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Reforming Southeast Asia's security sectors

Tim Huxley

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Introduction

In developing an agenda for security-sector reform, policy-oriented research has drawn primarily on the experience of states in sub-Saharan Africa and, to a lesser extent, Central America, the Caribbean and the South Pacific.¹ Mention of Southeast Asia has been restricted to Cambodia, with occasional references to Indonesia and the regional security role of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF). This paper makes three related arguments. The first is that the relative neglect of Southeast Asia is unfortunate given that the region's security sectors are, to a greater or lesser degree, afflicted with the same problems that security-sector reform seeks to remedy in other parts of the developing world. Second, such reform in Southeast Asia must be viewed in the broader context of the evolution of regional states' political systems, particularly changing patterns of civil–military relations. Domestic economic, social and political change, resulting in the growth of civil society and democratisation, has driven significant restructuring in some regional states' security sectors, with results often compatible with the reform agendas of Western governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The third argument is that, while Western governments' sponsorship of military-to-military contacts in the interests of security-sector reform can sometimes play a useful role, greater attention should be paid to enhancing the capacity of civilian mechanisms to supervise Southeast Asia's security sectors.

What is security-sector reform?

The term 'security sector' is widely understood to refer to those bodies that are 'responsible for, or should be responsible for, protecting the state and the communities within it'.² They comprise at least two main elements: groups with mandates to use force (the military, the police, paramilitary forces, intelligence organisations); and institutions responsible for managing and overseeing matters of defence and internal security (defence ministries, parliaments and NGOs).³

There is, however, no single, standard definition of security-sector reform, nor a single understanding of the shortcomings it is meant to address. Nicole Ball has identified a range of problems that afflict security sectors in developing countries, and that impede the ‘good governance’ which is widely seen as a prerequisite for economic and social development.⁴ Ball lists the typical problems as:

- bloated security establishments that are difficult to support financially, but frequently constitute a major political and economic force;
- lack of transparency and accountability in the security sector;
- inadequate defence planning, management and budgeting in both civilian and military institutions;
- a long history of human-rights abuse by the security forces;
- a tendency for security forces to act with impunity;
- corruption;
- an insufficient number of civilians with the capacity to manage security matters; and
- inadequate professional development.

Since the late 1990s, Western governments, like Canada’s and Britain’s, together with NGOs and multilateral financial institutions, such as the World Bank, have supported various forms of security-sector reform in developing countries. At the same time, it is widely recognised that the security sector has a legitimate—indeed vital—role to play in providing a stable framework for development in the face of internal and external threats, and that providing such security requires the ‘appropriate allocation of resources.’⁵ Ball has identified five ‘central elements’ of security-sector reform:⁶

- strengthening civilian management of the security forces, and their accountability to civilian authorities;
- encouraging transparency in security-sector planning, management and budgeting;
- creating a climate in which civil society can monitor the security sector and be consulted regularly on defence policy, resource allocation and related issues;

- fostering an environment that promotes regional or sub-regional peace and security; and
- disarmament, demobilisation and the reintegration of former combatants in countries emerging from civil war.

The embryonic literature on security-sector reform does not, however, adequately engage with a key problem in some developing countries: the fact that the armed forces may dominate or strongly influence the political system. While the pattern of civil–military relations has shifted in favour of civil society in many African, Latin American and Asian states, democratisation is by no means universal. In Southeast Asia, the military remains dominant in Burma, and highly influential in Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Wherever the military remains politically strong and assertive, it is unrealistic to expect that the problems identified by Ball and others can be significantly ameliorated. Although the literature recognises that the commitment of a country’s national leadership is vital for reform to succeed, it is commonly assumed that external actors (essentially Western governments) will set the reform agenda and take the initiative. In terms of motivating security-sector reform, there is insufficient acknowledgement of the potential for indigenous political development, specifically the growth of civil society, the related impetus for constitutional reform and the establishment of democratic norms and practices, to motivate security-sector reform. In Southeast Asia, the most important reforms, in Thailand and the Philippines, have been a consequence of much broader processes of social and political change.

Endnotes

¹ See, for example, Nicole Ball, *Spreading Good Practices in Security Sector Reform: Policy Options for the British Government*, (London: Saferworld, 1998); Malcolm Chalmers, *Security Sector Reform in Developing Countries: An EU Perspective*, (London: Saferworld, 2000); Dylan Hendrickson, *A Review of Security-Sector Reform*, (London: Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, 1999); *Security Sector Reform and the Management of Defence Expenditure*, (London: Department for International Development, 2000).

² Hendrickson, *A Review of Security-Sector Reform*, p. 29.

³ Some authorities include those bodies responsible for guaranteeing the rule of law, such as the judiciary, the penal system and human-rights ombudsmen. In the interests of a more focused analysis, this paper does not attempt to deal with this category. *Security Sector Reform and the Management of Defence Expenditure*, p. 4.

⁴ Ball, *Spreading Good Practices in Security Sector Reform*, pp. 4–5.

⁵ See, for example, 'Security Sector Reform and the Elimination of Poverty', speech by Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London, 9 March 1999 (London: Department for International Development, 1999), p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. ii.

Chapter one

Civil–military relations

Southeast Asia's political systems are distinguished by a wide variety of governance styles, not least in the nature of relations between their armed forces and civil societies. In the Philippines and Thailand, the military's once-central political role has significantly declined, while in Indonesia this transition has barely begun. In Burma, the military's role in politics has expanded. In Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Singapore and Malaysia, the armed forces have traditionally not enjoyed great autonomy, and have remained closely integrated with the ruling political élite. These variations in domestic civil–military relations have important implications for the potential of security-sector reform.

Thailand

Between 1932 and 1992, Thai politics was dominated by power struggles within the military, and between the military and other competing interests. Coups became a prominent feature of the country's political system. However, rapid economic growth in the 1960s led to urbanisation, rising levels of education and the growth of civil society. In 1973, a student-led popular rebellion against the country's military dictatorship ushered in a period of civilian constitutional government. While the army reasserted its political dominance in 1976, military bureaucrats found that they could not manage the country's increasingly sophisticated society and economy without the cooperation of civilian politicians, who mainly represented business interests.

During the rapid economic development of the 1980s, this 'bureaucratic–parliamentary compromise' gradually gave way to constitutionalism, despite coup attempts in 1981 and 1985 by discontented officers within the now-factionalised and politically weakened army. A group of senior officers known as the Democratic Soldiers, led by General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, supported

efforts by General Prem Tinsulanonda, who was prime minister between 1980 and 1988, to remove the army from direct political involvement. The Democratic Soldiers argued that the armed forces needed to distance themselves from politics in order to promote military professionalism and unity, as well as national development.

In February 1991, another coup, led by the army's conservative Class Five faction, toppled the civilian government. There was little popular reaction; the ousted administration of Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan was widely seen as corrupt, and the coup leaders promised a swift return to democracy. However, after elections in March 1992 the coup leader, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, assumed the post of prime minister. Massive demonstrations ensued in the capital, Bangkok. Troops opened fire, killing some 250 protesters. Thailand's king intervened, and Suchinda was forced to resign.

Since 1992, constitutional civilian rule has become increasingly entrenched, and the military has been politically marginalised. At the same time, electoral politics has provided a route to power for retired military officers, the most obvious among them Chavalit, who was prime minister between November 1996 and November 1997. Chavalit essentially behaved as an elected civilian prime minister. However, he used his military background to intervene in the annual military reshuffle—an area where senior officers had previously had a free hand—to end the influence of the Class Five group and promote amenable commanders.⁷ In September 1997, army commander-in-chief General Chetta Thanajaro, the armed forces' most senior officer, voiced his support for a popular new constitution intended to further consolidate democracy, despite the fact that it presaged an elected Senate in which military officers would no longer sit. Parliament approved the constitution in September 1997.

Thailand's financial crisis in 1997 provoked considerable social and political instability. Faced with growing pressure to resign, Chavalit considered declaring a state of emergency, but was opposed by Chetta.⁸ In November 1997, Chavalit stepped down, and was succeeded as prime minister by Democrat Party leader Chuan Leekpai, who also assumed the defence portfolio (only the second time

that a civilian had taken responsibility for the post). Chuan oversaw important changes to the structure and role of the armed forces. The appointment of the apolitical General Surayud Chulanont to a five-year term as army commander-in-chief in September 1998 has facilitated these reforms.

Some Thai political activists and NGOs have expressed concern that right-wing forces backed by the military might take advantage of the country's economic hardship, social dislocation and widespread disillusionment with politicians to reimpose authoritarian rule.⁹ Local academic Panitan Wattanayagorn has pointed to the army's national television network, its radio-station franchises and its continued involvement in business, particularly through the Thai Military Bank, as evidence that its influence over civilian life is more than residual.¹⁰ Since 1997, the army has also strengthened programmes that have maintained its profile in society. By late 1999, close to half the army's personnel were reportedly involved in rural development projects, including the construction of roads, bridges and irrigation canals.¹¹ In late 2000, rumours in Bangkok suggested that direct military intervention was again possible if disqualified candidates for the January 2001 lower-house polls mobilised their supporters, or if there was a significant delay in convening parliament and forming a new government after the elections.¹² Street protests in Bangkok, reflecting rural anger over the continued absence of decentralisation measures promised by the 1997 constitution, escalated during 2000, potentially providing an additional justification for such intervention.¹³ However, there were no indications that the military leadership favoured such a move; indeed, Surayud indicated his absolute opposition to intervention.¹⁴

The elections, which were won by a populist conservative coalition led by Thaksin Shinawatra, passed off without any major unrest. The most likely route to power and political influence for military and police officers is now by way of the ballot box. Of the 200 Senators who were elected in 2000, 14 of them were retired senior military officers and 12 were retired senior policemen.¹⁵ More than 30 retired officers stood for parliamentary seats in the elections of January 2001.¹⁶

The Philippines

Although the Philippines inherited professional and apolitical armed forces on attaining independence from the US in 1946, their non-military ‘civic action’ role expanded greatly during the successful counter-insurgency campaign against the left-wing Hukbalahap movement in the 1950s.¹⁷ Ferdinand Marcos’ election as president in 1965 led the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to assume an increasingly central position in the state apparatus. After Marcos declared martial law in 1972, the AFP became the regime’s essential prop, acquiring judicial, administrative, management and commercial roles.¹⁸ This was, however, never a military regime as such: Marcos maintained his control over the AFP, notably by manipulating the promotion, reassignment and retirement of senior officers, while the armed forces preferred to remain subordinate to a civilian authority which was not only ‘legitimate’, but also promoted their corporate interests.

Marcos’ political authority began to crumble as the economy failed, communist insurgents gained ground and protests grew following the assassination of his main political rival, Benigno Aquino, in 1983. In 1986, Aquino’s widow Corazon challenged Marcos in a presidential election, the result of which was disputed. A revolt within the AFP, led by deputy chief of staff General Fidel Ramos and Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and supported by discontented officers from the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), triggered the ‘People Power revolution’, in which a massive Church-backed demonstration of popular support for Aquino led the US to advise Marcos to flee the country.

Although ‘People Power’ allowed Aquino to become president, and the 1987 constitution emphasised civilian supremacy over the military, the role of elements of the AFP in overthrowing Marcos gave some officers—particularly members of RAM—a taste for direct political intervention. Aquino angered many officers with her attempts in 1986–87 to use political means to resolve the escalating communist insurgency, and her presidency faced no less than seven coup attempts. Her survival as president was due largely to support from Ramos, who became defence minister in January 1988 following his retirement from the AFP. The most serious coup attempt, in December 1989, was only overcome

with the help of direct US military intervention. The last AFP rebellion took place in October 1990, but the failure of the 1989 coup had already demoralised most dissident officers. Strongly supported by Aquino, Ramos was elected president in 1992. Given his military background, he was able to deal with military discontent considerably more effectively than his predecessor. In October 1995, after almost three years of negotiations, dissident AFP factions signed a peace deal with the government in exchange for an amnesty. The former leader of RAM, Lieutenant-Colonel 'Gringo' Honasan, was elected to a Senate seat in 1997.

Ramos' successor as president, Joseph Estrada, fared less well. Although initially popular after his election in May 1998, from late 1999 Estrada faced growing criticism for alleged cronyism, factional disputes within the administration and the perceived failure of the anti-poverty programme that had formed the basis of his election campaign. Escalating internal security threats, particularly in the Muslim south, added to his problems. In March 2000, rumours circulated that the military or factions within the armed forces might attempt to seize power.¹⁹ In mid-November, Estrada's implication in a corruption scandal led to his impeachment. Fresh rumours claimed that he might impose martial law in a Marcos-style attempt to retain power, or that AFP elements might try to topple him.²⁰ By December, senior retired AFP officers were reportedly lobbying for the military to overthrow the president, or at least withdraw their support. After the collapse of Estrada's trial in the Senate in early January 2001, demonstrations in Manila called for his resignation. Defence Minister Orlando Mercado, AFP chief of staff General Angelo Reyes and other key commanders transferred their support from Estrada to Vice-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was sworn in as president when Estrada stepped down.²¹ Nonetheless, despite the AFP's central, if essentially passive, role in Estrada's removal, its mainstream remains relatively apolitical.

