The Military and Political Parties in Indonesia: The Ups and Downs of the Military’s Political Role

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Abstract

This article examines the historical background of the emergence of the involvement of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (ABRI) in the socio-political field, specifically some of the reasons underlying government policies to involve ABRI in socio-political and economic activities, and the efforts of ABRI members themselves to contribute in this area. This research, which was conducted using a historical approach, concluded that ABRI's involvement in the socio-political sphere in Indonesia began after the democratic leadership of President Soekarno. Politically, Sukarno's reason for integrating the military into his government structure was the failure of civilian politicians to formulate a state ideology that was not approved by the parties in the Constituent Assembly. This failure is seen as endangering national political stability and threatening the country's integrity. Based on this, President Soekarno hired the military to balance civilian politicians in his government. Apart from the socio-political field, ABRI also has a socio-economic role.

Keywords: Politics, Military, TNI

1. INTRODUCTION

The atmosphere of war against the colonialists, both during the period of struggle and in the defense of independence, is a socio-historical context that cannot be separated from the process of forming the dominant TNI military culture. During the war, various National Resilience groups that became the pioneers of TNI soldiers struggled with absolute discipline in carrying out their duties, loyal to the state, and militant in the task of fighting and defending independence. The sense of colonialism, pressure, threats, and oppression is combined with the desire to free oneself from all forms of oppression and colonialism. These conditions and situations were external factors that provoked the formation of discipline, loyalty, and militancy in soldiers and fighters of all nations at that time. (Sihotang & Gadjah, 2012).
The military's socio-political role in history began to emerge when managed democracy took effect under President Sukarno. The period of guided democracy lasted from 19 July 1959 to September/October 1965. Whereas the two previous regimes, RIS and constitutional democracy or liberal democracy, which mostly dominated the government, were civilian politicians. (Larasati 2019).

ABRI's involvement in politics has continued since the independence revolution. This role later received political support through the participation of ABRI members who were first active in official state institutions in 1957. The National Council formed by Sukarno in February 1957 consisted of several ABRI officials. This body, which acts as an adviser to the President, provides opportunities for these ABRI officers to play a socio-political role similar to that of civilian politicians. (Anwar 2020).

The existence of political independence through the freedom to establish political parties. The freedom to form political parties was given after the government's declaration of November 3, 1945, which gave freedom to the people to form parties. This information is published in the hope that the parties can strengthen the struggle for independence and guarantee the security of the people. Since then, several political parties have sprung up, both new parties and pre-independence parties. The organizations that emerged during the national movement seemed to have found their period of development (Larasati 2019).

It is in the interest of the government to create a more democratic Indonesia by providing the widest opportunity for the Indonesian people to form political parties. With so many political parties, it is hoped that the community will be able to channel their political rights in addition to efforts to maintain independence through organizations formed by the heterogeneity of the Indonesian nation. (Sihotang and Gadjah 2012).

2. METHODS

The ups and downs of the role and function of the military in Indonesia are very often related to policies or political affairs in Indonesia, which is an interesting phenomenon to discuss the extent of the role of the military from time to time, even its existence in the present and also the role of the military, against various political parties that have existed and are still active today in Indonesia. The methodology used in this article is qualitative by using qualitative research methods by taking from various books, documents, journals, online media/websites, and literature on the topics discussed for further research, analysis, and reviews in this article as well as various questions that will be answered later in the discussion. Qualitative methods can be used to study the role of military politics in Indonesia with a broader perspective.
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Time of Independence

Starting from the formation of the People’s Security Agency on August 22, 1945, the BKR had the responsibility to protect regional security and its role in assisting the post-independence country. The BKR, whose position was under the Indonesian National Committee at that time, was tasked with securing Indonesian territories which at that time were still unstable. BKR members consisted of former KNIL, PETA, and also Heiho which on October 5 changed to the People’s Security Army (TKR). This was done because the arrival of the British Allies to Indonesia ridden by the Dutch made the situation unsafe, then in January 1946, TKR changed to the Indonesian Republican Army (TRI). Until finally on June 3, 1947, it changed back to the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) which is used today.

There are so many problems faced by the TNI, one of which is when facing political problems up to the military, one of which is when political problems stem from communism with the aim that the TNI is under its influence. Whereas in the military field, the TNI was faced with rebellions in various regions such as the 1948 PKI Rebellion in Madiun, the DI/TII Rebellion in 1949, and also the APRA Rebellion in 1950. Apart from that, the TNI was faced with Dutch military aggression in which people’s power and also the TNI was deployed to deal with the aggression. So that in the end Indonesia’s existence can be maintained with the strength of the TNI together with the people (Asmardika, 2022).

When Indonesia was faced with the Japanese colony which ultimately lost because of the atomic bombings in Nagasaki and Hiroshima by the United States, then the Indonesian civilians took the path of diplomacy as a form of defense of independence to prevent the many victims that fell. The military considered this diplomacy a failure because it always resulted in deals that were detrimental to Indonesia due to negotiations Linggarjati and consultation Renville. This made the military/TNI hesitate in expelling the Dutch colonialists. Conditions like this often occurred in the early days of independence because at that time the role of the Indonesian military was very large and sometimes there was no civilian control over everything it did. The army often makes successful decisions outside of the President’s command so this creates an assumption that it is the military that has the most merit in dealing with various threats (Hilal, Syamsul. Hendra, Afrizal, Risman 2022).

In the era of Indonesian independence, the role of the military was very important. At that time, the military played a role as the backbone of the struggle for independence against the Dutch colonial rulers. Below are some of the key roles played by the military during independence.

1. National Defence: The military is tasked with defending Indonesian territory from enemy attacks. At that time, the Indonesian army managed to defeat the Dutch army in a fierce battle.
2. Military development: During the independence period, Indonesia did not have a strong military. Therefore, the military plays an important role in forming a strong and well-organized Indonesian military.
3. Education and Training: The military also plays a role in educating and educating the public on how to defend the country against enemy attacks. This is done primarily through military-administered training and education programs.
4. Military Operations: The military is also involved in military operations to maintain Indonesian independence. This operation was carried out to defeat the surviving Dutch troops and protect vulnerable areas from enemy fire.

5. Diplomacy: The military is also involved in diplomatic efforts with other countries to support Indonesia’s struggle for independence. This diplomacy is carried out by collaborating with countries that support Indonesian independence and submitting requests for assistance from these countries.

In short, the role of the military in the struggle for Indonesian independence was very important. The military form a strong arm trains and trains people to defend the country, and engages in military operations and diplomacy to defend Indonesia’s independence from enemy attacks.

Old Order Period

Since the beginning of the formation of the Indonesian government, the Indonesian military has played a very large role in determining the historical line of the Indonesian nation’s struggle. Its role in gaining independence, made the TNI not only involved in the war but also participated in formulating strategies for establishing the Indonesian nation ([Setijo 2006; Utami 2019]). This involvement includes the military involved in political parties. Several military officers founded or joined political parties, and they played important roles in national politics (Leni 2013).

The beginning of the military’s involvement in politics during the Old Order era was when President Soekarno took Nasution to become his partner in politics and made Nasution a co-formateur in 1957. Soekarno did this to get support from the army and was welcomed by Nasution with several conditions namely, the PKI may not be involved in the cabinet as well as requests for deputy ministers in the cabinet. This was realized by Soekarno in the Djuanda cabinet. With members who serve in government outside the military field, the TNI becomes a political force that is legally recognized (Leni 2013).

This illustrates that at that time the relationship between the military and politics was well-developed. From the beginning, the collaboration between Soekarno and Nasution was in which Soekarno wanted support from the military and the military used it to take a role in the political arena. However, the relationship between Sukarno and the military experienced a split until finally President Soekarno’s power was overthrown and replaced by General Suharto with military support. The involvement of the military in politics certainly has positive as well as negative impacts, while the positive impact is that the military succeeded in crushing the PKI which has a different ideology from the Indonesian nation and the bad impact is that the military has become a group that has its power so that it can cause things that they shouldn’t consider involved in the downfall of the Soekarno regime and involved in the formation of the Soeharto regime (Fattah 2005).

