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The relationship between the president and the military chief (known as the Panglima) can be a useful proxy for understanding the state of civil-military relations in Indonesia. This research note argues that, under President Joko Widodo, democratic norms of civil-military relations have been further eroded with the selection of the Panglima becoming increasingly politicised, rather than being guided by operational or service rotation needs. Also, the president has experienced varying levels of civilian control over the military chief, influenced by factors such as personality and timing.

Introduction

Understanding the influence and power of a nation's military chief can reveal a lot about civil-military relations in a country. In Western democracies, civil-military relations describe a normative arrangement in which civilian authority has supremacy over the military. The military chief is not elected by the people and owing to the considerable force at their disposal, must be subordinate to the president. Furthermore, this civilian control is predicated on a set of norms, rules, and institutions that structure and regulate the balance of decision-making power between civilian institutions and the military. In contrast to this model, Indonesia's military chief—known formally as the Panglima—has played a prominent and influential role not just in defence and security but in domains beyond traditional military affairs such as politics and economics. For instance, during President Suharto's New Order (1966–1998), a period marked by authoritarian governance with high levels of military control, the formidable General Benny Murdani enjoyed unprecedented levels of bureaucratic power,

holding the position of military head and Minister of Defense between 1998 and 1993.¹

With the end of the New Order came democratisation and the introduction of democratic civil-military relations norms. For instance, in October 1999, President Abdurrahman Wahid appointed a civilian defence minister, Dr Juwono Sudarsono, as an early attempt to exert civilian control over defence affairs. However, the extent to which Indonesia's political and military elite have practised civil-military norms has been shaped by the country's history and current circumstances. Examining the Panglima is one such way of identifying trends in civil-military relations in post-*Reformasi* Indonesia and the extent to which these norms have become institutionalised.

Despite the significance of the position, existing literature on the armed forces commander is limited, even more so on the Indonesian military's chief. This research note attempts to expand on this area of Indonesia's civil-military relations, leading to other areas of inquiry. These might include: What influence does the Indonesian military chief have (on military modernisation, civil-military relations, morale and so on) and how has it changed over the decades? What is the impact of service on the role or effectiveness of the Indonesian military chief? What has rotation through the services achieved? What does all of this tell us about the current and future Panglimas?

This research note focuses on the relationship between the Panglima and the current president Joko Widodo (known popularly as Jokowi), who will have had five Panglimas by the time he leaves a decade in office in late 2024. Why did Jokowi pick who he picked? What were the consequences of those decisions? What does that tell us about civil-military relations during the post-*Reformasi* era under President Jokowi? This research note draws three conclusions: first, under Jokowi, the extent of the military chief's influence is shaped both by the personality and background of the president but also the Panglima. Second, the position of the Panglima serves political over operational interests. Third,

¹ General Maraden Panggabean also held the positions of Panglima and Minister of Defense concurrently between 1973 and 1978.

patronage networks can be successfully exploited to secure the position of the Panglima, a trend likely to continue under Jokowi's successor. As such, this research note argues that democratic norm of civilian control is mostly satisfied under Jokowi; he has exercised varying levels of controlling the selection of the chief and the behaviour depending on factors like his understanding of the military.

Military chiefs and civilian control

This research notes argues that examining the relationship between the military chief and the president yields useful insights into the state of civil-military relations. Civil-military relations are more than a description of ties between the armed forces and civilians. Civil-military relations also constitute a normative arrangement, particularly in democracies, whereby the armed forces are subordinate to elected civilian officials. Under this arrangement known as civilian supremacy, civilians exercise what is known as civilian control. Croissant et al (2010) propose one definition of civilian control as

“that distribution of decision-making power in which civilians have exclusive authority to decide on national politics and their implementation. Under civilian control, civilians can freely choose to delegate decision-making power and the implementation of certain policies to the military while the military has no decision-making power outside those areas specifically defined by civilians. Furthermore, it is civilians alone who determine which policies, or aspects of policies, the military implements, and the civilians alone define the boundaries between policymaking and policy-implementation” (Croissant et al. 2010: 955)

In other words, critical decision-making processes are devoid of undue military interference. Reality, of course, does not reflect such a neat divide. Civil-military relations are often “characterized by overlapping or shared competencies, areas of contestation, delegation of responsibilities, and informal networking between military officers and civilian elites” (Croissant et al. 2012: 7). Thus, civilian control is best understood in practice as the balance of power between the civilian and military spheres as tending towards the former.

