a variety of exogenous and endogenous factors can help explain why civilians or soldiers tend to hold a preponderance of power over the other during a given period of time. Three levels of

sources—macro-structural, organisational and ideational/cultural factors—help to strengthen either civilian governments or their militaries, thus determining whether civilians or soldiers will tend to exert greater control in the five areas of decision-making. First, at the macro-structural level, there are factors such as socio-economic modernisation, internal threats, and international political issues. Second, at the organisational level, civilians and the military each possess a temporal degree of unity, which can affect the ability of each to offset the other. Finally, at the cultural level, there are societal norms, traditions or ideologies, which either assist or prevent civilians from legitimising their ability to control the military.<sup>19</sup> These factors can be applied to the case of Thailand during the three periods of civil-military relations during 1992–2010 to determine why civilians or soldiers were relatively stronger than the other during different periods of time.

### **Thailand's Balance of Power between Civilian and Military Sectors (1992–2011)<sup>20</sup>**

Since 1992, there have been three phases of civil-military relations. In the first phase (1992–2001), the monarch's influence was predominant amidst increasing civilian control while military influence appeared to weaken. In the second phase (2001–2006), civilian Prime Minister Thaksin seemed to gain much control over the armed forces until he appeared to challenge the monarch, leading to his ouster in a 2006 royally-endorsed military coup against him. Since the return of civilian rule in 2007 (phase three), civilian influence vis-à-vis the military and King has been weaker than the post-1992 level.

### **Impelling Civilian Control (1992–2001)**

#### *Status*

During this era, four civilian Prime Ministers<sup>21</sup> succeeded each other in office and pushed for civilian supremacy. Each had to deal with a military that, though tarnished after the events of 1992, would have clearly preferred to restore its political power. Similarly, civilian leaders of the established elite such as the monarch, Privy Councillors led by (ret. Gen.) Prem Tinsulanond and civilian bureaucrats—attached little importance to Thailand's pluralist opening, being more interested in preserving order in the Kingdom.<sup>22</sup>

To establish civilian supremacy, the post-1992 civilian governments attempted to enhance their authority over soldiers in all five areas of civil-military relations. With democratisation, the 1992–2001 period saw the increase of civilian control in elite recruitment.<sup>23</sup> However, some armed forces influence remained. For example, the number of military officers sitting in the Senate diminished from 154 out of 270 senators in the period between 1992 and 1996 to 48 out of 260 between 1996 and 2000.<sup>24</sup> Yet the 1997 constitution required that the Prime Minister, other ministers and Senators be elected civilians.<sup>25</sup> Military influence could only continue in these posts through retired soldiers. Furthermore, the constitution stated that any future coup would be “unenforceable” under Section 6 of the 1997 constitution. Meanwhile, military influence on the procedures of political competition appeared to diminish during the mid-1990s period, though there were exceptions. For example, retired General Prem allegedly interfered in parliamentary politics in 1997, enabling the Democrat Party to form a coalition government.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, several political parties were influenced by military cliques.<sup>27</sup>

From 1992 until 2001, most public policy decisions were in the hands of civilians given the growing administrative and political decentralisation. Still, the armed forces succeeded in exerting control over certain television and radio stations.<sup>28</sup> In the area of national defence, civilians in the period 1992–2001 succeeded in chipping away military dominance. Only in emergency situations, e.g. along the frontier, did soldiers sometimes involve themselves in cross-border conflicts without the Prime Minister’s permission. Since 1992, constitutional authority over national defence issues has resided in elected civilians. Civilian prime ministers formally possess the authority to decide on external military activities, as exemplified by the second Chuan Leekpai government (1997–2001), which added a new role for the military: participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions (e.g. sending troops to East Timor in 1999).<sup>29</sup> As Chuan later opined:

By sending troops to East Timor I hoped this would promote the reputation of the Thai army; this might facilitate greater communication between the Thai army and other armies; and I wanted the Thai army to work with the United Nations to make income for itself.<sup>30</sup>

However, with regard to the actual planning of national defence policy, the military remained dominant at the Ministry of Defence.



Despite the fact that the 1997 constitution required defence ministers to be civilians, most of these were retired military personnel closely connected with active duty soldiers. The danger was that a retired soldier might align with active military chiefs against the civilian government and thus resist civilian monitoring. Thus, the Prime Minister had to take care to ensure that the Defence Minister was effective but loyal.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, there developed the Defence Ministry's Defence Council, a newly established agency tasked to advise the Defence Minister regarding defence budget, troop mobilisation, deployments and training, which was dominated by the military.<sup>32</sup> In the 1990s, Thailand's National Security Council, which advised the Prime Minister on national security threats, became a place where civilians exerted influence over national defence. The Prime Minister chairs this body with civilian members outnumbering military officials, thus dominating "the workings of the council".<sup>33</sup> However, the Defence Council continues to offer the military a degree of influence in national defence issues.

In internal security, civilian control began to grow when, in 1992, the government modified the Government Administration in a Crisis Act of 1952 and the Martial Law Act of 1954 and abolished the Internal Security Act of 1976, "so that the use of armed forces in riot control now [required] authorisation by the cabinet".<sup>34</sup> The armed forces have long controlled internal security through the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), the goal of which has been to fight communist insurgency.<sup>35</sup> But after 1992, the military's internal security role shifted increasingly to rural development, following prodding from the King.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the formal primary objective of the military shifted from internal security to external defence, as evidenced by the repealing of laws empowering the military to act in times of domestic crisis and transferring most domestic law and order powers to police.<sup>37</sup> In 1998, the Anti-Communism Act was scrapped, a move which formally reduced the powers of the military in internal security.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, following the Asian financial crisis, resources to fund ISOC were depleted.

Turning finally to military organisation, during the 1990s the armed forces were restructured in order to strengthen professionalism. Following the 1992 massacre, the military reluctantly agreed to a defence budget reduction for fiscal year 1993–1994 and the decline in military appropriations continued following the adoption of the 1997 "people's

constitution”.<sup>39</sup> During this time, parliamentary scrutiny of military budgets was strengthened.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, in Thailand’s first serious attempt at demilitarisation, Prime Minister Chuan and Army Chief Surayudh Chulanondh worked to professionalise the armed forces and increase transparency. Troop levels were somewhat reduced and early retirements were encouraged.<sup>41</sup> Surayudh investigated alleged criminal activity by military officers.<sup>42</sup> But many officers in the military resisted the reforms and these were thus limited and largely symbolic.<sup>43</sup>

### *Factors*

A series of factors helped civilians to gain more power vis-à-vis soldiers during the period 1992–2001. These resources determined the ability of elected governments to limit military influence across the five decision-making areas.

At the macro-structural level, by 1991 the Cold War and Thailand’s communist insurgency had ceased and Thailand was experiencing double-digit annual economic growth rates. As such, the armed forces’ mission to ensure anti-communist security had to be modified.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, a global push for democratic change (rather than an authoritarian security state) helped to reduce the military’s power in 1992.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Bangkok’s Cold War patron, the United States, given the end of the Cold War and in response to the 1992 Black May massacre, was much less supportive of a military role in politics.<sup>46</sup> The 1997 Asian financial crisis created renewed instability, toppling the government of ret. Gen. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, leading to reductions in military spending and outside pressures for increased military transparency.<sup>47</sup>

With regard to institutional resources, the armed forces’ image was tarnished in the aftermath of the 1992 Black May massacre, forcing it to sharply move to the political sidelines.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the monarch gained ever-heightened influence. The monarch banded together with civilians, which allowed civilians to slightly increase their influence vis-à-vis the military. The King’s Privy Council—with (ret. Gen.) Prem overshadowing it as “surrogate strongman”—now came to dominate the armed forces.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the weakened power of active-duty officers helped Prem gain control of the military in the post-1992 period. Prem’s candidates were generally placed in the position of Army Commander and many high-ranking officers saw him as their “patron”.<sup>50</sup> As such, amidst a vacuum

of armed forces might, the power of the palace was paramount and the military became united under Prem.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, civilian elites in 1992, through political parties and civil society organisations, became united in pushing for greater political reforms which would strengthen pluralism, a popular consensus which led to the People's Constitution of 1997.<sup>52</sup> This vibrant civil society also sought to closely monitor the military.<sup>53</sup> By the end of the 1990s, however, as the economy plummeted, civilians were increasingly in disarray, with many opposing the ruling Democrat government. At the same time, by 1998, the military was beginning to regain part of its former stature and some officers resisted Democrat-initiated military reforms.<sup>54</sup>

In terms of cultural resources, a tradition of strong monarchy, strong military and centralised bureaucratic control had long pervaded Thailand. Moreover, "the Thai military sees itself as the self-entitled defender and guardian of Thailand's political future."<sup>55</sup> Yet only the monarchy grew in influence during the 1992–2000 periods.<sup>56</sup> However, the long-entrenched military sway partly accounted for why military officers were able to resist the proposed military reforms of the Chuan government.

Altogether, the three levels of resources contributed to growing civilian control during the 1990s. Indeed, given that the macro-structural and institutional resource levels were favourable to civilians (especially with the assistance from the Privy Council), most military incursions across civilian decision-making were at least temporarily curtailed.

## Personalised Civilian Control (2001–2006)

### *Status*

This era saw more formal civilian challenges to the military. In terms of elite recruitment, in the 2000–2006 Senate, for the first time, all members (200) were elected. Only two per cent of these were retired military officers.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, on 6 January 2001, telecommunications tycoon and ex-police Colonel Thaksin Shinawatra became Prime Minister in a landslide election. Thaksin's clout in 2001 allowed him to dominate parliament and courts and to compete with Gen. Prem in terms of political influence. He appointed several soldiers to top positions, including ex-Prime Minister Gen. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh as Defence Minister, and used Chavalit's supporters to establish a wedge against Prem until the Prime Minister could manoeuvre his own cousin into the post of Army Chief.<sup>58</sup>

On 19 September 2006, the military directly intervened in the workings of Thaksin's government. Citing disorder, lack of unity and threats to the monarch, the army led a *putsch* against Thaksin while he was out of the country.<sup>59</sup> The military intervened to save the King and preserve the King-military power-sharing arrangement. This coup was endorsed by the King.<sup>60</sup> Other than royal assent, the coup succeeded because civilian control was weak and personalised rather than institutionalised. The military voided the 1997 constitution, and established a military government in Thailand—the first in 14 years. The 2006 coup was directed by arch-royalist Prem supporters in the armed forces who appointed a government to administer the country until the December 2007 elections.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile, the 2001 rise of Thaksin increased civilian control over public policy. Indeed, the Thaksin government represented the nadir of military influence over Thai public policy. The Prime Minister crafted a foreign policy aimed at building civilian-dominated business ties over regional security concerns. In 2002, Thaksin modified the bureaucracy, reducing the number of ministries (and weakening the power of the Budget Bureau), thus increasing efficiency while making bureaucrats more answerable to the elected government.<sup>62</sup>

As for internal security, the power of civilians grew under Thaksin. In 2003 and 2004 respectively, an anti-narcotics campaign in the North and the beginning of counter-insurgency operations in the South gave the military a revived objective—security. Yet these endeavours remained under the personalised control of Thaksin. In 2005, the Thaksin administration passed the Decree on Government Administration in a State of Emergency, which allowed the Prime Minister to authorise a state of emergency, and it was applied to cover the provinces where the southern insurgency was raging. The committee heading states of emergency was composed of mostly soldiers (Section 6, Decree on Government Administration in a State of Emergency, 2005). However, senior promotions remained under the control of Thaksin. With regard to ISOC, Thaksin greatly reduced its powers, especially the influence of the Army within the organisation in 2001 to 2002.<sup>63</sup> Prior to his 2006 ouster, Thaksin was planning to further restructure ISOC, centralising control over it in the Office of the Prime Minister.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding national defence, it too became increasingly a preserve of civilian supremacy. As with other ministries, the Defence Ministry

now came increasingly under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. Moreover, in terms of deploying troops abroad, it was Thaksin who saw to it that elements of the Thai military were sent in support of U.S. forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, with regard to military organisation, civilian control stood at its height. Regarding senior military appointments, Thaksin informally managed to gain much control over them, especially from 2001 to 2004.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, he established a new method for gaining control of military spending by ensuring that military allocation requests would have to pass through him alone.<sup>67</sup> As such, Thaksin was able to ensure a reduction of the military budget. From 2001 to 2006, it declined by approximately two per cent of the national budget.<sup>68</sup>

Ultimately, the 2001–2006 periods saw civilian supremacy rise to its highest point since 1947. However, a 2006 coup ousted the Prime Minister from office. The coup illustrated the fact that a civilian leader was attempting to do too much where the monarch-military power alliance remained strong.

### *Factors*

The resource environment during 2001–2006 helped to facilitate civilian supremacy to an even greater extent than during the 1990s. This allowed for the Thaksin Shinawatra government to temporarily personalise its control over the military.

Macro-structurally, the economy began to accelerate following Thaksin's 2001 election. In 2002, it grew 5.3 per cent, coming as a welcome surprise to investors.<sup>69</sup> Thaksin's populist economic policies also improved the welfare of the country's poor, making him immensely popular with a crucial voting bloc.<sup>70</sup> The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center also assisted Thaksin. Indeed, under his leadership, Thailand joined the U.S.-led "War on Terror", sent a token number of Thai troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, and became a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) of the United States, in return receiving more U.S. military assistance than it had in over a decade.<sup>71</sup> Such staunch U.S. backing provided Thaksin with added leverage over the armed forces.

As for institutional resources, Thaksin's landslide election victory in 2001 and continued wide popularity as Prime Minister created an enormous popular base of support for him among civilians (including

elites). This was due partly to the economic success of his administration. Only in late 2005 did civilians begin to become seriously divided over his leadership.<sup>72</sup> As for the military, Thaksin sought to inject his personalised influence over it from the time he came to office in 2001. He co-opted several retired senior military officers as well as active duty officers spearheaded by his former classmates to build a powerful pro-Thaksin military clique. His growing military sway increasingly offset the influence of Prem and Surayudh (the King had elevated the latter to sit with Prem on the Privy Council in 2003). As such, the military became disunited under Thaksin. It became even more split when, in 2003, the premier elevated his cousin Chaiyasit to Army Commander.<sup>73</sup> By 2006, civilians and soldiers alike were polarised over Thaksin. It was under these circumstances that the military ousted Thaksin in a coup endorsed by the palace.<sup>74</sup>

As for cultural resources, Thaksin's CEO style of centralised leadership was nothing new to the traditions of verticalised bureaucratic control in Thailand. What was different, however, was the attempt of an elected Prime Minister to oppose standard operating procedures in the Thai bureaucracy, to try to personalise his control over the government and even to challenge the influence of the palace's top advisor—Privy Council Chair Prem.<sup>75</sup>

In sum, the resource base of 2000–2006 initially facilitated a high level of civilian control in Thailand. Yet as power seemed to become increasingly concentrated in the hands of Thaksin Shinawatra, discord and disunity began to grow within both the military and civilian elites. These events triggered the coup that ousted him in September 2006.