Indonesia

In contrast to the sea change in civil–military relations in Thailand and the Philippines in the 1990s, in Indonesia the demilitarisation of politics was only

just beginning at the decade's end. The country's armed forces (TNI, known as ABRI between 1962 and April 1999) have played a central political role since the anti-colonial struggle against the Dutch in the 1940s. Although a liberal democratic constitution was adopted on independence in 1949, the diversity of competing political interests made it difficult for the new country's parliamentary democracy to produce stable and effective government. Regional revolts in Sumatra and Sulawesi in 1956–58 were only contained by a declaration of martial law and large-scale military offensives.²²

This instability provided the justification for President Sukarno's introduction of Guided Democracy, with an executive presidency and an appointed parliament, in 1959. Although the armed forces supported the move, Sukarno, who had allied himself with the Indonesian communist party, was soon competing for power with the military. Martial law remained in force, and military officers increasingly assumed political and administrative responsibilities. In 1957, Dutch businesses in Indonesia had been nationalised and handed over to the armed forces, providing the military with an important economic role and vital extra-budgetary income. The armed forces expanded, and benefited from modern equipment from the Soviet bloc. With military backing, Sukarno mounted a successful political and military campaign to secure control over West Irian from the Netherlands. In 1963, a similar campaign—known as Confrontation—was launched against 'neo-colonialist' Malaysia. Two years later, left-wing dissident officers abducted and murdered the army commander and five other generals, whom they alleged had been plotting to overthrow Sukarno. Savage reprisals against the communist party followed, orchestrated by Major-General Suharto, commander of Kostrad (the army's Strategic Reserve Command). Sukarno's links with the communists left him discredited, and in 1966 he was forced to cede executive authority to Suharto.

Under Suharto's New Order regime, the army emerged as the dominant political force, a role legitimised from 1966 by the *dwi fungsi* (dual function) doctrine. Senior officers controlled or supervised central government ministries and the provincial administration. In line with developmental priorities, the

defence budget was reduced, and the military's businesses, supplemented by appropriated communist cooperatives, became important sources of funding to support the armed forces' day-to-day functioning. Senior officers grew prosperous from the proceeds of commerce. The regime created its own corporatist political organisation, Golkar ('Functional Groups'), to compete against existing political parties in elections, which Golkar routinely won with more than 60% of the vote. A strategy of 'depoliticisation' severely constrained opposition politics. Although by the 1990s there were signs of estrangement between senior military officers and Suharto, principally over the corrupt business dealings of the president's family and cronies, the armed forces remained the New Order's essential power base.

The legitimacy of the New Order was grounded in economic success. Millions of Indonesians benefited from rapid economic growth and improvements in infrastructure and government services. The collapse of Indonesia's economy in 1997–98 led to demonstrations and violence, and galvanised political change. Suharto lost the confidence of his regime's political élite, and was forced to resign in May 1998. The New Order's collapse precipitated significant challenges to the armed forces' socio-political role, as governments led by B. J. Habibie and his successor, Abdurrahman Wahid, began to implement reforms. However, these challenges represented only the beginning of a protracted demilitarisation of Indonesia's political system in the face of deteriorating internal security conditions, a prolonged economic recession and resistance to change from within the armed forces themselves.

Under Habibie's interim presidency, in 1998–99, military representation in the House of Representatives was reduced from 75 to 38 seats, and a policy of political 'equidistance' replaced the military's traditionally close relationship with Golkar. Nonetheless, the military retained substantial political influence: five out of 23 cabinet ministers were senior serving officers. Habibie could not have attained power without the backing of General Wiranto, then the armed forces' commander-in-chief, as well as minister of defence and security. In most parts of the country, the armed forces still maintained far-reaching political, social

and economic influence through their territorial structure, which paralleled the apparatus of civilian government down to village level.

In June 1999, Indonesia held its first democratic parliamentary elections since 1955. The Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle, led by Sukarno's daughter Megawati Sukarnoputri, emerged with the largest number of seats. However, the armed forces' continuing representation in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), effectively the country's electoral college, combined with the TNI's potential to use force to manipulate the political process, meant that no presidential candidate could succeed without military support. By October, when the MPR was scheduled to meet to pick a new president, Habibie's links to Suharto's regime, events in East Timor and a corruption scandal had combined to discredit him. Megawati failed to win the support of other parties, and the MPR elected as president Abdurrahman Wahid, a liberal Muslim intellectual and leader of the 35-million strong Nahdatul Ulama organisation, with Megawati as his deputy. There was no immediate curtailment of the military's role. Abdurrahman's first cabinet included six ministers with TNI backgrounds, although only four were still serving officers, the lowest number in the central government since before the New Order. The new defence minister was a civilian, and the new commander-in-chief an admiral, only the second non-army officer to hold the post. But these innovations did not fundamentally reduce the military's political influence: the defence minister maintained close links with senior TNI officers, and the new commander-in-chief had been selected by Wiranto, who now became coordinating minister for political and security affairs. In November, Wiranto, still a serving officer, used a reshuffle of senior TNI posts to install allies in key appointments.

Tensions between Abdurrahman's administration and the armed forces mounted rapidly, particularly in relation to policy on the separatist struggle in the Sumatran province of Aceh and the proposed prosecution of senior officers, including Wiranto, for human-rights abuse. Abdurrahman decreed that cabinet members who were also serving officers should retire from the TNI and, after human-rights investigations underlined Wiranto's culpability, Abdurrahman

announced his imminent removal from the cabinet. Wiranto made clear his unwillingness to accede to this, and rumours of coup plots abounded. However, important factors militated against direct military intervention. It would have risked isolating Indonesia from the Western support so essential for economic recovery; in mid-January, the US government had directly warned the TNI not to mount a coup. A coup would also have provoked a strong reaction from Indonesia's burgeoning civil society, making large and almost certainly violent demonstrations likely. Wiranto finally gave up his post in mid-February 2000 after other senior officers declared their support for the president. The tussle between Abdurrahman and military conservatives for control over the armed forces nonetheless continued. In late February, Abdurrahman allocated reformist officers to key posts. Major-General Agus Wirahadikusumah, an outspoken advocate of reform, was given command of Kostrad.²³ General Djamari Chaniago, who was widely seen as apolitical, was appointed TNI chief of general staff, the third most important post in the armed forces' headquarters. Conservative officers were sidelined.

Despite this strengthened control over the military hierarchy, Abdurrahman's inability to resolve the country's many crises made him increasingly reluctant to risk confrontation with the TNI. A reshuffle of command and staff posts in August saw Agus reassigned from Kostrad to a supernumerary administrative post.²⁴ Agus had become increasingly isolated within the TNI leadership, his unpopularity deriving particularly from his investigations into corruption within Kostrad. Soon afterwards, Abdurrahman, facing mounting criticism from the MPR over his poor leadership, assigned 'day-to-day management' of the government to Megawati. This effectively increased the TNI's influence in decision-making: Megawati was tasked to work closely with two coordinating ministers, one of whom, retired General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, was once referred to by Abdurrahman as the 'most politicised officer in the military'.²⁵ At the same time, the defence minister was replaced by a civilian inexperienced in political and military affairs, and therefore unlikely to challenge the TNI's interests.²⁶ In August 2000, MPR legislators almost unanimously supported the

extension of the TNI's parliamentary presence until 2009.²⁷ In October, resignation threats from senior commanders forced Abdurrahman to abandon plans to appoint Agus as army chief of staff, and the position went instead to a less reformist officer.

Civilian politicians of all shades recognise the need to maintain equitable relations with the military in the interests of political stability. By early 2001, civil–military relations seemed to have settled into an uneasy compromise, and direct military intervention appeared unlikely, despite the increasingly unstable political environment. Should the frail Abdurrahman be replaced by his vice-president, Megawati, a smoother relationship with the military seems likely given her increasingly close links with TNI commanders.²⁸

Burma

Like Indonesia's TNI, the Tatmadaw (Burma's armed forces) harbours a sense of political entitlement deriving from its leading role in an anti-colonial struggle, although in the Burmese case the Burma National Army (BNA) fought only the Japanese and not the European colonial power. As in Indonesia, Burma's post-colonial political instability under civilian governments provided the armed forces with the opportunity to play a central political role. Immediately after independence in 1948, the Burma Army, which had been formed by integrating the BNA with colonial forces, disintegrated as units composed of ethnic minorities (particularly Karen) and communists deserted *en masse* and began armed rebellions against the government. During the 1950s, the military enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, and secured between one-third and one-half of the national budget in order to pursue internal security operations.²⁹ A period of 'caretaker' government under General Ne Win and the armed forces in 1958–60 was followed in 1962 by direct military intervention.

After seizing power, the armed forces ruled through a Revolutionary Council, which replaced the president, the cabinet and the chief justice. Ne Win's junta established the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) to serve as the military's political movement. Although the BSPP became a mass party in 1974, the majority

of its members were active or retired military and police personnel, and the armed forces still controlled the country. The BSPP regime oversaw an economic system based on rigid, centralised planning and isolationism.

Burma's declining economy and living standards during the 1970s and 1980s stoked popular resentment of the regime and, in early 1988, student-led protests erupted in Rangoon and other cities. More riots in June 1988, although brutally suppressed, prompted Ne Win to resign as BSPP chairman. Violence continued, and in September 1988 the armed forces seized power directly, killing thousands of demonstrators. A new ruling body, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), was created. Elections for a constituent assembly were eventually held in May 1990, and were won decisively by the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), which took more than 80% of the seats. The SLORC regime refused to hand over power and intensified its harassment of the NLD. The NLD's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, was held under house arrest until 1995, and her movements have subsequently been severely restricted.

In 1997, SLORC was superseded by a new ruling military body, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The SPDC, comprising 19 military commanders, supervises the government, which itself is composed largely of military officers. Acting through the SPDC and the state's security apparatus (particularly the home ministry's secret police), the Tatmadaw has tightened its control over Burma's political, social and economic life. By late 2000, the entire leadership of the NLD was effectively in detention.³⁰ The SPDC regime has drawn international opprobrium for its human-rights violations, particularly where Burma's ethnic minorities are concerned, but its close relations with China and members of ASEAN, which it joined in 1997, have provided an economic lifeline.

Between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, the Tatmadaw more than doubled in size, and received new, mainly Chinese-supplied, arms. Its growing strength allowed it to force many ethnic-minority rebel groups to agree to ceasefires. However, several insurgent organisations, including the Karen National Liberation Army, have continued their rebellions. In January 2001, apparently in response to international sanctions, the regime opened a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. Yet, given the dominant, authoritarian and intrusive role of

the military, the best hope for political change probably lies in divisions emerging within the armed forces, due to dissatisfaction with Burma's economic plight and the social costs of continuing political repression. During 2000, reports indicated discontent within the military, although its extent and political significance should not be overestimated.³¹

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

In Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the non-military roles of armed forces have been less pronounced than in Burma. Nevertheless, the military has provided vital political support for communist-controlled regimes in all three countries, and has played a significant economic role.

Like their Burmese and Indonesian counterparts, the modern Vietnamese armed forces originated in the military wing of a revolutionary anti-colonial movement. In Vietnam, the communist party secured leadership at an early stage, establishing its own army (in the first instance to fight Japanese occupation forces) in the early 1940s. The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) has always been subject to strict control by the communist party, and lines of demarcation between the state, the party and the military have been blurred. In keeping with patterns of civil-military relations under communist regimes elsewhere, the three key institutions of communist Vietnam have always interlocked, with many personnel holding overlapping responsibilities.

During the later stages of the Second Indochina War in the early and mid-1970s, professional military values began to exert greater influence over PAVN officers, with political mores losing some of their earlier dominance. A 'one-commander system' was established in 1982, under which commanders were given authority to 'lead' (previously the preserve of party committees within the PAVN) as well as to command. Nevertheless, the party retained strict control over the army, if not within it. Military restructuring as part of the programme of *doi moi* (renovation), begun in 1986, did little to further the PAVN's depoliticisation.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the Soviet Union in 1991, and the challenge posed to the communist Chinese regime by the

Tiananmen ‘incident’ of 1989, persuaded the Vietnamese leadership to reinforce relations between the party and the armed forces. During the early and mid-1990s, the party attempted to bolster its control over and within the PAVN, placing military units under the ‘leadership’ of local party organisations. At the same time, senior officers were given a greater role in strengthening and defending the party, and in making and influencing policy. Two military commanders were appointed to senior Politburo posts; one of them (Le Duc Anh) soon became state president. Another was appointed vice-chairman of the National Assembly’s Standing Committee, and chair of its National Defence and Security Committee, increasing the PAVN’s influence over the allocation of resources to defence. The PAVN was also allowed considerable scope for commercial activity. Although the number of military companies was cut by a third to fewer than 200, those that remained became increasingly profitable during the late 1990s.³² This commercial activity helped to fund increased defence spending and renewed purchases of major weapons from Russia. A new constitution in April 1992 assigned additional domestic security tasks to the PAVN. The eighth party congress in 1996 further strengthened the PAVN’s role in the party apparatus, with the election of Anh and General Le Kha Phieu, head of the PAVN’s Political Department, to the Politburo’s all-powerful inner circle, the Standing Committee.

