



**The Man Emerging from the  
Midst of Indonesian Reformation**

# **Tan Sri General Wiranto**

*A Political Analysis*

PARIDAH ABD SAMAD

Tan Sri General Wiranto, a man who has been placed in a very delicate situation in the midst of the Indonesian political and economic reform, but whose role is one of the most important determining factors in guiding Indonesia out of its national crisis.

*The sense of duty, responsibility and commitment of ABRI (the Indonesian Armed Forces) to the people and the nation was the manner Wiranto utilised when the special executive power was delegated to him by President Suharto on 19 May 1998 in the midst of the worsening security situation in the country. This power was contained in the March 1998 MPR (the People's Consultative Assembly) Decree Number Five, with regard to the maintenance of national stability and security, if need be, through the establishment of the KOPKAMTIB (the Command for the Restoration of Security and Order) as was undertaken in 1965 following the abortive coup by the PKI (the Communist Party of Indonesia).*

*Wiranto did not use this power and its existence was even kept away from public knowledge for some months. Following the Special Session of the MPR (People's Consultative Assembly) in November 1998, where ABRI and in particular, Wiranto were heavily criticised following the 'Semanggi Incident' in which a number of students were killed, Wiranto for the first time made public that he had been given a special power by the former President but he had not used it as he was not 'power-crazy'. For Wiranto, consolidating ABRI and its strength was far more important. Wiranto had not pursued the mandate because he realised that there would have been enormous bloodshed if he had done so. In order to avoid a 'Second Tiananmen', Wiranto chose to back the civilian politicians rather than take power for himself.*

*The transfer of executive power from Sukarno to Suharto through the establishment of the KOPKAMTIB after the GESTAPU tragedy of 30 September 1965, led to military domination of the society for the next three decades or so. Thirty-two years later, when an almost similar situation arose, the leading Wiranto decided not to actualise his power but instead chose to give the people and democracy, a chance.*

*The Indonesian military demonstrated once again that even though they may be a dominant political force, this does not mean that they are ambitious, much less, keen on grabbing political power. The enlightened military leadership especially in the person of Wiranto, played a key role in shaping the political destiny of the country following the May 1998 mayhem.*

*The Author*





TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

# Tan Sri General Wiranto

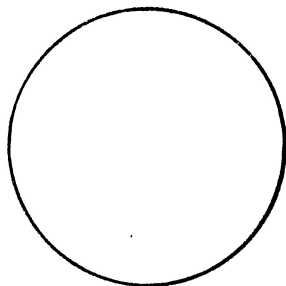
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*to my dearest daughters, Tidi Maharani and Astrid Sinarti (In)*  
*instilling in them that each citizen has a duty*  
*to uphold his/her nation*



## Preface

The events of May 1998 were a bitter dose to Indonesia. Democracy is not guaranteed unless social and economic disorders are dealt with first. Indonesian democracy has always been the significance of a blend of relations between economic performance and political stability, and between racial and inter-ethnic harmony. The combination of the first two equally important elements (economic growth and political stability) had always been thought to be the most essential for a country in the foreseeable future of democracy. In the perspective of racial and inter-ethnic crisis, a third equally important, or perhaps the most important, element have suddenly emerged, the distribution of opportunities, wealth and share of the indigenous population in the business sector of the country.

When the economic crisis of the country reached a critical point, there was increasing demand for more freedom, for an end to repression and for a clear definition of the role of the armed and intelligence forces which have been widely accused of harassment and torture of the government regime's opponents. The demand for the people to be given back their sovereignty and for national leaders to be changed grew louder. At that time, more credible opposition forces had emerged, some with extensive organisations. In other words Indonesia's economic crisis had actually contributed to the people's political awareness of the chaos in the country. The continuing economic crisis, and the emerging awareness of the people of the political chaos, had made the issue of reform increasingly significant by the end of 1997.

After more than 31 years under Suharto's government, or the New Order regime as it was popularly known, the economic crisis of the country that started in July 1997 had directly contributed to the chaotic political scenario. The economic crisis had glaringly exposed the weaknesses of the political and economic system of the country, to the extent that the country faced collapse if restructuring was not done effectively. At that stage, the need for national security and responsibility under the leadership of Wiranto became an important element in preventing the negative consequences of the political and economic chaos, where the issue of reform had become significant in the political life of Indonesia at the end of 1997<sup>1</sup>.

The downfall of Suharto did not necessarily pave the way for democracy. Indonesia still faces an uphill struggle along its long and winding road for democracy. Democracy in Indonesia cannot simply be achieved through superficial technical solutions like establishing new political parties and new election laws. Instead, it must be achieved through the involvement of society at all levels. Indonesia's democracy largely depends on the military factor. Therefore, a total review of the role of the military should be conducted before one can understand what kind of government the country has. In this connection, to achieve democracy, Indonesia must first demilitarise its civilian institutions. As the military's leader, Wiranto's role, position and stance in putting the institution of military in a new paradigm is significant for the process of democratisation in the era of reformation of the country.

