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Indonesia's Armed Forces: Entrenched as a Political Institution



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A Research Paper

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Indonesia's Armed Forces: Entrenched as a Political Institution



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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by  Office
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**Indonesia's Armed Forces:
Entrenched as a
Political Institution**



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Summary

*Information available
as of 2 February 1984
was used in this report.*

As a political force in Indonesia, the armed forces are second only to President Soeharto. They have dominated the political scene for the past 17 years, and we see nothing on the immediate horizon to change this. In reward for the military's loyalty, Soeharto has advanced and protected its political and economic interests to the point that the military will be the key factor in the orderly transfer of power when Soeharto passes from the scene. The military's transition to a younger generation of leaders and an apparent willingness to accept more civilians in senior government positions could lead the military to a less visible role in future years, but it will continue to exercise ultimate authority on major policy issues.

The military will have the major voice in selecting a successor to President Soeharto:

- Upon Soeharto's death, the military leadership would settle on a successor from within its ranks.
- In the unlikely event Soeharto should retire, he will almost certainly choose a successor from among senior military officers.

No group, in our judgment, will be able to challenge the military's role as long as major fissures do not appear within the officer corps; we believe there is no threat to military unity.

- Opposition to the military's political role is concentrated among Muslim fundamentalists and a small number of political dissidents.
- Although many junior officers would prefer the armed forces to concentrate on professional military skills, they support a modified dual role for the military in civilian functions.

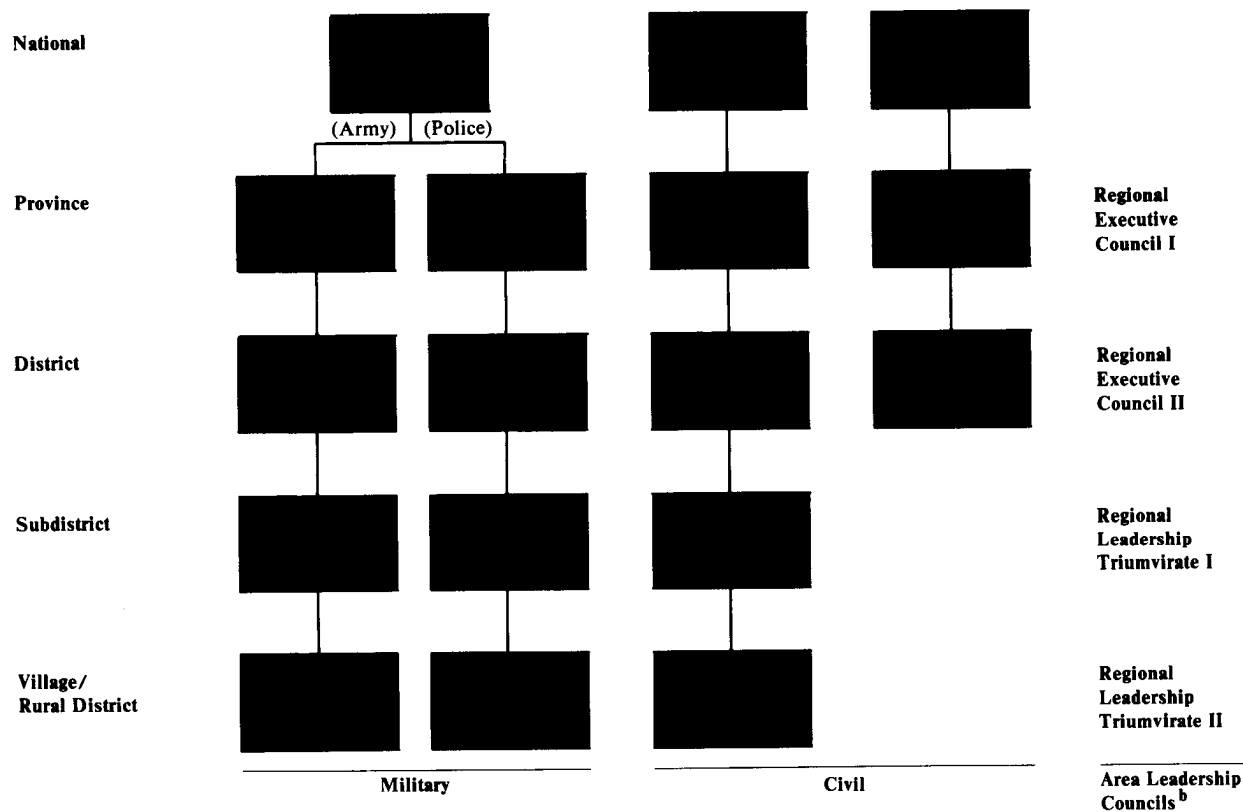


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Figure 1
Indonesia: Parallel Civil-Military Administrative Structure



^a Provincial and district military commanders are also head of the KOPKAMTIB (internal security) units at their respective levels.
^b Area leadership councils are made up of appropriate civil and military officials at each administrative level.