Reform-minded politicians within the party—and even some PAVN officers—seem to have been uneasy at the military’s assumption of a more central political role and, at the tenth National Assembly in September 1997, the apparently reformist civilian technocrat Tran Duc Luong was elected to the state presidency to replace the ailing Anh. However, following widespread peasant revolts triggered by the imposition of new taxes, Phieu was elected party leader in December 1997 in place of ageing reformer Do Muoi.³³ Phieu’s election indicated that the party would not tolerate threats to regime security and, backed by the PAVN leadership, it clamped down on dissent during 1998 and 1999.

The regional economic recession, the regime’s ambivalence towards the implementation of more far-reaching economic reforms, and bureaucratic ineptitude and corruption have combined to produce economic stagnation since the late 1990s. In the long term, Vietnam’s political system is likely to follow

Eastern Europe's former communist regimes and East Asia's military dictatorships in the direction of wider political participation and choice. If this happens, it is hard to see how the PAVN can retain its special role. But in the short term, any such transition is unlikely.

In Laos, the triangular relationship between the state, the party and the armed forces is similar to that in Vietnam. The Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) fears the political implications of economic liberalisation, which was slowed in 1997, and relies on its armed forces for its hold on power. Lieutenant-General Choumaly Sayasone, defence minister and commander-in-chief of the Lao People's Army (LPA), is the third-ranking member of the Politburo: he is believed to exercise near-total authority over all security matters, and to oppose political and economic change. In 1998, his appointment as one of four vice-prime ministers further bolstered his—and the military's—political strength. As in Vietnam, there appears to be no serious short-term threat to the paramountcy of the party and its armed forces, although by 2000 there was some evidence of a power struggle within the LPRP.³⁴

The picture is more complex in Cambodia. Following the Vietnamese invasion of 1979 which overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime, the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP)—later the Cambodian People's Party (CPP)—a sister organisation to the Vietnamese and Lao parties, took power. However, in the wake of legislative elections in 1993 the CPP shared power with the royalist Funcinpec. Prince Norodom Ranariddh of Funcinpec and the CPP's Hun Sen were appointed first and second prime ministers, respectively.

Although the armies controlled by the CPP and Funcinpec were supposed to be integrated into the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), they remained separate and highly partisan. Rising political tensions between the CPP and Funcinpec were reflected in fighting between their branches of the RCAF in Battambang province in February 1997. In July, security forces loyal to the CPP attacked Funcinpec-controlled RCAF units in what amounted to a coup. Ranariddh and Funcinpec were ousted from the government, and the CPP summarily executed more than 40 senior Funcinpec military officers.

Elections in 1998 further strengthened the CPP's political position. The subsequent stability in Cambodian politics has been built less on the CPP's popular legitimacy than on its control of forces considerably larger and more effective than those loyal to Funcinpec. In the run-up to the polls, the CPP used its control of the media to discredit other political parties and engaged in violence and intimidation. The balance of forces within the RCAF is heavily skewed towards the CPP: fewer than 10,000 of the RCAF's 140,000 troops are loyal to Funcinpec, and only three of the 29 most senior command and staff positions are held by Funcinpec officers.³⁵ For the foreseeable future, the dominance of the CPP and its armed forces seems to be assured.

Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei

The armed forces of Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, all former British colonies or protectorates, are the least politicised and most professional in the region. Various reasons have been advanced for the military's low political profile in these territories: the origins of these armed forces in British colonial military formations rather than in revolutionary nationalist armies; the fact that these are Southeast Asia's most prosperous states, allowing relatively high levels of defence spending; and the presence in Singapore and Malaysia of strong political structures and dominant political parties with high levels of popular legitimacy. Additional factors obtain in Malaysia's case, namely blood relationships between senior military officers and the leaders of the ruling party, and the fact that the armed forces' officer corps and rank-and-file have been drawn disproportionately from the ethnic Malay community, whose interests have also been favoured by Malay-dominated governments.

Nevertheless, the armed forces in Malaysia and Singapore have not been total strangers to political involvement. After serious race riots in May 1969, mainly pitting Malays against Chinese, the government set up a National Operations Council (NOC) to govern the country in parallel with the cabinet. The NOC included the armed forces' chief of staff and another senior army officer in the role of chief executive officer. Although the military's role in the NOC allowed it

to play an important part in governing Malaysia, the armed forces were not tempted to encroach upon civilian political authority in the longer term, and willingly withdrew from the political arena when parliamentary democracy was restored in 1971. Since then, the military has occasionally come under pressure to take sides in political controversies. In the 1980s, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's disputes with traditional Malay rulers led to pressure on the armed forces from both sides 'to abandon their traditional political neutrality'.³⁶ In 1987, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, a Kelantanese prince, challenged Mahathir for the leadership of the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), and subsequently led a breakaway faction of the party. Although close family links between senior officers and the royal house of Kelantan state may have deterred Mahathir from using internal security legislation in response to this challenge, the military has scrupulously maintained its apolitical position.³⁷ The government's heavy funding of defence, which saw the real value of budgets increase by more than 40% between 1985 and 1996, may have been partly intended to encourage the armed forces to remain out of politics.

In Singapore, a caucus of serving and reservist military officers has played an important political and administrative role. High-ranking officers have become senior figures in the dominant political party, the People's Action Party (PAP), and by 1995 four members of the cabinet, including one of the deputy prime ministers, were from military backgrounds. During the 1990s, the passage of senior officers into the civil service and other parts of the state apparatus became routine. Although the number of personnel involved was not large, former Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) officers increasingly filled positions where they could influence strategic decision-making in key areas of policy. This was particularly true in relation to Singapore's infrastructure, economic development and finance, as well as defence.³⁸ However, the impetus for this expanded role has come from the government, rather than from the armed forces, which as a corporate unit have remained apolitical. Although the official rationale emphasises the need to maximise the state's exploitation of scarce top-level manpower, it also appears that the PAP's leadership has attempted to create a reliable alterna-

tive power structure in case subsequent civilian leaders prove insufficiently resilient, while also pre-empting any interventionist tendencies in the officer corps. Nonetheless, the integration of senior officers into Singapore's political and administrative apparatus has helped to preserve and enhance the SAF's effectiveness and social status; officers in the cabinet would be unlikely to acquiesce in any policies that might damage Singapore's military capability.

Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah has directed considerable resources towards the development of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) since the 1960s. At the same time, he has also remained wary of the potential threat the RBAF could pose to his anachronistic absolute monarchy, warning in 1991 that, in certain circumstances, 'the weapon turns against its master'. Partly for this reason, the Sultanate also maintains the brigade-strength paramilitary Gurkha Reserve Unit (GRU) to guard key areas, including royal palaces and the RBAF's armouries. This is undoubtedly intended to deter any attempt at military intervention.

Implications for security-sector reform

In most Southeast Asian countries, reform of the security sector is closely bound up with patterns of civil–military relations. Democratisation and the increasing political influence of civil society have in several cases substantially reduced the autonomy of the security establishment. The radical changes in civil–military relations in the Philippines and Thailand have seen the military's removal from the centre of power, and allowed civilian governments to mould the shape and functions of their security sectors. In Indonesia, the beginnings of a comparable transition were apparent after Suharto's resignation in May 1998, but the military has remained deeply involved in the country's political, social and economic life. In Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, the security forces have always been subservient to the civilian political authority. Nevertheless, because of the nature of these states' political systems, there is still scope for reform in all three cases, particularly to increase the transparency and accountability of the defence policy-making process. But no substantial changes are likely under the present political leadership in any of these cases.

Elsewhere in the region, the outlook for security-sector reform is bleak. In Burma, Vietnam and Laos, there is no prospect of reform until these countries' political systems undergo fundamental change. In the meantime, the emergence of serious challenges to the position of the communist parties in Vietnam and Laos could see the security forces assume more important political positions. In Cambodia, heavy international involvement in post-war economic and political reconstruction has provided an opportunity for limited security-sector reform, but the CPP's dominance is likely to forestall reform efforts beyond the demobilisation of excess RCAF personnel.

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Chapter two

Security-sector reform

To a greater or lesser extent, all of Southeast Asia's security sectors changed in important ways during the 1990s. These changes have taken place for three main reasons: governments' changing perceptions of internal and external security concerns; rapid economic growth during the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s, which made available additional resources for spending on security sectors until 1997; and domestic political evolution towards democracy and accountability, including the armed forces' total or partial withdrawal from political, social and economic roles.

The outcome of these developments has not, however, been uniform. In Malaysia and Vietnam, for example, upgrading national capabilities for defence against external threats has not been matched by reforms in the sense of enhanced democratic civilian control and oversight. But elsewhere, restructuring has sometimes paralleled efforts to cement the armed forces' depoliticised status, by focusing them on professional, outward-looking activities. In Thailand, the Philippines and, to a much lesser degree, Indonesia, armed forces have moved towards objectives congruent with the types of security-sector reform favoured by Western governments, international financial institutions (IFIs) and NGOs.

The taming of Thailand's security sector

The army's dominant political role was the main influence on the development of Thailand's security sector between 1932 and 1992. However, even before the political events of 1992, important changes had already been planned in response to the collapse by the late 1980s of the Thai communist party's insurgency, which had posed the main internal security threat since the mid-1960s. The army's disappointing performance against Vietnamese forces on the Cambodian border in 1987, and against the Laotian army in the battle of Ban Romklao between November 1987 and February 1988, highlighted its weakness in the external

defence role. These developments underlined the need for modernisation and reorganisation aimed at improving the army's conventional-warfare capability. This new emphasis also benefited the air force and navy, whose support role was clearly much more important in the new context of larger-scale, conventional warfare than it had been during the counter-insurgency era. The increasing relevance of maritime security to Thailand's economic development underscored the importance of developing naval capabilities. Under the civilian-dominated Chatichai regime of 1988–91, the air force and navy were assigned important roles in defending new industrial areas along Thailand's eastern and southern coasts. The stress on enhancing conventional-warfare capabilities was maintained despite the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia in 1989, which effectively removed Thailand's main immediate external security threat. Between 1985 and 1996, Thai defence spending increased by 46% in real terms, although it declined as a proportion of GDP from 5% to 2.9%. Much of the additional military expenditure was directed towards arms procurement.

From the viewpoint of many senior Thai officers, large-scale military procurement on the international market has always had an important rationale apart from improving the armed forces' capabilities: to provide opportunities for personal enrichment through taking commissions from suppliers.³⁹ These commissions added as much as 15% to the price of military equipment, and ensured that the armed forces' inventories were largely built up haphazardly, posing serious logistical problems for defence planners.

Thai governments have funded military modernisation in part to secure the acquiescence of senior officers in the subordination of the armed forces to civilian political supremacy. Nonetheless, throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was considerable opposition from senior civilian bureaucrats and politicians to military profligacy. As early as 1985, the secretary-general of the National Economic and Social Development Board and the deputy governor of the Central Bank warned that Thailand's high military spending could lead to 'national bankruptcy' if left unchecked.⁴⁰ In 1991, Anand Panyarachun, the interim prime minister installed after the Class Five group's coup, blocked military requests for additional procurement funds.⁴¹

The events of May 1992 not only imposed new constraints on the military's political role, but also strengthened the determination of some civilian politicians to rein in excessive military spending, leading to recurrent controversy over arms deals. In February 1994, senior officers announced their opposition to an order from Chuan Leekpai's government to enter into barter deals involving Thai agricultural products to fund future procurement.⁴² The following November, the army commander-in-chief denied reports that the defence minister was now 'in charge' of military procurement.⁴³ In 1995, Chuan's government forced the navy to suspend plans to acquire submarines after the Budget Bureau found that the cost exceeded its annual procurement spending ceilings.⁴⁴ In 1996, a dispute over the proposed purchase of a military communications and reconnaissance satellite threatened to divide Banharn Silpa-archa's administration.⁴⁵

In August 1996, Banharn's government—widely seen as corrupt and inept—attempted to deflect public criticism by deferring the submarine purchase once again, and shelving the satellite project.⁴⁶ With Thailand's current-account position deteriorating, in early 1997 the Chavalit administration, elected the previous November, announced that military procurement would bear the brunt of budget cuts aimed at restoring economic stability.⁴⁷ This was a blow to senior officers who had expected that, because of his military background, Chavalit would support large-scale procurement projects. But these efforts to curtail spending were tempered by the need to avoid serious confrontation. Total planned military spending for 1998 (commencing in October 1997) was maintained at the 1997 level in local-currency terms, and critics pointed out that major military acquisitions had been postponed, rather than cancelled outright.⁴⁸