Civilian control includes control exercised by the head of state. In democracies such as Indonesia, the president, who is elected by the people, is the

commander-in-chief of the armed forces and exercises civilian supremacy. The Law on the Indonesian Armed Forces 34 of 2004, states that the president is responsible for appointing and dismissing the chief. In appointing the Panglima, the president submits a candidate's name to the House of Representatives for vetting and approval, adding another layer of civilian oversight. The president also has the authority and responsibility for deploying TNI forces which, including the Panglima, is a "tool of the state" (*alat negara*). The law also clearly affirms civilian supremacy in requiring the TNI to be "subject to every policy and political decision stipulated by the President through the process of constitutional mechanisms." It also specifies that the military "does not engage in the practice of politics" but must prioritise "the principles of democracy, civil supremacy, human rights, national legal provisions and ratified international legal provisions."

One way of appraising the civil-military balance and understanding how civilian supremacy is exercised in Indonesia is to study the relationship between the president and the Panglima. Specifically, what level of control does the president exert over the selection of the Panglima and to what extent can the president control a Panglima stepping outside of the legally defined remit of their role. The law only states that the president is responsible for selection but sheds little light on how the mechanics of this works in practice. The law specifies that a military chief can be selected from any senior officer who has served as a service chief and the role can be rotated through the services (*dapat dijabat secara bergantian*) but again, this provides few clues by which criteria a candidate is found suitable. Regarding the remit of the role, again, the law states the Panglima is responsible for the use and management of the TNI, carrying out national defence, and providing advice to the defence minister. Like the rest of the TNI, the chief must remain politically neutral and must reinforce the principles of democracy. How has this worked in practice?

Abundant scholarship on the Indonesian military has shed light on the civil-military relations since the state's formation (Mietzner, 2008; Honna, 2005; Lowry, 1997; Rinakit, 2005; Singh, 2001). Some of these works, like Jenkins' (1984) monograph on Suharto and his generals, examine the power relations

between the president and high-ranking military officers. More recent works by Laksmana (2019) and Sebastian et al (2018) focus on Jokowi and the military, examining the president's hands-off approach and increasing levels of military influence. This research note builds upon these works on the civil-military relationship in scrutinising the relationship between the president and Panglima. It also expands the existing literature on former military chiefs which is dominated by biographies and memoirs.²

The Indonesian military, the Panglima and civilian control

We cannot understand the role of the Panglima without understanding the broader context of changes to the Indonesian military's role in the state since *Reformasi*. In Indonesia, "the military's political weight – whether real or perceived – has remained an important factor in Indonesian politics" (Mietzner 2018: 140). While the TNI enjoyed intense levels of political and bureaucratic power during the New Order, it has since been depoliticised, with a New Paradigm (Paradigma Baru) barring active-duty officers from roles in cabinet or parliament. The doctrine of Dual Function (Dwi Fungsi), which legitimised interests in security and non-security roles, was dismantled and replaced with aspirations towards becoming a professional military focussed on external security. As part of democratisation, the military would be held accountable for abuses of power and that justice would be found for victims of human rights violations.

The onset of democratisation saw early changes to the role of the Panglima and the relationship with the president. Army General Wiranto, serving as chief at the time, had worked as Suharto's aide-de-camp in 1989, and as Panglima had maintained smooth relations with the president until his resignation. The ongoing fallout from the East Asian financial crisis and domestic political tumult necessitated a working civil-military relationship between Suharto's successor B.J Habibie and Wiranto to usher the country into democracy, which included kickstarting reforms to the armed forces, which were in a weak position at the time. One of the reasons Wiranto did not openly challenge Habibie's decisions

² Some examples include (Wiranto, Abdullah, & Tamara, 2003); (Pour & Scott, 1993); (Tjokropranolo & Arifin, 1992)

was that the president had originally planned to dismiss the chief. According to Wiranto, in exchange for supporting the president, he was kept on, allowing the passage of major political and security reforms (Wiranto 2003: 93–4).

