Indonesian middle-class opposition in the 1990s

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Indonesia’s sustained economic growth since the mid-1970s has unwittingly helped to revitalise two urban-based oppositional forces. They are the industrial workers and the middle-class professionals and activists (students, lawyers, non-government organisation (NGO) activists, journalists, artists, and religious leaders). Notwithstanding their dynamism, such oppositions encounter obstacles that constrain them as movements for far-reaching social change. Having been born out of, and having to operate within, the social structure they try to challenge, these oppositional groups find themselves in a position full of dilemmas and contradictions. What follows is a brief account of these new oppositional forces in the 1990s, and the difficulties they have to overcome before any radical transformation of the existing social order can be imagined.

The main thrust of this chapter can be outlined as follows. The New Order regime achieved a hegemonic status on the basis of the extra-ordinary political violence in 1965–6, and the continued reproduction of widespread fear in its protracted aftermath. The 1965–6 massacre took the lives of around one million people and jeopardised the lives of millions of survivors. That massive violence and subsequent terrorism provided the fundamental basis for sustained ‘political stability’ and successful economic development. However, the same events have generated new phenomena that increasingly undermine that basis. A new generation of middle classes and industrial workers has emerged. World capitalism incorporated Indonesia further into its structural relationships politically and economically, as well as culturally.

Despite its continued success in keeping the economy of the nation growing, the New Order regime has been in steady political decline since the mid-1980s and more obviously in the 1990s. There is no certainty what this will lead to. It may well be a transitory period for the regime to strengthen itself again and to renew its old hegemonic power with new names and personnel. For the moment, existing oppositional forces are too fragmented to exert a counter-hegemonic leadership. Attempts to make alliances among them have been made, but the result is still far from being solid. A key question to fundamental changes is whether the old hegemonic power can still be reproduced or is already exhausted.

HEGEMONIC BASIS

The massacre in the aftermath of the 1965 events, and its historical significance, remain
the most determining factor in shaping contemporary Indonesia. Writings on the topic have been voluminous, but there are still more questions concerning various aspects of the events of that time. In the years immediately after, a preoccupation with sheer survival steered attention away from a full analysis. Today, discussion on the topic is still strongly proscribed by the government and voluntarily avoided by many, especially those who have been directly affected by those events. Yet even though the memory of the violence remains traumatic, for various reasons (e.g. to make the pain endurable, or avoid risks) many people choose to deny or distort the violence. A nationwide campaign threatening a possible recurrence of earlier events has contributed to public acquiescence without the actual use of direct violence by state agents.

According to the official propaganda, the society runs and reproduces itself on the basis of familial harmony—deliberation and consensus (musyawarah and mufakat). Under such conditions, many non-governmental agents are compelled to collaborate in reproducing the propaganda. This does not mean that they allow themselves to be mystified, or that they can completely ignore what they believe to be ‘real historical facts’. On the contrary, their conformity is a direct effect of their awareness of the past violence and its potential recurrence. New Order hegemonic state power is achieved through a combination of both the apparent and celebrated consent on the one hand, and the perceived but undiscussed coercion on the other.

In that hegemonic position, the New Order regime is able to hold authoritarian control over major political, economic, and cultural institutions. It has also managed to reproduce the conditions for its hegemonic power by the use of occasional political violence, witch-hunts, and propaganda. