

## **Military Civil Relations in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, America, China, Turkey and Egypt**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

This article analyzes civil-military relations in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, the United States, China, Turkey, and Egypt. Each country has a unique approach to managing the role and influence of the military in government. Singapore and Malaysia emphasize civil supremacy and close coordination. Thailand and Türkiye have a history of military coups that influenced national politics. Vietnam and China demonstrate communist party control over the military. The United States upholds the principle of civilian control, while Egypt continues to face military interference in politics. This study highlights the importance of striking a balance between civilian control and military effectiveness to maintain national stability.

**Keywords:** Civil-Military Relations, Civil Supremacy, National Stability, Civilian Control, National Security.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The relationship between military institutions and civilian government is a critical aspect of a country's political structure and national security. The balance between civilian control and the role of the military often reflects the democratic principles and stability a country seeks to achieve. The study of civil-military relations is important because the different approaches adopted by various countries in managing these dynamics can provide valuable insights into how national stability and security are maintained.

In Singapore and Malaysia, there is a strong emphasis on civilian supremacy and close coordination between the government and the military. Singapore integrates the military into a broader government structure with close supervision from the civilian government, while Malaysia asserts democratic principles in full control of its armed forces (International Institute for Strategic Studies, IISS, 2022).

Thailand and Türkiye face unique challenges with a history of military coups affecting relations between the military and civilian governments. In Thailand, despite oversight from the Ministry of Defense, political dynamics often result in tensions in civil-military relations. Türkiye, even though it has carried out various reforms, still has to deal with the significant influence of the military in politics.

Vietnam and China show examples of complete communist party control over the military, with the military playing a significant role in national policy. In Vietnam, the Armed Forces operated under the direct direction of the Communist Party, ensuring military policy was aligned with national development goals. China exhibits a similar dynamic where the Communist Party controls the PLA, ensuring the military functions as a political and defensive tool.

The United States upholds the principle of civilian control over the military as a key pillar in maintaining its constitutional stability and integrity. The President as Supreme Commander maintains control over military decisions, with the civilian judiciary ensuring defense policy is in line with democratic values.

Egypt, on the other hand, has a history of military interference in politics, often

significantly influencing government and national policy. Despite efforts to strengthen civilian institutions, the military continues to play an important role in Egyptian politics.

By understanding the different approaches of these countries, we can examine how effective civil-military relations can help in striking a balance between national security and democratic principles. This research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of various models of civil-military relations and their implications for national stability and security.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Singapore**

Singapore has a strong tradition of maintaining separation between military institutions and civilian government. This means that although the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) is a strong military force, its role is clearly separate from the civil government. This tradition reflects the principles of democracy and civilian supremacy, where political decisions and control over the military are in the hands of the civilian government.

The SAF functions under the leadership and supervision of the civilian government. The Minister of Defense is a key figure in the government who leads and manages national defense policy. Thus, the existence of the SAF is not isolated independently, but is integrated into a wider government structure.

Singapore adheres to strict legal and ethical principles in civil-military relations. These principles aim to ensure military independence, meaning that the military has the ability to carry out its duties and operations effectively without unnecessary interference from the civilian government. However, full control remains in the hands of the civilian government, ensuring that the military operates in accordance with national policies and objectives set by the government.

Singapore has succeeded in maintaining its national stability and security with this approach, where the presence of a professional and efficient military remains in line with the principles of democracy and civilian supremacy. These principles play an important role in achieving a good balance between national defense needs and democratic principles (International Institute for Strategic Studies, IISS, 2022).

### **2. Malaysia**

Malaysia builds close relations between the civilian government and the armed forces, creating a strong foundation for effective coordination in maintaining the country's security and stability. The Malaysian Army Forces (ATM) operates under full government control and is managed by the Malaysian Ministry of Defence. The ATM's existence under government control emphasizes the principles of democracy and civilian supremacy, recognizing that military power must be under the full control of a democratically elected government.

The principles of democracy and civil supremacy are upheld, reflecting Malaysia's commitment to maintaining a government based on the will of the people and democratic values. In this framework, the role of the Malaysian military is more focused on internal security and national defense. This focus reflects an emphasis on maintaining domestic order and protecting state sovereignty, while adhering to the principles of democracy and civil supremacy. Thus, Malaysia succeeded in achieving a balance between national security and democratic principles in the relationship between the civilian government and the armed forces (Cheah, 2018).

### **3. Thailand**

Thailand reflects a complex history in civil-military relations, involving a number of military coups along the way. The Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTA) are under the

supervision of the Thai Ministry of Defense, however, the civilian government continues to play an important role in providing political direction and control over military forces. However, the dynamics of this relationship have changed in response to political changes in recent years.

Oversight of the Armed Forces by the Ministry of Defense reflects a formal structure that underscores the role of the civilian government in controlling certain aspects of the military. The civilian government is responsible for political direction, while the RTA remains under the full control of the Ministry of Defence. However, Thailand's history involving military coups shows the existence of tension and instability in civil-military relations.

Political changes in recent years in Thailand have had an impact on the dynamics of this relationship. These political developments can include changes in power structures, policy priorities, and civil society demands. These changes may influence the roles and interactions between the civilian government and the military, creating evolving dynamics in Thai civil-military relations (Chambers, 2012).