Changes to the military's—and hence the Panglima's—primacy in the state were furthered by Habibie's successor Abdurrahman Wahid (known as Gus Dur). As mentioned earlier, he installed Sudarsono, a civilian defence minister with relevant expertise in law, foreign affairs and defence matters. A civilian defence minister, devoid of military corporate interests, can provide a crucial counterweight to the influence of the military chief in a range of defence policy areas such as force structure and procurement. Gus Dur also elected the first non-army Panglima, Admiral Widodo A.S., thereby breaking the army's monopoly of positions of power such as the military chief (see Table 1 Panglimas from *Reformasi* to present day). This established the norm of rotating the chief's position among the services.

Attempts to introduce democratic civil-military norms and further reforms have progressed slowly. During her presidency, Megawati Sukarnoputri showed little appetite to challenge the military, choosing instead to keep them as allies. Rather than rotating the Panglima position to the Air Force, she defaulted to the Army. For his part, during his decade-long leadership, former army general Yudhoyono rotated the Panglima position through the services though allowing army alternate years. He also appointed two civilians as Defense Minister with Sudarsono again followed by Purnomo Yusgiantoro. Civil-military relations during his tenure were stable, owing in large part to his military background and understanding of how to mitigate armed forces influence while, at the same time, encouraging further military professionalisation.³

This research note argues that perceptions of the Panglima also contribute to this state of affairs. The figure of the Panglima has historically loomed much larger than a tool of the state. For instance, the qualities of loyalty, perseverance

³ Aside from launching a military modernisation program to boost naval and air force capacity, In particular, Yudhoyono pushed for the TNI to take greater part in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Such activity was intended to promote the country's role in multilateral security endeavours and, theoretically, provide soldiers opportunities to interact with other military forces.

and selfless sacrifice seen to be exhibited by the military's first commander, General Sudirman, during the War of Independence continues to be mythologised in contemporary Indonesian society. His statue stands high in central Jakarta and one can unfailingly find a *Jalan Sudirman* (Sudirman Street) in major cities. However, such glorification of the armed forces glosses over the complex and troubled relationship between civilians and the military.

Jokowi's Generals

Jokowi's first military chief, army General Moeldoko, was appointed by his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Moeldoko finished his term in July 2015, approximately nine months into Jokowi's first term. Since then, Jokowi's chiefs have been army general Gatot Nurmantyo (July 2015 to December 2017), air force Air Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto (December 2017 to November 2021), army general Andika Perkasa (November 2021 to December 2022) and navy Admiral Yudo Margono (December 2022 to present) (see Table 1 for further details).

The rise and fall of Gatot Nurmantyo

When Moeldoko's tenure ended in July 2015, Army Chief of Staff General Gatot Nurmantyo became the first Panglima selected by the president. Speculating on the reasons for Gatot's promotion, John McBeth argued that the Air Force Chief of Staff was too junior, and Jokowi wanted to balance out "rebellious" police force (McBeth 2017).

Gatot's time as chief was marked by the promotion of conservative ideas. For one, he argued that Indonesia was amidst a "proxy war" waged by foreign powers, tapping into the country's deeply ingrained fears of foreign interference since the days of Sukarno. Specifically, Gatot argued that Indonesia could become a site where foreign states played out their interests, invoking the potential of food and energy insecurity. He named anarchist workers demonstrations, student brawls, divisions between TNI and POLRI, between political parties, social engineering by the media and rise of drug abuse as threats to the nation state (Wardi 2016). He also accused the US and Australia of spreading false stories in order to destabilise Indonesia (Coconuts Jakarta 2016). He promulgated these ideas via lectures at several universities and Islamic boarding houses. In February 2016, Gatot also signed an "defence pact" (*pakta*