The significance of the role played by Wiranto was particularly apparent during the time when the country was experiencing a constitutional change of leadership from Suharto to Habibie on May 21, 1998. This event has also led the military to play a more crucial role in the post-Suharto era. Even three days before the resignation of President Suharto, the military had already showed its commitment and influence in changing the political scenario of the country<sup>2</sup>.

On May 18, 1998 Parliamentary Speaker Harmoko publicly urged President Suharto to resign but this was dismissed by Wiranto as unconstitutional. Under mounting public pressure and with top generals urging him to seek advice, Suharto agreed to meet with nine leading Muslims and other intellectuals on the morning of May 19. One of them was Nurcholish Majid, 59, an independent-minded scholar well-known throughout the country. Unknown to the President, Nurcholish said that he had been summoned in advance by the military's respected Commander for Socio-Political Affairs, Lieutenant General Bambang Yudhoyono, who encouraged Nurcholish to lay out demands for President Suharto to resign<sup>3</sup>.

At this critical stage, the military did not act on the students protesting at the Senayan Parliament building. However, plans for a Manila style mass rally in front of the downtown of National Monument were quashed by the military. The military sealed off the site and other nearby national landmarks with 15,000 troops and warned protest leader Amien Rais (who was then planning a huge mass of protesters march) that his march could provoke a massacre<sup>4</sup>.

For national security reasons, inevitably, the country had to continue accepting the crucial role of the military after the resignation of Suharto. Violations have been prompted by many factors including the fact that the country is experiencing an explosion of free culture and politics, citing a wave of rioting which has seen scores of places of worship badly damaged. Wiranto agreed that violations have erupted because of low standards of education and morality that made people vulnerable to rumours and other forms of provocation. It was Wiranto who asked religious figures to continuously 'shower' the people with religious as well as other virtuous value.

The government was confronted with formidable problems; the need for economic development, the need for better education with minimum funding and a shortage of capital needed to set a widespread indigenous economy in motion, and probably the most difficult one, village inertia. On top of all these problems the eruption of more violence further complicated the task of Wiranto. These tasks became especially difficult in situations where challenges were directed to ABRI. ABRI has been confronted by an angry (and possibly hungry) public that is highly frustrated, that has lost its patience and one that is easily provoked. ABRI is no longer feared, much less respected. The security apparatus is easily attacked by the public mass violence. ABRI members are pursued and attacked until they are wounded, even though they are armed. Wiranto himself is insulted and ABRI personnel are attacked with stones and even sharp objects. ABRI is increasingly viewed as an abusive instrument. To draw arms is wrong. Not to draw arms is also wrong. Everywhere, there are demands for ABRI to return 'back to barracks' as this is an era of reformation. There is pressure from every corner of the country for ABRI not to participate in politics.

The politicians are another factor contributing to the creation of more grey clouds over the already uncertain situation. Such intolerance of the politicians would continue to divide the people because their interests are served by sowing the seeds of distrust, adding to the suffering of the people. At this stage, the importance of a personnel who is neutral, that can serve as a force to prevent the worsening of the country's political and economic volatility is vital. As the nation and the people have seen enough unrest and violence, Wiranto was right in warning the political leaders of their responsibility to prevent violence on the eve of the election or the post-election era.

Indonesians at large realised that their political and economic system was in a state of shambles, after his resignation Suharto's name has become the byword for everything that has gone wrong with Indonesia, from its tattered economy to its ethnic and religious groups tearing at each other's throats. The reform concept that was always related to the issue of bringing Suharto to court could actually divert the public understanding of the real concept of reform that the country should fight for. This, together with too many, and not infrequently conflicting views and opinions aired over the media due to the newly acquired freedom of speech, have further caused the deterioration of values in ideology, nationalism, unity and diversity of the country. In this perceptive, there is a dire need for ABRI to play a role to avoid further disintegration. As the majority of the people have yet to prepare themselves for a real democracy, or reform in their truest sense, ABRI has become the dominant institution in preventing the economy, law enforcement and social stability from continuing to fall below the expectations of the people.

Nevertheless, the success of the Habibie's government in handling its immediate challenge on the issue of Suharto at the MPR assembly in November 1999 could determine the future scenario of the country's political life and also the future position of Wiranto, the man behind the power of the Indonesian Armed Forces.