## Hollow Civilian Control (2007-Present)

### *Status*

With the return of national electoral governance in December 2007, political space for civilians seemed to slightly widen. The 2007 constitution called for a half-appointed (74 members), half-elected (76 members) Upper House. Following senatorial elections in early 2008, 15.3 per cent of the Senate was composed of retired military officials. Among the 74 appointed Senators, 14 were ex-soldiers for a 9.3 per cent military reserved domain.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile, the military continued to meddle with the procedures

of political competition. On 2 December 2008, following the resignation of a pro-Thaksin Prime Minister, military elements (including the Army Commander) met with a Democrat party bigwig and an ex-loyalist of Thaksin to cobble together a coalition government under Democrat Abhisit Wetchachiwa, which would exclude the pro-Thaksin Puea Thai party.<sup>77</sup> This oblique intrusion into civilian political competition indicated that despite the return to ostensible civilian rule in 2008, the military would continue to play a political role. In early 2009, Army Commander Gen. Anupong, the Defence Minister and the Chief of Police directed officers to tell enlisted personnel to support certain parties that were aligned against Thaksin.<sup>78</sup>

The Thai military also sought to informally influence the fall of two pro-Thaksin governments in 2008. This occurred during the 2008 anti-Thaksin PAD (People's Alliance for Democracy) yellow-shirt demonstrations. First, during the demonstrations, the Army Commander refused to order his troops to defend government buildings against advancing protestors. Without troops to defend it, the government was left with only the uncertain support of the police. Second, in late November, as PAD protests in Bangkok continued unabated, Army Chief Anupong went on national television to call for the resignation of Somchai or dissolution of the Lower House, although the PM refused to do so.<sup>79</sup>

Regarding public policy, post-2007 Thailand finds the military with a greater voice. In foreign relations, the Thai military has become more autonomous of civilian authorities, as exemplified in August 2008, when Thailand's Supreme Commander warned Cambodia to "back off" from a border temple claimed by Thailand.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, the armed forces continue to exert control over the media. Currently, the Army controls television channels 5 and 7 (Channel 5 [TV]) and 245 out of 524 radio stations in 2008.<sup>81</sup> A Broadcasting Act was implemented which continued to grant broadcasting concessions to military vested interests.<sup>82</sup>

In internal security, a new military-endorsed Internal Security Act took effect on 27 February 2008. It shifted the civil-military equilibrium back towards the armed forces, establishing the army as the principal unit safeguarding internal security.<sup>83</sup> The ISOC organisational structure was revised to appear to be under civilian control—given that the Prime Minister serves as Director. But civilian board members are outnumbered by military and military-leaning bureaucrats. Moreover, under the national ISOC board,



there are four regional branches of ISOC commanded by military officers who are not accountable to civilians.<sup>84</sup> During 2008, ISOC powers were centralised in the hands of Army Chief Anupong for fear of otherwise upsetting the anti-Thaksin senior military leaders. The ability of Anupong to dominate ISOC allowed him to deny assistance to the two pro-Thaksin civilian governments whenever he saw fit. Such behaviour demonstrated a military refusal to maintain internal security for elected governments in Thailand. Following the ascension to power of an anti-Thaksin civilian government at the end of 2008, the armed forces (as dominated by the anti-Thaksin Queen's Guard military faction) now found a need to ensure its protection and survival. Thereupon, Anupong's ISOC moved from evading responsibility for internal security to guaranteeing it.<sup>85</sup>

In April 2009, PM Abhisit declared a state of emergency in Bangkok and surrounding areas, following a flurry of pro-Thaksin anti-government demonstrations in Bangkok and Pattaya. The military ultimately resorted to force to disperse the protestors.<sup>86</sup> The events of March-May 2010 illustrated an intensification of military autonomy in Internal Security. During this period of the pro-Thaksin Red Shirts' occupation of parts of Bangkok, the military began applying the "Emergency Decree on Government Administration in States of Emergency" of 2005.<sup>87</sup> The Emergency Decree law is more draconian than the ISA (though less authoritarian than the Martial Law Order of 1914), and thus gives the military enhanced autonomy from civilian control (International Commission of Jurists, 2010: 4). Months after the Red Shirts had been dispersed, the Emergency Decree was still being applied.<sup>88</sup>

Regarding national defence, civilians exercised balanced influence vis-à-vis the military-dominant Defence Council. In July 2009, civilian power over the National Security Council increased even more with PM Abhisit Wetchachiwa's appointment of anti-Thaksin civilian Thawil Pliensri as NSC secretary-general despite intense military lobbying. The NSC has had 14 secretary-generals over the years, with only three of them civilians.<sup>89</sup>

Military organisation remains firmly in the hands of the armed forces. For example, the return to elected governance in December 2007 paralleled the continuing growth in military spending. Indeed, an ex-member of the junta stated that it was "the coup [which] helped the military budget expand greatly—though at the expense of democracy".<sup>90</sup>



The escalating armed forces budget owed to military pressure on civilian governments. The 2011 military budget has risen to a projected US\$5,558 million.<sup>91</sup> The junta-created National Legislative Assembly (NLA) passed a decree that vastly reduces the power of elected civilians over senior reshuffles. Where previously, the Prime Minister and Defence Minister had enormous sway in such decisions, the new law requires that reshuffles of high-ranking officers be vetted by a committee, whose members are dominated by active-duty senior military officials.

Ultimately, in 2010, though civilian authority appears to have re-emerged following the 2007 elections, the King-military power pact has persevered. Thailand's military today wields even greater power in decision-making than during the 1990s, especially in the areas of internal security, elite recruitment and military organisation.

### *Factors*

The resource base following the return to formal civilian rule in December 2007 allowed for the least robust level of civilian control since 1991. As such, civilian control became quite weak amidst growing military breaches across civilian decision-making. Macro-structurally, after 2007 the global economy began increasingly to stagnate. This produced dilatory effects on Thai economic stability in 2008.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, a border crisis (beginning in 2008) between Thailand and Cambodia produced nationalism and threats of military intervention in Cambodia by senior Thai officers.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, Thaksin Shinawatra, now a fugitive abroad, sought to find a sympathetic audience among the international community, which might put pressure on the Thai government.<sup>94</sup> Finally, continuing perceptions of international threats (e.g. al Qaeda-linked Muslim insurgency) rationalised the escalation of Thai military purchases of weapons overseas—paralleling a post-2006 annual growth in the armed forces budget.<sup>95</sup>

Among institutional resources, civilians became increasingly divided over Thaksin after the return to elected governance in 2007. Thailand's populous North and Northeast were especially loyal to the former Prime Minister. Wealthier citizens in Bangkok and the South were equally against him. The opposing views became symbolised by opposing demonstrations launched by anti-Thaksin "Yellow Shirts" and pro-Thaksin "Red Shirts". The former contributed to helping in the ouster of pro-

Thaksin Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat in 2008 by occupying airports while Thailand's army (led by anti-Thaksinites) used violence to quell a Red Shirt protest in May 2010, an event that left 91 killed.<sup>96</sup> As for the armed forces, a military clique known as the Queen's Guard dominated it after 2007. The Queen's Guard was favoured by the Palace and Privy Council Chair, Prem. Favoured officers in this faction received the choicest promotions. Soldiers belonging to other units or perceived as close to Thaksin were often forced to remain in junior postings or appointed to inactive military posts. These conditions seeded disenchantment in lower levels of the security sector. As a result, the military became an institution united at the top but divided at the bottom.<sup>97</sup>

Culturally, after 2007, anti-Thaksin elites (including some in the military) accused Thaksin of threatening the sanctity of monarchy—perhaps Thailand's pre-eminent cultural icon, which it is taboo to criticise.<sup>98</sup> Ultimately, Thailand's 2007 move towards growing power by the palace-military nexus amidst a weakened civilian government seemed to signify that the country was advancing towards its past, whereby political prerogatives were held by the King and his armed forces as junior partners.

The resources during this period together constrained the power of civilian leaders to constrain a military that was growing in power. After the 2006 coup, the military was united at the senior level and supported by the palace. Meanwhile, civilians were weak and disorganised. Such a scenario would not bode well for civilian supremacy in Thailand.

Ultimately, the period from 1992 to the present has seen civilians seek to restrain military influence while building a greater power base. 1992 ushered in an era whereby growing political space allowed some room for civilian elites, alongside the monarchy and military. Thereafter, civilians made incisions into traditional military bastions of authority, reaching their height under Thaksin. Yet when he dared to challenge the influence of Privy Council Chair Prem (who possesses enormous sway in the armed forces) amidst perceptions that Thaksin was also utilising favouritism and nepotism to personally dominate the military, he was ousted from power. In seeking to further his personalised variant of civilian control, Thaksin had gone too far, too fast, in challenging the military and the monarchy—the nexus of which existed in the Privy Council. Since 2007, civilian governments operate in the shadow of enhanced military power. "Civilian control officially exists, but unofficially it does not."<sup>99</sup>

## CONCLUSION: DEMILITARISATION UNDONE

Since the military coup of 2006 and the 2007 return to elected governance, the armed forces have been riding high in the saddle. Thus, any attempts at demilitarisation in Thailand today (such as those which only partially occurred in the late 1990s) will remain stillborn. This is because civilians cannot risk antagonising the armed forces for fear of another putsch. In the last five years, soldiers have gained at the expense of civilians in their tug-of-war over decision-making power. The military has obtained increased formal and informal prerogatives, a situation that hauntingly echoes back to the Thailand of two decades ago. Though from 1992 to 2006, macro-structural, organisational and cultural factors contributed to a growth in civilian control, these same factors, since the 2006 coup have played to the advantage of an increasingly influential military across Thailand's political landscape. Standing behind a weak civilian government—rather than exerting overt control—the armed forces have carefully positioned themselves so that they are not the face of the government and can thus avoid any negative public backlash, exercising enhanced autonomy while placing the responsibility for unappealing policies on the shoulders of civilians. As such, they have found their perfect niche. If such camouflaged military clout can be maintained, future coups may become less likely in Thailand—except for factional threats. Such stability is ominous for attempts at civilian control—for it means that the military can increasingly threaten civilian sectors unimpeded.

Any constraints to the increasing influence of the armed forces can only arise from two sources: (1) the election of a pro-Thaksin government; and (2) growing factionalism within the armed forces themselves. The first challenge could arise following the pro-Thaksin Puea Thai Party's win in Thailand's 2011 general election. Thereupon, the pre-eminence of the Queen's Guard might be threatened. But the perils facing the Queen's Guard will be less likely to arise from Thailand's elected civilian governments given the latter's temporary and frail character—especially with Thaksin still at large.

Intra-military factionalism presents a much greater challenge to military authority. Within the armed forces, the Queen's Guard clique and soldiers graduating from pre-cadet Class 12 (of current Army Commander Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha) are increasingly holding mastery over top armed forces positions—despite disenchantment from the lower

ranks. Indeed, during the March-May 2010 Red Shirt demonstrations in Bangkok, many lower-ranked, non-commissioned and retired officers sympathised with the protestors. However, the anti-Thaksin top military brass has continued to prevail. The Queen's Guard, however, is in a better position than the latter given that Class 12 is limited by retirement but unit cliques can establish military dynasties over time. Moreover, the end of the current monarchical reign may mean a growing enhancement of Queen's Guard power. This is because, given that the Queen will probably outlive the King, the soldiers over whom she ceremonially presides (the Queen's Guard) will undoubtedly gain in military influence. Still, the clique will have to placate the rival King's Guard (*Wongthewan*) in order to remain dominant in the military. Moreover, in terms of class-based factions, Prayuth's Class 12 cannot merely hoard military positions if it wants to consolidate its military power. Other classes will have to be placated. Prayuth must retire in 2014 and, as such, has been attempting to build up arch-royalist military sentiment in order to achieve enhanced vertical unity across the military so as to buttress the continuing dominance of the Queen's Guard.

The growing number of arch-royalists in senior positions is linked to the continuing influence of Privy Councillors Gen. (retd.) Prem Tinsulanond and Gen. (retd.) Surayudh Chulanond over the Thai military. Meanwhile, Prem, Surayudh and Prayuth are seeking to quell the influence of former Prime Ministers Thaksin and Chavalit, who continue to hold personal sway over some in the Thai military. The May 2010 assassination of Major General Kattiya Sawasdipol did little to lessen the sympathy in some parts of the military for the pro-Thaksin position. Ultimately, the arch-royalist military's greatest challenge will be to diminish internal resentment from junior officers and thus ensure its enhanced control over the armed forces. If Prem and Surayudh successfully balance various military classes to perpetuate military control by the Queen's Guard, then some semblance of unity within the arch-royalist leadership of the armed forces may well endure. If such balancing is not undertaken or proves unsuccessful, then internal military division could become increasingly violent.<sup>100</sup>

Thailand is currently in the throes of political crisis. The calamity directly involves ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra as well as political parties and protest movements either supporting or oppos-

ing him. The crisis is also about the growing socio-economic disparity between the urban wealthy (who mostly oppose Thaksin) and the rural poor (most of whom tend to support Thaksin). Perhaps the most chilling part of the crisis, however, is that it is transpiring amidst a soon-to-occur succession in the palace and at the top of the Privy Council (current Privy Council Chair Prem Tinsulanond is a nonagenarian), which will at least initially leave a tremendous political vacuum. In the meantime, pro-Thaksinites and anti-Thaksinites are leveraging what power they can muster in preparation for the impending monarchical transition. The Queen's Guard military faction has benefited from this crisis to achieve control over the armed forces. Such power has paralleled growing military incursions across various areas of civilian affairs. However, factional stability has its limits. The current calamity could provide the Queen's Guard an excuse to try and enhance its domination or offer other military factions opportunities to challenge the Queen's Guard as growing numbers of soldiers become dissatisfied with what they perceive as "politicised" promotions or too much sway exercised by a single military clique. Amidst erosion in attempts at demilitarisation as well as an impending political vacuum, Thailand's future appears to be beset with growing military influence, pockmarked by factionalised military struggles for the foreseeable future.

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# DEMILITARISING THE STATE IN INDONESIA

## LOSING THE IMPETUS FOR REFORM?

Leonard C. Sebastian & Iisgindarsah

How do we account for Indonesia's experience with (de)militarisation? Indonesia under former President Suharto's New-Order regime was by no means a democratic country. The authoritarian regime had contributed significantly to the country's economic development and political stability for more than three decades. However, its democratic political institutions were crippled. Throughout this period, the Indonesian military became the backbone and the ultimate guarantor of the regime's longevity. The military had thoroughly penetrated the state through a variety of institutional arrangements that resulted in militarisation of all levels of civil government and society in Indonesia. In accordance with the military's "dual-function" (*dwi-fungsi*) and "total people's defence and security" system, the army evolved a territorial command structure that shadowed civil administration down to the village level. The military further extended its influence by placing military officers—active and retired—to occupy key positions at all levels of civil government, stretching from the national cabinet down to the provincial and district administration. Moreover, the military gained its organisational independence through self-financing practices owing to inadequate funding from the government. In short, the Indonesian military in the past was not only involved in social and political life, but was accountable to no state institution apart from the presidency itself.

Nevertheless, the multiple crises accompanying the downfall of Suharto's regime in 1998 had prompted unprecedented questions about the military's socio-political role. In a newly liberalised political environment, the military's image took a battering. Reports about the

military's past atrocities quickly spread through the mass media and sparked anti-military sentiments within Indonesian society, bringing calls for the military's withdrawal from politics. To cope with mounting public pressure, the Indonesian Armed Forces (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, ABRI), later renamed Indonesia National Defence Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI), responded by renouncing its dual-function doctrine—the linchpin of the military's engagement in political affairs. The process of demilitarisation of the state began in the aftermath of this initiative. Emblematic of this change was the abolition of socio-political compartments within the military structure and the withdrawal of military representatives in national and regional legislatures. The number of senior military officers occupying cabinet positions was reduced and legislation was passed to prevent officers' involvement in political and economic activities.

Despite measures to disengage the military from formal politics, this paper argues, efforts to demilitarise the state in Indonesia are by no means complete and straightforward. The practical difficulties in implementing strategic change have somewhat reduced the impetus for reforms. Additional changes may still lie in the future, but adjustments will be difficult and the outcome remains uncertain. This paper therefore aims to explore Indonesia's experience with respect to demilitarisation over the last decade. First, it will provide a brief discussion on the development of the Indonesian military's socio-political role. Second, the paper will analyse the process of military withdrawal from politics and assess to what extent the shift has been substantial, and what factors explain the outcome. It will highlight key issues, such as the fragmented nature of the civilian leadership, the military's preoccupation with domestic security challenges, the retention of the army's territorial structure, the fragile state of professional military culture, and shortcomings relating to democratic civilian control over the military as well as public apathy to continuing the promotion of military reform. Lastly, it will conclude by evaluating the degree of success in demilitarisation achieved in Indonesia.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDONESIAN MILITARY'S SOCIO-POLITICAL ROLE

Both military historians and political scientists are in agreement that the Indonesian military, like many militaries in developing countries,

portrayed itself as a people's army. This perception is deeply rooted in the army's experience with guerrilla warfare against the Dutch during the Independence War (1945–1949), where it relied heavily on goodwill and logistical support from the local population. Unstable governments in the early period of independence helped to instil a deep contempt for civilian rule within military circles and a belief that only the military was capable of rising above the petty rivalries among political elites. These views had shaped the military's self-image as the guardian of the nation-state later enshrined in the soldiers' oath of allegiance—*Sapta Marga* (The Seven Pledges). As a consequence of its organisational ideology, the Indonesian military believed its role was not limited to defence and security missions, but also to ensure national unity and support state ideology.

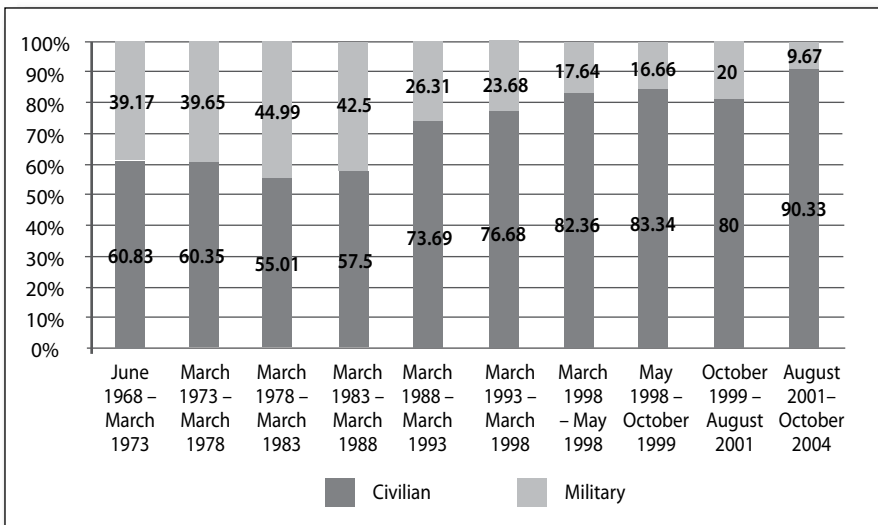
The military's perception of its rightful place in Indonesian politics was concretised in the mid-1950s and 1960s through three key political developments that significantly contributed to the formulation of the military's political doctrines. Firstly, General A. H. Nasution enunciated the "Middle-Way" concept that promoted the idea that the military would neither utterly abstain from politics, nor dominate the government; instead, it should offer advice and necessary support when requested by the government, but always be prepared to reject such requests if they endanger the national interest. Secondly, during the period of Sukarno's Guided-Democracy, the military gained even greater political power to counter-balance the growing political influence of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Thirdly, after a successful anti-communist campaign following an abortive coup in mid-1965, the military became the most influential institution during Suharto's New-Order regime.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike his predecessor Sukarno, who favoured nationalist adventurism and mass mobilisation, Suharto sought legitimacy for his regime through economic development and thus emphasised political stability. In this context, the Indonesian military exerted its overt political influence under the auspices of the so-called "dual-function" doctrine. Based on this doctrine, the military not only had a defence and security role, but also a socio-political function to promote national development and ensure political stability. The doctrine justified the military's systematic political intervention and the formation of its political programme, organisational ideology and patterns of civil-military relations during the Suharto era.<sup>2</sup> The military's socio-political role was further codified

in the People’s Representatives Assembly’s (MPR) decrees in the late 1960s and subsequently in Law No. 20/1982 on Basic Provisions for the Defence and Security of the Republic of Indonesia.

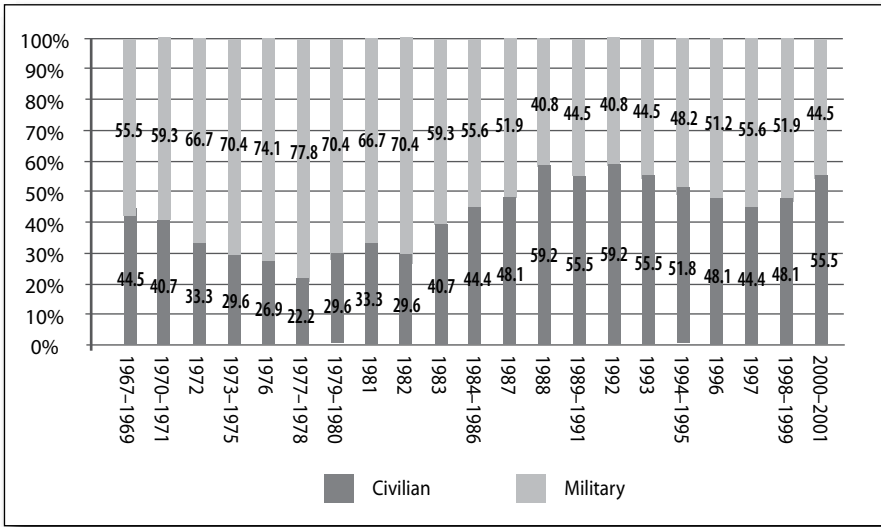
Besides the dual-function doctrine, the military also implemented a broad policy (known as *kekaryaan*) of employing military officers in legislative and non-military administrative bodies. Under this policy, both active and retired officers occupied strategic positions in national and regional bureaucracies from cabinet ministers to village heads, as well as key management positions in state-owned corporations, such as the oil and gas firm Pertamina. During the first period of Suharto’s reign, almost half of the ministries and nearly all provinces were headed by military officers. Though the number of such appointments declined in the 1980s, both active and retired officers still made up around 20 per cent of cabinet members and 40 to 50 per cent of provincial governors (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Furthermore, the military also gained influence in the legislature through representation in national and regional parliaments (see Figure 5.3). Before the reduction of its representation in

FIGURE 5.1  
Civilians and military officers served in government cabinets, 1968–2004



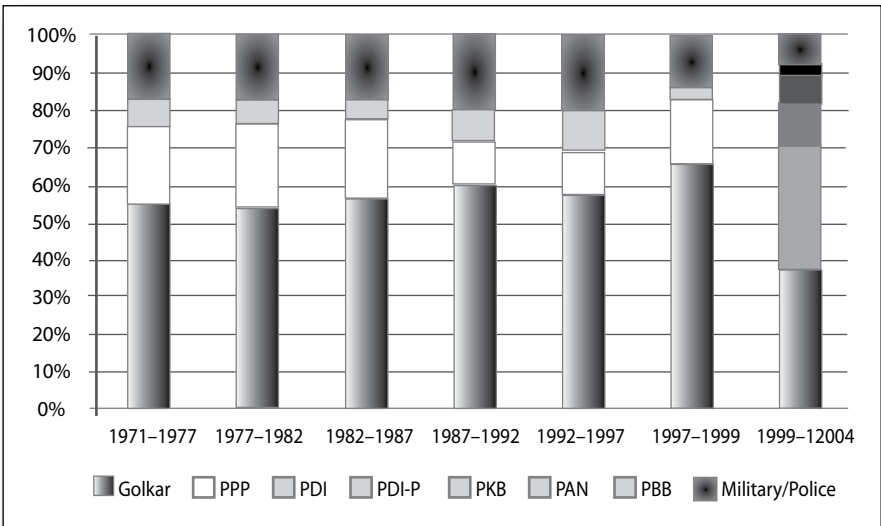
Source: Adapted from “*Mustahil mencabut dwifungsi*” [Impossible to revoke the dual-function], *Tempo*, 22–28 December 1998; “*Cari penghasilan di masa pensiun*” [Retiree officers seeking for income], *Tempo*, 22–28 December 1998

FIGURE 5.2  
**Civilians and military officers serving as governor, 1967–2001**



Source: Adapted from “*Mustahil mencabut dwifungsi*” [Impossible to revoke the dual-function], *Tempo*, 22–28 December 1998); “*Cari penghasilan di masa pensiun*” [Retiree officers seeking for income], *Tempo*, 22–28 December 19985.

FIGURE 5.3  
**Configuration in Indonesian Parliament, 1977–2004**



Source: Adapted from Leo Suryadinata, *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002), pp. 32, 103.



parliament in 1999 and its eventual withdrawal in 2004, the military held 75 of the 500 legislative seats in the Indonesian parliament and a total of 2,800 non-elected seats in regional and sub-regional legislatures.<sup>3</sup> The military’s political power was further enhanced through its influence in Golkar—a government-supported political party. The former helped the latter win the majority of votes in elections during the Suharto era.

Military dominance in national security was reflected in the command structure. As part of the “total people’s defence and security” doctrine, the army evolved a territorial command structure that paralleled the civilian bureaucracy down to the village level. Under this military structure, the Indonesian archipelago was divided into 10 Regional Military Commands (*Kodam*). Each *Kodam* was further divided into several levels of sub-command: Resort Military Command (*Korem*), headed by a colonel; District Military Command (*Kodim*), headed by a lieutenant

FIGURE 5.4  
 Civil and military bureaucracies in Indonesia

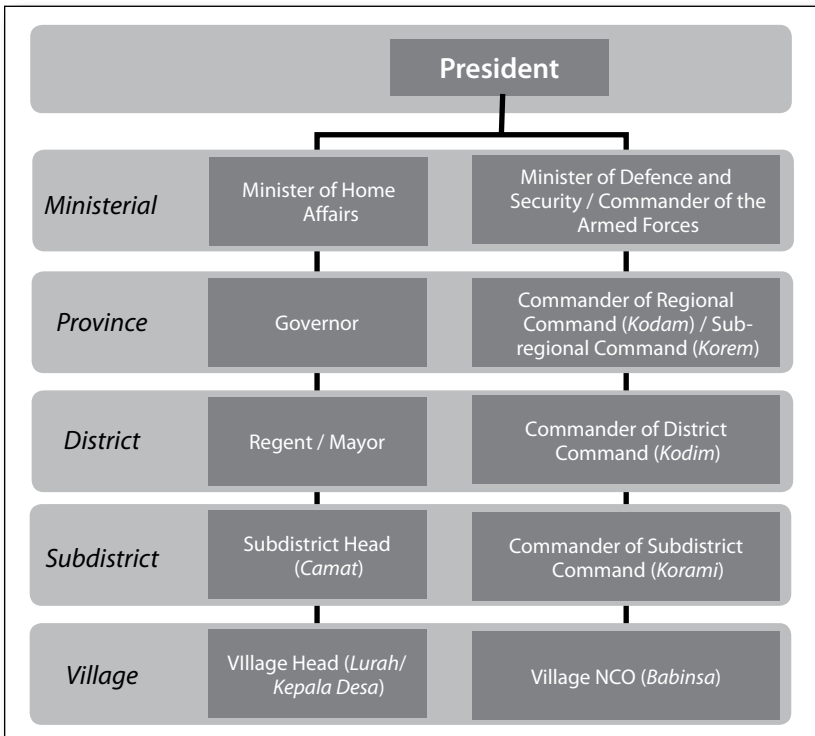
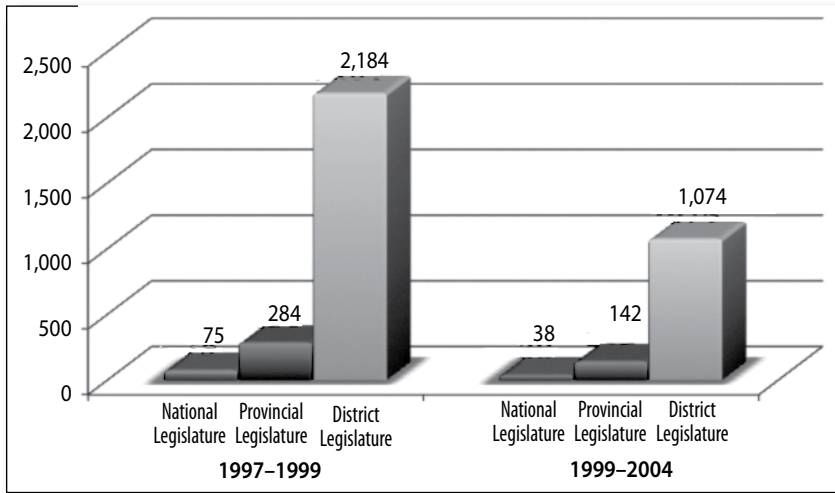


FIGURE 5.5  
Military representation in national and regional legislatures



Source: Adapted from Angel Rabasa and John Haseaman, *The Military and Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, Politics, and Power* (Santa Monica: Rand, 2010), p. 47; “Menggugat mereka yang diangkat” [Prosecuting the appointees], *Tempo*, 10–16 October 1998

colonel; and Sub-district Military Command (*Koramil*), with a major in charge. At the village level, the army assigned a non-commissioned officer known as *Babinsa* (see Figure 5.4). In this way, the territorial apparatus linked the military and the civilian authorities, ensuring that the military influenced political developments at every level of regional governance, including control of militias and paramilitary units. It also facilitated political surveillance by monitoring and controlling the activities of political parties, religious groups, social organisations, trade unions and the press. In effect, three decades of military involvement in socio-political affairs resulted in the “militarisation” of all levels of the Indonesian state and blurred the boundary between the military and civil-society. From marching bands in public parades to the daily flag-hoisting ceremonies at 100,000 schools throughout the archipelago, Indonesian people have been taught to respect order and authority.

During the Suharto era, the military also enjoyed power and prestige within the intelligence community. The State Intelligence Coordinating

Agency (BAKIN), for instance, was mostly staffed by military personnel. Within the military itself, the Armed Forces Intelligence Agency (BIA) was established and linked to the intelligence compartments of the army territorial commands. The military's control of national intelligence assets enabled it to operate freely with little regard for domestic or international legal norms. Likewise, Suharto established the Command for Restoring Order and Security (Kopkamtib) and later the Coordinating Agency for National Stability (Bakorstanas), which intensively exercised extra-judicial power to conduct security operations in order to maintain stability and public order. These agencies became the institutions used to suppress and curb any resistance towards the Suharto regime and its domestic policies. All in all, it was a regime not averse to applying force and engaging in periodic human rights abuse when it perceived a threat to "stability".