pertahanan) with 11 organisations, including Republic of Indonesia Teachers' Association, Indonesian Publishers Association, Association of Indonesian Higher Education Publishers, to purportedly combat the threat of proxy war via the media (Rahmat 2016). His tenure as chief was not the first time that Gatot had made his political ideas known. When he was head of KOSTRAD, he declared Indonesia's democracy to be "empty". Gatot's public posturing also had religious dimensions. During the Action to Defend Islam 212 (*Aksi Bela Islam 212*) in December 2016 against the then governor of Jakarta Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (also known as Ahok) who was accused of blaspheming the Koran. While he mobilised the military against the 200,000-strong demonstration but appeared to take advantage of the intense media coverage, being photographed next to Jokowi wearing a white hajj cap rather than his usual Panglima hat (BBC News Indonesia 2016).

The year 2017 saw Gatot become considerably bolder and more autonomous. Continuing to position himself as defender of Indonesia's dignity, in January he raised the spectre of mass organisations who could threaten Pancasila (Siregar & Prasetyo 2017). Gatot caused further controversy in the same month when he unilaterally cancelled military ties with the Australian Defence Force. Training material used by Australia special forces which called the national ideology "Panca-gila" (*gila* meaning crazy in Indonesia) was deemed insulting to Indonesia. The Indonesian president was apparently not consulted in relation to the matter, before Gatot announced the cutting of ties.

In September, Gatot gave the order for soldiers to attend public screenings of Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (Treachery of G30S/PKI), a four-hour propaganda film on the attempted 1965 coup which had been mandatory watching for schoolchildren and public servants during the New Order. Gatot promoted the idea that millennials should have a stronger grasp of Communism's threat to the nation. This meant the military's version of history, produced by the Armed Forces History Centre (Pusat Sejarah TNI, Pusjarah TNI) and unchanged since the end of the New Order. When the order was questioned by Defense Minister Ryamizard, Gatot retorted that he took orders only from the president (Loveard et al, 2017). Around the same time groups such as Legal Aid Foundation were

attacked for hosting a discussion on the killings of 1965. The countermovement was spearheaded by retired generals like Kivlan Zen.

Gatot's actions were also destabilising intra-security agency relations. He alleged that non-military institutions, the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) and the National Police (POLRI) had illegally imported firearms. The allegation was refuted by Wiranto and Ryamizard (The Jakarta Post 2017). A police spokesperson confirmed the weapons procured by his organisation were in accordance with procedure (Antara News 2017). The incident not only demonstrated a lack of unity among Jokowi's security actors but highlighted Gatot's unrelenting willingness to publicly play out grievances in the media, thereby positioning himself in a patriotic light. While Gatot was not due to retire from the military until March 2018, it appeared that Jokowi grew tired of his lack of control over the Panglima and replaced Gatot with the Air Force Chief of Staff Hadi Tjahjanto in December 2017.

Hadi's steady hands

In the wake of Gatot's ambitious behaviour, Jokowi opted for a more manageable military chief. In appointing Hadi as Panglima, Jokowi was seen as restoring political "neutrality" to the TNI (McBeth 2017). Part of his suitability for the job included Hadi's past service as the Adi Sumarno airbase commander in Jokowi's hometown of Solo, Central Java from 2010 to 2011 and then as the president's military secretary from 2015 to 2016. In other words, unlike Gatot, he was known to the president. Hadi was appointed Air Force Chief in January 2017, during Jokowi's presidency, thereby guaranteeing a place among eligible candidates for Panglima selection. The appointment also had the support of Wiranto, then serving as Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Ryamizard and Luhut, then serving as Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs (McBeth 2017). Another advantage for Jokowi was Hadi's age; being younger than other candidates would allow him to stay in the position for longer before reaching the mandatory retirement age.