#### **4. Vietnamese**

Vietnam displays a strong revolutionary tradition with the Vietnam Armed Forces (VPA) having close ties with the communist government. The Communist Party of Vietnam maintains full control over the VPA, and the military plays a very significant role in formulating and implementing national security and defense policies. Within this framework, the civil and military governments in Vietnam work together in an integrated manner to achieve national development goals.

The Communist Party of Vietnam played a central role in directing the VPA, setting military policy, and ensuring alignment with party goals. The military has a significant role in national security and defense policy, ensuring readiness to face potential threats from both within and outside the country. Close cooperation between the civil government and the military has become a hallmark of Vietnam's national development.

Civilian and military governments work together to achieve national development goals, pursuing harmony between aspects of security and economic development. The close relationship between the communist government and the military created a coordinated framework, in which military policy objectives were integrated with the national development vision. As a result, Vietnam succeeded in maintaining stability in the dynamics of civil-military relations, creating synergy to support the country's growth and progress (Liow, J. C, 2014).

#### **5. United States**

The principle of civilian control over the military is one of the main pillars of the political and national security system. This principle is clearly reflected in the constitutional structure governing relations between the civilian government and the military. The President of the United States, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, is responsible for military decision-making, creating the legal basis for national defense and security policy. This concept underscores the importance of civilian control to prevent military coups or military domination of political decisions. A strong civil justice tradition also reinforces this principle. Military decisions can be tested and accounted for before civilian justice bodies, ensuring that defense policies and military actions remain in line with democratic values and the rule of law. Tight control of national defense policy by civilian justice institutions is the basis for law enforcement and maintaining the balance of power between the civilian government and the military. Thus, the United States upholds the principle of civil control as a key element in maintaining its constitutional stability and integrity (Huntington, 1957).

#### **6. China**

The relationship between the civilian government and the military reflects the political domination of the Communist Party over national security and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). As the ruling Party, the Communist Party has complete control over the PLA, creating a unique dynamic in China's political and security structure. The Communist Party's principle of control over the PLA marks a form of military control by a strong civilian government. This structure is clearly visible in the political command and national security policies originating from the Communist Party, which are then implemented by the PLA. Despite efforts to strengthen civilian control over the military, the PLA continues to play a significant political role and is a force that cannot be ignored in China's political dynamics. In recent years, there have been efforts to restructure and modernize the PLA as part of efforts to increase military professionalism and efficiency. However, while there have been changes in structure and leadership, Communist Party political control remains a distinctive feature of civil-military relations in China. As a result, the PLA not only functions as a military force, but also as a political tool necessary for the Communist Party to maintain the country's stability and security (Dumbaugh, 2015).

## **7. Türkiye**

Civil-military relations are characterized by military interference in political affairs that has occurred throughout the country's history. Although there have been efforts to strengthen civilian control over the military, the military's presence continues to play an important role in Turkish politics. History records several military coups and direct military interference in government affairs. Although Türkiye has experienced political and constitutional changes in recent decades, the military continues to play a significant role. Several reform and restructuring efforts have been undertaken to reduce military interference in political affairs, including changes to the role and authority of the military. New dynamics have emerged in Türkiye's civil-military relations, especially in light of recent political and constitutional changes. Efforts to strengthen democracy and civilian control continue, but challenges and tensions remain in building a balanced relationship between the civilian government and the military in Turkey (Aras & Cebeci, 2019).

## **8. Egypt**

Egypt has a history of complex civil-military relations, which often includes military interference in the country's political affairs. Egyptian political history records several periods in which the military played a significant role in governance, including military takeovers of power in various historical contexts. Despite political changes and the transition to civilian rule, the Egyptian military continues to maintain a strong political role. Military involvement can involve temporarily taking power or having substantial influence in policy and decision-making. Despite efforts to restructure and modernize military institutions, the political role of the military remains an important factor in Egyptian political dynamics. In recent years, there have been efforts to strengthen civil institutions and restore democratic governance. Despite this, the relationship between the civilian government and the military remains an important aspect in shaping Egypt's political direction. These complex dynamics continue to develop along with political changes in the Middle East region (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2002).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals significant variations in civil-military relations across countries, reflecting differences in their respective histories, political cultures, and national goals. Singapore and Malaysia demonstrate successful models of civil supremacy, with militaries that are professional and closely integrated within a civilian governance framework. This approach helps maintain national stability and security while adhering to democratic

principles.

Thailand and Türkiye, with their histories of military coups, demonstrate more complex dynamics in civil-military relations. Despite reform and restructuring efforts to strengthen civilian control, the military continues to play a significant role in politics, creating challenges in achieving a stable balance between military power and civilian rule.

Vietnam and China offer examples where the military was under the complete control of the ruling communist party. This control ensures that military policy is in line with party and national development goals. While effective in maintaining internal stability, this approach shows how the military also functions as a political tool.

The United States upholds the principle of strict civilian control over the military, governed by a constitutional framework and overseen by a civilian judiciary. This approach emphasizes the importance of accountability and transparency in military decision-making, which helps prevent military domination of politics.

Egypt, with a long history of military interference in political affairs, faces challenges in strengthening civilian institutions and reducing military influence. Despite efforts to restore democratic government, the military remains a significant actor in Egyptian politics.

The success of civil-military relations depends on a careful balance between civilian control and the role of the military. Approaches that ensure military professionalism while preserving democratic principles and civilian supremacy are likely to be more successful in maintaining national stability and security. The various models of civil-military relations examined in this study provide valuable insights for countries seeking to strengthen their political and security structures.

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