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Indonesia's Armed Forces: Entrenched as a Political Institution

Army officers have the guts, the leadership, the managerial skills, and they are very quick. They are trained to do things according to a certain system. [Some civilians have these skills] but I have the impression they are not very sure of themselves.

*Lieutenant General Soepardjo
Third Territorial Defense Command*

The Military's Political Roots

Then... The political role of the Indonesian military is rooted in its revolutionary experience against the Dutch. In 1945, Indonesian civilian politicians reluctantly acceded to the demands of student revolutionaries to legitimize existing youth defense units, creating the forerunner of today's armed forces. Indonesian military doctrine has emphasized this development. Because the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) were not created by civilian politicians as an instrument of their authority, but arose spontaneously from among the people, the military's political authority is derived from the people and not from the politicians, according to writers on military affairs.

ABRI's political role is further justified by its repeated interventions as guardian of independence and national unity. Many senior Indonesian officers believe the armed forces saved the revolution from a Communist revolt in 1948 and, after independence in 1949, from several regional rebellions and an insurrection by Islamic extremists. After the attempted Communist coup in 1965 and General Soeharto's assumption of power, the military was frequently the only trusted source of administrative personnel, giving it a role in the formerly civilian bureaucracy that it is only gradually relinquishing today.

And Now. Under President Soeharto, ABRI's political role has been reinforced by:

- Soeharto's commitment to the principle of *dwi-fungsi* (dual civilian-military functions).
- The acceptance of *dwi-fungsi* by the officer corps.
- Legislation enacted in 1982 that established the dual function as a mission for the armed forces.

- The military's domination of GOLKAR (the ruling political party), the parliament, and the bureaucracy.

President Soeharto's commitment to *dwi-fungsi* is the most critical of these factors. Because of Soeharto's continued backing, ABRI has become the single most important political institution next to the Presidency. For its part, the military has encouraged its own civic action role under the *dwi-fungsi* doctrine while entrusting economic development to the technocrats.

ABRI's Pervasive Role in Government

The military's control of the government extends from the president's office down through the villages. ABRI dominates both the senior bureaucracy and parliament, while at the provincial and local levels it not only occupies many civilian positions, but also maintains a parallel administrative structure with local civil authorities (see figure 1).

Domination of the Senior Bureaucracy. For the first time since independence, both the president and vice president are retired military men. In addition, the two most powerful men in Indonesia after Soeharto, ABRI Commander Murdani and State Secretary Sudharmono (who directs the bureaucracy), are military officers. Active or retired officers staff over half the senior bureaucratic posts. ABRI officers head the key Ministries of Defense, Justice, Home Affairs, and Manpower. The Attorney General's office is dominated by military men, and the Chief of the Supreme Court is a retired general. The military also controls major government enterprises such as Pertamina (the state oil company), Bulog (the state agency responsible for food imports and distribution), and numerous other state-owned corporations.

Control of Parliamentary Politics. ABRI dominates GOLKAR, the government party, which is a coalition representing labor, farmers, women, businessmen, civil servants, and the professions. Control is maintained

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ABRI Officers in the Senior Bureaucracy

Percent

	1967	1971	1981	1983
President	Military	Military	Military	Military
Vice President	Vacant	Vacant	Civilian	Military
Coordinating Ministers ^a	20	0	67	67
Ministers of State	NA	0	0	14
Department Ministers	44	22	47	43
Secretaries General	55	41	89	67
Inspectors General	NA	73	65	62
Directors General	36	36	35	29
Provincial Governors	80	80	56	52

^a The three Coordinating Ministers oversee policy implementation of several ministries. They do not have responsibility for the day-to-day operation of ministries, which is left to Department Ministers.

through military officers in leadership positions, and vital administrative support is furnished by the military to GOLKAR at the local level. In addition, ABRI directly participates in parliamentary legislative and electoral functions. ABRI has 75 permanently assigned seats out of parliament's 460 to compensate for the exclusion of the military from voting in elections.¹ The military also has 230 out of 920 seats in the People's Consultative Congress (the MPR), which meets every five years and is responsible for electing the president and establishing national policy guidelines. ABRI's influence within GOLKAR and the number of seats it controls in the MPR, both directly and through the government party, give it an effective veto over the choice of a presidential successor or any change to the Constitution that could affect the military's political status. [redacted]

Influence at the Provincial and Local Level. The military controls provincial and local governments two ways:

- A vertical military command structure paralleling civil institutions down to the village level.