It is notable that Hadi's tenure saw no controversies involving the Panglima's decisions in defence or political matters. Hadi did not openly challenge or undermine the president or other members of cabinet the way Gatot

had. Hadi served alongside two retired Army generals as Defense Minister and did not exhibit the same confrontational attitude as Gatot had towards Ryamizard. Within 12 days, the new chief reversed appointments made by his predecessor, helping to ensure that Gatot loyalists would not act as spoilers. There was a sense that Gatot was placing loyal officers in strategic posts which would frustrate Hadi's tenure (Anindya & Dwicahyo 2018). During his almost four years as head, Hadi main tasks would include repairing the relationship between the military and the police, securing the 2019 elections, responding to several natural disasters, responding to increasing Chinese vessels incursions around Indonesia's Natuna Islands, and assisting the national covid-19 pandemic response. Hadi's role in smoothing military-police ties was bolstered by the appointment of Jokowi's choice of police chief, Tito Karnavian. Hadi served until November 2018. After retirement, Hadi appeared to be rewarded for his loyalty in being appointed in June 2022 as Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency.

The grand ambitions of Andika Perkasa

Andika is the second Panglima to have had a strong, personal connection to the president. He was politically well connected, being the son-in-law of A.M. Hendropriyono, a former Kopassus general and close advisor of Jokowi.⁴ Andika served as head of the presidential security guard (Paspampres), allowing him access to an inner circle from 2014 to 2016, the first few years of Jokowi's tenure. In November 2021, while serving as Army Chief of Staff, Andika became Jokowi's sole nominee submitted to the DPR for the position.

Unlike Hadi, who was selected to create stability, there is a strong case that Andika's appointment was based on nepotism and patronage. First, Andika had not been renowned for strong performance and the positions he held, though often seen as a pathway to the top job, were not for long. As Made Supriatma highlights, Andika was promoted from colonel to major general in a mere 11 months, days after Jokowi's inauguration in 2014 (Supriatma 2021). He then spent only four months as head of the Army's Strategic Command (Kostrad)

⁴ Hendropriyono also served as the head of the State Intelligence Agency (*Badan Intelijen Nasional, BIN*).

before rising to the Army Chief of Staff position in November 2018. Andika's military career is also unusually lacking in operational and territorial command experience, particularly for a high-ranking army officer (Anindya & Dwicahyo 2018; Supriatma 2014). While serving in Kopassus, he became well known after the arrest of Omar Al-Faruq, an alleged Al Qaeda leader with connections to Jemaah Islamiyah, in Bogor in 2002. At the time, Andika's father-in-law Hendropriyono was the head of BIN, the agency which authorised the arrest.

A second reason to suspect nepotism and patronage is that Jokowi could have promoted the Navy Chief of Staff Yudo Margono. The Navy had last held the Panglima position from 2010 to 2013 so, if the rotation system had been upheld, the service was arguably due a turn. It is possible Jokowi deferred to age; Margono, a 1988 academy graduate, is junior to Andika, a 1987 graduate, however, Jokowi has shown willingness to circumvent this formality in the past when he promoted police chief Tito Karnavian ahead of his seniors. If Jokowi had wanted stability and continuity in the Panglima, appointing Yudo would have given the Navy Chief two years in the job. Yet, doing so would have meant Andika would have reached the retirement age by December 2022 and been out of the running for the position after Yudo. Thus, it seems as though Jokowi used the opportunity to give a year to Andika, while still allowing Yudo some time in the position.

Andika's tenure was marked by low conflict with the president and investment in areas which would support not just the military's security interests but Jokowi's political ones. Central among these was Andika's "softer" approach to the ongoing struggle for self-determination in the Papuan provinces. The approach involved a greater emphasis on winning the hearts and minds of the people through welfare-based programs, among other steps (Lai 2022a). Despite Andika's intentions, the region saw violent clashes in the few months of 2022, leaving several soldiers killed. Experts deemed a welfare-approach led by the military and police, whom the local Papuan populations did not trust, would not likely be effective (Lai 2022a).

