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## The Emerging TNI elite: Impact of Recent Reshuffles

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*In December 2007, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono appointed Army General Djoko Santoso as his new commander-in- chief. His appointment was part of significant organisational changes initiated by TNI headquarters since September 2007. These changes have major implications.*

THE APPOINTMENT of Army Chief of Staff Djoko Santoso as TNI Commander-in-Chief has both political and military implications. The political implication is that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono intends to promote certain military officers to exert his influence over the military as he prepares his re-election strategy for the 2009 presidential election. The military implications indicate the start of a process of regeneration within the military as well as the need to keep up the momentum of military reform.

### The new top brass

The promotion of Lieutenant General Erwin Sujono as the new chief of general staff (Kasum TNI), Lieutenant General Cornel Simbolon as the new deputy army chief of staff, Major General Suryo Prabowo as the Jakarta regional military commander, Major General Suroyo Gino as the West Java regional military commander, and Brigadier General Pramono Edhi Wibowo as the chief of staff of Central Java regional military command is seen as part of Dr Yudhoyono's manoeuvre to strengthen his personal influence within the military. All these generals are known to have close personal relationships with him. Erwin Sujono, Suryo Prabowo, and Edhi Wibowo are part of Dr Yudhoyono's extended family; Cornel Simbolon was his classmate in the military academy; and Suroyo Gino in 2006-2007 commanded the presidential guard, solely responsible for the president's security arrangements.

The reorganisation of the army as part of Dr Yudhoyono's strategy to win the 2009 national elections started in September 2007 with the promotion of Lt-Gen Simbolon (as deputy army chief of staff), Lieutenant General George Toisutta (Commander of the Army Strategic Command), Brigadier General Soenarko (Commander of Army Special Forces), and promotion of several officers to become

army regional commanders such as Suryo Prabowo (Jakarta), Suroyo Gino (West Java), Pramono Edhi Wibowo (Central Java), Bambang Suranto (East Java), Djoko S. Utomo (Sulawesi), and Haryadi Soetanto (Papua).

This process culminated in January 2008 when Dr Yudhoyono, surprisingly, appointed his close aide Lieutenant General Agustadi Sasongko Purnomo to become the new army chief of staff. Under normal circumstances, such a strategic position would be given to a three-star general who had previously served as commander of the Army Strategic Command, better known as Kostrad, or as deputy army chief of staff. By appointing Agustadi Sasongko Purnomo – secretary of the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs -- to become his new army chief of staff, the President continues to extend his personal influence within the Army.

### **TNI's strategic transformation**

Besides the political ramifications, changes to the military hierarchy from September 2007 to January 2008 should be seen as part of the TNI's strategic transformation aimed at designing a professional armed forces configured for dealing with 21<sup>st</sup> century contingencies.

The promotion of General Djoko Santoso as the new commander-in-chief is part of a regeneration process particularly necessary due the passing of Law of TNI 2004 extending an officer's retirement age from 55 to 58 years old. Without the law, former commander-in-chief Air Marshall Djoko Suyanto would have retired in December 2005. Similarly, former Air Force and Navy Chief of Staff Air Marshall Herman Prayitno and Admiral Slamet Subijanto would have retired in January and June 2006.

The extension of the retirement age has created a backlog in promotions affecting a significant number of high ranking military officers, especially officers those who graduated from the military academy from 1973 to 1978. From 2004 to 2009, there will be approximately 120-150 army generals from 1973-1978 classes and another 50-70 generals from 1979-1981 classes. These 170-220 army generals will have to compete with each other to fill approximately 130 positions in the Army.

The available positions for army generals has reduced significantly into only 44 strategic positions in the army regional commands, army special forces, and army strategic command, and another 80-90 positions in army headquarters. This reduction is due to cutbacks of the number of army regional commands in the late 1980s and as a consequence of the elimination of its dual-function role.

### **Military academy's role**

As part of the regeneration process, a high-ranking officer from the military academy's graduating classes from 1977-1979 will be promoted as the next commander-in-chief just before the 2009 national elections. In order to do so, at some point from December 2008 to June 2009, Dr Yudhoyono will have to replace the current chiefs of staff. The appointment of General Djoko Santoso from the class of 1975 as the commander-in-chief is a first step in this transition. In fact General Santoso is younger in age compared to the current army, navy, and air force chiefs of staff and all the current three star officers (with the exception of Commander of the Army Strategic Command, Lieutenant General Toisutta).

General Santoso is conservative and represents continuity. He supports the principle of political neutrality of the military; he guarantees that serving army personnel would not get involved in local and national elections; he accepts the separation of military justice system from the criminal justice system in principle; he has stated the need for a reserve force; and he favours the elimination of military businesses.

In 2006, General Santoso created a new Total Defence College in Bandung to initiate a series of discussions on doctrinal reforms. He wants an open debate on the basic concepts of Indonesia's defence doctrine. Foremost in these discussions is whether Indonesia should maintain its People's War doctrine or have it modified to become a new doctrine of total war or total defence.

Another issue for discussion is whether a doctrine of asymmetric warfare relying on military capacity to maintain a war of attrition against a much stronger adversary would become a more appropriate strategy for Indonesia.

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