

PERSPECTIVE

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Jokowi and His Generals: Appeasement and Personal Relations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Jokowi will be the first civilian president to complete his full five-year term in the post-Soeharto era. A significant factor for this achievement has been his strategy to accommodate the military's interests to keep them on his side. Five years into his presidency, Jokowi has shown little interest in reforming the military.
- As reelection time draws near, Jokowi is tightening his relationship with the military, by giving key appointments to commanders within his personal network. The recent TNI reshuffles saw the ascendancy of officers who have had personal relations with the president since early in his political career.
- Because of the *reformasi* law abolishing the military's dual-function (*dwifungsi*) practice of placing military officers in civilian posts, the TNI has a surplus of many generals and colonels who are unable to hold substantive positions.
- The Jokowi administration has tried to address this problem by expanding military structures, and raising the level of ranks for various posts.
- These policies are basically efforts at appeasing the officer corps. His more recent proposal to put active military officers in 60 civilian posts has been criticized as an attempt to revive the military's *dwi-fingsi*.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a simple fact in Indonesian politics which most people overlook. Since the fall of the New Order in May 1998, Indonesia has had five presidents, four of whom were civilians. Apart from current president Joko Widodo (Jokowi), none of these civilian presidents managed to serve their full five-year term.

President Jokowi is positioned to be the first full-term civilian president. If he is reelected and successfully serves another five years, he will have made history. Not only will he be the first civilian president to have governed the longest, his record will carry important weight because he is democratically elected.

However, some of Jokowi's successes as president have been determined by his relationship with the military and by how he manages that relationship. One thing is clear, five years into his presidency, Jokowi has not shown any interest in reforming the military. He also has little interest in building democratic institutions. Instead, his administration is becoming increasingly authoritarian.¹

On the surface, Jokowi appears to treat the military like an independent institution. A closer look, however, shows that the president is treading carefully. In the early years of his presidency, he tried to embrace members of the military elite. Most were not his appointees, and he tried to buy their loyalty in order to avoid unnecessary confrontations.

As reelection time draws near, Jokowi is ever more engaged with the military. He is imposing more control, compared to his first three years in office, and has appointed military commanders within his personal network. The recent TNI reshuffles saw the ascendancy of officers who have personal relations with the president. The reshuffles also displayed the influence of two of the president's closest confidants, Luhut Binsar Panjaitan and A.M. Hendropriyono. Relatives of these retired generals are now occupying the most important positions within the army.

At the same time, the Jokowi administration has to manage the expectations of military personnel. For months, the media in Jakarta have been buzzing with news about hundreds of mid- and high-ranking officers whose careers have stalled.

This Perspective discusses how Jokowi has managed his relationship with the military; how his administration deals with the excess of military officers; and assesses the broad consequences of his approach to the military for Indonesia's democracy.

THE MILITARY'S STRUCTURAL PROBLEM

In recent years, the Indonesian military has been plagued with serious personnel management problems. The TNI has a surplus of middle- and high-ranking officers, resulting in many generals and colonels not having jobs and positions. This problem is a consequence of both New Order legacies and institutional changes introduced during the early years of Indonesia's democratic transition.

During the New Order, the Indonesian armed forces (the military and police) had dual functionality (*Dwifungsi*)—as a national defense force and as a socio-political force. Therefore, a military officer could be assigned to a civilian post (*dikaryakan*) without giving up his military career. Most of the current military elites were educated under this doctrine, graduating from the military academy with aspirations to end their careers as civilian officials – as ministers, governors, regents, parliamentarians, or in positions in civilian bureaucracies.

In the *Reformasi* era, however, *kekaryaan* was abolished and the military remains barred from politics. A military officer who wishes to assume a civilian position must retire and give up his/her military career. Since 2004, with the issuance of Law No. 34, the military was completely kept out of politics. They gave up their representation in national and local parliaments.² As a result, many military officers who could have previously been employed in civilian positions are now without jobs. The military organizations are unable to accommodate these officers.

Other provisions of Law No. 34/2004 have also impacted the increasing number of officers without jobs. Article 53 of the law increases the retirement age for middle- and high-ranking officers from 55 to 58 years, while the age of retirement for enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers is set at 53 years.