¹ Despite the prohibition on voting, ABRI participates in parliamentary campaigns largely through surrogates such as the retired officers' association and the military wives' organization. The military also keeps a close eye on the political scene, passing on information that may be of advantage to GOLKAR. [redacted]

- Area leadership councils linking the military structure with civil and police authorities at the district level. [redacted]

Within the civil administration, provincial governors and district heads frequently are active or retired military officers. When Soeharto installed a new Cabinet in March 1983, the number of provincial governorships held by military men fell by one, to 14 of the 27 provinces. Although down from a peak of 21 posts in 1975, the military nonetheless retains control of the most important provinces. On the island of Java, all the provinces except Yogyakarta are governed by active or retired officers (see figure 2). Sumatera Utara (North Sumatra), Sulawesi Utara (North Sulawesi), and Maluku are also governed by ABRI officers, in part because of a postindependence history of rebellion against Jakarta's authority. [redacted] even in the provinces governed by civilians the governors play a secondary role to military commanders, whose influence is enhanced by their internal security responsibilities. [redacted]

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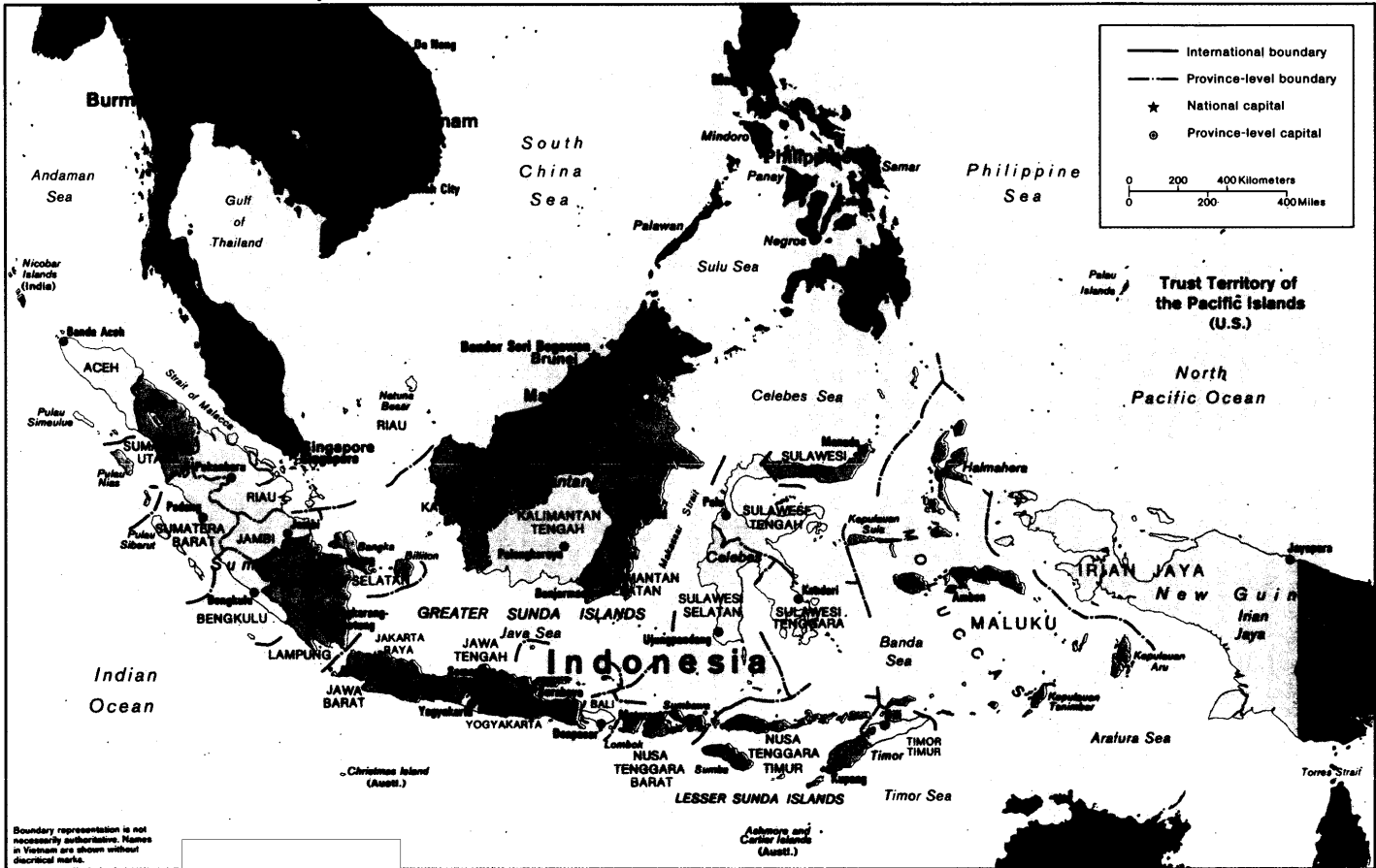
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Figure 2
Province-Level Units With Military Officers as Governors