The economic crisis from July 1997 had a drastic impact on the country's defence spending and procurement. In August, Chavalit's government successfully applied for International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance, in return for which the Fund required a budget surplus of 1% of GDP in 1998. On his return to power in November 1997, Chuan evidently viewed control of the armed forces as key to not only ensuring Thailand's continued political stability, but also reining in government spending in accordance with the austerity measures required by the IMF. Soon after taking office, Chuan's government announced

a cut of almost 30% in the 1998 defence budget; other government departments escaped virtually unscathed.⁴⁹ It was clear that the military, whose budget became subject to parliamentary scrutiny for the first time, was no longer inviolable.⁵⁰ The armed forces were forced to implement far-reaching cost-cutting measures, to the extent that army units resorted to growing vegetables and raising livestock for subsistence.⁵¹ Some military units attempted to raise funds through commercial activities, including developing tourist resorts.⁵²

The procurement element of the defence budget fell to \$200m in 1998. Equipment already purchased had to be paid for at unexpectedly unfavourable exchange rates, preventing little new procurement beyond spare parts. An order for F/A-18 fighter aircraft was cancelled, and plans to buy other major pieces of equipment were deferred. In early 1999, army commander-in-chief Surayud stated that Thailand would make no major military purchases 'for the next five years'.⁵³ In 1999 and 2000, the defence budget was maintained at roughly the same level as in 1998 (approximately \$2 billion, compared with \$4.3bn in 1996). A 14% increase in defence spending was scheduled for 2001, but this would not be sufficient to allow the armed forces to reactivate plans for 'big-ticket procurement'. Since 1997, procurement policy has emphasised upgrading existing equipment (using local industrial resources wherever possible) and, if necessary, buying relatively cheap second-hand weapons systems. Procurement of new equipment will be limited until Thailand's economic circumstances improve, and will focus on communications, intelligence and surveillance equipment.⁵⁴ These restrictions have not, however, prevented criticism of recent procurement projects. According to one Thai academic economist, by using funds already paid to the US government for a subsequently cancelled purchase of F-18 aircraft, the defence ministry took advantage of a legal loophole to avoid parliamentary scrutiny of an agreement in July 2000 to purchase second-hand F-16 fighters from the US.⁵⁵

Combined with the change of administration precipitated by the economic crisis, the severe funding constraints imposed by the recession since 1997 have accelerated the formulation and implementation of plans for restructuring and reforming Thailand's armed forces, which one Thai commentator has referred

to as 'the most sweeping revamp . . . in over 100 years'.⁵⁶ A strengthened consensus emerged between senior military officers and civilian politicians that far-reaching reforms were necessary in view of the new strategic circumstances and foreign-policy interests of Thailand, as well as budgetary constraints and the changed domestic political environment. This consensus found expression in the policies of Chuan's government, particularly after General Surayud was appointed army commander-in-chief in September 1998.

On his appointment, Surayud announced his determination not only to keep the military out of politics, but also to restructure the army.⁵⁷ Restructuring is intended to reduce the proportion of the defence budget spent on personnel from around 65% to 45–50%, creating smaller, better-equipped and better-trained forces more suited for conventional warfare and international peace-keeping duties. Conscription will be phased out in favour of an all-volunteer force. By 2007, the armed forces plan to have reduced their 1999 total of 440,000 personnel by 70,000. The number of generals, admirals and air marshals will fall from 1,600 to 1,000 by 2010. The army's organisational structure will be overhauled, with three divisions being disbanded.⁵⁸

This restructuring will also see significant changes in the chain of command. Traditionally, the supreme commander was a figurehead, with real authority over the armed forces resting with the army commander-in-chief. Under the new structure, the supreme commander will become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the commanders-in-chief of the army, navy and air force—who will act as his deputies.⁵⁹ This change is likely to reinforce the military's depoliticisation by enhancing the standing of the navy and air force at the expense of the traditionally more politically minded army. The powers of the defence ministry's permanent secretary have been reinforced, which may ultimately enhance civilian political control over the armed forces. For the time being, however, the post remains in the hands of a military officer, rather than a civil servant.

The professionalisation of the armed forces has proceeded in parallel with military restructuring, and has included efforts to:⁶⁰

- educate military personnel in humanitarian law;

- adopt a less confrontational approach to internal security issues, particularly in the south where Malay–Muslim separatists pose a residual threat;
- end the widespread involvement of military personnel in activities linked to *chao pao* (criminal ‘godfathers’, which has included intimidating civilian politicians and collecting debts for businessmen;
- reduce the military’s role in business by selling military-owned companies and—eventually—reducing senior officers’ direct involvement in the Thai Military Bank; and
- end military commanders’ dominant role in handling Thailand’s relations with neighbouring countries, particularly Burma.

New responsibilities for the military during the late 1990s helped to reinforce its reorientation towards a more professional, less politicised role. Burma emerged as a serious external security threat, notably as a source of drugs and because of the spill-over of fighting between the Burmese army and the insurgent Karen National Union (KNU). The KNU has received support from elements of the 100,000-strong refugee population on the Thai side of the border. In early 2000, Thailand’s National Security Council declared the infiltration of narcotics from Burma to be the country’s principal security threat.⁶¹ Although the confrontation with Burma has involved little direct conflict, in April 2000 Supreme Commander General Mongkon Ampornpisit highlighted the potential threat that Burma’s expanding military capabilities posed to Thai security.⁶²

The military’s second new responsibility was to support Thailand’s foreign policy by contributing to regional peacekeeping efforts. Key elements of the army’s 1,500-strong rapid-deployment force were deployed to East Timor in September 1999 as part of the Australian-led International Force in East Timor (INTERFET). Thailand also provided INTERFET’s deputy commander. Its willingness to contribute to this mission on such a scale led the Canadian government and the UN to consider funding the creation of a regional peacekeeping training centre for the Thai armed forces.⁶³ In July 2000, a Thai lieutenant-general assumed command of all forces deployed under the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) that replaced INTERFET in February 2000.

The entrenchment of democratic norms in Thailand since the early 1990s has been felt in reforms affecting the police, as well as the armed forces. During the 1990s, pressure from the public, lawyers and the media mounted for an end to extra-judicial killings. This issue received international attention in 1997 after the ‘Suphan Buri shootings’, in which six suspected drug smugglers were filmed in handcuffs before being shot. Legislation governing inquest procedures, passed in mid-2000, is expected to reduce the frequency of such killings.⁶⁴ Another initiative has aimed to reduce the role of policemen as ‘hired guns’ for *chao poh*.⁶⁵

Modernising the armed forces of the Philippines

Despite its name, the Reform the Armed Forces Movement was always more a focus for the political frustrations of field commanders and their sponsors than a movement with a coherent plan for reforming the military. The RAM, established by a caucus of middle-ranking AFP officers in 1985, reflected military discontent with ineffective and corrupt political leadership in the context of the protracted counter-insurgency campaigns against communist and Muslim separatist rebels. Far from encouraging reforms within the armed forces once Marcos was ousted, during Aquino’s presidency the RAM and other factions focused their energies on undermining the new administration’s early efforts to find non-military solutions to the Philippines’ internal security problems.⁶⁶

During the late 1980s, there were few signs of reform in the Philippines’ defence policy, or in the structure and behaviour of the military. From March 1987, Aquino’s government yielded to military pressure to adopt a ‘total war’ policy towards the communist New People’s Army (NPA) and the Muslim separatist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). ‘Total war’ involved larger-scale military operations, using heavier firepower, and created large numbers of internally-displaced people. Another prominent feature was the reliance on paramilitary and vigilante groups: while the 1987 constitution led to the disbanding of private armies and irregular government forces, notably the Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) which had been blamed for widespread human-rights violations under Marcos, the AFP established Citizens’ Armed Forces Geographi-

cal Units (CAFGU) in their place. By 1992, there were almost twice as many CAFGU personnel as there had been CHDF irregulars in 1987, and the new units achieved a similar reputation for abuse.⁶⁷

One significant change in the structure of the security forces did, however, occur under Aquino. As part of a long-term plan to reduce the AFP's internal security role, in December 1990 the paramilitary Philippine Constabulary (PC) was separated from the AFP and joined with the civilian Integrated National Police to form the Philippine National Police (PNP), a new force under the control of the department of the interior and provincial administrations. Long-term plans called for the PNP to be broken down into regional or provincial forces staffed by better-trained and better-paid personnel, and geared towards law enforcement rather than counter-insurgency. However, the scale of internal security threats during the 1990s and the lack of funding to re-equip the PNP meant that a plan for the police to assume full responsibility for internal security by 1992 could not be implemented.

In contrast to the Aquino administration's deference to the AFP, security-sector reforms made some headway from 1992 under Ramos and his national security adviser, retired General José Almonte. They adopted a comprehensive approach towards subduing the country's three main sources of instability (the NPA, the MNLF and dissident AFP factions), involving economic development and political initiatives, backed up with the threat of force. In July 1992, Ramos announced the repeal of the anti-subversion law (thereby effectively legalising the NPA's political wing, the Communist Party of the Philippines), an amnesty for rebels, the creation of a National Unification Commission (a presidential advisory body charged with promoting conflict resolution), and a review of the cases of detained rebels.⁶⁸ Protracted negotiations resulted in not only a comprehensive settlement with AFP dissidents, but also an agreement in 1996 with the MNLF, creating a self-governing four-province Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. It was also agreed that 6,000 MNLF guerrillas would be integrated into the AFP. By the end of 2000, integration was almost complete, with former MNLF troops serving in AFP infantry, engineer and Marine units.⁶⁹ However,

talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a breakaway MNLF faction, were inconclusive and the group's rebellion continued. Mainly because the communists refused to disarm, talks with the NPA were broken off in June 1995, but by then the movement no longer posed a serious threat: weakened by internecine disputes, by mid-decade its strength had fallen to about 8,000 armed guerrillas, down from 18,000 in the early 1990s. Despite the lack of a comprehensive settlement, the government and the NPA agreed to observe international humanitarian law in their continuing conflict.

Ramos' presidency also saw moves towards modernising the armed forces, focusing on reorienting them towards external defence. A modernisation programme had first been mooted in 1989, but it was not until 1991–92, when the US closed its Philippine air and naval bases after the Philippine Senate rejected a proposed new bilateral security treaty, that the government began to pursue the idea vigorously. The American withdrawal left the Philippines essentially undefended against external threats, while the treaty's rejection also led to the cancellation of US military assistance, which had contributed roughly two-thirds of the AFP's procurement and operating budget.

In 1991, the AFP—at the government's behest—formulated an ambitious and expensive ten-year defence-modernisation plan, but both the Aquino and Ramos administrations were reluctant to fund the programme. Because of the AFP's socio-political role under Marcos and repeated coup attempts against Aquino, anti-military sentiment was widespread, particularly among legislators.⁷⁰ Congress allocated a budget for defence modernisation in 1991, but instructed the department of budget and management not to allow the AFP to sign any contracts necessitating long-term funding.⁷¹ In 1992, the AFP and the department of national defence persuaded sympathetic legislators to support AFP modernisation bills, mandating long-term funding of defence-procurement programmes. However, wary of the potential for the military to misappropriate funds and concerned about the diversion of funding from developmental programmes, the Senate obstructed this legislation. Moreover, despite his AFP background, Ramos prioritised economic development over defence. Both the Senate and the presi-

dent attempted to link the modernisation programme to the AFP's adoption of new roles in disaster relief and the protection of natural resources—a reorientation which clashed with the AFP's aim of concentrating on external defence.⁷²

At the beginning of 1995, China occupied Mischief Reef, part of Manila's claim in the contested Spratly Islands. This highlighted the Philippines' military weakness, and, in February 1995, the Senate approved modernisation legislation, authorising 331bn pesos (\$8.5bn) of extra funding for new equipment, upgrade programmes and infrastructure between 1996 and 2011. The Modernization Act was not, however, simply concerned with restructuring and re-equipping the armed forces: it was also an instrument for entrenching professional military doctrine and civilian oversight of the military.⁷³ It permitted Congress to decide on the objectives and funding requirements of the modernisation programme, allowing legislators to impede its implementation in 1995–96.⁷⁴ Congress did not formally assign funding to the programme until December 1996, when it allocated an initial 7.8bn pesos (\$200m). But the fall in the value of the peso during 1997 reduced the international buying power of this allocation by approximately one-third.

The outlook for the AFP's modernisation became even bleaker after Estrada became president in July 1998. In his state of the nation address, in which he claimed that the Ramos administration had left the country 'bankrupt', the new president announced the programme's postponement for at least a year, pending improved economic conditions. Given the Philippines' clear inability to defend itself, Estrada's government pushed wholeheartedly for closer defence links with the US.⁷⁵ At the same time, the populist nature of Estrada's administration dictated an aggressive approach to internal security threats, especially Muslim separatism. In January 1999, Estrada stressed that if negotiations with the MILF failed, the government would have to 'crush' the rebel group.⁷⁶ By 1998, the MILF had increased its armed strength to 9,000; at the same time, NPA strength had risen from 5,000 in 1992 to 8,000. During 1999, an upsurge in internal conflict meant that the AFP reassumed the lead role in counter-insurgency from the PNP. In January 2000, Secretary of Defense Orlando Mercado confirmed that 'the local insurgency' was now the 'the urgent threat'.⁷⁷

Conflict in the southern Philippines escalated during 2000. MILF military activity in southern Mindanao increased, and in March and April the small Abu Sayyaf faction, based in the island chain between Mindanao and Malaysian Sabah, took a group of foreigners hostage. At the same time, the NPA launched diversionary attacks in support of the MILF in eastern Mindanao.⁷⁸ By mid-2000, some 70,000 AFP personnel, around 70% of the military's total strength, were deployed in Mindanao, and extensive use was made of air strikes and artillery. In March, the government also mobilised 35,000 CAFGU paramilitaries, 7,000 of whom were deployed in Mindanao in August. Allegations of human-rights abuse by AFP troops, including the harassment of civilians, rape and the desecration of mosques, fitted into a pattern of violations by the security forces that had become apparent during operations against the NPA in 1999.⁷⁹ By mid-2000, more than 500,000 civilians had been displaced. The MILF mounted frequent terrorist bombings in Manila as well as Mindanao, and the MNLF threatened to take up arms again. The NPA continued to gain in strength.⁸⁰

Given these conditions, there is little chance that the AFP will in the foreseeable future be reoriented away from internal security and towards external defence, as had been anticipated in the early and mid-1990s. In April 2000, Estrada announced that 5.48bn pesos (\$129m) had been released to start the modernisation programme, but these additional funds will only be used to procure equipment directly relevant to internal security operations.⁸¹ In July, the US government offered substantially increased security assistance, in the form of second-hand equipment valued at \$105m, to combat terrorism and drug smuggling.⁸² These measures will only partially compensate for the routine defence budget's extremely small procurement component, likely to amount to only 216m pesos (\$5m) in 2001.

Largely because of its wish to retain military support, it is likely that Arroyo's administration will attempt to further the AFP's long-planned modernisation and reform programmes. Soon after taking power in January 2001, Arroyo pledged to give 'top priority' to the AFP's modernisation, while also improving the living standards of military personnel. She praised the AFP's professionalism, and stressed the importance of its role in protecting national resources and in

disaster relief, and its contribution to UN peacekeeping missions. In 1999–2000, the Philippine government contributed troops to peacekeeping missions in East Timor, first to INTERFET and then to UNTAET, and also provided UNTAET's first military commander. This contribution to a crucial regional peacekeeping initiative boosted the image of the Philippines as a democracy committed, like Thailand, to a more interventionist foreign policy.

The PNP has also suffered from prolonged under-funding. Like the AFP, the police force has been progressively depoliticised since 1986, but many of the habits it acquired under Marcos have thrived among its poorly-paid and ill-equipped officers. The force has become 'notorious for being inept, corrupt and indisciplined', and has often been criticised for abusing its powers. After his appointment as PNP director-general in November 1999, General Panfilo Lacson dismissed 2,000 'rogue' officers.⁸³ In recognition of the PNP's poor record in tackling crime in Manila, 500 AFP marines were deployed to patrol the capital's streets alongside police officers—ironic given earlier expectations that the police would take over the AFP's internal security duties. Lacson has emphasised the need for a large-scale funding increase if the PNP is to become an effective organisation, and has called for a re-equipment programme costing at least 10bn pesos (\$235m), against a total proposed police capital budget of 93m pesos (\$2.2m) for 2001.⁸⁴ Apparently despairing of any sufficient infusion of government funding, in early 2000 he suggested establishing a private foundation, backed by donations from business, to pay for this modernisation programme.⁸⁵

Indonesia: reforming the TNI and Polri

Although Indonesia's democratic transformation since 1998 has seriously challenged the armed forces' political role, it has not yet brought about profound changes in the security sector's structure or behaviour. While the military's role at the political centre has been weakened, developments since early 2000 have shown the extent of senior officers' continuing influence. At the same time, the armed forces remain deeply embedded in social, political and economic affairs in the provinces, particularly outside Java. Although there has been much talk

of refocusing the TNI on external defence, and of building up its naval and air force components at the expense of the army, the demands of escalating internal security problems combined with budgetary restrictions seem likely to constrain restructuring and re-equipment for the foreseeable future.

Security-sector reforms began soon after Suharto's ousting. A key early move involved neutralising hard-line senior officers, notably Lieutenant-General Prabowo Subianto, Suharto's son-in-law. Prabowo was found guilty of orchestrating widespread violence in Jakarta in May 1998, and in August was discharged from the army, together with several associates. Yet disruptive officers with retrogressive attitudes remained influential and powerful, and there was no thoroughgoing effort to root out personnel responsible for human-rights abuses. For example, although 11 low-ranking officers and NCOs from Kopassus (the army's Special Forces) were tried in early 1999 for the abduction of pro-democracy activists during the last months of the Suharto regime, higher-ranking officers were not indicted, and no arrests were made in connection with the disappearance and presumed murder of other dissidents. In April 1999, the national police force Polisi Republik Indonesia (Polri) was made a separate entity, although in reality little changed. The 187,000-strong force remained a paramilitary organisation with little tradition of, or training for, community policing, under the administrative and operational control of the department of defence and security, and thus still answerable to Wiranto.⁸⁶

Under Habibie, the armed forces' non-military roles nonetheless began to contract. The practice of *kekaryaan*, under which large numbers of active and retired military personnel had held powerful and lucrative bureaucratic and legislative posts during the New Order, was scaled down; more than 3,000 TNI officers were forced to choose between keeping their government jobs or returning to the armed forces. There was, however, no urgency on the TNI's part to discard its territorial doctrine, under which regional commands controlled approximately two-thirds of the army's 230,000 personnel. This structure served a crucial political purpose, with the armed forces' command shadowing the civilian administration down to village level, often in an oppressive manner. Indeed, plans unveiled in early 1999 to boost the number of Kodams (Military

Area Commands) seemed to indicate that the army was attempting to tighten its grip on peripheral provinces, where armed rebellion or inter-communal conflicts threatened national cohesion.⁸⁷

It was also clear that, under Wiranto's leadership, the armed forces had no intention of abandoning their traditional 'security approach', which routinely involved the use of extreme brutality to terrorise the population of disaffected regions. This approach continued to dominate Jakarta's handling of the insurgencies in East Timor, Aceh and Irian Jaya. Plans for a 3,300-strong Special Task Force Unit, a joint-service rapid reaction force under the authority of the Polri commander and granted special legal powers, underlined the armed forces' determination to crush dissent. Moreover, there were signs that renegade military elements linked to the former regime were stoking ethnic and religious tensions throughout the archipelago.

Habibie, despite his nominal position as the armed forces' supreme commander, evidently had virtually no control over the military. But events in East Timor during 1999 demonstrated that even Wiranto's grip on the armed forces was tenuous. Violence there escalated in April 1999, when pro-Indonesian militia and Brimob (Polri mobile brigade) troops launched *Operasi Sapu Jagad* (Operation Global Clean Sweep) against pro-independence East Timorese. The mission, sponsored by TNI officers in both the local territorial command and within the military intelligence agency, was apparently intended to sabotage the referendum on Habibie's autonomy proposal planned for August 1999 by exacerbating conflict amongst Timorese, undermining the political and military strength of the nationalist movement, and intimidating supporters of independence among the general population.

The violence foreshadowed a major offensive throughout East Timor by anti-independence militias immediately before, during and after the UN-supervised plebiscite on 30 August, in which 80% supported independence. In early September, TNI-directed militias rampaged throughout the territory, killing hundreds of civilians and wrecking the infrastructure. Direct international military intervention followed in the form of INTERFET, humiliating both Habibie's government

and the TNI. The intervention gave Jakarta little option but to relinquish East Timor, which is scheduled to become independent at the end of 2001 after a period of UN administration.

After Abdurrahman became president in November 1999, issues related to military reform became major points of contention between the government and the TNI. Many senior officers were concerned that East Timor could set an example for other separatist-minded parts of the archipelago, and argued for a tough military response to the growing insurgency in Aceh, where TNI and Brimob troops were already exacting random reprisals against non-combatants and using extra-judicial executions. After the new government took power, troop levels in Aceh were significantly reduced, and the president stated his preference for a political solution. This galvanised Acehnese demands for a referendum on the province's future. The president resisted the military's calls for martial law, but the TNI soon reasserted a 'security approach'.⁸⁸

It was clear to Abdurrahman that the armed forces—or at least elements within the army—often constituted part of the problem, rather than part of the solution, in relation to Indonesia's deteriorating internal security situation. This was particularly evident in Maluku, where almost 2,000 people died in 1999 in fighting between Muslims and Christians. The conflict escalated in December 1999 and January 2000, with fighting spreading to other islands in the group and beyond. Inter-communal tensions undoubtedly existed, but the president claimed that renegade military elements linked to the former regime were intent on exacerbating ethnic and religious tensions throughout Indonesia as a means of undermining political stability and, ultimately, bringing down the government. A primary objective was to defend the TNI's privileges in the face of the new government's reform efforts.⁸⁹

Another serious conflict of interest concerned senior officers' attempts to avoid prosecution for their role in human-rights abuses in East Timor, Aceh and other provinces. At the end of January 2000, the national human-rights commission's report into the violence in East Timor accused Wiranto and five other generals of bearing ultimate responsibility for 'crimes against humanity'.

Simultaneously, a separate UN investigation called for an international tribunal to try Indonesian military personnel, including Wiranto. While Indonesia's government rejected this idea as an infringement of its sovereignty, the real concern was that it might antagonise the TNI to such an extent that already tense relations with the government might break down completely. As an alternative, the government began preparations to prosecute implicated senior officers itself. Although less threatening to the TNI than the proposed UN tribunal, this was an important reverse nonetheless: the defence minister had asserted as recently as December 1999 that higher-ranking military personnel would not be prosecuted 'as they were just carrying out state policy'.⁹⁰

Wiranto's removal from the cabinet in mid-February 2000 opened the way for further reform. In March 2000, Defence Minister Juwono Sudarsono announced that the number of three-star officers (lieutenant-generals and equivalents) would be reduced from 19 to approximately 14 over the ensuing two years, with merit as the basis for promotion to high rank, replacing the patronage and political interference so influential in the past.⁹¹ In the same month, Abdurrahman revoked legislation allowing for the existence of Bakorstanas, the TNI's security-coordination agency, which had enforced the Suharto regime's control over and through the armed forces. The cabinet's economic coordinating minister, Kwik Kian Gie, stated that the government would soon begin an audit of TNI businesses, which would cease to receive preferential treatment.⁹²

There were, however, limits to how far and how quickly reforming the armed forces could proceed. The president's role in the February 2000 reshuffle of command and staff posts had provoked considerable resentment within the officer corps. It was clear that the government now intended to allow the TNI considerable leeway to organise its own affairs. The defence minister emphasised in April that civilians had no role to play within his ministry, a stance supposedly justified by the need to exclude party political influence over the TNI.⁹³ The TNI's most radical senior officer, Agus Wirahadikusumah, argued for a rapid and thoroughgoing dismantling of the territorial structure, and was supported by many younger officers. But moderate reformers (such as Chief of Staff for Territorial Affairs Major-General Agus Widjojo), who dominated the higher ranks,

favoured a less traumatic, gradual withdrawal from the socio-political sphere. These officers tended to support the notion of *peran TNI* ('TNI role'), effectively a modernised version of *dwi fungsi* in which the armed forces' socio-political activities are more closely integrated with their military function.⁹⁴ Trials of junior TNI personnel indicted in human rights cases went ahead, but these did not satisfy the many domestic and international critics of the armed forces' appalling record. However, Abdurrahman's government was reluctant to risk high-profile trials. As a pragmatic alternative, the president proposed that the armed forces should apologise for their past crimes in Aceh, East Timor, West Papua (Irian Jaya) and elsewhere as part of a reconciliation process aimed at restoring national unity.

The political compromises forced on Abdurrahman in August 2000 seemed to bolster the army's political influence, and have reinforced its resistance to fundamental change. Some reforms have nonetheless proceeded. In January 2001, Defence Minister Mohammad Mahfud announced that major personnel changes in his ministry would soon see several civilians appointed to senior positions.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, a 'humanitarian pause' in Aceh, beginning in early June 2000, did not improve the situation in the province or undermine the popular demand for a referendum on independence. Despite peace talks in Switzerland in January 2001, which resulted in an indefinite extension of the largely illusory ceasefire, the TNI has been preparing for an all-out offensive against the Acehnese rebels. In West Papua, local nationalists' drive for independence is similarly unabated. Ambon, other parts of Maluku and areas of Sulawesi remain riven by Muslim-Christian conflict. At best, the security forces stand accused of failing to prevent violence from escalating (as in Ambon, where the TNI and Polri did nothing to prevent thousands of extremist Muslim militiamen arriving from Java during May 2000); at worst, of provoking violence or even actively taking sides (as has also happened in Ambon). A true picture of events in provinces such as Aceh and Ambon is often obscured by disinformation and black operations involving so-called *provokators*, the stock-in-trade of shadier TNI elements that may still be collaborating with renegade senior officers who are linked to the former regime.

While seeking to reduce the TNI's non-military roles, Abdurrahman's government has also attempted to reorient the military towards a more professional posture, involving greater emphasis on defending Indonesia against external threats. These dangers are intrinsically of relatively low intensity: despite tensions with neighbours such as Australia and Malaysia, no major external threat is envisaged. Concern over China's long-term strategic potential has apparently diminished in light of the new government's *rapprochement* with Beijing.

The main focus of the government's restructuring of the TNI has, for political as well as strategic reasons, been on strengthening the navy and the air force. Shifting the balance of power within the defence ministry and armed forces headquarters will help to change the military's political complexion: the navy, including the marine corps, and the air force were never integrated into the New Order system to the same extent as the army. The government also aims to enhance the armed forces' ability to protect Indonesia's vital maritime interests. In his first major speech after becoming president, Abdurrahman promised to rebuild Indonesia's capacity to defend its vast marine resources, particularly against illegal fishing. Another priority is to secure Indonesia's natural-gas fields on the Natuna Islands. Enhanced maritime capabilities are also seen as key in managing growing internal threats. The navy has attempted to prevent the smuggling of weapons to the separatist movement in Aceh, and deploys troops to trouble spots throughout the archipelago.

Under current plans, the army's overall personnel numbers (presently approximately 230,000) are to be cut substantially; Kopassus, disgraced because of its former role as Prabowo's power base and its alleged involvement in many of the TNI's worst violations of human rights, is to be reduced from 7,000 to 5,000. In the longer term, substantial personnel savings may be possible if the territorial structure is significantly reduced. The 30,000-strong Kostrad is likely to emerge as the main element of a more professional army.

Increasingly professionalised, outward-looking armed forces are likely to be expensive. In the past, Indonesia's forces relied on non-budgetary income from an extensive network of businesses, as well as extortion and corruption, with the

official defence budget meeting only a fraction of their needs. Although both the TNI commander and the defence minister pressed for a substantially increased budget in the 2000 fiscal year, the funding granted by parliament, amounting to 10.9 trillion rupiah (\$1bn) for the TNI and the police, was, pro rata, lower than the 1999 allocation. Despite supposedly being beneficiaries of TNI restructuring, the navy received only one trillion rupiah (\$126m), and the air force two-thirds of this amount. The army and police, with their much larger personnel numbers, continued to take the bulk of the defence and security budget. The government's announcement in March 2000 that TNI and Polri salaries would be increased by at least 30% during 2000 increased the pressure on the budget, leaving even less funding for non-personnel spending. Since substantial increases in the defence budget will be impossible given Indonesia's dire economic circumstances, the military will be allowed to maintain its extensive commercial activities for the foreseeable future.⁹⁶

Security-sector reform in Indonesia has involved developments affecting the police service as well as the armed forces. Abdurrahman has emphasised the need to increase the strength of Polri, particularly Brimob, partly in order to take over greater responsibility for internal security from the army. Polri has begun a process of cultural change, which has seen it replace its military-style ranks with a civilianised police hierarchy. Its separation from the TNI went one stage further in July 2000, when the force came under the direct control of the president rather than the defence minister. Former Defence Minister Juwono Sudarsono has predicted, though, that Polri will not be sufficiently large or well-trained to become Indonesia's main force for maintaining law and order until 2010 or 2015.⁹⁷ In these circumstances, the TNI has used the poor domestic security situation, including ethnic violence that erupted in Kalimantan in early 2001, to justify its continuing territorial role and internal security function. A defence bill that was submitted to parliament in March 2001 provided for the TNI to handle 'conventional and unconventional threats, both internally and externally, which could damage the country's integrity, sovereignty and safety'.⁹⁸

Regional initiatives

Security-sector reform is inherently a national-level process. Yet the literature on the subject has occasionally referred to the apparent relevance and usefulness of regional security initiatives in Southeast Asia. Nicole Ball has argued that the exchange of defence-related information in the ARF not only requires ASEAN countries to produce relevant documentation, but has also fostered 'positive interaction' between governments and the 'national research institutes' which have provided input for regional states' ARF submissions. In Ball's view, this process may 'lay the foundation for more detailed exchanges on a wide range of security-related topics and build an infrastructure for adopting common approaches to regional security problems'. Ball also claims that 'civil society may be able to play an important role in nudging ASEAN governments in the direction of more openness and collaboration', and that such activities might facilitate civilian oversight of the security sector in a more general sense.

Unfortunately, Ball's assessment substantially overestimates the potential of ARF-related dialogue processes to affect significantly either regional security, or Southeast Asian states' security sector policy-making at the national level. It also seriously misinterprets the role of civil society in relation to the ARF.

ASEAN, originally established with five members (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) in 1967, had expanded to include all ten Southeast Asian states by April 1999, when Cambodia joined. Although ostensibly primarily an organisation for fostering economic cooperation, it has always performed implicit security functions, most importantly by providing a diplomatic framework for the mitigation (although not resolution) of tensions between its members. By containing the potential for conflict, and thus helping to limit defence spending, ASEAN has facilitated economic development, which member governments have always agreed is vital in order to control domestic dissent and maintain national cohesion in the face of internal and external security challenges. However, the very existence of tensions between members, the absence of commonly-held mutual external threat perceptions and the fear of provoking potential extra-regional adversaries have negated any chance of ASEAN developing as a defence community.

The ARF, established as an ASEAN initiative in 1993, represents an effort to extend the ASEAN model of regional security cooperation to the wider East Asian region. Its official aims are 'to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern' and 'to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region'.⁹⁹ From the beginning, an unspoken objective was to integrate China, the rising regional power, into a system of regional order. By 2000, the ARF's membership comprised the ten ASEAN states, together with Australia, Canada, China, the European Union (EU), India, Japan, North and South Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Russia and the US. The Forum convenes at ministerial level annually after the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) and Post-Ministerial Conference; an ARF senior officials' meeting (SOM) takes place two months before each AMM. Despite the Forum's wide membership, the ASEAN states have retained control of its agenda.

Since its first meeting in 1994, activities sponsored by the ARF have grown steadily to involve meetings at 'first track' (senior official), 'second track' and 'expert' levels. Although the ARF defines security in comprehensive rather than narrowly military terms, its focus on exploring how confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy might be applied to East Asian regional security has seen the Forum encouraging transparency among members in defence matters through the exchange of military information, high-level contacts between staff colleges, and participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The ARF has encouraged member countries to allow defence officials and senior military officers to participate in the dialogue process, direct links between national defence establishments being seen as a key means of enhancing confidence. ARF-sponsored workshops, meetings and training courses have also covered peacekeeping, demining, search and rescue, disaster relief, military medicine, piracy and other maritime issues, and transnational crime.¹⁰⁰ ARF members from outside Southeast Asia have played important roles in organising these activities, although often on a joint basis with ASEAN members. 'Second track' meetings involve academics and other non-official participants. The deliberations of non-ARF 'second track' meetings,

particularly those of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP)—a loosely constituted body based on national branches composed largely of academics and members of policy research institutes—have been fed into the ARF from the beginning.

However, there has been little evidence of any significant increase in the transparency of member states' defence establishments. Partly because of the encouragement provided by the ARF, most ASEAN governments—most recently Vietnam in July 1998—have produced defence 'white papers' or similar policy statements. But while the publication of these documents marks a first step towards greater openness, in comparison with the defence-policy statements released by the governments of Western countries, Japan, South Korea or India, Southeast Asian governments' white papers have been vague and imprecise, particularly where defence spending, personnel numbers, military organisation and orders of battle are concerned.

In 1997, all Southeast Asian governments except Burma, Cambodia and Laos submitted data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. This was, however, the zenith of Southeast Asian interest: in 1999, only Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand participated.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the data has remained skeletal, relating simply to the quantity of arms imports during the previous year in each of seven basic categories (tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers). Although governments are invited to supply supplementary information concerning their overall military holdings, no ASEAN government has done so. Publications like the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)'s *Military Balance*, widely available in the West and even in the libraries of Southeast Asian universities and think-tanks, provide considerably more detail than regional governments' defence white papers and UN register submissions.

There is little incentive for Southeast Asian governments to increase the transparency of their armed forces. In general, defence establishments view the notion of transparency negatively, because of its potential to reveal both their weaknesses, which might tempt aggression, and their strengths, which might stimulate counter-measures. Such attitudes have often influenced the 'national

research institutes' to which Ball refers. In most Southeast Asian countries, these are either extensions of national defence bureaucracies, for example the Office of Strategic Studies in Burma, or are sponsored by the defence ministry or armed forces, as in the case of Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. Official nominees and representatives of these think-tanks have dominated Southeast Asian participation in the supposedly non-official ARF 'second track' activities, together with the related CSCAP process.

Contrary to Ball's expectations, civil society has played little role in the ARF process, which has remained state-dominated even at 'second track' level. The role of civil society in general is severely restricted in all regional states except Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Even here, the engagement with defence issues of civil society, including the mass media, political parties and NGOs, is still only embryonic.

Status of security-sector reform in Southeast Asia

To varying degrees, security-sector reform has followed in the wake of the major political turning points in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. But while democratisation has been a prerequisite for significant reform, it has not in itself provided an adequate basis for far-reaching changes in the military and police.

In the Philippines and Thailand, civilian political authority and constitutional processes needed to become well-entrenched before the legacy of the military's political role, taking the form particularly of lingering concerns over the potential for renewed direct intervention, could be overcome. In the early years after 1986 and 1992, respectively, relations between civilian governments and the armed forces in the Philippines and Thailand remained unstable and ambiguous. Only after secondary turning points—Ramos' accession to the presidency in 1992 and the economic crisis that led to Chavalit's downfall in 1997—did governments with more explicit agendas for security-sector reform take power.

Since the late 1990s, Thailand's straitened financial circumstances and the need to take account of the views of multilateral lending institutions have justified the Chuan government's drastic cuts in military budgets, and its far-reaching

security-sector reforms. In the Philippines, though, detailed civilian political oversight of the armed forces has combined with a long-term lack of finances to hobble plans to modernise the AFP through restructuring and re-equipment. At the same time, recession in the Philippines has contributed to the revival of serious domestic rebellions, which have sucked the military back into a major internal security role, further setting back reforms which should have re-oriented the AFP towards external defence. The change of government in Thailand in January 2001 is unlikely to affect the scope or pace of reforms significantly. In the Philippines, the Arroyo administration may focus more clearly than its predecessor on military modernisation and related reforms.

In Indonesia, security-sector reform is at a much earlier and more fragile stage. Although significant changes have been made, including the separation of Polri from the armed forces, the institution of parliamentary oversight of the TNI, and the scaling down of *kekaryaan*, the armed forces' territorial role remains entrenched, along with their substantial commercial interests. Abdurrahman's civilian government is highly vulnerable to pressure from the military, which imposes tight constraints on the potential for reform. Indeed, given the country's escalating internal security problems and the possibility of a successor government more closely attuned to the armed forces' wishes than Abdurrahman's, it is hard to see how it can progress significantly in the short to medium term.

At the regional level, the ARF has provided a context for initial steps towards East Asia-wide confidence-building measures. However, it has not significantly enhanced military transparency in Southeast Asia, and is unlikely to do so until more national defence establishments in the region are under democratic political control, and civilian capacity to oversee the defence sector is substantially increased.

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Chapter three

The role of external assistance

Crucial obstacles limit the scope for direct external influence over the evolution of Southeast Asian states' security sectors. Most importantly, all of the region's governments view defence and security as sovereign matters *par excellence*, and only in exceptional circumstances is it realistic to expect their acquiescence in externally-motivated security-sector reform. In a number of states, the political climate necessary for reform to proceed is simply not present. The closed political systems of several regional states are largely impervious to outside political influence. Despite their receipt of considerable international aid, Vietnam and Laos are unwilling to accept interference in what they see as political matters. Attempts by donors to exploit their economic leverage in order to secure reform, for example a reduction in Vietnam's defence spending, would probably alienate the recipient government and risk the loss of existing influence over its policies. In Burma's case, the SPDC regime has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to repudiate international interference in what it sees as a life-or-death struggle against externally-supported domestic adversaries, even at the cost of cutting itself off from international development aid. In Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, the need for reform is minimal compared with other states. But in any case, their prosperity and economic importance, and their independence from aid or financial assistance from Western governments and IFIs, mean that external powers and agencies have little scope to influence their security policies.

But there is a middle group of states—Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia—where prevailing political conditions are allowing various types of security-sector reform to proceed. In the first three cases, reform has been motivated primarily by domestic political change. In Thailand and the Philippines, the consolidation of vibrant if imperfect democracies during the 1990s considerably reduced the autonomy of the security sector. Probably for this reason, there has been no perceptible external interest in supporting security-sector reform in these two countries. In Cambodia, though, the role played by

international aid donors in ensuring economic survival since the early 1990s has allowed the exercise of crucial influence over the country's demobilisation programme. Given Cambodia's prevailing political circumstances, this programme would probably not have proceeded without such international assistance. And in Indonesia, the central role that more far-reaching reform must play in furthering the incomplete democratic transition, combined with the country's strategic importance, has stimulated Western governments' interest in considering how to support reforms affecting the military and police.

In September 1999, the crisis over East Timor opened the way for the creation of Southeast Asia's eleventh state. Although the precise timetable for the transfer of sovereignty from UNTAET was unclear at the beginning of 2001, efforts were being made to ensure that the territory would possess all the trappings of modern statehood, including armed forces. Its dependence on international economic and political support has provided an unusual opportunity for extensive outside influence over the structure of the security sector. While East Timor's armed forces will be built afresh, they will be based around a core of personnel from the nation's liberation army, and for this reason the process may be classed as security-sector reform.

Cambodia

Cambodia provides a classic example of a post-conflict security sector needing reform. Its armed forces are bloated, expensive, and engage in widespread illicit commercial activities and human-rights abuse. There are substantial militia forces outside centralised political control, and the police force is weak and ineffective. Security-sector reform is 'an essential condition for the success of rural development efforts, the democratic transition and efforts to restore the state's capacity'.¹⁰²

Limited security-sector reform, though not identified as such, was supposed to be an important part of the peace settlement signed by the four Cambodian politico-military factions in Paris in 1991. Under the settlement's terms, their armed forces were meant to be integrated into new national forces, with each

faction demobilising and disarming 70% of its troops as part of the process. After the Khmer Rouge defected from the peace plan, however, the UN decided to allow the other factions to maintain their existing troop levels, and the demobilisation provision was not implemented.

When the coalition government was formed in 1993, there was considerable international interest in supporting the reform of Cambodia's security forces, with a view to both reducing their size and increasing their military effectiveness against the Khmer Rouge. The armed forces had a nominal strength of 130,000, but 40,000 of these troops were 'ghost soldiers', whose pay was pocketed by senior officers, of whom there were many.¹⁰³ During 1993, both France and Australia agreed to provide training and material assistance to the security forces. After the Khmer Rouge routed RCAF units at Pailin on the Thai border in April 1994, foreign assistance was stepped up.

Over the following three years, the US, France, Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia became involved in training various components of the RCAF, supplying non-lethal equipment and offering advice on military restructuring. France was also heavily involved in training the national paramilitary police force along the lines of its own *gendarmerie*.¹⁰⁴ This assistance may have helped Cambodia's security forces to contain the substantial internal security threat posed by the Khmer Rouge until its disintegration in late 1996. But it did not significantly respond to the central concern of aid donors: that the over-sized security sector was consuming too great a proportion—about 40%—of the country's limited national budget at the expense of developmental and social spending. The government did announce a plan for reforming the RCAF in October 1994. Limited restructuring, such as the demotion of more than 10,000 middle-ranking RCAF officers in late 1995, took place. Yet, there was no significant progress towards reducing RCAF personnel strength towards the eventual target of 70,000.¹⁰⁵

Because of the security forces' involvement in the July 1997 coup by the CPP, the US and Australia withdrew from most military cooperation with the Phnom Penh government. Australia, however, supported Cambodian defence ministry efforts to prepare a white paper. France continued to provide more significant assistance, including military advisers attached to the defence ministry and RCAF

general staff.¹⁰⁶ Chinese military aid also became significant during the late 1990s. In 1995, Beijing pledged \$1m-worth of non-lethal military assistance. Since 1999, China has attempted to use military assistance as a key instrument in building up a broad strategic relationship with Phnom Penh, supplying military aid packages worth a total of \$4.2m in November 1999 and August 2000.¹⁰⁷ While Hun Sen is believed to have deferred his government's acceptance of a large-scale infusion of Chinese army equipment, Beijing is reported to have re-equipped Cambodia's paratroop battalion, and to have begun training Cambodian demining personnel.¹⁰⁸

Following the 1998 elections and the restoration of political stability, military reform in the quantitative sense of reducing the RCAF's size, now swollen further with the accretion of Khmer Rouge defectors, returned to the government's agenda. This was largely because of pressure from the international donor community, on which the country's economy still depended. The first step in the World Bank-funded Cambodian Veterans Assistance Programme (CVAP), which parallels efforts to reduce the civil service, involved a census of RCAF personnel and the issuing of new military identity cards during 1999. This process revealed more than 15,000 'ghost soldiers' and almost 160,000 dependant 'ghost children', who were removed from the military payroll. Following pressure from the Consultative Group of donor governments, the government implemented a \$2.2m pilot demobilisation project in June and July 2000, under which 1,500 troops were given cash payments of \$240 and 150kg of rice on being demobilised. Plans envisaged further demobilisation at a rate of 10,000 troops annually during 2000, 2001 and 2002, with the aim of reducing the RCAF's strength to less than 100,000. This timetable has proved unrealistic: delays in disbursing donors' funding for the pilot project led the government to postpone the start of the main part of the programme. By November 2000, demobilisation of the quota of 10,000 for the year had still not begun.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the pilot demobilisation was widely seen as successful, and the main part of the CVAP is likely to proceed. But the programme is no panacea for the problems of Cambodia's security sector. The primary part of the programme will make more adequate provision for the needs of disabled and chronically-ill

soldiers and other 'special target groups', which comprise almost two-thirds of soldiers likely to be demobilised.¹¹⁰ But early reports indicate that troops demobilised in the pilot project have encountered problems reintegrating into civilian society and making a living. Moreover, there is no guarantee that subsidising demobilisation will lead to significant absolute reductions in defence spending.¹¹¹ Indeed, the government has only spoken of reducing the *proportion* of the total budget allocated to defence and security in 2000–02. Thus, the defence budget of \$120m in 2000 was virtually the same as in 1999, though it fell as a proportion of the overall budget, from 30% to 19%. The total defence and security budget, including the police allocation, fell from 42% to 35% of the total. Savings made through reducing the size of the RCAF's payroll may be used to provide better pay for remaining personnel, or for other military purposes.

The demobilisation programme will also do little to deal with the central problem of Cambodia's security sector: the fact that its armed forces and police constitute the main components of the CPP's coercive state apparatus. Their use against the political opposition has been widely documented. In May 2000, for example, government security forces killed six members of the Free Khmer Movement (FKM), an opposition group formed in the aftermath of the July 1997 coup, six months after they had surrendered. Another 25 FKM members were reported missing, believed killed. When the Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee, an umbrella organisation of 17 local NGOs, reported these deaths and disappearances in August 2000, the ministry of defence threatened to bring defamation charges against it. Reports also indicate the use of the security forces to intimidate activists from the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP).¹¹²

Under the present government, there is little chance of creating armed forces or police that are loyal to the state, rather than to political factions. Particularly since 1997, the CPP has dominated Cambodia's political system, and its senior military officers control the RCAF. Although Hun Sen relinquished his post as the RCAF's commander-in-chief in 1999, there is no legislation or other mechanism to enforce the distinction between military and civilian spheres, and defence policy-making and resource allocation remain opaque processes.¹¹³ The SRP has criticised the government's defence policy, to the extent of walking out of parlia-

ment in protest at the level of defence spending envisaged in the budget for 2000, but such pressure has been ineffective.

Strong, politically loyal armed forces remain the CPP's vital power base, which the government is unlikely to jeopardise—even to please the IFIs and other donors. Substantial reforms would necessitate IFIs and donor governments becoming considerably more involved in moulding Cambodia's domestic politics than is conceivable at present. Primarily because of the CPP-dominated government's restoration of a relatively stable socio-political environment after almost 30 years of conflict, donors have been unwilling to exert major pressure for reform, despite the serious flaws in Cambodia's democracy and the administration's poor record in many areas.

Indonesia

Given the armed forces' central role in Indonesia's domestic politics between 1965 and 1998, and the widespread view among Western governments that Suharto's New Order was a key ally, aid donors did not resolutely encourage improvement in its security forces' human-rights record. The armed forces behaved atrociously in East Timor after its invasion in 1975, and their conduct in other rebellious provinces, notably Aceh and Irian Jaya, was routinely brutal. There was substantial disagreement between Western governments and armed forces and Western NGOs over how best to improve the Indonesian military's behaviour. Whereas governments emphasised the potentially positive impact which interaction between the Indonesian military and its Western counterparts could have in terms of raising standards and establishing ideals of apolitical professionalism, NGO critics feared that such contact would merely legitimise the military's behaviour. Interested NGOs and left-of-centre politicians in the West tended to argue for a total embargo on arms sales and military contacts to impress a sense of Western disapproval on Indonesia's armed forces. Partly because of this disagreement, there was no clear strategy.

Several Western governments, notably the US, Australia and the UK, maintained close military as well as political and economic relationships with

Suharto's Indonesia. These links involved sales of defence equipment and military-to-military contacts, such as the training of Indonesian personnel. However, in the wake of the 1991 Dili massacre in East Timor, in which ABRI crushed a protest demonstration causing heavy loss of life, the US government cancelled Indonesia's participation in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Programme. Limited assistance under IMET was restored in 1996, although Indonesia responded to the threat of US sanctions after Congressional criticism of its human-rights record by cancelling a planned purchase of fighter aircraft from the US, and withdrawing from IMET. Nonetheless, small numbers of military officers continued to receive training in the US during the late 1990s. The main reasons for this assistance were the Pentagon's view that Indonesia was an important strategic partner, and the belief that the armed forces would remain an important vector of American political influence after the succession to Suharto.

The importance of Australia's defence relationship with Indonesia was underlined when the two countries signed a bilateral 'Agreement on Maintaining Security' (AMS) in December 1995. The AMS committed Canberra and Jakarta to regular ministerial-level consultation on mutual security issues, and to fostering bilateral and regional security cooperation. They also agreed to consult in the event of 'adverse challenges' to the security of either state. The agreement was unprecedented for Indonesia, and reflected shared concern over China's rising regional power and assertiveness. In practical terms, \$4.7m-worth of Australian funding a year supported wide-ranging cooperation, including the training of ABRI personnel in Australia. However, human-rights concerns threatened to undermine the relationship, especially because of the high profile the East Timor issue enjoyed in Australia. Efforts aimed directly at influencing ABRI's behaviour did not constitute a significant part of cooperation under the AMS, although concern over the indiscipline of Indonesian troops in internal security operations did lead Australia's army to supply information on its rules of engagement.

Britain's military involvement with Suharto's Indonesia focused on promoting sales of defence equipment. In response to domestic concerns over human-rights abuses, though, attempts were made to improve ABRI's professionalism. For

example, it is understood that a training package drawing on the British army's long experience of controlling riots in Northern Ireland was provided when Brimob took delivery of British-made *Tactica* vehicles in the mid-1990s. Although NGO activists in the UK, supported by a small number of politicians, opposed direct links between British institutions and ABRI, during the late 1990s officers were admitted to British universities for postgraduate courses in defence management and security studies.

Because of the military's continuing political role and persistent evidence of abuses, Indonesia's defence links with the West did not significantly increase after Suharto was ousted. Indeed, subsequent developments have undermined the TNI's existing connections with the West, effectively negating any role that military-to-military links might play in assisting the professionalisation and depoliticisation of Indonesia's military. The TNI-orchestrated violence in September 1999 following East Timor's referendum led the US to suspend arms sales and all military contacts, including the training of Indonesian officers in the US. The EU imposed a total arms embargo. Days before the Australian-led international military intervention in East Timor, Jakarta abruptly repudiated the AMS.

NGOs, including in Indonesia, pressured Western governments not to restore military links with Indonesia until certain 'benchmarks' were met: immediate reforms to reduce the TNI's influence over local and provincial government; full cooperation by the TNI with domestic and international investigations of human-rights abuses; the creation of a permanent human-rights court to handle cases of abuse; the disbanding and disarmament of militias; the cessation of military and military-sponsored militia violence; and the disbanding of Kopassus and the armed forces' intelligence agency.¹¹⁴

Opponents of renewed military contacts pointed to the fact that, despite claims that cultivating TNI officers through military training and education programmes could influence the military's behaviour, no Western government was able to use existing contacts to halt the military's excesses in East Timor.

The US, UK and Australia allowed some low-profile links with the TNI during 2000, but these emphasised relations with the navy and air force, rather than the more politically-tainted army. The EU arms embargo was lifted in January 2000,

but US restrictions remained in force, prompting the Indonesian government to claim that Washington was partially responsible for the TNI's failure to control ethnic and communal conflict.¹¹⁵ In September 2000, Washington re-imposed a full suspension of military-to-military contacts after TNI-supported East Timorese militiamen killed three UN aid workers, including a US citizen, in West Timor. According to US Defense Secretary William Cohen, relations would only be restored once Washington was satisfied that the TNI was 'subordinate to civilian rule'.¹¹⁶ Soon afterwards, US marines were deployed to East Timor, ostensibly to assist in development projects, a move seen by Jakarta as 'intimidation'. US relations with Indonesia deteriorated further in late 2000, as Indonesian politicians accused Washington's ambassador, Robert Gelbard, of interfering in domestic affairs.¹¹⁷

Abdurrahman repeatedly postponed a visit to Canberra during 2000, reflecting misplaced but widespread concern in Indonesia that Australia supported the independence movement in Irian Jaya, and was seeking to destabilise eastern Indonesia more generally. Australia's defence white paper, issued in December 2000, spoke of 'working with the Indonesian Government to establish, over time, a new defence relationship', but this remained a long-term aspiration.¹¹⁸

Although relations with the UK remained relatively stable, and Indonesia's chief of air staff stated in December 2000 that Britain would soon resume training personnel from his service, the UK government's concern over the TNI's behaviour apparently ruled out significantly closer military contacts.¹¹⁹ This applied particularly to links with Indonesia's army. The UK nevertheless continued a programme aimed at encouraging the demilitarisation of the police, which included attaching a senior British police officer to Polri headquarters in an advisory capacity, as well as training Indonesian police officers in the UK.