This problem has emerged since the days of the SBY administration. According to one observer, in 2010, hundreds of Army colonels had their career on hold because there were not enough positions within the Army.³ From 2011 to 2017, the Army had a surplus of around 30 generals and more than 330 colonels.

The officer surplus deteriorated further in 2017. There were then 141 TNI generals (or 22% of all generals) who did not hold any positions. Of this number, 63 were Army generals; 45 Navy, and 37 Air Force. The number of colonels who did not have jobs was 790 (22.6% of all colonel-rank officers). Of these, 469 were Army colonels; 214 were from the Navy; and 140 from the Air Force.⁴

The Jokowi administration has tried to address this situation. In 2016, Jokowi issued Presidential Regulation (Perpres No. 62) that expanded the military organization so it could absorb the excess officers. The proliferation of military organizations was apparent in the expansion of the Army's territorial structures. Under Jokowi, the Army created several new territorial commands. In Papua, the Army split Jayapura-based Kodam XVII/Cendrawasih and created Kodam XVIII/Kasuari in Manokwari. It also created new units under regional commands.⁵

In the last year of SBY's tenure, the Army introduced a new classification of Korem (Military Resort Command). A Korem that is considered as strategic for the national defense system is now classified as Type A. This Korem is led by a brigadier general. A less strategic Korem is classified as Type B and is commanded by a senior colonel.

The Jokowi administration broadened the definition of Type A Korem. All Korem in major cities in Indonesia are now considered to be Type A, which means that around half of the 44 Korem in Indonesia are now Type A Korem.⁶ The army also increased the status of several Kodim (District Military Command), a territorial command equal to district level in

civilian bureaucracy. A Kodim that is deemed strategic is commanded by a colonel, while a less strategic Kodim is commanded by a lieutenant colonel.

Other than the proliferation of military organizations, there is also an effort to raise the level of rank needed to hold a certain position. Previously, the position of inspector at Kostrad for example was held by a colonel. Now it is held by a brigadier general. The inspector now has a deputy, and that position is assumed by a colonel.

These policies are obviously aimed at creating jobs for jobless generals and colonels. They also paved the way to give promotions to senior colonels from the Military Academy Class 1988 to 1992 whose careers stalled because there had not been enough positions within the military.⁷ This policy, however, failed to resolve the problem. The increase in officers that need to be employed continues to exceed the number of jobs created through expansion of the military organizations.

The latest initiative has been the most controversial. Jokowi proposed to employ these officers in the civilian bureaucracy. "One- to three-star military officers can serve in the 60 positions and colonels can fill (some) of the positions (and will be) promoted to star ranks," the president has said.⁸

This plan drew the ire of human rights and democracy activists. His critics said the president wanted to bring the military's dual-function system back into play.⁹ As a civilian president, Jokowi has tried to appease the military by having officers take civilian posts as a way to solve their personnel mismanagement problems.

BUILDING PERSONAL RELATIONS

Under Jokowi, TNI's organizational structure expanded. But such expansion of the military bureaucracy has not done enough to absorb the number of officers who need jobs and promotions. As a consequence, competition for jobs and positions within the military has also increased.

In the midst of this fierce competition, Jokowi has chosen to fill the military's strategic and top positions with officers who have built personal relations with him and his inner circles. In his early days in office, Jokowi had chosen not to become involved with the military's internal affairs. He kept his predecessor's appointee, Gen. Moeldoko (Military Academy or MA class 1981), as commander of the Indonesian armed forces despite a mishap during the 2014 presidential campaign.¹⁰ Later, Jokowi appointed Moeldoko as his chief of staff after developing a positive personal relationship with him.¹¹

Jokowi also kept another SBY appointee, Gen. Gatot Nurmantyo (MA class 1982). Nurmantyo was the army chief of staff replacing Gen. Budiman, who was fired by Moeldoko. When Moeldoko had to retire in mid-2015, Jokowi hesitantly elevated Gen. Gatot Nurmantyo to armed forces commander. Unlike Moeldoko who never challenged Jokowi, Nurmantyo never hid his ambition to pursue higher office.¹² He openly used his office to build political capital. He staged speaking circuits across campuses in Indonesia and gave lectures mostly on a single topic, 'proxy wars' by the world's powers against Indonesia.

