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I. Reforming Civil-Military Relations

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reforming Civil-Military Relations

Samuel P. Huntington (bio)

As we all know, the last two decades have seen a remarkable political revolution in which transitions from authoritarianism to democracy have occurred in roughly 40 countries. The previous authoritarian regimes

varied considerably. They included military governments in Latin America and elsewhere; one-party regimes in the communist states but also in Taiwan; personal dictatorships in Spain, the Philippines, Romania, and elsewhere; and a racial oligarchy in South Africa. The transitions to democracy also differed greatly. In some cases, including many military regimes, reformers came to power within the authoritarian regime and took the initiative in bringing about the transition. In other cases, the transition came as a result of negotiations between the government and opposition groups. In still others, the authoritarian regime was overthrown or collapsed. In a few instances, intervention by the United States brought the fall of the dictatorship and its replacement by a regime based on elections.

Virtually all of these authoritarian regimes, whatever their type, had one thing in common. Their civil-military relations left much to be desired. Almost all notably lacked the kind of civil-military relations characteristic of the world's industrial democracies, which I once termed "objective civilian control."¹ This involves: 1) a high level of military professionalism and recognition by military officers of the limits of their professional competence; 2) the effective subordination of the military **[End Page 9]** to the civilian political leaders who make the basic decisions on foreign and military policy; 3) the recognition and acceptance by that leadership of an area of professional competence and autonomy for the military; and 4) as a result, the minimization of military intervention in politics and of political intervention in the military.

Civil-military relations in the authoritarian regimes differed from this model to varying degrees. In the military regimes, no civilian control existed at all and military leaders and military organizations often performed a wide variety of functions only distantly related to normal military missions. In the personal dictatorships, the ruler did everything he could to ensure that the military was permeated by and controlled by his cronies and agents, that it was divided against itself, and that it served his purpose of keeping a tight grip on power. In the one-party states, civil-military relations were not in quite the same disarray, but the

military was viewed as the instrument of the party, military officers had to be party members, political commissars and party cells paralleled the normal military chain of command, and ultimate loyalty was to the party rather than the state.

The new democracies have thus faced a daunting challenge in the need drastically to reform their civil-military relations. This challenge, of course, is only one of many. They also have had to establish their general authority with the public, draft new constitutions, establish competitive party systems and other democratic institutions, liberalize, privatize, and marketize command economies or economies heavily dominated by the state, promote economic growth while curbing inflation and unemployment, reduce fiscal deficits, limit crime and corruption, and curb tensions and violence among ethnic and religious groups.

How well have the new democracies dealt with these problems? Overall, their record has been spotty at best, lending credence to the arguments of those, like Singapore's former premier Lee Kuan Yew, who criticize democracy for breeding inefficiency and indiscipline. In many cases, economic performance has declined. Economic reform has been stymied, has become unpopular with publics, and has been manipulated to benefit members of the old authoritarian elite. Crime and corruption have increased. Human rights guarantees in new constitutions have been routinely violated. The press has been controlled or subverted. Political party systems have been fragmented and personalistic, incapable of producing either effective governments or responsible oppositions. The removal of authoritarian controls has permitted and even helped to stimulate heightened communal consciousness and violence. With some exceptions in some areas in some countries, new democratic governments have not been all that good at producing good government.

This democratic deficiency has generated authoritarian nostalgia, as people in country after country look back with longing at dictators who provided for basic needs and made things work...



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