East Timor

In contrast to Indonesia, in East Timor international actors have considerable potential to mould the security sector—and will bear substantial responsibility if it shows the same shortcomings familiar elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The terri-

tory is expected to become an independent sovereign state by the end of 2001 following the drafting of a constitution and elections to a constituent assembly. The October 1999 report by the UN Secretary-General on the situation in East Timor called for the rapid establishment of a local police force to maintain law and order, and in early 2000 the civilian police component of UNTAET began training recruits at the newly-established East Timor Police Academy. A total of 150 police officers had been trained by November 2000, when a further 100 recruits were inducted.¹²⁰ The police force will eventually be 1,500-strong. A separate service has also been established to take responsibility for policing the border, and for customs control. In the meantime, responsibility for ensuring East Timor's security against armed threats (essentially pro-Indonesian militias in West Timor) has rested with UNTAET's international peacekeeping force.

Establishing an East Timorese defence force will be a more complex and politically sensitive task than setting up the police service. Throughout the Indonesian occupation, East Timor's resistance was spearheaded by Falintil, originally the military wing of Fretilin, the left-wing political organisation whose unilateral declaration of independence from Portuguese rule triggered Jakarta's invasion in 1975. From 1987, Falintil claimed to have severed its formal connections with Fretilin and represented itself as an inclusive national liberation army under the command of a political organisation, the Timorese National Council of Resistance (CNRT). In the weeks preceding the August 1999 plebiscite on East Timor's future, Falintil agreed to a ceasefire, and to the cantonment of its 1,500 guerrillas. At this stage, the CNRT and Falintil apparently assumed that an eventually independent East Timor would not need—and probably could not afford—armed forces, and would instead rely on a paramilitary National Guard or *gendarmerie*.

Although Falintil forces remained in their cantonments throughout the violent events of September 1999, the manner of East Timor's eventual liberation from Indonesian occupation forced the CNRT and Falintil to revise their thinking about the territory's future security. Subsequent events have only confirmed the need for a more capable military able to defend East Timor against militia forces, and possibly also to deter a larger-scale Indonesian attack. Following the international intervention and the establishment of UNTAET, in March 2000 Falintil

proposed a 5,000-strong force, including naval and air components. In July, this was revised down to a smaller force of 3,000, mainly composed of three territorially-based infantry battalions. Falintil envisaged one to two years of conscription, the establishment of a reserve component, and the involvement of troops in farming. While existing Falintil troops would constitute the core of the new force, it would also include East Timorese transferred from the Portuguese army, and possibly even some who had served in Indonesian forces.¹²¹

In August 2000, with funding from the UK's Department for International Development, the Centre for Defence Studies (CDS) at King's College London produced a preliminary study on security-force options to assist UNTAET in planning East Timor's future security. The report outlined three options for a future East Timorese defence force:

- a force of 3,000–5,000 troops, composed mainly of conscripts, but including sea and air components;
- an all-army force of 3,000, comprising a professional core of 1,500 (including 800–1,000 former Falintil fighters) and 1,500 conscripts; and
- an all-army force of 3,000, comprising 1,500 mainly former Falintil regulars, and another 1,500 volunteer reserves.

The study recommended the third option, mainly because it was the cheapest and obviated the need for conscription, which was assessed as 'unnecessary and unsuitable'.¹²²

Considerable progress has been made towards establishing the East Timor Defence Force. It is clear that many of the study's recommendations will be acted upon. The territory's revised budget, presented to the proto-legislative body the Timorese National Council in November 2000, included an initial allocation of \$1m. Later the same month, the East Timorese Transitional Administration hosted an international conference of potential donors of additional funding for the Defence Force. The head of UNTAET revealed that the training of recruits would begin in January 2001, with the aim of fielding 1,500 troops (of whom at least 600 will be ex-Falintil) and a roughly equal number of reservists within three years. At the end of the conference, Portugal and Australia agreed

to take the lead in providing initial training. Portugal also offered to assist in establishing a naval component, while Thailand offered expertise in 'linking national development and security'. Portugal's financial assistance will amount to \$2.5m in 2001, and Australia's to \$12.5m over five years. Brazil, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, the UK and the US also participated in the conference, with a view to providing military assistance or financial support.¹²³

Despite this international attention, there are good reasons for concern over the nature of post-independence civil–military relations in East Timor. The CNRT enjoys huge popular legitimacy, will probably dominate the constituent assembly and will form the territory's first elected government. But how it will govern, and particularly how it will manage domestic political opposition and view its relationship with the Defence Force, remains unclear. The intimate relationship between the CNRT and the personnel who will form the core of the Defence Force raises the possibility that the government might use the armed forces as a domestic political instrument, in much the same way as Cambodia's post-1992 regime has used the RCAF.

Given the continued threat from pro-Indonesian elements, Falintil has maintained its extensive intelligence apparatus and other clandestine networks, which depend on illicit commercial activities for funds.¹²⁴ This does not bode well for the prospects for an apolitical, fully professional military after independence. Southeast Asian militaries which originated in independence struggles have become heavily and directly involved in politics after independence in Burma and Indonesia, or formed an integral part of oppressive political systems dominated by single parties, as in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. They have also all maintained their access to extensive non-budgetary income from commercial activity.

Building civilian oversight capacity

Military-to-military links have dominated Western efforts to professionalise Southeast Asia's armed forces, not only by developing their military capabilities,

but also through attempting to influence the nature of their relations with the civil power. The success of such programmes of military engagement varies according to the prevailing political circumstances, especially the political will for reform, and the extent to which education in the principles of civilian supremacy and respect for civil and human rights are integrated, explicitly or implicitly, into routine military-to-military contacts.

Other approaches could usefully complement military-to-military contacts. One possibility is for the IFIs, notably the IMF and the World Bank, to become more assertive in relation to security-sector reform. Dylan Hendrickson has suggested that 'IFIs will become more closely involved in security-sector reform as the issue moves up the development agenda'.¹²⁵ The clearest evidence of this in Southeast Asia is in Cambodia, where they have been the driving force behind the demobilisation programme. These institutions could attempt to use their influence to contain or reduce defence spending in countries under their economic tutelage. As Jonathan Stevenson has noted, however, the IFIs' approach to 'the sensitive issue of security-sector conditionality' has generally been 'circumspect': they face 'a philosophical and political quandary in determining how to use their leverage without exceeding their mandates and alienating the governments they seek to reform'.¹²⁶ Although in 1999 the president of the World Bank twice warned Jakarta to restrain East Timorese militia violence, such political intervention has been exceptional.¹²⁷ The IMF, accused of adopting an overbearing attitude towards Indonesia during the 1997–98 economic crisis, now avoids 'micromanagement', particularly in relation to political issues. Neither the IMF nor the World Bank is likely to become involved in the details of security-sector reform in Southeast Asia.

Despite their diversity, one policy implication is clear from the three examples of external assistance for reform in Cambodia, Indonesia and East Timor: more could be done in the vital area of enhancing the oversight capacity of civilian bodies, whether parliaments, the public service, the media or NGOs. This could be done by providing practical courses in security studies and defence administration for personnel from these groups. This might be achieved most cost effectively through collaborative programmes between foreign and local universities.

In Cambodia, security-sector reform has been quantitative rather than qualitative, but there is no guarantee that smaller armed forces will consume fewer resources, or be any less an instrument of the dominant political party. Although the CPP's dominance restricts opportunities for substantive debate over security-sector issues, the virtual absence of informed critics on security matters gives it a freer hand than might otherwise be the case. Media coverage of security issues is also extremely limited, and few non-CPP politicians are sufficiently 'literate' in security matters to challenge the party's line convincingly. Despite the myriad local NGOs in the country, there is a distinct shortage of NGO capacity in security-related matters. This is reflected in Cambodia's lack of representation in CSCAP, the region's main non-official security forum.

In Indonesia, the New Order's ousting opened the possibility of building civilian capacity to influence and potentially oversee Indonesia's security sector. But little has been done to take advantage of this opportunity. One possibility would be to assist Indonesian legislators to supervise the security sector, particularly the TNI, more effectively, in order 'to enhance civilian control, increase respect for the rule of law, and create transparency in the military's activities'.¹²⁸ An initial step might involve organising exchange visits by legislators to equivalent parliamentary committees in other countries.¹²⁹ Another initiative could be to train civilian defence experts, so as to provide a cadre of non-TNI policy-makers for Indonesia's defence ministry, which—with the exception of the minister—is still staffed entirely by military personnel.

The CDS study on East Timor's options emphasises the importance of introducing 'checks and balances' to ensure that civil–military relations develop in an 'appropriate' way, and argues that 'more work needs to be done—by the international community in East Timor, international and local NGOs and the Transitional Administration—to address the range of issues involved'. The core mechanism suggested by the report is the building of civilian capacity—at the levels of administration, parliament and civil society—to monitor the security sector, particularly the Defence Force.¹³⁰ These objectives must not be overlooked in the rush to establish an effective security sector.

Building civil capacity should be an attractive option for donor governments. Its aims are relatively clear-cut and, unlike military assistance, there is little danger of political embarrassment. Beyond Cambodia, Indonesia and East Timor, it could be useful in helping to reinforce existing security-sector reform in Thailand and the Philippines.

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Conclusion

Reform is not in prospect for the security sectors of every Southeast Asian state, however important and urgent it might seem in the interests of their development. There is presently no will for it among the political élites of Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia and Singapore. This is likely to remain the case in the absence of political change sufficient to undermine the power of these countries' dominant political organisations. In all these states except Burma, civilian political parties are in control. Thus, '[c]ivilian management of the security forces and the accountability of the security forces to civilian authorities', which Ball argues should be a 'central element' of security-sector reform, are clearly not sufficient in themselves. In Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia and Singapore, the ruling parties clearly manage the security forces, and these forces recognise the supremacy of the civil power. But, to greater or lesser degrees, these states' security sectors remain opaque and unaccountable as far as the population as a whole and outside parties are concerned. It is the nature of the civilian authority that is problematic. The same is true of Cambodia, where limited reform is taking place via the demobilisation programme, but without a political transformation it is hard to see the CPP allowing changes that might undermine its control of the security sector.

In Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, democratisation has to varying extents reduced the autonomy of the security sector, opening the way for more far-reaching reform. Despite rumours during 2000 and early 2001 regarding the potential for renewed military intervention in politics in Thailand and the Philippines, in both these countries the officer corps has been considerably depoliticised. Civilian politicians control the allocation of resources to the armed forces and police—to a debilitating degree in the Philippines. Yet there remains scope for further reform in both countries, especially in the Philippines, where the resumption of widespread Muslim and communist insurgency has revealed the extent to which the civilian political authorities have little effective influence—let alone control—over the operational conduct of the armed forces. In

both Thailand and the Philippines, corruption and abuse of power damage the reputation of the police. In Indonesia, the armed forces remain deeply embedded in politics, and show little sign of recognising civilian political supremacy. Unless there is a further shift in the balance of political power towards civilian politicians, significant reforms, such as bringing the defence ministry under civilian control, controlling the armed forces' extra-budgetary income and closing down their domestic intelligence and 'dirty tricks' operations, are unlikely.

The ARF's early success in encouraging member governments, including those in Southeast Asia, to issue defence white papers and to submit data to the UN register seemed to bode well for regional security confidence-building, but these initiatives had lost momentum by the end of the decade. Until considerable advances are made in enhancing democratic control over Southeast Asia's defence establishments, ARF efforts to build regional confidence through greater transparency are unlikely to have a noticeable effect on the attitudes of most ASEAN governments.

There are no quick fixes for the shortcomings of Southeast Asia's security sectors. In the main, their problems can only be resolved through long-term processes of domestic political change. External assistance for security-sector reform through military-to-military or police-to-police links can play a useful role where the overall political context is conducive, as in Thailand, the Philippines and East Timor. Indonesia's political future remains unclear, and Western governments should ensure that any significant direct contact with Jakarta's security forces is carefully focused on promoting reforms and avoids bestowing international respectability on the TNI's efforts to hold on to its residual political influence.

The most promising form of external aid specifically for security-sector reform is assistance that enhances and expands civil capacity to manage and supervise the security sector. But the broader political context for successful reform must not be neglected. In those countries where prevailing political conditions presently rule out security-sector reforms, the general encouragement of greater political pluralism might improve the longer-term prospects for change.