Nurmantyo's most decisive moment came during the demonstration of Aksi Bela Islam (Action to Defend Islam) on December 12, 2016 (famously known as 212). The rally, attended by hundreds of thousands of Islamists, demanded jail time for Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), a Jokowi ally, for blasphemy. Nurmantyo mobilized TNI troops to confront the demonstration. He accompanied Jokowi to meet demonstrators by wearing a hajj cap. It was the first time a member of the military elite appeared in public without his formal military hat. As a result, sympathy from Muslims soared for Nurmantyo, and his presidential prospects increased.

In December 2017, Jokowi replaced Nurmantyo with Air Force Chief-of-Staff Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto. Jokowi had known Tjahjanto since he was commander of the Adi Sumarno Air Base in Solo at the time when Jokowi was mayor of that city.¹³ In 2015-2016 Hadi Tjahjanto served as Jokowi's military secretary.¹⁴ Under Jokowi, his career climbed very fast. In January 2017, he became air force chief and ten months later, Jokowi appointed him commander of the Indonesian armed forces.

In Indonesia, it is widely held that an officer's personal relations with powerful politicians will determine promotion to a strategic post. There is a popular belief that an officer will have his career determined by his merit and professional achievements until he reaches the rank of colonel. After that his elevation to the rank of general, and promotion to a strategic position, is more a matter of politics.

Jokowi's presidency has exhibited this tendency, and he has appointed officers whom he knows well, have worked with him, or have proven loyal to him.¹⁵

The cases of Gen. Luhut Binsar Panjaitan (MA 1970) and Gen. AM Hendropriyono (MA 1967), two retired generals who are Jokowi's closest confidantes also illustrate this trait. These retired generals put their sons-in-law in the most important positions in the army. Gen. Hendropriyono's son-in-law is now chief of staff of the army and Gen. Panjaitan's son-in-law is commander of the presidential guards (*Paspampres*).

Hendropriyono's son-in-law, Gen. Andika Perkasa (MA 1986), has had the most impressive career path in the Indonesian Army in recent times. His military career is very closely related to that of his father-in-law. In 2002, as a Kopassus soldier, Andika arrested Al-Qaeda terrorist suspect Omar Al-Farouq in Bogor. The arrest was reportedly under the order of his father-in-law who served as Head of the National Intelligence Agency.¹⁶ His rise to being the Army's chief of staff also shows the importance of personal relationships with influential political figures.

From 2004 to 2011, Andika was studying in the United States.¹⁷ His military career rose meteorically when Jokowi came to power. In 2013, Andika was still a colonel but, within 11 months, by 2014, he was Major General and serving as commander of presidential security details (*Paspampres – Pasukan Pengaman Presiden*). It took Andika Perkasa only four years to reach the rank of a full general.¹⁸

A special promotion was also given Major General Maruli Simanjuntak (MA 1992), the son-in-law of Luhut Panjaitan. He started his career at Special Forces Command (Kopassus) and was recruited into Jokowi's security details (*Paspampres*) in 2015 as commander of

Group A. He served briefly as Korem commander in Solo, Jokowi's birthplace. In 2017, he became deputy commander of Paspampres and then commander of that unit in November 2018. He only needed 19 months to rise from the rank of colonel to major general.

CONCLUSION

Over the last four years, we have been able to observe how the Jokowi administration manages civil-military relations. As with the previous president, Jokowi has also had to face the problem of a high number of middle- and high-ranking officers being jobless.

The president tried several policies to address this problem. He expanded the military organizations and new structures, and he raised the level of rank required to hold certain positions. All of these policies were taken to appease the military. The president is aware that the military can be his biggest political threat. The political adventure of Gen. Gatot Nurmantyo when he served as TNI Commander proved that.

Jokowi even plans to expand his appeasement strategy by opening up civilian bureaucracies for unemployed officers. He proposes sixty civilian posts for military officers, but will need to revise Law No. 34/2004 to make that possible.¹⁹ Some of his critics have however claimed that the plan is a threat to democracy.²⁰

Against this backdrop of hundreds of jobless officers, Jokowi has at the same time stepped up his control of the military. He has built up a personal network of trusted officers who had worked with him since early in his political career. He also picked relatives of his trusted confidantes to fill strategic positions in the Army. This is in itself against the military's principle of meritocracy. No doubt, despite the military being banned from politics, Jokowi knows full well that the armed forces are still the most important political player in Indonesia.