Andika also presided over deepening security ties with the US. This manifested in the upgraded version of Exercise Garuda Shield held with the US'

INDOPACOM into Super Garuda Shield in August 2022. The joint training exercise included over 4,000 combined forces personnel from 14 countries (US Embassy Jakarta 2022).⁵ Andika's familiarity with the US, as a result of having studied there for a total of eight years, was likely a factor in his ability to enact the upgraded exercise in such little time. In light of the increasing tempo of Chinese incursions in the South China Sea near Indonesia's Natuna Islands, deepening military ties and fostering interoperability with the US and other Indo-Pacific countries through field and maritime training activities is a logical step. However, given its nonaligned stance, it is rare for Indonesia to undertake military activities that could be misinterpreted by Beijing as greater alignment with the US. A cynical view would see Andika's investment in the high-profile event as an attempt to boost his standing domestically, among the army and also in front of an international audience.

Yudo Margono as caretaker

Yudo Margono has been the first naval Panglima in over a decade, however, his tenure will only last 11 months.⁶ Most recently serving as the Navy Chief of Staff, he was also commander of the Joint Regional Defence Command (Kogabwilhan) I from 2019 to 2020. Yudo was also responsible for a military taskforce to coordinate its covid-19 response and supervised the evacuation of Indonesian citizens from Wuhan, China. Prior to that, he was commander of the Navy's western fleet located in Riau. Despite the loss of the KRI Nanggala-402 submarine in April 2021 under his tenure as Navy Chief, Yudo's time working in key naval roles and in a joint capacity have given him experiences and exposure necessary for a Panglima. That said, Yudo's case shows that one's background or service need not provide compelling reasons for selection for two reasons.

⁵ First time participants were Australia, Singapore and Japan while other participating nations included Canada, France, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, and the United Kingdom.

⁶ The last naval Panglima was Admiral Agus Suhartono who served under President Yudhoyono from 2007 to 2010.

First, while the Navy was due the position under the informal rotational system, Jokowi's previous disregard for the tradition meant it was not guaranteed. The president was reportedly motivated to nominate Yudo in order to honour the rotation system between the services (*OBSERVER* 2022). In light of Jokowi's practice of selecting political allies—as shown by his appointments of Hadi and Andika—and selecting an army candidate ahead of a navy one, this is not persuasive. One analyst has suggested that a Panglima from a navy background would help the president further implement his vision of strengthening Indonesia's maritime capabilities (Darmawan 2022). The anticipated tenure of 11 months would be challenging for any navy chief to make significant progress on the maritime front.

Second, the appointment of Andika's successor proved to be a tight race between Yudo and the Army Chief of Staff Dudung Abdurachman. Efforts by both Yudo and Dudung to clearly ingratiate themselves with Megawati are indicative of the political manoeuvring involved in securing the position. For instance, in May 2022, while Yudo was still Navy Chief of Staff, the navy commissioned a domestically built presidential/VVIP corvette, KRI *Bung Karno*, named after the first president, to replace its ageing predecessor. The scheduled construction time for the corvette was short, with Yudo announcing the target launch date as February 2023 after a construction start date of June 2022 (Irawan 2022). As Sukarno's daughter, Megawati was invited to attend the ship naming ceremony the same month, while the ship itself was launched in April 2023 (Malufti 2023). During the ceremony, Yudo praised the first president as a great figure with a maritime vision (Sari 2022). At a naval event in August 2022, Yudo also praised Megawati for her support towards developing navy capability and invited her to deliver a keynote address (Lai 2022b).

Dudung has employed similar tactics. While governor of the military academy, he commissioned a statue in early 2020 of the first president Sukarno which reportedly caught the attention of Megawati (The Star 2021b). A senior member of PDI-P remarked that it was a "turning point" in the perception that her father was not a friend of the army (The Star 2021b), suggesting that Dudung's efforts might have garnered the support of the former president. While this was

done in the lead-up to his appointment to Army Chief of Staff, the political capital invested into courting these power brokers would have served well during Dudung's bid for the top job. Like Andika, Dudung also had political ties as his late father-in-law, Major General Cholid Ghozali, served on a supervisory board of a PDI-P organisation to reach Islamic voters. He also toured Islamic boarding schools in early 2022 to improve his popularity, proposing to recruit students as enlisted and non-commissioned personnel (Tenggara Strategics 2022). As military commander in Jakarta, Dudung had been tough on the Islamic Defenders Front (The Jakarta Post 2020), the group which had organised the Action 212 anti-Ahok rallies and had proved to be a political nuisance for Jokowi. That said, the involvement of power brokers in the Panglima appointment might have worked against him. Dudung's chance to ascend to the top job appeared thwarted once public rifts between him and Andika and between him and a lawmaker and House Commission I member Effendi Simbolon, a member of Megawati's party, were made public in 2022.⁷ Andika was reported to have given his support to Yudo (Tenggara Strategics 2022).