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The military extends its influence at the local level through civic action programs, the most publicized of which is the ABRI *Masuk Desa* (Armed Forces Entering the Villages) program. Since inauguration of this program in August 1980, 13 operations have been conducted in which company-sized units (approximately 150 men) assist in a variety of projects, including the construction of roads, bridges, and irrigation facilities; the repair of mosques, schools, and homes; and the provision of medical care, entertainment, and political indoctrination. The program combines village development with the strengthening of civilian-military relations, particularly on the part of younger officers. Although proclaimed a success, according to public statements by Indonesian officials, the program has recently been affected by budget cutbacks. According to General Murdani, from now on only troops locally available will be used, in order to keep costs down. Nonetheless, Murdani believes that it is necessary for officers to move around to different projects to ensure they receive wide regional exposure to the people. [redacted]

The Military's Financial Interests

ABRI's major stake in the Indonesian economy not only provides necessary income for the military, but rewards for officers and the military's supporters (see appendix). Many senior officers and their wives have links to various enterprises. General Murdani, for example, reportedly has considerable financial interests in East Timor that are fostered by his role of overseeing military operations there against rebels fighting for independence. The Soeharto family has extensive business connections throughout the country, some of which are linked to military enterprises. [redacted]

[redacted] despite such widespread abuses as exploiting businesses and institutionalizing corruption, the military's involvement in the economy is useful because it contributes managerial skills to business enterprises. Moreover, a military backer can provide the necessary support to promote a firm's development and help overcome bureaucratic hurdles. Thus the military's symbiotic relationship with the business community can facilitate growth and, to some extent, efficiency by cutting redtape and reducing legal obstacles. [redacted]

Negative Views on Dual Function Range From . . . Reservations Among Younger Officers. . . The majority of the officer corps supports the dual function, benefiting from the economic and political influence it confers. [redacted] some younger officers, lacking the revolutionary experience, question the doctrine. To compensate for their lack of experience, senior military officers have sought to instill a commitment to *dwi-fungsi* among the younger generation through training courses. US military observers in Jakarta have reported that the largest block of instruction at the ABRI staff school (SESKOAD) concentrates on "nationbuilding," emphasizing among other things the nonsectarian state ideology (*Pancasila* ²), and national political-social-economic development. Although we believe the training process has generally instilled an appreciation for the social-political role of the military among younger officers, there are signs that many of them believe modifications are necessary. US and foreign military observers report that many younger officers place a greater emphasis on military professionalism and favor a reduced role in civilian affairs and politics. [redacted]

Several officers who have recently assumed senior command positions within ABRI also share some of the reservations of their juniors but insist on retaining a social-political role for ABRI. [redacted] Army Chief of Staff Rudini has said that ABRI should encourage local civilian authorities to take over some of the military's social development functions. He strongly criticized those political and military figures who view *dwi-fungsi* as a legal justification to meddle in civilian affairs at any level. Even ABRI Commander Murdani has publicly said that, although he accepts the military's dual function, he would prefer to see it reduced in order to concentrate on creating a professional fighting force. [redacted]