Since the first years of the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesian military officers have tended to engage in politics as revolutionary soldiers (Leni 2013). One example of a political party that has military involvement is the Indonesian National Party (PNI). The PNI was founded by Sukarno, who was also president and military leader at the time. Many military officers were members of the PNI, and the party had close ties to the military. Another political party that has military involvement is the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Several military officers became
members of the PKI, and the party had a military wing known as the Indonesian People's Army (TRI) (Leni 2013).

The military also used its influence within political parties to strengthen its position in national politics and promote nationalist and anti-colonialist views. On the other hand, military involvement in government is often aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of government policies. Military officers will take on roles within the government bureaucracy, for example being part of a ministry or serving as advisors to high-ranking government officials. Military involvement in government is seen as a way to maintain stability and ensure the loyalty of government officials to the regime. In short, the military’s involvement in political parties during the Old Order era was more ideological and focused on military interests, while the military’s involvement in government was more technocratic and focused on administering effective government.

The dynamics of military involvement in political parties continue to experience ups and downs. At the end of 1949 there was a change in the constitution to become the United States of Indonesia and the 1950 Provisional Law (UUDS 1950) based on Liberal Democracy also came into force. As a result, the military’s role in politics decreased and the military was not even allowed to interfere in Indonesian politics. Then in the 1950s, the socio-political role of the military returned to the surface, namely by becoming a pioneer to advocate for the return of strict political life based on the 1945 Constitution which was followed by the incident of 17 October 1952 where this event can be seen as an event that can best explain the beginning of the army’s re-engagement in the political arena (Vonika 2020).

The formal socio-political role of the TNI/ABRI in this period was from when the TNI had the opportunity to become the National Council formed by President Soekarno. Since democracy led by the military began to enter the Indonesian political system, the military has not only been active in the world of politics, government, and diplomacy, but they have also played an important role in the country’s economy since 1957 when Dutch-owned companies were nationalized and then the military was appointed to manage businesses such as land, hotels, transportation facilities, and trading companies. The outbreak of the 30 September 1965 Movement rebellion (G.30S/PKI/1965) also had an impact on increasing military strength (especially the TNI-AD) in the political map of the Indonesian nation. This was because after G.30S/PKI/1965, the two major powers at that time, namely the power of President Sukarno and the PKI, became weak and destroyed (Vonika 2020).

**New Order Period**

After the fall of the Suharto regime, the existence of the TNI as a social force Many parties sued the politician. According to him, the TNI should not have responsibilities other than the defense and security sector which should belong to civilian groups. According to Bilveer Singh, the role of the military in most Western societies is basically to support the political aspirations of the people under civilian leadership. This statement is based on the opinion of Samuel P. Huntington who said that the majority of military officials in the West recognize civilian authority as a right that should exist. So if the military "deviates" and intervenes in civil affairs, then, said Taufik Abdullah, there is a concern based on allegations that unlawful acts have been committed. The idea of using the military as a force to help civilians do their "part" has not been fully realized in third-world countries, including Indonesia. Studies of military intervention in politics show that a country’s military interests and
crises motivate the military to intervene in civilian affairs. Military intervention in the political field cannot be separated from military control in other fields, such as the economic field (Sugiarto, 2018).

The military during the New Order era occupied a very strategic position compared to civilian groups. Because the army, like the soldiers trained by the Dutch and Japanese, who were trained in the use of weapons, also had sufficient political support to exercise power, it was just that soldiers were involved in business for economic reasons, that is, because of their income. It was not sufficient to provide for himself and his family, nor did they have any income for the country’s military development. And also government regulations that prohibit civil servants from participating in private companies, including the TNI. This was also assisted by the handover of power from President Soekarno into the hands of President Soeharto, who was a military man who had a different policy in implementing strategic economic development policies, soldiers who were also accomplices who voluntarily carried out military activities were strictly prohibited. do so under threat of removal from office. Military-controlled companies, including foundations, PTs, cooperatives, and their partnerships with foreign investors and civilian technocrats, resulted in the Indonesian economy developing into a capitalist economy which resulted in a bureaucratic authoritarian state. With military assistance to maintain this stability, capitalism reached its golden peak in the New Order era, and military business in the New Order era reached its glory. With the Dwi Funktion ABRI doctrine, the Indonesian people believe that the military is also concerned with Indonesia’s economic development, the professionalism of the Indonesian military is decreasing, because the military is no longer just a security guard for the state, but also a business. Operators or agents of large companies are very important for the development of the country.