#### **THE MILITARY'S "NEW PARADIGM" AND POST-SUHARTO REFORMS**

The downfall of Suharto's New-Order regime in 1998 marked the beginning of democratic transition in Indonesia. Vice-President Habibie, who took over the presidency with minimal support either at the elite or popular level quickly attempted to build his democratic credentials by liberalising Indonesian politics. This change of policy was manifested in the release of political prisoners, setting up of a timetable for elections, abolition of the law restricting the number of political parties, lifting constraints on the press, and ratifying several international conventions and protocols on the protection of human rights. In this new political environment, Indonesian society at large became emboldened to express its dissatisfaction and directed criticism at the New-Order for its military abuses. Following the avalanche of revelations about the military's past abuses, civilian elites, intellectuals and human rights activists called for the termination of the military's dual-function and the promotion of democratic civilian control over the military. Anti-military sentiments were not only voiced in student protests, but were also reflected in several public surveys conducted by research institutes and the mass media. In a survey released in mid-1998, for instance, 61.4 per cent of respondents argued that the military's dual-function should be abolished, while 63.8 per cent demanded the withdrawal of military officers from legislative and administrative bodies.<sup>4</sup>

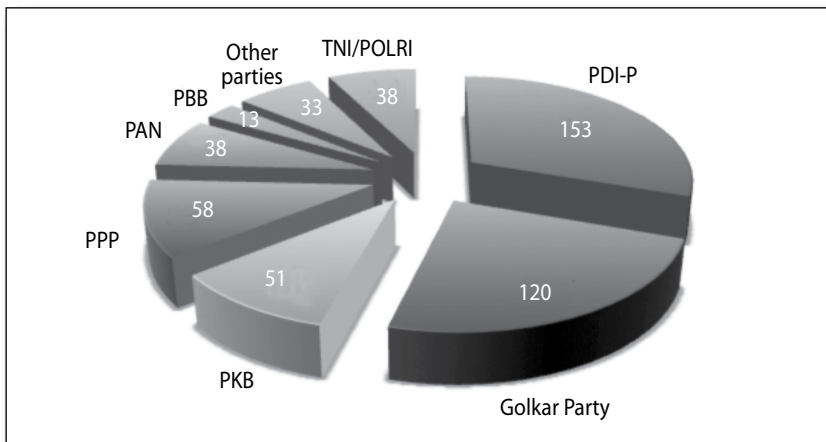
Unable to save their patron, Suharto, and further demoralised by widespread public antagonism, the military leaders found themselves facing a dilemma on how to restore political stability following the sudden resignation of President Suharto. Most military officers feared that any attempt to assert their authority would only deepen public contempt and further exacerbate political upheaval in the country.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the military leadership under General Wiranto was by no means sufficiently cohesive to devise a strategy to regain its predominant position in Indonesian politics. At that point of time, army officers were sharply divided into two main factions struggling for control over the military establishment and its patronage network.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, there was a growing concern within the officer corps that the military had been too deeply entrenched in non-military missions, thereby impairing its professional capacity in the defence and security realm. Concerned with growing public criticism and as a response to deepening military disunity over appropriate policy to address the country's changing political circumstances, a group of "intellectual and reformist" officers eventually persuaded Wiranto to implement internal reforms aimed at disengaging the military from formal politics and restoring its credibility.<sup>7</sup>

To re-conceptualise the military's future role, in September 1998, military headquarters then organised a seminar in Bandung that produced the so-called "New Paradigm". The concept underlined the guiding principles for the post-Suharto military era, consisting of four key points, namely: first, the military would disengage itself from the forefront of national politics; second, it would not seek to occupy political positions, but seek to influence the decision-making process; third, the military would exert its influence indirectly rather than directly; and fourth, the military would work in partnership with other national entities.<sup>8</sup> In the New Paradigm, military officers increasingly envisaged the termination of the military's socio-political role, but insisted that the process must be gradual. The military leadership, including the reform-minded officers, made it clear that the process of military withdrawal from politics would depend on the ability of government structures to absorb adjustments due to changed political conditions and the "maturity" of Indonesian society. They warned that with society fragile and vulnerable to violent horizontal conflict, rapid political reform could lead to an all-out civil war and national disintegration.<sup>9</sup>

However, some scholars observed that while the military leadership may have envisaged the necessity to extricate the military from political activities, they failed to devise a comprehensive plan to overhaul the military establishment. To them the New Paradigm was dismissed as a discursive concept that was more a statement of intent indicating a direction of change, with no clear-cut objectives to evaluate and monitor its implementation.<sup>10</sup> Some reformist officers, including Agus Wirahadikusumah complained that the content of the concept was identical to the ideas developed some time before the downfall of Suharto in anticipation of the time when he would allow limited reforms, and thus irrelevant to address the post-Suharto era political challenges confronting the military.<sup>11</sup>

The Indonesian military—now renamed the Indonesian National Defence Forces—implemented a series of internal reforms to distance itself from overt political positions that were no longer sustainable under democratic conditions. The first step taken was to dissolve socio-political components within the military structure, starting from the Chief of Staff for Social and Political Affairs at the TNI headquarters down to each level of the army's territorial structure. The TNI high command also ended the practice of employing military officers for non-military

FIGURE 5.6  
Configuration of Parliamentary seats, 1999–2004



Source: Adapted from Leo Suryadinata, *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002), pp. 32, 103.

positions in legislative bodies and the civil bureaucracy. In mid-1998, the Ministry of Home Affairs drafted a new electoral bill to reduce the number of military seats in national and regional legislatures. However, the military leadership attempted to pre-empt the plan by proposing at the Special Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) in November 1998 that a decree recognising the military representation in that institution and other relevant legislatures be adopted. Confronted by massive opposition, the military eventually accepted the electoral law reducing its representatives in the national legislature from 75 to 38 seats (see Figure 5.5). A complete withdrawal from politics was possible in 2009, though reformist officers successfully persuaded the then TNI Commander-in-Chief, General Endriartono Sutarto to bring forward the schedule to 2004.

Running parallel with the reduction of military representatives in legislative bodies, the TNI high command decided to end the seconding of military officers to serve in civil administration. According to various sources, there were approximately 4,000 active officers who occupied non-military bureaucratic posts in 1999; while the number of retired officers was estimated to be at least twice that figure.<sup>12</sup> From 1 April 1999 onwards, the military leadership instructed all active officers wishing to hold positions in the national cabinet and non-military bureaucracy that they were required to resign from their military service, even if they had not reached the retirement age. Consequently, the military career of Lieutenant General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was cut short following his appointment as a member of President Abdurrahman Wahid's cabinet in late 1999. Likewise, when the parliament endorsed the nomination of 17 new Supreme Court judges in July 2000, none was drawn from the military.

As part of the reform agenda, in mid-1998, the military had officially severed its formal links with the Golkar Party, which for the duration of the New Order was Suharto's electoral vehicle, and changed the patterns of relations between the TNI Headquarters and the retired military and police officers organisation (PEPABRI). However, political observers at that time remained doubtful that the officers in the army's territorial structure would take a neutral stand during general elections as they might see alliances with political parties as a way of keeping open the prospects for their appointment as provincial and district heads.

Therefore, as the general election approached in 1999, General Wiranto gave orders to all TNI members not to get involved in any political campaign. Likewise, the then TNI Commander General Endriartono Sutarto banned military personnel from casting their votes in the 2004 presidential elections. Previously, Sutarto withdrew all active military officers from civilian posts, including some from the Coordinating Ministry for Political and Security Affairs.

Besides disengaging itself from formal politics and day-to-day governing, the TNI also detached itself from domestic security management. The key policy measure in this regard was the formal separation of the police from the military command structure. Under MPR Decree Number VI and VII/2000, the Indonesian National Police (POLRI) assumed primary responsibility for maintaining public order and law enforcement throughout the country. Unfortunately, the police was insufficiently trained, equipped and manned to undertake such responsibilities. Subsumed under the military command structure for more than three decades, the organisational culture of the police force had been deeply “militarised” and therefore strongly inclined to adopt repressive measures when dealing with political protest.<sup>13</sup> Not surprisingly, many experts argued that it would take years to change their mindsets and train police officers to adopt non-lethal approaches for effective crowd and riot control.

Overall, the TNI had undertaken significant measures aimed at distancing itself from its highly controversial political role and regaining public trust in the military. However, the effective demilitarisation of the state in Indonesia required substantial diminishing and restructuring of the sources of military power to enable it to function during the New-Order regime. As noted earlier, the scope of internal reforms taken by the TNI leadership implied that the problem of military intervention in politics was exclusively defined within the context of military postings in state institutions, with the solution being military withdrawal from legislative bodies and the civilian bureaucracy.<sup>14</sup> Such judgement, in turn, had “detached” civilian elites and the public at large from discussing the more substantive issues for fundamental military reform. The most neglected aspect of military reform remained the army’s territorial command, which in the past had formed the backbone of the military’s enduring presence in socio-political affairs. Despite public criticism

and reform initiatives to overhaul the military organisation in the last decade, the territorial structure remained not only untouched, but ironically was expanded in scope. Military officers were either ambivalent or unwilling to give up the system that had provided them with resources and institutional autonomy from civilian control over institutions. As the subsequent sections will emphasise, political developments and practical difficulties in implementing strategic change have reduced the impetus for more substantial adjustments to further demilitarise the state, although the earlier military reforms have not been annulled.

### DEEP FRAGMENTATION OF POST-SUHARTO CIVILIAN POLITICS

The mainstream view of Indonesian society in the period following the downfall of Suharto was that the country was undergoing a process of democratic transition and that the military was also simultaneously embarking on a process of reform. Overwhelmed by the rhetoric of *reformasi*, Indonesians could be lulled into a sense that fundamental change was taking place within the military. However, with minimal support at either elite or popular level, the new civilian government under President Habibie had little opportunity to impose reform on the military, fearing it would provoke strong resistance from military leaders. Therefore, Habibie was highly dependent on the military's support to dissuade his political rivals from unseating him and to neutralise military opposition to his reformist policies. His reliance on the military was particularly evident when Habibie demanded that General Wiranto in July 1998 ensure the victory of his close aide, Akbar Tanjung, in the contest for the chairmanship of the Golkar Party.<sup>15</sup> During the MPR's Special Session in November 1998, Wiranto at the request of Habibie's inner circle instructed the incorporation of radical Muslim groups into the military and mobilised "private security volunteers" (known as Pam-Swakarsa) to counter anti-government demonstrations.<sup>16</sup>

Given the concessions it had provided to stabilise Habibie's presidency, the military maintained its relative institutional autonomy, whether in terms of personnel posting or the right to formulate its reform agenda on its own terms.<sup>17</sup> Between July and November 1998, as noted in the previous section, the military leadership took the initiative to launch a series of reforms that brought relevant institutional change without compromising its long-term organisational interests. Moreover,



after purging officers who were loyalists of his traditional rival, Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto (widely known as “de-Prabowo-isation”), Wiranto even outmanoeuvred Habibie’s inner circle by removing the “green” officers, who had close links to the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI). Having weakened the influence of Prabowo and generals close to Habibie, Wiranto managed to achieve greater unity within the military as most officers now realised that their career progression depended on loyalty to him.<sup>18</sup> In this context, Wiranto began to show his obsession for national leadership after he ordered military representatives in the parliament to reject President Habibie’s accountability speech in October 1999. The influence of reformist officers was consequently diluted as their reform initiatives were contradictory to Wiranto’s increasing political activities and ambitions.

The election of President Abdurrahman Wahid in 1999 initially had brought a new impetus to military reform. In the early period of his administration, President Wahid initiated a series of measures to further demilitarise the state. The military’s capacity to suppress political dissent was reduced through the dissolution of the Coordinating Agency for National Stability (Bakorstanas) and the military-staffed Directorate of Social and Political Affairs under the Ministry of Home Affairs. His decision to appoint Juwono Sudarsono as the Minister of Defence also sent a strong signal to both domestic and international observers about his commitment to exert civilian control over the military. Concerned with Wiranto’s increasing influence within the military, President Wahid ended his military career and took steps to uproot his patronage network within the officer corps by appointing him as the Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security. Later, in January 2000, the President dismissed Wiranto from the position following the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights Violations in East Timor that charged Wiranto with negligence for doing nothing in his capacity as Armed Forces Commander to halt the violence in the region.<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding this fact, the Wahid administration was fragile from the beginning, and his election was a result of intensive political bargaining among political parties. The National Awakening Party (PKB), Wahid’s electoral vehicle, won only 12.6 per cent of total electoral votes and held 51 of 505 parliamentary seats (see Figure 5.6). The dismissal of three ministers in April 2000 angered the parties’ leaders, who accused

President Wahid of violating the implicit power-sharing agreement in his coalition government.<sup>20</sup> After exposing two alleged high-profile corruption cases implicating Wahid himself (widely known as “Bulog-Gate” and “Brunei-Gate”), the majority of political parties were emboldened to impeach him in 2001.<sup>21</sup> Under these circumstances, President Wahid sought military support against the Indonesian parliament move to impeach him for alleged corruption. In early 2001, he proposed to the TNI high command that a state of emergency be declared to enable him to dissolve Parliament. The proposal, however, was rejected by a military leadership which was aware that any overt political involvement on their part would be counter-productive to their efforts to restore the TNI’s public image.<sup>22</sup> Far from depoliticising the military, President Wahid in the end had to take controversial steps to draw the military back into politics for the sake of his political survival.

Unlike her predecessor, President Megawati showed little interest in continuing military reform. Her lack of attention to the subject was symbolised by the appointment of Matori Abdul Djalil, who had just lost his chairmanship of Wahid’s political party and lacked expertise in military affairs. The President’s attitude became more evident later with her hesitation to appoint a new civilian minister after Matori suffered a stroke in August 2003.<sup>23</sup> Indebted to the military for facilitating the impeachment process of President Wahid, Megawati granted greater institutional autonomy to the military leadership under General Endriartono Sutarto, who was a professional yet conservative officer. The rising threat of terrorism and deteriorating situation in Aceh also had given new impetus for the military to take on a greater role in domestic security in the guise of “military operations other than war”, thereby signalling the end of attempts to limit the military’s function purely to external defence.<sup>24</sup> Megawati’s political apathy on military reform had revealed the persistence of political fragmentation between civilian elites. Megawati in particular harboured a deep distrust of political leaders, who had orchestrated the political crises blocking her ascent to the presidency in 1999 and later became a key player masterminding her predecessor’s removal from office. Not surprisingly, despite political commitments from a majority of political parties to support her administration, Megawati felt it critical to keep the military on her side should the coalition unravel.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, the fragmented nature of post-Suharto Indonesian politics had

tremendous consequences so far as military reform was concerned. For civilian elites, political survival and the goal of outmanoeuvring political rivals ranked higher than their interest in reforming the Indonesian military, thereby stalling the momentum for further military reform.

### DOMESTIC SECURITY CHALLENGES AND RETENTION OF THE ARMY'S TERRITORIAL STRUCTURE

The impetus for demilitarising the state in Indonesia was further watered down with the country confronted with mounting domestic security challenges and the danger of national disintegration. There were four major developments that turned the momentum of reform against the reformists. First, the independence of Timor-Leste in 1999 alarmed both civilian elites and military officers, who stressed the need to discourage other regions seeking a similar path. Second, widespread communal strife and instability in several parts of Indonesia between 1999 and 2001 raised concerns that further reform initiatives could weaken the ability of the security apparatus to effectively deal with social unrest.<sup>26</sup> Third, the failure of the “soft” approach adopted during the Habibie and Wahid presidencies to quell insurgency movements in Aceh and Papua emboldened nearly all-civilian elites to think of resolving the problem through military means.<sup>27</sup> Fourth, the rising terrorist threat following the Bali bombings in 2002 provided the military leadership with a strategic rationale to delay the fundamental reform of its organisational structure, most notably the army's territorial command.<sup>28</sup>

The slogan “Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia” (NKRI) over territorial integrity revitalised the military's role in the domestic security realm and enhanced its role in the policymaking process to restore stability in violence-torn areas.<sup>29</sup> In June 2002, for instance, President Megawati decided to establish the Operation Command for Security Restoration under Major General Djoko Santoso to put down religiously motivated violence in the Moluccas. The establishment of the new command, in effect, had ended long uncertainty and quarrels between the military and the police over who should take charge in the efforts to restore stability and public order in the region.<sup>30</sup> With domestic insecurity evident in other areas as well, civilian elites and the public at large recognised the indispensability of the military's territorial presence in upholding domestic security throughout the archipelago.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, many

politicians in parliament were less inclined to assert their demands to reform the military's territorial structure and other crucial aspects of military organisation, fearing it would compromise the military's ability to respond to sectarian conflicts.<sup>32</sup>

Apparently, civilian elites became more patriotic and persuaded the government to adopt a "harder" approach to deal with separatist groups. When the Megawati administration was seeking a peaceful settlement for the insurgency in Aceh through negotiations mediated by the Henry Dunant Centre (HDC), the majority of parliamentary members and military hard-liners frequently protested, criticising it for allowing "foreign interference" in the country's home affairs.<sup>33</sup> Later, as the situation in Aceh deteriorated in the late period of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA), parliament gave its unanimous support for Megawati's decision to declare martial law and launch a counter-insurgency operation in the province. The military campaign started in May 2003 and continued for the next 12 months. During that period, the parliament granted nearly all budget proposals requested by the military without demanding detailed explanations for specific expenses or insisting on the need for submitting a financial accountability report.<sup>34</sup> At the local level, the military established an emergency administration under Major General Endang Suwarya and filled vacant civilian posts in the local government with the army's territorial officers aimed at restoring government functions and public order in insecure areas.<sup>35</sup> That said, both executive and legislative branches of government granted autonomy to the military to determine the strategic objectives.