Since his appointment, Yudo has stated his desire to focus on building up the military's human resources (Suryana 2022). However, the reality of the role has dictated that Yudo pay attention to issues such as the Papuan provinces where a New Zealand pilot has been held hostage by the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB) since early February 2023. In response, the chief declared Operation Battle Standby, implying a more kinetic role when encountered by armed groups, making a symbolic break from the softer approach promoted by Andika (Marwangi & Haryati 2023). With only 11 months in the job, it appears Yudo will be more of a caretaker.

What Does the Case of Jokowi's Generals Tell Us About Civilian Control?

When do soldiers obey politicians, especially in societies that have recently been ruled by the military? How do politicians compel or induce obedience from soldiers? (Trinkunas 2005: 4)

⁷ The feud between Andika and Dudung reportedly concerned the failure of Dudung's son to successfully pass the military academy entrance test (Lai 2022b).

Apt for the case of Indonesia, one answer could be “with difficulty”. The case of the Panglima during the Jokowi presidency shows, for the most part, levels of obedience, however, achieved through a careful balance of power between the civilian and military sphere, leading to three main observations.

1. President's personality and background

The first finding is that the president's personality and background are factors that influence the Panglima's behaviour. Laksmana (2019) has raised this point about Jokowi's lack of presidential handholding and the increase in military involvement. This effect was magnified with an ambitious Panglima like Gatot Nurmantyo who was willing to overstep the limits of his remit. Jokowi's predecessor, Yudhoyono, was a former army general and had not just extensive experience in foreign policy and security matters but had been involved in the reform process. He was notionally committed to steering Indonesia towards stronger democratic norms. In contrast, Jokowi came to the presidency with little background in defence and weak political ties at the national level. Gatot offered Jokowi a means to ingratiate himself with the military. This would allow Jokowi to focus more on economic and infrastructure development while delegating foreign affairs to Retno Marsudi, a career diplomat, and defence to Ryamizard, a former army general.

However, Jokowi's disinterest in such affairs allowed an ambitious Gatot to position himself as a defender of Indonesia's national values. The latter grew increasingly more assertive, even unilaterally deciding to sever defence ties with Australia (later found to be limited to certain exchanges). It was only after several of such incidents did Jokowi finally dismiss Gatot ahead of his retirement age, signalling a maturation in the balance of power between president and Panglima. In other words, Jokowi finally asserted civilian control. His subsequent appointment of Hadi Tjahjanto, a trusted aide, also sent a message that a more passive and manageable military chief would be preferred for a while.

2. The position as political capital

The second observation is that the position of Panglima under Jokowi affirms that the role is less about operational needs and more about securing political interests.

The president has appointed four military chiefs and, with the exception of Gatot Nurmantyo, has selected officers who aligned with his need to maintain patronage networks but also to check the influence of the armed forces. Hadi served to stabilise civil-military relations after Gatot had demonstrated a more politicised leadership. While a navy appointment would have given Jokowi a maritime-focussed leader for two years, he selected Hendropriyono's son-in-law Andika who had a meteoric rise but less operational experience than an officer at the same rank. Yudo will only have 11 months in the role but Jokowi will be able to select an army general to secure the February 2024 selection.