## Acknowledgements

The author is particularly indebted to many individuals and organisations that have contributed to the successful completion and publication of this book. It was not without difficulties that all the information gathered by the author could be assembled and analysed to produce this book. However, the assistance provided by many individuals (especially from the Minister of Defence and Security's Office – MENHANKAM - SES MEN/PANGAB) was of enormous help, and the author would like to share the success of the eventual publication of this book with them.

The author also wishes to thank to Mr. Robert Baldwin of the British Council Language Centre in Kuala Lumpur for proof-reading this book and other miscellaneous assistance.

The author owes much the successful completion of this book especially to Indonesian Observer and also Jakarta Post whose reports and articles has become important sources of information and materials.

The author, who lived in Indonesia during the last of two years of the Indonesian economic and political turbulence, wishes to share this book with all Indonesians. They are in the midst of a struggle in search of a new destination for their nation and also with non-Indonesians, especially neighbouring nationals who with concern observed the difficulties occurring in the country. The author, together with so many others hopes for a quick but everlasting solution as the series of events happening in Indonesia will unavoidably create repercussions to the region and to the global world at large.

Paridah Abd. Samad  
September 1999

## Author's Note

The author realises that Malaysia and Indonesia have different political and economic stance and perception, experience and direction. However, these two countries still have many common values and roots and hence many things can be learned from and shared with each other in order to improve their political, social and economic ties.

In certain aspects, Indonesia's political experience and struggle can be a lesson for Malaysia in decision-makings and in adopting political practices of the country. On the other hand, Indonesia can learn from Malaysia's economic experience and development in its attempt to make the country a developed nation, a vision for Malaysia by the year 2020, and a nation whose indigenous population has a proud and equitable share of the country's wealth.

As Indonesia faces a very complicated political crisis where security aspects are considered as one of the key factors affecting the resolution of the problem, the nation needs the man at the helm of its military force to play a significant role in preventing disintegration of the country. Being familiar with Malaysia's different military role, perception and experience, the author was prompted to do some further studies on Indonesian military's role and functions and the contemporary man behind this important institution.

As a book mainly on political analysis, its discussion on economy is limited only to the efforts of the Habibie government in preventing the worsening of economic turbulence and its apparent success thus far in overcoming it. It is also noted that the former ABRI (the Indonesian Armed Forces) has changed its name to TNI (the National Defence Forces) due to the separation of the police force and the military. However, as General Wiranto is Defence Minister, the author has decided to maintain the name ABRI throughout this book to include both the role played by the military and the police.

Rather than being a personal biography this book outlines the political scene of the country at a time when General Wiranto played a vital role as the nation's top army leader, whose leadership facilitated the process of reformation, with charisma and determination. The author believes that this book could be used as a tool of reference for any individual wishing to further understand Indonesia in its era of reformation.

The scope of discussion of this book is limited to the period of May 1998 to July 1999. Before and beyond that period, all other facts are accommodated as supporting and background pieces of discussion.

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## List of Abbreviations

ABRI	Indonesian Armed Forces
ADC	Aide-de-camp
APCs	Armoured Personnel Carriers
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BAPPENAS	National Development Planning Board
BBM	Buton, Bugis and Makassar
CBC	Centre for Banking Crisis
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DPKT	First Class Order of the Dignity of the Most Exalted Order
DPR	House of Representatives
DPRD	The House and the Regional Legislatures
FKMIY	Communication Forum of Yogyakarta Islamic Students
FORKI	Indonesian Karate-do Federation
FORMA	Indonesian Students Forum
FORSAL	Salemba Forum
GAM	Free Aceh Movement
GBHN	Broad Outlines of State Policy
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESTAPU	Thirtieth September Movement
GOLKAR	Functional Group
HANKAM	Department of Defence and Security
HANSIP	Civilian Guards
HF	Hamburger Flug-zeugbau
HMI	Association of Indonesian Muslims
IBIS	Canada Integrated Ballistic Identification System
IBRA	Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency
ICMI	Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association
ICW	Indonesian Corruption Watch
JPS	Social Safety Net
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMM	Association of Muhammadiyah Student
IPTN	Indonesian State Aircraft Maker
ITB	Bandung Institute of Technology
KADIN	Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
KAMI	Indonesia Association of Students Action
KAMRA	People's Security
KKN	Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism
KNPI	A Federation of Youth Associations
KODAM	Military Area Command
KODIM	District Military Command