Furthermore, the terrorist attacks in September 2001 and the United States' "war on terror" had a significant impact on how the key policy-makers and the military leadership in Indonesia viewed the strategic environment. As far as the United States was concerned, the terror attacks had altered Washington's strategic interests, which now focused on combating international terrorist networks and thus developing a global partnership with key countries for effective counter-terrorism efforts. This new interest consequently provided momentum for the reestablishment of military-to-military ties between Indonesia and the United States, including defence funding, training and the vital re-equipping of the TNI.<sup>36</sup> In 2002, for instance, the United States invited Indonesian military officers to join in counter-terrorism training under

the newly established Regional Defense Counter-Terrorism Fellowship Program.<sup>37</sup> Washington's intention to work more closely with the Indonesian military became even clearer when senior American State Department and Defense officials certified that the TNI had achieved a satisfactory rating in its reform process and thus expected the removal of all policy restrictions under the Leahy Amendment for full military engagement with Indonesia. Likewise, in 2006, the Australian government signed the Lombok Treaty to enhance its security cooperation with Indonesia without demanding institutional measures for security sector reform. These attitudes, in effect, had minimised international pressures and were reflected in major reductions of foreign aid for civil-society to promote further military reform in Indonesia.

The political fallout of the global war on terror had provided further rationalisation for the military to reassert its role in domestic security and re-legitimised its territorial structure. Opportunities for military engagement in counter-terrorism efforts were further reinforced by a series of terror attacks between 2002 and 2005. Following the bombing of the Australian embassy in September 2003, President Megawati decided to include the military in the counter-terror task force, but in reality the police remained the lead institution in Indonesia's counter-terrorism efforts.<sup>38</sup> Later, when then President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono ordered the military to take measures against terrorism, TNI Chief General Endri-artono Sutarto responded that he was ready to re-activate the territorial structure, allowing it to resume its earlier intelligence role.<sup>39</sup> Soon after the second Bali bombings in October 2005, the military's anti-terrorism detachments were established at the level of the army's Regional Military Command (KODAM). In short, the growing threat of terrorism has provided an opening for the military to reassert itself and maintain its standing as "guardian of the nation-state".<sup>40</sup>

### FRAGILE MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM

As noted in the previous section, soon after the downfall of the New-Order regime, the Indonesian military initiated a series of organisational reforms aimed at professionalising the military establishment. These initial reforms were taken largely on the initiatives of reform-minded officers, like generals Agus Widjojo, Agus Wirahadikusumah and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Enjoying the support of the Armed Forces Com-

mander General Wiranto, these officers stressed the need to recover the military's lost credibility in Indonesian society and pinned the blame of its past misconduct on Suharto and his cronies. While the reformist officers concentrated their effort to reform the military establishment, most officers were concerned with the short-term implications of the democratic transition by underlining the growing of social unrest in the regions. Given the mounting turbulence in many parts of Indonesia, Wiranto shifted his support to the "security-first" generals, who proposed the expansion of territorial commands and enhancing the military's intelligence capabilities to prevent national disintegration.<sup>41</sup> The growing presence of military officers with operational-intelligence expertise, including generals Tyasno Sudarto and Endriartono Sutarto, had sidelined the role of intellectual-reformist officers and slowed down the pace of military reform.

The rise of "security-first" generals was also the result of President Wahid's political intervention in military affairs, which ignited intra-military divisions. After dismissing Wiranto from his cabinet in early 2000, Wahid moved quickly to consolidate his control over the military by interfering in military postings and promotions. In February 2000, for instance, Wahid persuaded Army Chief of Staff General Tyasno to promote his favourite generals, in particular Agus Wirahadikusumah from his post in Sulawesi to take charge of the army's Strategic Reserve Command (Kostrad). Wahid's political patronage soon provoked anger from military hard-liners, who thought the reshuffle was unfair and biased. They also accused the uncompromising reformist group led by Wirahadikusumah of sacrificing the military's corporate interests for personal gain and fiercely opposed all reform initiatives within the military.<sup>42</sup> Caught between the ambitious reformist officers and the conservatives, moderate institutional reformers like Agus Widjojo became totally demoralised and began to lose their influence to press for further military reform.<sup>43</sup> Later, in October 2000, 45 generals signed a petition to oppose Wahid's planned promotion of Wirahadikusumah as Army Chief and demanded that General Tyasno court-martial Wirahadikusumah and his associates for violating the military's code of ethics.<sup>44</sup> Isolated from the majority of the civilian elite and powerless to rein in the military, President Wahid eventually agreed to replace General Tyasno with his deputy, General Endriartono Sutarto. Under his leadership, Sutarto initiated a process of

rebuilding a strong military and imposed institutional discipline within the military establishment.

The above cases, in fact, revealed the fragility of military professionalism in Indonesia. This problem, to some extent, is evident in recent TNI personnel reshuffles. Following the appointment of a new TNI Chief Admiral Agus Suhartono, there was a total of 17 waves of personnel changes that brought more officers from the 1980 to 1982 classes into the TNI high command. The officers of these graduating classes had more than adequate opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to military professionalism. First, given the small size of the classes between 1980 and 1982, averaging around 100 officers per class, professional norms should be more prominent in rank promotions and military postings. With the current number of strategic posts within TNI Headquarters, the young officers should feel secure enough about their career prospects and place greater emphasis on their professional competencies for key military positions. Second, with an on-going plan to establish a new airborne division under Kostrad, young officers would be more eager to showcase their professional skills so as to attain prestigious military posts. Postings outside the military establishment then became less appealing as such assignments were not particularly attractive for military officers to prove themselves professionally. Third, with growing terrorist and transnational threats, young officers may focus more on opting for missions that involve counter-terrorism, counter-maritime piracy and border security tasks in order to exercise their military competency and gain operational experience. They may also commit themselves to peacekeeping operations. Such assignments not only help them advance their military credentials for future promotion, but also provide them with extra financial benefits of approximately US\$1,500 per month for each personnel.

The trend, however, is hardly sustainable in the long run. Classes from 1983 to 1991 have a larger pool of personnel with an average of 250 officers per year. These officers later may look to non-military postings at civilian ministries and non-defence agencies. Such trends are counter-productive for ingraining attitudes of military professionalism. Without comprehensive manpower planning and a merit-based promotion system, political processes will continue to affect institutional decisions for military postings. Instead of emphasising professional competen-



cies, “parochial” factors such as political affiliations and primordial ties will continue to be key factors for promotion. Such questions abound in the recent three-star promotion of Lieutenant General Pramono Edhi Wibowo, the brother-in-law of President Yudhoyono. Some political observers speculate his promotion is part of the President’s “careful” move to install his relatives within key military slots.

In a highly competitive political environment, the biggest challenge for the TNI leadership is to insulate the rotation of personnel from political influence and maintain the sanctity of a merit-based rank promotion system. Recently, President Yudhoyono passed Government Regulation (PP) No. 39/2010 on the administration of soldier-ship and Presidential Decree (Perpres) No. 10/2010 on the organisational structure of the TNI. These regulations are significant: they specify the terms and service of the enlisted men; the educational system and its requirements; and promotion policies and ranks, including personnel benefits within the military establishment. Under all circumstances, the president and TNI leadership must submit to the regulations and uphold TNI’s professional ethos as an apolitical defence force adhering to the national decision-making process. If this ethos is ignored in promotion exercises and military postings, the military leadership will undermine the TNI’s aspirations for organisational transformation into a rational and legal bureaucracy.

### SHORTCOMINGS OF DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN CONTROL

Besides the fragmented nature of post-Suharto Indonesian politics, the mindsets for civilian control are still not deeply rooted in Indonesia’s democratic institutions, especially parliament. The foremost obstacle in this regard is apathy, the unwillingness of legislators to develop expertise on defence matters and the hesitation of many members of parliament to carry out their constitutional responsibilities.<sup>45</sup> The disregard for defence and military affairs by legislators is apparent, exemplified by their reluctance to participate in public discussions on the defence and military issues and by their presumption that military expertise is a precondition for participating in defence policymaking. Accordingly, the majority of legislators tend to concentrate exclusively on matters relating to political accountability rather than scrutinise topics or issues requiring them to make judgements on how to harmonise defence policy and strategic planning with programmes and projects in national defence. In testing



candidates for the position of TNI's commander-in-chief, for example, the questions posed by the legislators generally focus on personal matters, with cursory inquiries made on the candidate's military credentials and organisational vision with respect to the TNI's force structure.

More importantly, the Indonesian parliament, particularly Commission I, which oversees national defence, sorely lacks institutional capacity. There are existing regulations, including the Handbook of Indonesia's House of Representatives, stipulating procedures for the implementation of parliamentary oversight that act as a guide. Yet, the lack of institutional capacity of the Indonesian parliament is not simply confined to the shortage of qualified parliamentary staffers, but hampered considerably by the limited expertise of the legislators along with their staff to comprehend the complexities of technical-operational requirements and financial management issues in national defence. The lack of expertise is to some extent evident during the legislation process for several bills on national defence and annual defence budgeting. This problem has substantially undermined the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight. For defence procurement matters, officials at the ministry are required to provide information to Commission I legislators if arms acquisitions are funded through export credit, as regulations stipulate the need for parliamentary approval for the allocation of foreign loans.<sup>46</sup> But legislators are hindered by the limited information provided by the Ministry of Defence regarding the details of defence expenditure in relation to defence budgeting.

Political rivalries among civilian elites may also distract parliament members from substantial issues related to military reforms. Under the current political system, parliament members are grouped under their respective "party caucus" (*fraksi*). Each political party may issue directives on how their respective parliament members should respond to certain issues or government policies. Accordingly, outspoken legislators may be reprimanded or be even "recalled", requiring them to step down from their parliamentary positions if they adopt a stance contradicting their respective party's directives on specific issues related to defence policy, particularly on issues relating to procurement.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, legislators find themselves in an awkward position, being forced to act according to their party's directives, which may go against their obligation to exercise proper parliamentary oversight. Such conflicts of interest are a common occurrence in coalition politics where parties forming a coali-

tion government are forced to adopt compromise positions. For a young democracy like Indonesia, this represents an understandable handicap. A disturbing trend, however, is the willingness of legislators to constantly hide behind such excuses in order not to exercise oversight responsibilities over a variety of expenditure issues within the Ministry of Defence and TNI Headquarters. Unsurprisingly, financial deviations reported by the State Audit Agency (BPK) are never properly examined by legislators and no recommendations made to law enforcement agencies to prevent malfeasance in the management of annual defence spending.

To make matters worse, civil-society organisations have yet to completely adapt their approaches to cope with post-Suharto political developments. Some of them still harp on non-substantive issues, such as the need for “demilitarisation” and for the army to “return to the barracks”. The use of such jargon provokes a defensive reaction from the military and is counter-productive to sound civil-military relations. During the Megawati presidency, anti-dual function slogans were still aired despite the fact that the TNI had officially abandoned this doctrine since 2000. Some issues, including cases related to human rights abuses and questions pertaining to the takeover of military businesses, remain relevant and need to be scrutinised. However, such advocacy should be impartial and, in the case of human rights investigations, conducted with empathy and without disregarding the difficult operating conditions faced by soldiers usually placed in stressful situations by their ambitious officers. Likewise, the mass media, the fourth pillar of democracy, need to focus more on substantive issues plaguing the defence sector. Although print and electronic media are now making greater efforts to cover strategic defence issues, including arms procurement matters, the majority of Indonesian journalists have a greater interest in covering political issues and their commentaries seem to reflect a fixation on the political ramifications of military postings. Similar to other democratic countries, the military is justified in having some role in strategic policy-making, but only a small number of journalists in Indonesia seem willing to make an effort to investigate to what level the TNI high command is involved in strategic decision-making.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Taking into account our analysis in its entirety, the demilitarisation of

the state and governance in Indonesia is by no means complete. Indonesia today remains a proto-democracy. While employing processes that preserve its democratic image, in reality the current political model is fraught with disadvantages that encourage new forms of military participation. For example, retired officers still hold prominent positions in the national cabinet; populist nationalist causes are espoused by military leaders; paramilitary forces continue to be instruments for social control; and the military's presence in the provinces has been enhanced by strong patrimonial ties with local elites coupled with poor conditions of public administration in the provinces that allow them significant latitude to manipulate local political processes. Such advantages allow the military considerable leverage to weaken democracy by steering social forces in directions that benefit its interests.

It is important to note that the military's reform moves were made from a position of strength, not weakness. The TNI engaged in reforms but on its own terms. No doubt its popularity was at an all time low and the public at large did not support the overt presence of the TNI in politics. However, outside the NGO community, few dared to embark on a campaign to force it "back to the barracks". Proof that the TNI still retained its substantial autonomy in post-Suharto administrations is irrefutable. The territorial structure allowed the army considerable latitude at the regional level and facilitated its informal involvement in local business activities. Structures for democratic oversight have not been adequately established by institutions responsible for civilian oversight. Parliament is further compromised by embedded militaristic thinking in society. The legacy of years of military rule is evident in the proliferation of political parties, ethnic and religious militia groups. Given how valued the TNI is as a strategic partner in the "war on terror", there is a significant decrease in international pressure for military reforms, thereby consolidating the positions of officers opposed to radical change.

### Notes

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1. J. Kristiadi, "The armed forces", in Richard W. Baker, M. Hadi Soesastro, J. Kristiadi & Douglas E. Ramage (Eds.), *Indonesia: The Challenge of Change* (pp. 99–114). Singapore: KITLV and ISEAS, 1999.
2. Jun Honna, *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia* (p. 3). New York: Routledge, 2003.

3. Geoffrey Robinson, "Indonesia: On a new course?", in Muthiah Alagappa (Ed.), *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (pp. 234–235). Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001; Harold Crouch, "Wiranto and Habibie: Military-civilian relations since May 1998", in Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley & Damien Kingsbury (Eds.), *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia* (pp. 133–134). Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999.
4. See Bilveer Singh, *Civil-Military Relations in Democratising Indonesia: The Potentials and Limits to Change* (p. 119). Canberra: Australia National University, 2001.
5. Crouch, "Wiranto and Habibie", p. 131.
6. Honna, *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia* (pp. 159–164); Tatik S. Hafidz, *Fading Away: The Political Role of the Army in Indonesia's Transition to Democracy, 1998–2001*, RSIS Monograph No. 8 (pp. 62–109), Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2006; Marcus Mietzner, "Personal triumph and political turmoil: Adurrahman and Indonesia's struggle for reform", in Damien Kingsbury (Ed.), *The Presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid: An Assessment After the First Year* (pp. 109–138), Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 2001. During the months leading to Suharto's resignation, General Wiranto (the Armed Forces' Commander-in-Chief) was involved in a fierce rivalry with Suharto's son-in-law, Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto (the Commander of Army Strategic Command). The former was backed by mainstream nationalist-oriented officers (known as the "red-and-white" faction) while the latter maintained close links to the so-called "green" Islamic officers.
7. These officers had stints as Wiranto's aide-de-camp during the political upheavals leading to Suharto's resignation. Among them were generals Agus Widjojo, Agus Wirahadikusumah and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Since the early 1990s, they had been discussing the ideas of military reform and the need to revise the military's role in the changing Indonesian society.
8. See Indonesian Armed Forces Headquarters, *ABRI Abad XXI: Redefinisi, Reposisi dan Reaktualisasi Peran ABRI dalam Kehidupan Bangsa [The Indonesian Armed Forces in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Redefinition, Reposition and Re-actualization of ABRI's Role]*. Jakarta: Mabes ABRI, 1998.
9. Harold Crouch, "Wiranto and Habibie: Military-civilian relations since May 1998", in Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley & Damien Kingsbury (Eds.), *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia* (p. 179). Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999.
10. Jun Honna, *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia* (p. 166). New York: Routledge, 2003.

11. See Marcus Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia: Elite conflict, nationalism, and institutional resistance", *Policy Studies*, No. 23 (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2006), p. 12.
12. Geoffrey Robinson, "Indonesia: On a new course?", in Muthiah Alagappa (Ed.), *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (p. 235), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001; Richard Chauvel & Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, "The Papua conflict: Jakarta's perceptions and policies", *Policy Studies*, No. 5 (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2004), p. 135.
13. Crouch, "Wiranto and Habibie", p. 134.
14. Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia: Elite conflict, nationalism, and institutional resistance", p. 13.
15. In the contest for the party chairmanship, Akbar Tanjung was challenged by retired General Edi Sudrajat, who had been Habibie's long-time critical opponent. It is widely expected that if the latter won, he would instruct Golkar representatives in the parliament to call a special session of the MPR to unseat Habibie. Though initially reluctant to accept Habibie's request, Wiranto ultimately agreed and ordered the regional commanders to "persuade" local Golkar leaders to cast their vote for Akbar, who was then elected with comfortable majority. It was believed that Wiranto himself felt he would be forced to resign if Habibie was deposed (Crouch, 1999: 131–132).
16. See Jun Honna, "Military ideology in response to democratic pressure during the late Suharto era: Political and institutional context", in Bennedit Anderson (Ed.), *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia* (pp. 85–89). Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
17. Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia", pp. 10–11.
18. Honna, *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia* (pp. 163–169); Mark Beeson & Alex J. Bellamy, *Securing Southeast Asia: The Politics of Security Sector Reform* (p. 143). New York: Routledge, 2008.
19. See KPP-HAM Tim-Tim, "Ringkasan eksekutif: Laporan penyelidikan pelanggaran hak asasi manusia di Timor Timur" [Executive summary: The investigation report of human rights abuses in East Timor] (p. 17). Jakarta: KPP-HAM Tim-Tim, 31 January 2000.
20. The three cabinet members were Laksamana Sukardi (Indonesia Democratic Party for Struggle, PDI-P), Jusuf Kalla (Golkar Party) and Hamzah Haz (United Development Party, PPP).
21. Angel Rabasa & Josh Haseman, *The Military and Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, Politics, and Power* (p. 42), Santa Monica, RAND, 2002;

- Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia: Elite conflict, nationalism, and institutional resistance", p. 13.
22. Malik A. Haramain, *Gus Dur, Militer dan Politik* [*Gus Dur, Military and Politics*] (p. 334), Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2004; Michael Malley, "Indonesia in 2001: Restoring stability in Jakarta", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 42 No. 1 (2002), p. 132.
  23. Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia", p. 34.
  24. Muhammad Qodari, "Indonesia's quest for accountable governance", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16 No. 2 (2005), p. 85.
  25. Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia", p. 34.
  26. Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia: Elite conflict, nationalism, and institutional resistance", p. 36.
  27. Richard Chauvel & Nusa Bhakti Ikrar, "The Papua conflict: Jakarta's perceptions and policies", *Policy Studies*, No. 5 (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2004), p. 52.
  28. See Leonard C. Sebastian, "The Indonesian dilemma: How to participate in the war on terror without becoming a national security state", in Kumar Ramakrishna & See Seng Tan (Eds.), *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia* (pp. 357–381). Singapore: World Scientific and the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2003.
  29. Crouch, "Wiranto and Habibie: Military-civilian relations since May 1998", p. 20.
  30. "Djoko vows to end Maluku's military-police conflict", *The Jakarta Post*, 7 June 2002.
  31. Donald Weatherbee, "Indonesia: Political drift and state decay", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 9 No. 1 (2002), p. 28.
  32. Mietzner, "The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia", p. 38.
  33. Edward Aspinall & Harold Crouch, "The Aceh peace process: Why it failed", *Policy Studies*, No. 1 (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center 2003), pp. 26–34.
  34. See "US\$291 million in military emergency funds missing", *Acehkita*, September 2004.
  35. Previously, in February 2002, the military high command re-established the army's regional command (Kodam) in Aceh. See "KSAD resmikan Kodam Iskandar muda" [Army chief inaugurate Aceh Regional Military Command], *Republika*, 6 February 2002.
  36. Grayson J. Lloyd & Shannon L. Smith (Eds.), *Indonesia Today: Challenges of History* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003).

37. See Angel Rabasa & Josh Haseman, *The Military and Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, Politics, and Power* (p. 117). Santa Monica: RAND, 2002.
38. See “Govt sets up antiterror task force”, *The Jakarta Post*, 16 September 2004. A month before the bombing, Army’s Chief of Staff, General Ryamizard Ryacudu suggested that the government should revive and expand the intelligence gathering capabilities of the territorial command. See “KSAD: Intelijen Militer Harus di Depan”, *Suara Merdeka*, 20 August 2003.
39. See Harold Crouch, *Political Reform in Indonesia After Soeharto* (pp. 160–161). Singapore: ISEAS, 2010.
40. Mark Beeson & Alex J. Bellamy, *Securing Southeast Asia: The Politics of Security Sector Reform* (p. 148). New York: Routledge, 2008.
41. Honna, *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia* (pp. 171–173).
42. Agus Widjojo, who was Chief of Staff for territorial affairs and reformist proponent, even rejected Wirahadikusumah’s pilot project to disband segments of army’s territorial structure and began to develop counter-proposal instead. See Atmadji Sumakidjo, “The rise and fall of the generals”, in Grayson J. Lloyd & Shannon L. Smith (Eds.), *Indonesia Today: Challenges of History* (p. 143). Singapore: ISEAS, 2003.
43. Honna, *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia* (p. 187).
44. See “Drama Gus Dur vs. TNI AD” [The drama between Gus Dur versus the army], *Tajuk*, No. 17 (12–25 October 2000).
45. Anggoro Kusnanto, “Konsolidasi tentara, inkompetensi sipil & reformasi pertahanan keamanan” [Military consolidation, civilian incompetence and security sector reform], Paper presented at ProPatria’s Focus Group Discussion in Jakarta, ProPatria Insitute, 21 February 2002, pp. 1–22.
46. “Streamlining Purchase”, *Tempo*, 30 March 2010.
47. To name a case, despite strong resistance by some legislators in Commission I, the procurement proposal of France made-Armoured Vanguard Vehicles (VAB) was eventually approved by the parliament in 2006. At a focus-group-discussion with several members of the Commission on 28 June 2007, a legislator from one of the major political parties acknowledged that he had to approve the proposal after receiving a memo from the party’s chairman, ProPatria Insitute, “Management and Control of Indonesia’s Defence Resources”, *ProPatria Monograph*, 10 (Jakarta: ProPatria Insitute, 2007), p. 28.



# THE CYCLE OF MILITARISATION, DEMILITARISATION AND REMILITARISATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Renato Cruz De Castro

On the morning of 8 February 2011, former Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff and then Department of National Defence (DND) Secretary Angelo Tomas Reyes fatally shot himself in front of his mother's grave on the outskirts of Metro Manila. The tragic end of an erstwhile defence secretary with a distinguished military career came a week after he was implicated in high-level corruption in the AFP being investigated by the Philippine Senate Blue Ribbon Committee. Former Secretary Reyes's accusers alleged that he received Php 5 million (US\$100,000) in monthly allowance when he was the chief of staff, and Php 50 million (US\$1 million) as send-off money when he retired from the military in 2001.<sup>1</sup> Stung and publicly humiliated by the allegations of his own former budget officer, then Secretary Reyes countered that his detractors caused undue injury to his person and family through their manifest partiality, evident bad faith and gross inexcusable negligence.<sup>2</sup> He announced to the media that the charges against him were politically motivated because he had supported the ouster of former President Joseph Estrada in January 2001.

The allegation of corruption at the highest level of the AFP immediately generated indignation and anger in Philippine society. The Management Association of the Philippines urged that President Benigno Aquino prosecute military officers involved in the anomalies. The lower chamber of the Philippine Congress, the House of Representatives, called for a joint congressional investigation. The DND as well formed



an oversight committee to investigate the reported cases of anomalous disbursement of AFP funds. Analysts, legislators and media commentators focused on key personalities, particularly former AFP chiefs of staff and commanders, who were allegedly part of a complex network of high-ranking military officers involved in financial wrongdoing. Conveniently ignored, however, was the broader socio-political context in which top AFP officials were able to dip into huge slash funds during their terms of office at a time when the military's political role in Philippine society had become pervasive.

Historically, the AFP has played an integral role in the Philippine polity since the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935.<sup>3</sup> This long involvement in socio-political affairs has resulted in two political aberrations in Philippine civil-military relations. One, contact with the civil society has allowed the culture of graft and corruption to seep into the military organisation, compromising its traditional values of duty, honour and integrity.<sup>4</sup> Two, this exposure to society has "politicised" the Philippine military, expanded its role vis-à-vis the civilian authorities, and plunged the country into an endless cycle of militarisation, demilitarisation and remilitarisation. Just like the armed forces of new and fragile democracies in East Asia such as Thailand and Cambodia, the Philippine military and its apparatus "have become increasingly intrusive in the political realm as well as gradually becoming more autonomous from the civilian authorities"<sup>5</sup>

This article examines the AFP's resilience in reasserting a political influence that generates a cycle of militarisation, demilitarisation and remilitarisation in Philippine society. It raises this main question: What factors account for this cycle of militarisation, demilitarisation and remilitarisation? It also explores the following corollary questions: What societal forces contribute to this cycle? What military functions enabled the AFP to exert its enduring influence on Philippine society? What events from 1972 to the mid-1990s precipitated this militarisation/demilitarisation process? How did President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo unwittingly foster remilitarisation during her term? Will this remilitarisation lead to a garrison state or a praetorian regime? And how can the Aquino Administration end this cycle of militarisation, demilitarisation and remilitarisation in the twenty-first century?

## THE CYCLE OF MILITARISATION, DEMILITARISATION AND REMILITARISATION

“Militarisation”, “demilitarisation” and “remilitarisation” are distinct and highly nuanced terms. Though different from each other, they are inter-dependent and inter-related. Arguably, these terms are processes, not end states. As such, they are closely associated with the terminal state of militarism, which is related to a militarised or a garrison state. As a concept, militarism pertains to the pervasive influence of the “military way” as a rationale within the context of war, and the primacy of the military profession over those of the state that it is supposed to serve.<sup>6</sup> The terms “militarisation” and “militarism” are often linked to the concept of a “garrison state”. In such a polity, members of the military establishment become self-serving and develop a corporatist attitude that commits the profession of arms to furthering its own organisational interests as opposed to following the legitimate political dictates or guidance of duly elected and appointed officials.<sup>7</sup> A more conventional definition equates a garrison state to one that subordinates civil authority to the military in one or more arms of the government.<sup>8</sup>

Militarisation, therefore, is a process involving the efforts of the military establishment and the civilian government to transform a free and democratic civilian state into a garrison or a praetorian state. It can take the form of an increased military role in the area of public affairs,<sup>9</sup> such as: a) elite recruitment; b) public policy; c) internal security d) national defence; and e) matters related to military organisation. Demilitarisation is the opposite process in which the polity transitions from a military regime or a garrison state by developing a balanced relationship between civil society and the military. Here, civilian authorities can even assert their power and clout in the formulation of policies pertaining to the aforementioned areas at the military’s expense.

The mainstream literature on civil-military relations describes a garrison state as the direct opposite of a liberal democratic state. In a democracy, civilian control manifests in the subordination of the armed forces to duly elected political authorities, who formulate all decisions concerning the defence of the country.<sup>10</sup> Democratic governance also requires civilian control or supremacy, defined as the obedience that the military owes to the *civis*, the state.<sup>11</sup> Ideally, civilian control or supremacy is achieved by appointing civilian politicians, instead of military officers, to positions of responsibility and by granting decision-making powers to civil servants.<sup>12</sup>

Civilian control is also defined as the dynamic process of “negotiating and renegotiating the boundaries between military expertise and civilian oversight, within an overall framework of assured civilian supremacy”.<sup>13</sup> In the Western view, a democratic-liberal system with its civilian control over the military is the most appropriate political framework that developing countries should adopt. In the same breath, a militarised or garrison state is a political aberration that should be avoided. When the military challenges civilian authority, it impedes a democracy’s ability to govern, giving rise to a garrison or a praetorian state.

Worldwide, civil-military relations appear fluid as military establishments and civilian regimes have yet to determine the right balance within the political system. Many non-Western countries are haunted by the prospect of a military *coup d’état* and the establishment of a military junta, a praetorian regime, militarisation and even remilitarisation. In these states, a skilled and professional armed force is often managed by a weak state incapable of imposing civilian control. As a result, the military becomes highly politicised, and develops the ability to thwart a fledgling democracy and to effect the militarisation of civil society.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, force plays a crucial role in these states’ efforts to achieve internal consolidation. Thus, the military is deployed quite freely and on a massive scale in support of nation building—especially in relation to segments of minority communities that resist “national” integration.<sup>15</sup> Because of coercion’s centrality in the process of political-domination and nation building, the militaries in several East Asian countries are not necessarily subordinate to civilian authorities. As Paul Chambers comments:

In many cases, the failure of civilian control of the military is sufficient to account for the existence of non-democratic regimes in many countries. On the other hand, the existence and soundness of civilian control does not imply good governance, nor does it necessarily enhance the quality of decisions, it does not guarantee the respect of human rights by the ruling elites or the stability of the political regime.<sup>16</sup>

Chambers’ observation of a dynamic pattern of civil-military relations in East Asia is supported by Mark Besson. Besson and other scholars and analysts who thought that civilian control over the military was the accepted norm in the region were surprised when the Thai military staged a coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in September 2006. In response, he argues that:

Civil-military relations (in Southeast Asia) are primarily driven by domestic factors and not directly subject to the potentially devastating judgments by outsiders ... Nevertheless, the Thai coup raised questions about the stability of other countries in a region where the ascendancy of civilian forces is either relatively new or uncertain.<sup>17</sup>

In some Southeast Asian countries, democratic control of armed forces and civilian supremacy over the military are not fixed attributes. These practices and norms need to be underpinned by other principles, supported by certain political activities and, more significantly, buttressed by internal socio-political forces. Muthiah Alagappa elaborates:

The militaries in several Asian countries are not subordinate to civilian authority. They have entered the structure of political domination... although the military has formally disengaged from politics, it continues to preserve institutional autonomy, as well as a key role in the formulation of security policy.<sup>18</sup>

An interesting case of a Southeast Asian state that gravitates towards the grey area of a liberal democracy and a garrison or praetorian state is the Philippines. Despite its long tradition of democratic rule and a fairly dynamic and autonomous civil society, the Philippines has experienced a 40-year cycle of militarisation, demilitarisation and remilitarisation. This recurrent militarism in the society always carries with it the possibility of a military take-over of the civilian government. The armed forces' increasing involvement in the making and implementation of domestic security policies triggers fears of a military takeover of the government. This became apparent during mutinies staged by junior military officers in July 2003 and then in January 2006. These military rebellions showed that Philippine democracy is fragile and uncertain, and the military is capable of intervening in politics, which the civilian government has limited capacity to constrain.