In pursuing such pragmatic and political ends, Jokowi has also undermined the informal tradition of rotating the chief's position between the services. The president has ignored the rotation between the services twice, in appointing Gatot after Moeldoko and in appointing Andika instead of Yudo. A coalition of human rights focussed NGOs criticised Andika's nomination on the grounds that Jokowi was undermining the rotational norm and hence spirit of reform, accusing the president of privileging personal ties and political imperatives (The Star 2021a).⁸

3. Panglima personality and political ties

Following on from the second observation, if Jokowi can use the Panglima position to consolidate patronage networks, military officers are encouraged to use patronage to secure their selection. This is evident in Hadi's personal ties with Jokowi, Andika's family ties, and in the jockeying between Yudo and Dudung to court political power brokers. As mentioned, Dudung also had elite ties with his father-in-law linked to PDI-P. Yudo was not originally considered by PDI-P to be part of "its people" (Lai 2022b) but it may seem that his lobbying of Megawati could have contributed to his success, providing encouragement of other service chiefs to do the same in future. In light of the pattern of Panglima nomination under Jokowi, it would seem natural that current Kostrad commander Lieutenant General Maruli Simanjuntak, who has not only followed a similar career

⁸ The coalition included Imparsial, the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH Jakarta) and the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (KontraS).

trajectory as other army Panglimas but is also Luhut's son-in-law, be destined for higher responsibilities.

Conclusion

Jokowi's tenure saw the position of the Panglima evolve from a launchpad for a political career to a stabilising role to a patronage bargaining chip. While the reality of civil-military relations means that power can be shared between the civilian and military spheres but normatively tend towards the former, at times Jokowi's levels of control were curtailed. As observed in this research note, the president's level of control over the selection of the military chief and the chief's behaviour varied with personality factors and timing. This suggests that military figures like the Panglima can be more influential under the right circumstances. It also suggests that military roles like the chief's position can be manipulated by political brokers. This would suggest an ongoing pertinence of the military's place, or at least perceptions of it, within the Indonesian state. As one analyst puts it, "these political acts reflect the struggle of Indonesian political institutions to manage the legacy of Suharto-era military-backed authoritarianism" (Wangge 2018).

It is unlikely that this two-way manipulation will change under Jokowi's successor. The military reform process has not progressed significantly over the past decade nor has military professionalisation, such as the push for PKO under Yudhoyono, been prioritised. In fact, the military's influence in non-security domains has increased under the current president. As such, if civil-military relations balance is to shift, it will see greater overlapping between the spheres. The implications for future civil-military relations will include the reinforcement of nepotism and patronage systems, which will impact on the morale of officers investing in the hopes of merit-based systems. Instead, this will further incentivise personnel to cultivate political ties and offer inducements in return for support. This could create further potential for parts of the military to drift into political factions (Supriatma, 2014). One way to mitigate some of the politicisation of the Panglima position might be to require two candidates to be presented by the president to the DPR and for the vetting process to be more thorough, justifying one candidate over the other. In post-authoritarian states like Indonesia, the

institutionalisation of civil-military relations norms will still take some time to take root, as shown by the fluctuating power between the president and Panglima.

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Annex

Table 1. Panglimas from *Reformasi* to present day

Name	Service	President(s)	Start	End	Year of birth	Academy class
General Wiranto	Army	Suharto, B.J. Habibie	February 1997	October 1999	1947	1968
Admiral Widodo Adi Sutjipto	Navy	Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati Sukarnoputri	October 1999	June 2002	1944	1968
General Endriartono Sutarto	Army	Megawati Sukarnoputri, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	June 2002	February 2006	1947	1971
Air Chief Marshal Djoko Suyanto	Air Force	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	February 2006	December 2007	1950	1973
General Djoko Santoso	Army	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	December 2007	September 2010	1952	1975
Admiral Agus Suhartono	Navy	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	September 2010	August 2013	1955	1978
General Moeldoko	Army	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Joko Widodo	August 2013	July 2015	1957	1981
General Gatot Nurmantyo	Army	Joko Widodo	July 2015	December 2017	1960	1982
Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto	Air Force	Joko Widodo	December 2017	November 2021	1963	1986
General Andika Perkasa	Army	Joko Widodo	November 2021	December 2022	1964	1987
Admiral Yudo Margono	Navy	Joko Widodo	December 2022	TBC	1965	1988

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