KOPASSUS	Special Forces Command
KOPERWAN	Co-operatives for Women's Participation
KOPKAMTIB	Command for the Restoration of Security and Order
KOSGORO	Multi-Purpose Co-operative for Mutual Assistance
KOSTRAD	Army Strategic Command
KPU	General Election Committee
KSAD	Army Chief of Staff
LEMHANNAS	National Resilience Institute
MASYUMI	Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslim
MSB	Messerschmidt Boelkow Blohm
MPR	People's Consultative Assembly
MUI	Indonesian Ulama Council
NASAKOM	Nationalism, Religion and Communism
NEP	New Economic Policy (Malaysia)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NKK	Normalisation of Campus Life
NU	Revival of Islamic Scholars - Nahdlatul Ulama Muslim Grouping
OPM	Free Papua Movement
PAN	National Mandate Party
PANGAB	Commander-in-Chief of ABRI
PAP	People's Action Party (Singapore)
PBB	Crescent Star Party
PDI	Indonesian Democratic Party
PDI-P	Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle
PDR	People's Sovereign Party
PERMESTA	Charter of Common Struggle
PEPABRI	Retired Military Officers Association
PERTAMINA	State Oil Company
PKI	Communist Party of Indonesia
PKP	Justice and Unity Party
PMB	New Masyumi Party
PNI	Indonesian National Party
PNU	People's Nahdlatul Party
PKB	National Awakening Party
POLRI	Police Force of the Republic of Indonesia
PP	Unity Party
PPI	Indonesian Election Committee
PPIM	Masyumi Islamic Party
PPM	Centre for Public Participation
PPP	United Development Party
PPP	Princes and Princesses of the President
PRD	People's Democratic Party
PRRI	Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia

PSI	Indonesian Socialist Party
PSII	Indonesian Islamic Association Party
PSSI	Indonesian Islamic Association Party 1905
PUI	Islamic Believers' Party
RATIH	(Military) Trained Population
SESKOABRI	School of ABRI Staff and Command School
SI	'Syarikat Islam'
SKS	Semester Credit System
STHM	Military Law College
TGPF	Fact-Finding Team
TNI	National Defence Forces
UI	University of Indonesia
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
UUD	1945 Constitution
YLBHI	Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation





Tan Sri General Wiranto with his wife, Ibu Hajjah Uga Usman at the National Palace of Kuala Lumpur where he receives his 'Tan Sri' title, a high award by the King of Malaysia.

## Chapter One

# Wiranto: Ascending the Army Ladder

## The Beginning of Wiranto's Political Task

Wiranto was only 50 when President Suharto signed a decree appointing him as the new Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces in February, 1998<sup>1</sup>. Wiranto took over command of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) from General Feisal Tanjung amid calls from senior officers that Wiranto would develop the military into a more democratic institution<sup>2</sup>.

Two senior ABRI members, General (ret.) Leonardus Benjamin Moerdani expressed hope that under Wiranto the Armed Forces could be more heedful of and responsive to the people's aspirations. Moerdani said that the Armed Forces should be more responsive to calls for democratisation. The Armed Forces should be more open and accommodate suggestions from the people and be ready to hold dialogues. Moerdani said that he had been observing Wiranto's performance long before he was appointed the Armed Forces Commander in 1983 and was convinced of Wiranto's good military record. General (ret.) Abdul Haris Nasution, who had turned 80 at that time, said that Wiranto should strive to maintain unity in the Armed Forces and to protect the institution from disintegration. Nasution said that Wiranto has a more outstanding record than his seniors, including himself<sup>3</sup>.

The appointment of Wiranto replacing General Feisal Tanjung as ABRI Commander in 1998 opened the way for a less pro-Suharto general to fill the responsibility of an ABRI Chief. He was one of the rising younger generation of the armed forces' top leaders. Immediately following the general election of the MPR in March 1998, Suharto appointed Wiranto as Defence Minister, giving him a great amount of political power. As Defence Minister and also the Commander of the Armed Forces, directly under him are the Army, Navy and Air Force Chiefs and also the National Police Chief<sup>4</sup>.

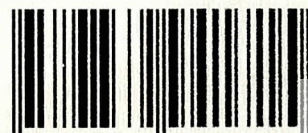
In the past five years, Wiranto's career has continued a consistent ascent as he held one important post after another, starting with Jakarta Military Commander in 1995, Commander of the Army's Strategic Reserve (KOSTRAD) a year later, then Army chief in 1998. Wiranto had also served

As the country faces political and economic difficulties, it is unavoidable that the security aspect has become an important phenomenon for the success of the Indonesian reformation process. This book describes the role played by Defence Minister and the Army Chief, Tan Sri General Wiranto in putting the new paradigm of ABRI on the correct track and in the right role.

When the ulamas suggested him as a probable Indonesian president, Tan Sri General Wiranto humbly replied that he is already one of the national leaders and only hoped for the people to pray for him so that he could fulfil his responsibility of the task given to him. Such a humble stance attracted the author to seek to further understand this charismatic man and the significant role he played amidst the political and economic turbulence of the country during the reformation era.



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