In his 2001 seminal work on Asian militaries' declining role in politics, Alagappa observes that though the Philippine military has theoretically disengaged from politics since the mid-1980s, it still wields substantial influence since this detachment from political affairs is still incomplete and tentative at best.<sup>19</sup> Comparing the Philippine case with Indonesia in the light of the 2006 Thai military *coup d'état*, an Australian academic argues: "If Indonesia has proved surprisingly stable, in the Philippines, despite a long tradition of democratic representation and

a robust civil society, civilian authority seems fragile and continually susceptible to actual or rumoured military intervention.”<sup>20</sup> No less than the AFP’s 2008 Policy Paper on military adventurism succinctly admits: “It is unfortunate that there are observations that military adventurism has been embedded in the Filipino culture. It is more unfortunate that there are actual incidents of military adventurism (in recent times) to back this observation.”<sup>21</sup>

### CONTEXT OF THE CYCLE: A CONFLICT-RIDDEN SOCIETY

Militarisation as well as the potential emergence of a garrison state in Philippine society stems from domestic factors. The common response of a political regime is to protect the entrenched interests of the ruling elite against the challenges posed by both revolutionary and secessionist movements. Analysing the nature of security challenges faced by the Philippines since it became an independent state nearly six decades ago, two scholars note:

The discourse on national security in the Philippines is rooted in conflicts and identity of the nation-state, over regime legitimacy, and over socio-economic inequality, which continue to create tension between state and society. Unlike more established states, the Philippine state has not achieved an effective monopoly of means of coercion within its boundaries and is still engaged in a process of nation-building...<sup>22</sup>

Since 1946, the Philippine state has been bedevilled by perennial insurgency. Thus, the AFP has long focused its attention, efforts and resources on containing domestic rebel movements. The first major challenge to the Philippine government and its military was the Hukbalahap (People’s Army against the Japanese) or Huk uprising from the 1940s to 1950s. Under the banner of the Partido Kommunistang Pilipinas (PKP or Communist Party of the Philippines) the Huks launched several hit-and-run battles against Japanese occupation forces in 1942 and established several guerrilla bases in Central Luzon.<sup>23</sup> After the United States granted the Philippines independence in 1946, the unified, armed and widespread Hukbalahap insurgency movement became a major threat to the government.

In the 1970s, the country experienced two separate yet enduring insurgencies that have cyclically flared up and abated, resulting in more than 50,000 deaths. On the mainland of Luzon and on several Visayan

Islands, the leftist National Democratic Front (NDF) led by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed group, the New People's Army (NPA), mounted a major rebellion that involved hit-and-run tactics, bombings and assassinations against the Philippine state.<sup>24</sup> From the late 1960s onwards, the CPP continuously built and consolidated its armed strength in an effort to seize state power by intensifying a "people's war". The authoritarian regime of President Ferdinand Marcos almost eradicated the entire political and military leadership of the CPP-NPA in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup> Despite these setbacks, the party has been pragmatic and flexible in maximising its political clout by forging alliances within Philippine society.<sup>26</sup> The NPA continues to extract resources from the population. It tries to project to the world that the CPP is a strong, viable and armed political movement capable of capturing power from the Philippine state. In the meantime, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) has waged an ethno-religious insurgency in Mindanao to gain independence for the island. This resistance, which began with sporadic clashes between Muslim rebels and government forces, evolved into full-blown battles involving 15,000 to 30,000 MNLF fighters against the AFP in the mid-1970s.

In the early 1990s, both conflicts had largely petered out. The number of communist guerrillas dramatically decreased from a peak strength of 25,800 in 1988 to about 14,470 in 1992, decreasing further to 6,800 in 1997.<sup>27</sup> In the mid-1990s, however, the moribund NPA membership swelled from 6,800 in 1997 to 11,930 in 2001.<sup>28</sup> The number of firearms of the communist insurgents also increased by four per cent annually since 1995 and the guerrilla fronts expanded from 58 in 1995 to 70 by the turn of the century. Simultaneously, a more militant and religious-oriented secessionist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) emerged and mobilised its forces for the creation of Muslim Mindanao, an entity separate from the predominantly Christian Philippine state.<sup>29</sup> The MILF started as a breakaway faction of the MNLF with a more pronounced Islamic orientation. It was formed in March 1984, after Hashim Salamat, a religiously schooled aristocrat realised that there was no hope for reconciliation with the MNLF, which he perceived as a left-leaning organisation.<sup>30</sup> In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement with the MNLF, which formally ended its 25-year armed struggle and paved the way for the creation of the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and

Development (SPCPD) to oversee the development efforts in Mindanao.

The MILF, however, believes that the only viable solution to the Mindanao conflict is complete independence and the establishment of an Islamic state.<sup>31</sup> On the eve of the 1996 Mindanao peace agreement, heavy fighting broke out between the AFP and the MILF. Excluded from the peace talks, certain MILF elements advocated armed struggle against the Philippine government and the creation of a separate Islamic state as soon as possible. In early 1999, the MILF and the AFP began engaging in full-scale combat.<sup>32</sup> In the aftermath of 9/11 and the consequent U.S.-led war on terror, the Philippine government accused the MILF of collaborating with Southeast Asian transnational terrorist groups—the Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). The MILF leadership denied the allegations, and maintained that it had cut off its ties with all terrorist groups since 2002, paving the way for formal peace talks with the Philippine government.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the fairly new and notorious insurgent group, the ASG, staged high-profile hostage seizures in Mindanao in the late 1990s. The Philippine armed forces pursued the group members and engaged them in fierce firefights.<sup>34</sup> Initially, the ASG adhered to a religious agenda far more radical than the one espoused by the MILF as it called for the establishment of an Islamic state governed by the Sharia.<sup>35</sup> The group launched a series of bombings, murders, kidnappings for ransom, massacres and extortions. Thus, its members were aptly branded as “entrepreneurs of violence.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, it established links with international terrorist networks, which prompted the Philippine state to allot enormous resources and efforts to ensure its elimination.<sup>37</sup>

### THE MAIN CHANNEL OF MILITARISATION: INTERNAL SECURITY ROLE

To confront these security challenges, the AFP has formulated a counter-insurgency strategy with two vital components:<sup>38</sup> 1) military measures to defeat the insurgents through tactical combat operations such as short-term search-and-destroy, clearing, mopping-up and sweeping operations; and 2) internal development that uses civic action programmes to win the local people over and to address the root causes of insurgency.

In the late 1980s, the AFP adopted the *lambat bitag* (fishing net) strategy deploying Special Operation Teams (SOT) in communist controlled-villages. This strategy consisted of three components:<sup>39</sup> 1) the



deployment of elite army units to conduct psychological operations in communist-influenced hamlets; 2) a territorial security scheme forming local militias to defend the village against mobile insurgent groups; and 3) stay-behind or consolidation operations to facilitate the entry of civilian agencies bringing basic services and generating economic activities in the targeted village.

The SOT halted the expansion of the communist movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, this AFP strategy requires the use of the “whole government approach” in which all state agencies are involved in the counter-insurgency efforts. Operationally, the military would ensure that the insurgents were pushed out of the areas under their control or induced to capitulate so that civilian agencies could bring back services to the people. However, after neutralising the insurgents, AFP units stayed on to deliver social services to the people since the local government could not function effectively in former NPA-insurgent-controlled territories. Thus, the AFP units were deployed longer than expected and, in time, their presence increased the military’s political and administrative clout, enabling it to constrain and challenge other state institutions operating in the countryside. Filipino academic Dr. Arcala Hall notes:

Civilian direction and oversight is most pronounced in the areas of counter-insurgency... However, the civilian authorities defer to the military’s judgment on the type and nature of civic action program, which in recent years had greatly expanded from the typical infrastructure and basic service delivery, to include community organizing... There was no parallel [civilian] scrutiny on the effects of the long-term immersion by the military to their relationship with local leaders and their subsequent attitudes towards civilian leadership.<sup>40</sup>

### **THE OTHER CHANNEL OF MILITARISATION: CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS**

Complementing the AFP’s counter-insurgency campaign are civil-military operations that include public works projects in rebel-infested areas and relief missions during natural or man-made disasters. The AFP has a long history of civic action-cum-developmental undertakings dating back to the presidency of Ramon Magsaysay in the mid-1950s. To alleviate poverty and contain peasant unrest during the Hukbalahap rebellion, President Magsaysay deployed army engineering battalions



to build new settlements for communist rebels who surrendered to the government. The AFP also established the Economic Development Corporation (EDCOR) to transform rebel returnees into productive citizens by educating and training them in various trades.<sup>41</sup> President Ferdinand Marcos revitalised this practice and ordered AFP engineering units to undertake massive civic action projects such as the construction of roads, schools, hospitals and irrigation-flood control systems.<sup>42</sup>

Current government policy mandates that the AFP involve itself in civil-military operations and development projects. The 1987 Revised Administrative Code of the Philippines stipulates that the defence establishment support social and economic development. Specifically, it requires the AFP to undertake infrastructure projects. Thus, in the late 1990s, the Philippine Army's 54th Engineering Brigade constructed roads and bridges in Central Mindanao, while the 51st Engineering Brigade completed similar projects in Central Luzon. These undertakings were intended to impress upon the local population that the government could still operate and facilitate the entry of civilian agencies in remote rebel-controlled areas.<sup>43</sup> At present, AFP units are actively involved in community organising, adult literacy programmes and environmental conservation activities.<sup>44</sup> These non-combat operations are included in the AFP's 1998 internal security functions under Operation *Kasagaanaan* [Prosperity]. Strategically, these engineering projects, search, rescue and relief operations, environmental conservation and protection, and development assistance are integrated in the AFP's civil military missions.<sup>45</sup> During natural calamities such as typhoons, earthquakes and floods, Philippine Navy ships and Air Force transport planes often bring supplies and other relief goods to affected areas. The AFP also conducts searches and patrols against gun running, piracy and the illegal entry of foreign vessels.<sup>46</sup> In September 2007, the AFP created a new functional Unified Command called the National Development Support Command (NDSC). The NDSC coordinates the AFP's development activities with government and non-government partners in conflict-ridden, underdeveloped and depressed areas.<sup>47</sup>

### MILITARISATION AND DEMILITARISATION, 1972–1998

Historically, the Philippine military's influence in Philippine society has waxed and waned because of the internal security challenges and

the reliance of national leaders on the AFP in advancing their political agenda. The imposition of martial law in 1972 expanded the role and clout of the military in Philippine society. During this period, the AFP's manpower dramatically increased and so did the country's defence budget.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, President Marcos used the engineering construction battalions in various civic action missions.<sup>49</sup> The armed forces were deployed against the communist insurgents and Muslim secessionist rebels in Mindanao. The AFP also established military tribunals for cases involving military and civilian personnel. Military personnel managed government-sequestered companies, and were appointed as regional heads and directors of government-owned corporations.

Eventually, military influence pervaded the civil courts, mass media and national economy. The military was also ordered to control and monitor the media and public utilities, and implement national development programmes. Despite increased military manpower and influence, President Marcos ensured that the AFP would only serve as an instrument of his authoritarian regime. Therefore, the martial law regime remained essentially civilian—if not civil—with the AFP insulated from powers associated with distinctly political controls and pressure. As a Filipino academic argues:

While the military under Marcos experienced an unprecedented degree of involvement in politics...this participation was restrained by Marcos's exploitation of the principle of civilian supremacy over the military as he took the necessary steps to keep this institution under his firm control.<sup>50</sup>

The military-led popular uprising in February 1986 dismantled the Marcos regime's authoritarian power structure and generated the political forces that reversed the tide of militarisation of Philippine society. Democratic institutions, like the Philippine Congress, were re-established to restore civilian control over the military. Backed by a popular mandate, President Corazon Aquino secured her regime against threats from the military by retiring or transferring overstaying generals, and abolishing the Presidential Security Command and the National Intelligence Service Agency (NISA). To reduce the military's involvement in government, officers assigned to positions outside of the armed services were recalled to the AFP.

The Aquino Administration also launched a widespread programme

of re-education and re-training to instil professional and democratic values at all levels of the Philippine military. Despite these demilitarisation efforts, some AFP units repeatedly rebelled against the Aquino Administration. From July 1986 to December 1989, seven coup attempts were staged. The most serious was the military putsch on 1 December 1989 when elite marine and Army Scout ranger units attacked the AFP Headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, seized parts of the country's financial centre and even bombed the presidential palace. Fortunately, the majority of the AFP top leadership remained loyal to the government and the embattled Aquino Administration survived all the coup attempts. Some of these rebellious military officers eventually succeeded in entering mainstream politics. Again, as an institution, the military was subordinated to the national legislature and local politicians. It also shifted its focus from internal security to external security after the withdrawal of U.S. military facilities from the country in the early 1990s.<sup>51</sup>

President Fidel Ramos continued his predecessor's efforts "to return the military to the barracks". He refused to extend the stint of senior military officers beyond their tour of duty. He also fostered an era of democracy and liberalism by strengthening civil society and other liberal and autonomous institutions such as mass media, non-governmental organisations, religious groups and political parties. These measures firmed up the social bases of democratic consolidation vis-à-vis any attempt at militarisation and the return of authoritarian rule. More importantly, President Ramos took concrete steps to redirect the military from internal security to external defence when U.S. military assistance was terminated in view of the removal of American military facilities from the country in 1992.

Given the Philippine military's inability to defend the country's maritime territorial claims in the South China Sea, the Ramos Administration pushed for the modernisation of the armed forces. The AFP modernisation law was passed in early 1995 at the time that China had finished building installations and a helicopter pad on Mischief Reef. The Philippine military began developing its external defence capabilities, and planned the acquisition of multi-role fighter planes, offshore patrol vessels, long-range maritime patrol craft, naval multi-role helicopters, coastal patrol boats and a naval missile system.<sup>52</sup> This shift to external defence prompted the AFP to scale down its counter-insurgency opera-

tions. Consequently, internal security operations (ISO) were transferred from the military to the newly established and inexperienced Philippine National Police (PNP). To transform into a conventional armed force, the AFP deactivated its village-based territorial defence systems and suspended military operations, presuming (wrongly) that the country's insurgency problem would be reduced to a mere police or law-enforcement matter.<sup>53</sup>

However, in the late 1990s, the communist movement experienced a resurgence. Its armed membership swelled from 4,541 in 1995 to a high of 10,238 in 2001 with the number of rebel firearms increasing from 4,580 in 1995 to 6,409 in 2001.<sup>54</sup> At the start of the twenty-first century, party cadres and armed insurgents consolidated their existing 95 guerrilla fronts and intensified their recruitment and politico-military activities through mass protest actions in the urban areas and armed struggles in the rural areas. In 1998, the Philippine Congress passed Republic Act 8551, which transferred the responsibility for counter-insurgency duties from the PNP back to the AFP. Then in 2000, the series of armed clashes with the secessionist MILF compelled the AFP to shift its priority from external defence to internal security.<sup>55</sup>

### EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY REMILITARISATION, 2001–2010

The process of remilitarisation began with the partnership between the military and the civilian government. Cementing this relationship was the 2001 popular street protest that triggered the AFP's withdrawal of support from the then incumbent President Joseph Estrada. This event occurred after 11 senators voted against a motion to unseal an envelope containing incriminating pieces of evidence against President Estrada during his impeachment trial for bribery, graft and corruption. The AFP top officers' decision to withdraw the institution's support to its commander-in-chief destroyed the delicate balance between the civilian authorities and the military, and created the impression that any seating president could only stay in power if he or she had the AFP's support. Hence, when Gloria Macapagal Arroyo assumed the presidency, she unwittingly entered into an "unholy alliance" with the military. She visited military camps, increased the benefits of the military personnel and designated retiring AFP Chief of Staff General Angelo Reyes who famously abandoned President Estrada as defence secretary. She also appointed

retired military officers who helped her during the February 2001 mutiny to important positions in the new administration. When former President Estrada's supporters laid siege to the presidential palace in May 2001, the military along with the police defended the palace against the unruly urban mob. Consequently, although President Arroyo was the head of the civilian government, she became a compromised figure whose continuance in office seemed dependent on the support of "loyal" senior military officers in particular and of the Philippine military in general.<sup>56</sup> Finally, she ordered the AFP to formulate the national military strategy and to lead the campaign against the three major internal security challenges to her fledgling administration—the communist movement, the MILF and the Abu Sayaff Group.<sup>57</sup>

Alarmed by the communist resurgence and the persistent growth of the secessionist movement in Mindanao at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the government channelled all its efforts and resources to domestic security. In June 2001, President Arroyo issued Executive Order No. 21-S-2001, creating a "Coordinative and Integrative System for Internal Security". This led to the formation of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security, which drafted the National Internal Security Plan (NISP) that prescribes the general political framework and policy guidelines for coordination, integration and acceleration of all government actions on domestic insurgencies. The NISP commits the entire government machinery to eliminate the root causes of the insurgencies and neutralise the rebels using the "strategy of holistic approach".<sup>58</sup> This strategy requires grass-roots intelligence and coordination of all policies and actions at all government levels and promotes active government-civil society partnership. More significantly, the AFP spearheads this counter-insurgency campaign.<sup>59</sup> In operational terms, it means that the AFP would draft the military plan and advise government agencies on the security situation in areas controlled or influenced by the insurgents.

