
RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON THE INDONESIAN MILITARY

Jun Honna. *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia.* London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 300 pp.

Damien Kingsbury. *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military.* London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 280 pp.

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If one were to erect a monument to commemorate Indonesia's much-celebrated "reformasi" (reformation) and transition from authoritarian rule, the motto might well read "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." Removing Suharto from power was certainly one step in the direction of democratization, but it was by no means sufficient. Meaningful democratization would also require fundamental changes to the pillars of his authoritarian rule. Five years after Suharto's resignation, despite uncertainty, internal conflicts, and temporary setbacks, the central pillar of the New Order—the Indonesian military—has carried out internal consolidation and re-emerged as one of the most powerful institutions in the country. Two recent books published by RoutledgeCurzon Press explore the changing position of the military during and after Suharto's New Order.

Kingsbury's book, *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military*, seeks "to indicate or to reinforce the idea of the existence of a pattern or patterns of behavior" on the part of the Indonesian military "over a long period of time, despite what appear to be external changes and short-term rationalisations of particular events." (Kingsbury, p. 3) "The central thesis of this book," the author writes,

is that the state of the Republic of Indonesia is not viable without the active involvement of the TNI in its political and security activities, which are inextricably linked.... The state and the TNI's current role within it are mutually dependent: the state cannot maintain its territorial integrity without unity being imposed by the TNI, and the TNI cannot exist in its present form without the demands of a potentially or actually fragmented state. (ibid., p. 12)

This argument is developed in six chapters, with the titles "The problematic role of the TNI" (covering philosophical origins, military doctrine, and state organization); "Context, continuity and change" (on theoretical issues of power, empire, and militarization of the state under Sukarno and Suharto); "The functional structure of the TNI" (combines description of the service branches with anecdotal material from Aceh,

East Timor, and Irian Jaya); "Factions, reform and reassertion" (on the political position and role of the military during Indonesia's partial transition from authoritarian rule); "The political economy of the TNI" (covering military-business links); and a concluding chapter "The more things change"

Unfortunately, the book is marred by a wide range of errors. There are hundreds of distracting, incorrect spellings. Some of these are of ordinary English words and names ("furore" instead of "furor," "posses" instead of "possess," "Benedict" instead of "Benedict," etc.); others are of Indonesian words ("Ordre" rather than "Orde," "Baden" rather than "Badan," "Termimpin" instead of "Terpimpin," "Permetsa" instead of "Permesta," "puti" instead of "putih," etc.) and proper names ("Wiraha di Kusumah" instead of "Wirahadikusumah," "Ryamisard" instead of "Ryamizard," "Yayak" instead of "Yayat," etc.). Still others are Portuguese words and names ("Joao" rather than "João," "Gusmao" instead of "Gusmão," "Uniao Democratca de Timor" instead of "União Democrática Timorensê") and even Tetun words ("Mahau" instead of "mauhu"). Further confusion stems from the haphazard listing in the glossary, in which full names of some acronyms are provided but not others. There are also a host of poor and incorrect translations of Indonesian acronyms and terms. "Angkatan Darat" is at times translated as "Army" and other times as "Land Force," "Oknum" meaning "rogue," is misleadingly translated as "'involved'/military gangster," and "sewewang-wenang" is translated as "arbitrary ruthlessness."

More worrisome is that the seventy-three page chapter on the structure of the military misrepresents many of the most basic features of the Indonesian military. For example, the author explains that:

each Kodam is divided into smaller administrative units, each of which corresponds to one of the civil administrative divisions, as follows: Military Resort (Garrison) Command (Komando Resort Militer—Korem), with at least one battalion, which corresponds to the sub-provincial district (*kabupaten*), Military District Command (Komando Distrik Militer – Kodim), which corresponds to the sub-district (*kecamatan*), and Military Area Command (Komando Rayon Militer—Koramil), which corresponds to the local level (*kelurahan*). (*ibid.*, p. 85)

Garrisons, of course, are not Korem but are part of the Kodam. Furthermore, Korem generally correspond to either a province (as in Bengkulu or Bali) or the old Dutch residencies, not to *kabupaten*; Kodim correspond to Districts, not *kecamatan*, and Koramil correspond to *kecamatan*, not *kelurahan*. But disregarding his own explanation, the author then claims that there were thirteen Koramil in East Timor, when in fact there were thirteen Kodim. Basic confusion also arises over Kostrad (which the author claims is "stationed throughout the archipelago," when in fact Kostrad units are all headquartered on Java with the exception of the 3rd Airborne Brigade, which is based in South Sulawesi) and Kopassus. (The author incorrectly claims that "SGI" was part of Kopassus and that Group V is equivalent to Detasemen 81, and offers the bizarre explanation that "[t]he involvement of Kopassus in East Timor dates back to the very first days of Indonesia's involvement in the territory, and the involvement of its forerunner, Kopassandha, goes back even further to before Indonesia's invasion in December 1975." [*ibid.*, p. 115]). Equally serious is the author's assertion that in 1999

the territorial structure was expanded from the previous ten Kodam to seventeen Kodam. In fact, to date only two new Kodam have been created, one in Aceh and the other covering the provinces of Maluku and North Maluku.

Much of this confusion may stem from the author's sources. He mostly disregards the large body of solid research on the Indonesian military, and often misrepresents those studies that are cited. Over one-third of the sources cited in the bibliography are from the print media, of which the most commonly cited is the *Jakarta Post* online. As the author explains in the introduction, he also relies heavily on his own interviews and interactions in East Timor, Aceh, Papua, Ambon, and elsewhere. The author's reliance on the media and interviews leads to a book that is chock full of the phrases "was identified as being," "it has been alleged," "which the locals attributed to," and "some sources claimed." Allegations, attributions, and claims are all interesting, of course, but only insofar as they are either verified or studied as a window into military and/or civilian perceptions. The author does neither.

What, then, of the author's argument? Despite Kingsbury's admirable goal of "challenging the preconceptions that underpin military power in Indonesia," the author's thesis—"the state of the Republic of Indonesia is not viable without the active involvement of the TNI"—unwittingly replicates the Indonesian military's own argument that it is the only institution capable of preserving the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Rather, a complete withdrawal of the Indonesian military from Aceh, Maluku, and Papua would be the surest means of reestablishing the eroded legitimacy of the state.

By contrast, Jun Honna's book is a model of detailed research, judicious analysis, and clear prose. The author innovatively combines two of the most important approaches to the study of the Indonesian military. On the one hand, Honna explores the interaction between doctrinal debates and discourse both within the military and between the military and "political society." On the other hand, Honna highlights how, over the last decade of the New Order and the first three years of the post-Suharto era, this discourse contributed to rivalries and factionalism within the military. To do so, he relies on a close reading of official military writings on doctrine as well as on essays written by individual officers, speeches, and statements to the press.

The first five chapters explore major themes in military discourse during the New Order, with particular emphasis on the last decade of Suharto's rule. Chapter 2 examines how "the struggle between Soeharto and [General] Moerdani" created political space in which civilians could raise the issue of *dwifungsi* (dual function), and Chapter 3 documents military responses to its eroding legitimacy and the role of "professional" and "reformist" officers. Chapter 4 focuses on the emergence of human rights discourse, debates over the "security approach," and the military's response. Chapter 5 is a fascinating exploration of "ideological dogmatization" associated with the rise of hard-line officers closely linked to President Suharto. Finally, Chapter 6 investigates the emergence of internal military debate over the implementation of *dwifungsi* in the 1990s, with particular attention paid to the military's legislative presence, electoral participation, and military-ABRI relations. This thematic approach not only allows close scrutiny of different themes and issue areas, but also serves as a

means to demonstrate that military openness to political change on one front may be coupled with intransigence and even retreats on other fronts. Paradoxically, the minute analysis of internal military publications and discourse about the political role of the military partially constrains Honna's analysis to what politicians, military officers, academics, activists and religious leaders thought or said, with little on their own involvement in the areas under debate (human rights accountability, for example).

In contrast to the thematic chapters on the late New Order, the final chapter presents a largely chronological account of "the fall of Soeharto and the aftermath" (until Abdurrachman Wahid's removal from the presidency in July 2001). The close analysis of events during this three-year period would not have been possible without the sustained analysis of the previous chapters. The great strength of this chapter is in demonstrating that military response to democratic demands was neither monolithic nor constant, but it varied in relation to internal power struggles. One wishes, however, for a more extended account of Suharto's fall (which is covered in a mere three and one-half pages) and a more convincing explanation of what Honna calls "Wiranto's political autonomy." But observers of Indonesia will be well served to remember Honna's conclusion that the military's response to democratic pressure has been characterized by both "accommodation and repression."

Throughout the book, Honna's focus is almost exclusively on Jakarta. Regional issues—including military influence at the provincial level and below, the occupation of East Timor, military operations and troop deployments, ethnic and religious conflicts, systematic human rights violations, non-commissioned officers and soldiers, etc.—are only mentioned when they impinge on discourse concerning the military, and even then only briefly. Indeed, the author seems to be at pains to avoid discussing what he terms "events." The military-sponsored massacres in 1965–66 are referred to in the most opaque language: "The PKI ... was quickly eliminated" (Honna, p. 9), "the defeat of the PKI" (*ibid.*, p. 54), and the "elimination of [the] PKI" (*ibid.*, p. 110). The reader is never told that the Indonesian military invaded East Timor, and oddly Fretilin/Falintil are termed a "separatist movement." (*ibid.*, pp. 9 and 209) Nor would the reader know that under Suharto the Indonesian military had engaged in a ten-year counterinsurgency campaign in West Kalimantan, more than three decades of military campaigns in Irian Jaya, and in large-scale military operations in Aceh during the late 1970s and throughout the 1990s, and that major ethnic violence broke out in West Kalimantan prior to Suharto's resignation, and that additional regional violence raged at different times in Maluku, Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, and elsewhere.

The few specific references to regional issues are also marred by odd factual errors. Honna claims that in 1998 General Wiranto "announced ABRI's decision to reduce the troops deployed in East Timor, Irian Jaya and Aceh, and terminated the status of the Military Operations Zone, or Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM), which had been imposed on the three regions since the late 1980s" (*ibid.*, p. 165). There were indeed important troop withdrawals from all three areas, but a careful reading of Wiranto's statements at the time reveals that he avoided mentioning DOM precisely because no such thing existed. Other errors of detail include references to Kodim Wiradharma rather than Korem 164/Wira Dharma (*ibid.*, p. 98), plans to open East Timor in the early 1990s, although this was done in December 1988 (*ibid.*, p. 99), the 572nd Trikora battalion

rather than Battalion 752/Vira Yudha Sakti in Irian Jaya (*ibid.*, p. 100), the killing of over one hundred NU leaders in 1998, when in fact NU documents show that the victims of the “santet” killings were not NU leaders of *kyai* (*ibid.*, p. 170). Indeed, one suspects that slightly less doctrinal and textual analysis and more attention to local military entrenchment might have yielded more insights into Indonesia’s stalled democratic project.

Nevertheless, this book is a major contribution to our understanding of the Indonesian military and transitions from authoritarian rule more generally. This work will be particularly valuable for specialists in the field of civil-military relations and academics writing on the Indonesian military. Given the large number of military acronyms and abbreviations (not all of which are explained in the text or included in the glossary), the thematic chapters will be harder reading for non-experts. For the general reader, the chapter on changing civil-military relations since Suharto’s resignation will be of most use in understanding the Habibie and Wahid presidencies, in evaluating current developments under Megawati Sukarnoputri, and, one suspects, in understanding the unfolding competition for the 2004 national elections.