Reformation Period

In general, experts discuss the dynamics that have occurred within the TNI since the reform was rolled out. Discussions on this topic intensified when the reforms began. The reforms undertaken to overthrow the Soeharto government have attracted the attention of experts, especially in the context of TNI reform. One of the main demands or issues for reform is the changing role of the TNI. The TNI must be professional by leaving dual roles, meaning that the TNI must be outside the management system (Setiyono, 2004).

With the fall of the New Order which was formed by reform, the issue of ABRI’s socio-political role, better known as ABRI’s dual function, became the focus of attention. ABRI's involvement in socio-political issues which also led to economic domination was seen as an obstacle to creating a healthy democratic atmosphere for the Indonesian nation. Many observers believe that ABRI should be restored to its status as a defense and security institution, so this was a decision by the government of the reform era to limit the role of military politicians in public policy. One of the efforts is to reduce the number of ABRI members in the DPR so that ABRI can gradually return to its position (Anwar 2020).

As a country with a liberal political system, the government is run by civilian politicians, especially election-winning parties. This system rejects military interference in politics. Direct military involvement is a political phenomenon that is disliked and always suspected by countries with liberal views. The socio-political role of the military is seen as an intervention in political life. (Miftakhur Ridlo 2019).
The participation of armed persons means that competition can no longer run normally. The result is pressure from military politicians on civilian politicians. Therefore, in liberal countries, the military is used as a tool by civilian politicians to be deployed according to the policies of the civilian-dominated government. For liberal countries, the presence of the military in the world of politics opens up the possibility of a power struggle (coup) characterized by armed violence. It is feared that military involvement in politics without leaving its military status will disrupt healthy political competition among civilian politicians because the military tends to use weapons to achieve its goals (Sihotang and Gadjah 2012).

According to (Miftakhur Ridlo 2019). There are five reasons why the public is so mythical about the military in politics; First, the military has so far declared itself as a neutral group, does not take sides, and is not trapped in ideological politics. Second, the military in Indonesia is still considered the basis for saving the nation's threats, both latent and transparent, communism or terrorism. Third, the military in Indonesia is still seen as the embodiment of Indonesian nationalism, unifying the nation and the aspirations for the birth of non-religious politics. Fourth, the military is also still considered the main representative and supporter of Pancasila values and the protector of public security from all internal threats to national and international politics. Fifth, the public perceives the military as a political unit that operates by taking into account cohesiveness and clear lines of command.

4. CONCLUSION

In Indonesia, the military has a long history of playing a political role. During the New Order era led by President Suharto, the military played a very dominant role in the Indonesian government and politics. After the 1998 reforms, the military had to reduce its political role, and since then the military's role in Indonesia has changed significantly. However, until now, the military still plays an important role in Indonesian politics, especially in matters of maintaining national security and order, often seen as a national security force that helps maintain political stability. However, the military's political role must be monitored and controlled by the government and other democratic institutions to ensure that democracy and civil liberties are upheld. On the other hand, Indonesian political parties also play an important role in the country's political system. They are responsible for fighting for the interests of their people, developing programs and policies to advance the country, and electing and overseeing the government. However, in some cases, the relationship between the Indonesian military and political parties can be controversial and affect the country's political stability. Therefore, to ensure sustainable political stability and democracy in Indonesia, it is also important for the government and democratic institutions to properly monitor and manage the political role of the military and political parties.

The political role of the military in Indonesia itself certainly has its ups and downs. Starting from the old order, new order, reform, and independence until now. There are so many problems faced by the TNI, one of which is when facing political to military problems. moreover, the reality of today's era is growing, so of course the threats and challenges are increasingly massive. the aspects covered in the world of military politics are of course very diverse. Starting from education, society, religion, and the economy. Currently, the TNI has duties and functions only as a defense after its dual function was
abolished during the BJ era. Habibie. Because if you are still involved in politics it is felt and believed that there will be an uproar (except for retired officers or non-active members of the TNI).

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