According to the AFP's 2001 National Military Strategy,<sup>60</sup> the military's priorities and plans for the early twenty-first century centre on "a focus-and-contain" policy that identifies major security threats while down-playing others. It also recommends the concentration of limited government resources and attention in areas where they will have a greater impact rather than spreading them thinly in many places, in which case their effect becomes inconsequential.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the

document identifies the local communist movement, the Southern Philippine secessionist groups and the notorious Abu Sayaff Group as the most dangerous internal threats to national security.<sup>62</sup> It stresses that the AFP's end goal of containing the armed insurgencies warrants a holistic approach.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the AFP utilises the comprehensive operational methodology of "Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop".<sup>64</sup>

In this counter-insurgency approach, the AFP has to apply all its combat power against the enemy to achieve maximum, tangible and decisive effect. The AFP's National Military Strategy 2001 states:

The cornerstone of the AFP strategy can be summed up in the phrase "Focus and Contain"—the AFP focuses on priority objectives or threats while containing others in the meantime. In essence, the strategy means deliberately and sequentially addressing each objective or threat one at a time. It means initially concentrating the AFP's limited resources on a particular objective so that it makes an impact rather than spreading these resources thinly without any significant effect.<sup>65</sup>

In January 2002, the AFP released an Internal Security Plan (ISO) called "Bantay Laya" [Freedom Watch]. The ISO provides the AFP with a roadmap to contain the insurgency within the NISP framework. It envisions the AFP decisively defeating the armed component of the communist insurgency within five years. However, this timetable was derailed by the AFP's operations against the Abu Sayaff Group at the start of the new century. Thus, the ISO was revised and it stated that once the ASG was eliminated, the AFP would redeploy its resources to reduce the number of communist-influenced communities, their manpower and firearms, and dismantle the insurgents' politico-military structure.<sup>66</sup> The 2006 ISO, launching Bantay Laya II, aimed to defeat the CPP/NPA/NDF by 2010.<sup>67</sup> The ISO provides for the TRIAD concept in which the AFP units simultaneously conduct combat, intelligence and civil-military operations in communist-controlled villages. A more in-depth dimension of the strategy includes a legal offensive, information warfare and developmental activities aimed at demolishing the political, military and territorial components of a communist guerrilla front in the countryside. Another form of this TRIAD operation is used in white areas or urban centres under communist influence.

Capping a counter-insurgency operation is the application of the "Kalayaan Barangay [Freedom Village] Programme" designed to trans-

form communist-infested communities into development areas through the speedy delivery of basic goods and services to the people. The programme involves rural electrification, the construction of school buildings, medical facilities and roads, and the formation of cooperatives for rebel returnees through the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA). The AFP also conducts non-combat missions such as Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (DRRO), and undertakes civil works, particularly through the Engineer Civil Action Program (ENCAP) and various community-relations programmes. To reinforce the earlier Freedom Village Programme, the Philippine Army has launched the Community Assistance and Rural Empowerment through Social Services (CARES) and the Army Community Organizing for Development (ACCORD).<sup>68</sup> In these undertakings, the military becomes the microcosm of the government machinery as it performs the functions of construction worker, teacher, health provider, community activist and even development planner. Herein lies the risk that the military might perceive the civilian government as weak, ignorant of the insurgency problem and only capable of a supporting role in the AFP's counter-insurgency operations.<sup>69</sup>

### EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MILITARISATION

The AFP's involvement in internal security operations complicates civilian supremacy in Philippine politics. It remilitarises Philippine society and creates the prospect of a garrison state. It is also reflective of the preference for a clear-cut military solution without the benefit of considering other options to address an otherwise complex socio-economic and political problem like insurgency.<sup>70</sup> This set-up allows the military to perform roles and functions supposedly reserved for civilian administrations. In the process, the AFP develops a critical if not a cynical view of the civilian government.<sup>71</sup> For during counter-insurgency operations, military personnel see the incompetence and corruption in local governance. These social vices permeate the military itself, and compromise its efficiency and effectiveness in managing organisational violence.<sup>72</sup> This frustrates and disillusiones the officers and the rank-and-file as well as politicises the whole military establishment.<sup>73</sup> Observing this phenomenon among AFP units deployed in long-term counter-insurgency operations, a Filipina academic notes:

The armed forces' prolonged exposure to anti-insurgent operations is



argued to engender highly critical attitudes toward the civilian government and to nurture the idea of the military as a more competent and viable alternative to inept and corrupt civilian role. Rather than producing political neutrality, internal security oriented professionalism fosters a *raison d'être* and motivation for the military to be involved in politics.<sup>74</sup>

As lead agency in the government's anti-insurgency campaign, the AFP limits and modifies the civilian authorities' exercise of their supremacy over the military. Thus, the military has become assertive beyond the traditional control of elected officials, government functionaries and politicians who continue to use their contacts within the police and military organisations to pursue their personal ambitions in Asia's oldest democracy.<sup>75</sup> The AFP sees itself as a deserving, capable and equal partner of the civilian authority in managing a fractious society like the Philippines. This partnership is reflected in the civilian authorities' deference to the military in defence and military matters regarding internal security. The AFP expects the local government units to recognise the gravity of the insurgency problem to national security and the urgency of the counter-insurgency campaign.<sup>76</sup> The military also works with civilian government agencies in identifying, implementing and monitoring development projects in insurgency-affected areas. In many instances, it determines the type of civic action programmes to be undertaken. Lately, these programmes have expanded from the typical infrastructure and basic services delivery to community organising and even to the creation of a parallel development-planning agency—the NDSC.<sup>77</sup> The tasks of constructing school buildings, roads and the electrical system, and of managing schools are being conducted by the military without the help of national government agencies.<sup>78</sup> In essence, national security priorities are given precedence over the national and local government units' development programmes and projects.<sup>79</sup> Finally, the military wants civilian agencies to assume specific responsibilities in counter-insurgency, which is a multi-faceted security challenge that requires solutions beyond what the military can provide.<sup>80</sup> For the military, the current and sustained counter-insurgency campaign is the base policy on which the national government's peace and development agenda can be pursued.<sup>81</sup>

A prolonged counter-insurgency operation, however, compels the AFP to perform non-military functions that otherwise could have been



performed by civilian government agencies and even by non-governmental organisations. Since civilian and government functionaries seldom venture into insurgent controlled-territories, AFP units take on the roles of educators, health and social workers, and community organisers. For example, a Philippine Army unit in collaboration with the Department of Education's Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) held a five-day food-processing seminar for 356 households in a suburban area.<sup>82</sup> An army battalion also conducted dialogues with high school and college students to prevent them from being recruited by local communist cadres. Army units also extended medical services, livelihood training and information drives on drug abuse and more importantly, communist infiltration to informal settlers in the depressed areas of Metro Manila.<sup>83</sup> These undertakings, according to Dr. Arcala-Hall, "pushed the military into competitive, complementary or collaborative relationships with the government agencies and NGOs", which in the long run broadened "the scope of civilian actors and demands new mechanisms for military oversight beyond the traditional prism of national civilian control".<sup>84</sup>

Undoubtedly, this leadership role in counter-insurgency has made the AFP very influential in the government and caused the remilitarisation of Philippine society, and thereby created the prospect of a garrison state. As one noted analyst on Philippine civil-military relations observes:

The military can be best kept out of politics if civilian political leaders do not provide military men with a convenient excuse for being involved in politics, specifically by intervening in changes in political leadership. This means that political leaders must be able to govern well, both at the national and local level. Considering the military is observed to be a politicised armed force, some factions within the institution could be encouraged to attempt a takeover of the government if there are perceptions that the civilian government is incapable of governing and addressing certain social, political and economic issues confronting the nation.<sup>85</sup>

Whether this trend will foster a corporate belief that the military can effectively govern the strife-ridden Philippine society is, however, doubtful. Although it exerts a powerful influence vis-à-vis the civilian authorities, the AFP is constrained from assuming a dominant role in Philippine politics by four major factors.

1. Recognition that it is simply beyond its capability to construct an acceptable and viable political framework for governance and national development. Exposure to the society because of its counter-insurgency and civil-military functions has indeed led to the politicisation of the AFP. However, it also exposes the military to the country's socio-economic problems that it knows it cannot solve alone. Furthermore, the military's involvement in other functions beyond its core competence in the use of organised coercion against internal armed threats will strain its limited resources, thereby making it less efficient and effective in its vital function—counter-insurgency. This situation could also lead to a division among its officers and demoralisation within its ranks.
2. The existence of countervailing political structures that can limit the military's influence in Philippine politics. Prominent among these political structures is the Philippine Congress. The Philippine Congress's ability to act as a countervailing institution against the military was apparent when it prevented the AFP from affecting a modernisation programme in the 1990s. In the early 1990s, the AFP undertook an ambitious force modernisation programme to catch up with the conventional armed forces of most Southeast Asian militaries. The territorial dispute with China over the Spratlys in the mid-1990s drove the AFP to develop its conventional military capability. The People's Republic of China's promulgation of its territorial law claiming a large portion of the South China Sea in 1992 and the discovery of Chinese structures on Mischief Reef in 1995 were viewed by Manila as China's creeping territorial expansionism. The Philippine Congress, however, used its "power of the purse" to micromanage and delay the implementation of this modernisation programme until it was temporarily shelved because of the 1997 Asian financial crisis.<sup>86</sup> Congress showed its propensity to micromanage any efforts to reform the AFP.<sup>87</sup> The long-delayed 1995 AFP modernisation programme was largely formulated and guided by two legislative acts—Republic Act No. 7898 and Joint Resolution No. 28—and not by the strategic exigency faced by the Philippine military during the post-U.S.

bases period. Thus, for the modernisation programme, the Philippine Department of National Defence and the AFP relied on a meticulous and stingy Congress for limited funds. They also followed legalistic and tedious procedures for arms acquisition policies and processes. Despite these moves, the Philippine Congress placed constraints on the DND and exhibited a mindset that defence spending was a non-priority in the government's budget outlay.<sup>88</sup> These realities forced the AFP and the DND to address the legal, administrative and financial aspects of the modernisation programme.<sup>89</sup> Eventually, Filipino legislators appropriated a mere Php5 billion throughout the law's 15-year life cycle despite their commitment to allocate Php50 billion for the programme's first five-year phase (1995–2000). In February 2010, the law expired without the Philippine military being able to purchase a single weapons system that could support, let alone boost, its territorial defence capabilities. The failure of the AFP to modernise in the 1990s could be attributed partly to congressional reluctance to fund a very expensive but necessary public good—national security.

3. Awareness of the civil society's countervailing power. The Philippines has a long tradition of democratic representation with a very active and robust civil society. Although the civilian government seems fragile and susceptible to military influence, it has not yet experienced a major political crisis. The military acknowledges an existing strong opposition, both in the civilian government and civil society, against any authoritarian rule in which the military will play a central role. Moreover, the Philippine military is very much aware that its clout and involvement in the economy are more opportunistic and less regularised, making it extremely dependent on the civilian government for resources through the annual defence appropriation.<sup>90</sup>
4. The external factor. Any attempt by the military to overthrow and replace the civilian government will adversely affect the country's relations with its only strategic ally—the United States. This will automatically trigger the termination of American military assistance to the AFP and will further complicate its current logistical woes.<sup>91</sup>

## PROSPECTS FOR TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY DEMILITARISATION

For the present, the AFP is content with its partnership with the civilian government. Since it cannot simply take over the reins of government, it would be best for it to be concerned with the coercive aspect of twenty-first-century Philippine politics. As one defence analyst correctly observes: “Ideally, the AFP’s involvement in governance encompasses both the national and local levels. This could be construed as the AFP taking over the government. Let it be clear that the AFP has no intention of running the government.”<sup>92</sup> Recent developments, however, are undoing this partnership. Currently, the AFP, in the short term, confronts the insurgent movements, and in the long-term, the China challenge as evidenced by the Chinese naval presence in Philippine territorial waters and the PRC’s assertive territorial claims over the Spratly Islands.<sup>93</sup>

The Aquino Administration’s plan to pursue the AFP’s modernisation for territorial defence aims not only to improve Southeast Asia’s most ill-equipped military, but also to transform the context of twenty-first-century Philippine civil-military relations.<sup>94</sup> Giving the AFP the necessary equipment, technical expertise, training and role for external defence will arrest its involvement in domestic politics at the expense of the civilian government’s institutions. A military organisation focused on territorial defence needs to undergo education and training that will hone its skills, expertise and capability to secure the national territory against external threats rather than engage in constabulary functions and socio-economic activities.<sup>95</sup> Although these activities contribute to national development, they prevent the AFP, as a coercive institution, from managing organised violence against any possible security challenges in the form of other states. To ensure the return of what Samuel Huntington called “objective civilian control over the military”, the present Aquino government will do well to heed this advice:

The infusion of new combat equipment would pave the way for better appreciation of service members of their role in society. Operating advanced military equipment requires specialised knowledge and training. A military preoccupied with the technical aspects of soldiery would be less inclined and interested to dip its hands in political issues...<sup>96</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From 1972 to the early twenty-first century, the Philippines has experienced a cycle of militarisation, demilitarisation and remilitarisation. The

declaration of martial law in 1972 dramatically broadened the scope of the AFP in terms of manpower, budget and roles. This caused the rapid militarisation of Philippine society as reflected by the AFP's expanded roles: waging counter-insurgency campaigns against various insurgent groups; conducting civil-military operations all over the country; creating military tribunals to handle both military and civilian cases; and managing regional development units and government corporations.

The overthrow of the Marcos regime during the 1986 popular uprising saw the re-emergence of a democratic government headed by President Corazon Aquino. To fully restore democracy to the country, President Aquino demilitarised the society by removing AFP officers from government departments and corporations, initiating training and educational programmes to instil democratic ethos in military officers and enlisted personnel, retiring overstaying generals, and suppressing numerous military rebellions against her government. President Ramos continued the demilitarisation process by buttressing the socio-political bases of Philippine democracy and diverting the AFP's focus from internal security to territorial defence. Demilitarisation, however, was reversed in the aftermath of a military-backed mutiny that ousted President Estrada from the presidency in January 2001. His successor, President Arroyo ushered in an era of remilitarisation in the twenty-first century. She instructed the AFP to draft its *National Military Strategy 2001* to contain the country's domestic security challenges by 2010. Then she ordered the AFP to conduct an intense, focused and protracted counter-insurgency campaign that expanded once again the role and influence of the military in Philippine society.

The crucial challenge confronting the Aquino Administration is the re-installing of objective civilian control over a military that has become politicised and overly confident of its capability and status as an influential actor in the Philippine polity. This can be achieved if the present administration can successfully change the context of twenty-first-century Philippine civil-military relations. This involves weaning the military away from its leading role in the government's counter-insurgency campaign and financing the acquisition of the necessary materiel so that the AFP can concentrate on its primary function of territorial defence. These are Herculean tasks for the Aquino government given the insurgents' resilience in the past and the enormous resources

needed to modernise the most ill-equipped of all the Southeast Asian armed forces. However, putting the Philippine military in its original subordinate position vis-à-vis the civilian leadership will make it more responsive to the duly elected leaders' political direction and control and prevent the recurrence of militarisation. This will keep Philippine society from experiencing the endless cycle of militarisation, demilitarisation and remilitarisation in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

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**S**outh and Southeast Asia have undergone varied experiences with regard to the civil-military balance. The democratising trend has been very visible over time. But how exactly have post-military regimes fared in the region? This volume looks at the demilitarisation experience in five countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. The study demonstrates that the demilitarisation of governance is not just an event but a complex and often long-drawn-out process. It offers valuable lessons on the prospects for the embedding of democracy not only for the region examined but for civil-military relations generally, and indeed the authoritarian-democratic balance everywhere.



**S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL  
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