¹ Thomas P. Power (2018) Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 54:3, 307-338, DOI: 10.1080/00074918.2018.1549918

² Although Law No. 34/2004 banned the military from politics, there are some loopholes in it. Article 7, Section 1, for example, states that the military can conduct a "military operation other than war" (*operasi militer selain perang*, or OMSP), which includes a wide range of military operations starting from combating separatist movements, rebellion, and terrorism to assisting police and local government.

³ Evan A. Laksmana, "Military personnel problems need more than quick fixes," *The Jakarta Post*: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/02/01/military-personnel-problems-need-more-than-quick-fixes.html>

⁴ Brigjen TNI Sisriadi (Sekretaris Ditjen Kuathan Kemhan), "Upaya Menyelesaikan Masalah Kelebihan Pati Dan Kolonel Secara Menyeluruh Dan Permanen," *Majalah Wira*, Vol. 71, No. 55, March-April 2018.

⁵ The expansion of these combat units has already been included in the Indonesian Defense Strategic Plan II (2015-2019).

⁶ <https://www.detikperistiwa.com/news-58167/peningkatan-status-korem-kolonel-jadi-brigjen.html>
Accessed on April 5, 2019.

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http://www.portalindonesianews.com/posts/view/2653/danrem_dikuasai_kolonel_angkatan_1990_an_anak_try_sutrisno_dan_menantu_luhut_bersaing_jadi_jenderal Accessed on April 5, 2019.

⁸ <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesias-military-demands-more-positions-in-ministries-and-state-institutions> Accessed on April 5, 2019.

⁹ <https://koran.tempo.co/read/440189/sejengkal-lagi-dwifungsi> Accessed on April 5, 2019.

¹⁰ During the 2014 presidential campaign, Moeldoko sacked the army chief of staff, Gen. Budiman (MA class 1978) and replaced him with Gen. Gatot Nurmantyo. Budiman's dismissal occurred because of the involvement of the lower ranking army officer in collecting data on voters' preferences. Budiman argued that the 'data collection' was valid because the Army was still carrying out its territorial functions. Moeldoko viewed this as interfering with civil political affairs. Budiman's firing was met by protests from Jokowi's campaign team.

¹¹ Jokowi made Moeldoko a marriage guardian (*wali*) at his daughter's wedding. In November 2018, close to his reelection campaign, he replaced Teten Masduki, his former activist's chief of staff, with Moeldoko.

¹² <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/an-indonesian-generals-political-aspirations/> Accessed on April 5, 2019

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-42233872> Accessed on April 5, 2019.

¹⁴ <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/15/07/27/ns55yt334-hadi-tjahjanto-promosi-jadi-sekretaris-militer-presiden-jokowi> Accessed on April 5, 2019

¹⁵ One military observer has noted that most of the officers who had been in contact with Jokowi since his time as Mayor of Solo now have their careers secured if not accelerated. See, Aris Santoso, "Jokowi dan Jejaring Perwira Solo," Tirta.id: <https://tirta.id/jokowi-dan-jejaring-perwira-solo-cLNs>

¹⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2005/11/18/foreign-network-at-front-of-cias-terror-fight/b15b27dd-8de2-441e-9eb5-8509770a1d53/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.87fb4e676a3c Accessed on April 5, 2019.

¹⁷ He earned three master degrees in three US universities: Norwich University in Vermont, National Defense University, Washington DC, and The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, George Washington University, Washington DC. On his education and his rise to prominence in 2014, see: <https://indoprogress.com/2014/11/andika-perkasa-jejak-langkah-pengawal-presiden/>.

¹⁸ Under a normal circumstance, an officer will serve in a post for a maximum three years.

¹⁹ <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190129140134-20-364709/jokowi-tambah-60-ruang-jabatan-bagi-jenderal-tni> Accessed on April 5, 2019.

²⁰ <https://nasional.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/hukum/pnz5yn409/kritik-rencana-kembalinya-dwifungsi-tni-aktivis-ditangkap> Accessed on April 5, 2019.

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