² *Pancasila* is the name given to the Indonesian state ideology based upon five principles: belief in one God, humanitarianism, national unity, populism, and social justice. [redacted]

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To Open Opposition. Both fundamentalist Muslims and a small group of political dissidents oppose the military's involvement in politics. The fundamentalist Muslims seek to establish an Islamic state and are suspicious of the government and military in which Christians, such as General Murdani, hold a disproportionate number of leading positions.⁴ For its part, the military fears Islamic fundamentalism.

even though fundamentalists are only a fraction of the 30 percent of the general populace who are orthodox Muslims. The older officers have not forgotten—nor do they let the younger officers forget—the savage fighting in the 1950s and early 1960s against Islamic extremists who rebelled in an attempt to establish an Islamic state in Jawa Barat (West Java) and several other regions of Indonesia.

The Committee of Fifty, a vocal coalition, has repeatedly called for a severe restriction, if not elimination, of the military's dual function. The Committee, founded in 1980, consists of retired military officers, politicians, academics, and religious leaders who have united in widely publicized, but so far ineffective, opposition to the Soeharto government. Led by the former governor of Jakarta, retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Ali Sadikin, the group has called for a return to civilian government, increased power for a more representative parliament, and a reduction in the economic power of Chinese businessmen associated with political and military figures.⁵

most Committee members believe that ABRI's dual function must be phased out for the good of Indonesian society and the

⁴ Nowhere is this sectarian disparity more noticeable than among SESKOAD graduates, reputedly the single most important source of government leaders in Indonesia. Christians made up 17 percent of the 1982-83 graduating class, although they account for only 5 percent of the national population. The contrast in some earlier classes has been higher, according to a US Army officer who attended SESKOAD.

⁵ Retired military officers form a significant portion of the active membership and maintain contact with some high government officials. Indeed, State Secretary Sudharmono in the past has requested the Committee's input in developing the nation's five-year policy objectives.

morale of the armed forces. although the complete elimination of the *dwi-fungsi* role has met with reservations among the former military members of the Committee, younger Muslim or nationalist members of the Committee want a rapid elimination of the military's political role.

Looking Ahead

We expect the military will retain its command of domestic politics through the end of the decade because of Soeharto's strong support for ABRI's political role, ABRI's desire to safeguard its economic interests, and the lack of any effective political opposition. Nonetheless, we expect a gradual trend toward greater civilian visibility in the government to continue as ABRI limits its role to more traditional security-related ministries and a few key posts in other ministries. This will enable ABRI to maintain its influence within the government while allowing civilians a larger role in day-to-day management.

We believe that the reservations of younger officers about the dual role will have little effect upon the extent of ABRI's political role as long as Soeharto remains in office.⁶ If the newly emerging emphasis on military professionalism continues into the post-Soeharto era, however, the gradual trend away from direct military involvement in running the government may accelerate.

We also believe that ABRI will maintain its dominant role in GOLKAR, despite public statements by GOLKAR officials to the contrary and several recent moves that on the surface point to a greater civilian role in party affairs. The Third National GOLKAR Party Congress in 1983 named State Secretary Sudharmono chairman, in what many domestic observers

⁶ Although we believe a coup by younger officers to be most unlikely under present circumstances, they could be tempted to oust civilian politicians and take direct control should Soeharto adopt the trappings of Sukarno's personal rule, thus distancing himself from both the people and the armed forces, and government policies become discredited by worsening social strains and economic hardship. Such intervention would reverse the trend toward a less visible military role in government and could lead to popular disaffection toward a new regime, which might rely more on coercion than consensus for its authority.

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A New Triumvirate?

The dominant role of the military ensures it a major voice in the presidential succession. Should Soeharto die or be disabled while in office, we believe the most likely succession outcome would be for a triumvirate of the following to run the government until a single successor could be chosen by a small group of senior officers and approved by the MPR. [redacted]

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Gen. (Ret.) Umar Wirahadikusumah

As Vice President, he is the constitutionally designated successor to Soeharto until a special session of the MPR can elect a new president. According to US Embassy officials, Umar has no apparent political ambitions. In the event of Soeharto's death, Umar would probably be acceptable to the military as an interim president or as a figurehead with real power exercised by Murdani or Sudharmono or both men working together. [redacted]

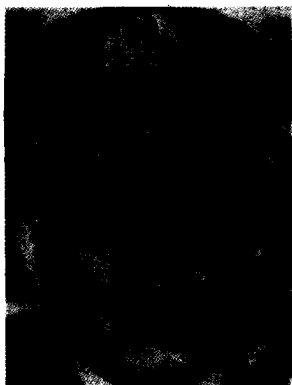
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Gen. Leonardus Benjamin Murdani

The first of a new generation of military officers to hold the key position of ABRI commander in chief, he is an ambitious professional soldier with close personal ties to Soeharto. A Catholic in a predominantly Muslim country, Murdani's prospects for accession to the Presidency seem remote. But as both internal security and military intelligence chief, in addition to his control of ABRI, he is in an excellent position to act as "kingmaker," if not "king," should the Presidency fall vacant before 1988. [redacted]

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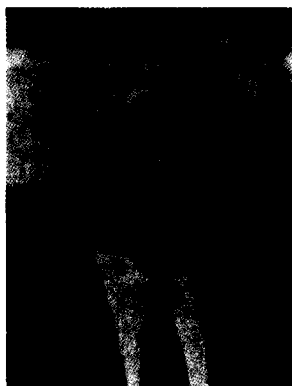


Lieutenant General (Ret.) Sudharmono

A military lawyer, he is one of Soeharto's most trusted aides. As head of the bureaucracy, and now leader of GOLKAR, Sudharmono has gradually expanded his influence within the government. He appears to have established an effective working relationship with Murdani. We believe that Sudharmono would probably maintain the constitutional succession while consolidating his position, perhaps in concert with Murdani. [redacted] one plan in circulation within the government calls for Sudharmono to assume power until the MPR meets. [redacted]

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believe is an effort to enhance GOLKAR's credibility as a political party. The Congress also appointed a prominent civilian, the brother of the current Foreign Minister, as Secretary General and moved to allow participation on an individual basis rather than participation by groups in an attempt to broaden the party's civilian base. The US Embassy and some foreign observers, however, believe that these changes are largely cosmetic because the Congress also adopted a resolution reaffirming GOLKAR's support for *dwi-fungsi*.

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The dominant role of the military ensures it has the major voice in the presidential succession. Should Soeharto die or be incapacitated, Vice President Umar would assume the reins of government under the Constitution until the MPR can meet in special session to elect a successor, probably from within the ranks of the senior military. In the unlikely event Soeharto decides to retire at the end of his term in 1988, when he will be 67 years old, he would almost certainly name his successor. He has been careful not to disclose any choice he may be considering, but we strongly believe it would be a senior military officer.

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Appendix

Military Economic Activity

The military's commercial enterprises have several common characteristics. They are financed primarily from resources acquired as a result of ABRI's political influence in such areas as import licenses, forestry concessions, and civilian use of military storage facilities and vehicles. They are established largely to raise funds to meet the shortfall between the ABRI budget and actual operating costs of military commands and units. For the most part, wholly owned military companies are small and concentrated in trade, transport, construction, and warehousing. When military officers are involved in large enterprises, they are usually junior partners in joint ventures with foreign or Chinese firms. In some instances, the military is compensated for protecting Chinese business groups.



Military commercial enterprises fall into one of five groups:

- *Command-Integrated Enterprises.* Originally established to handle the supply needs of the armed services, these have diversified into such areas as rice milling and distributing construction equipment.
- *Military Cooperatives.* There are four cooperatives, one for each branch of service, which are involved in a variety of enterprises. The Navy's cooperative, for example, has financial interests in fisheries, tailoring, plantations, and a golf course.
- *Civic Mission Enterprises.* Focusing on the construction of public works (schools, mosques, and roads), these firms largely provide employment to local inhabitants rather than make money. Often they have expanded into regional or national enterprises.
- *Regional Military Enterprises.* Set up by regional commands and divisions, they have been established at the provincial, subprovincial, and district military command levels. Each of the main army divisions, particularly those on Java, controls business conglomerates with interests ranging from copra processing to steel fabricating and from tourism to trucking. For example, PT Propelat, one of the largest corporations in the country, with interests in engineering, construction, vehicle assembly, and real estate, is associated with the Siliwangi Division headquartered in Bandung, West Java.
- *Military Firms.* Similar to the regional enterprises, these are primarily Jakarta-based firms, established by the services. The most prominent of these firms is Tri Usaha Bhakti, a holding company organized in 1969 by the Defense Department to assist foreign companies having difficulty finding a local partner. It is run by retired servicemen and has shares in at least 38 joint ventures.

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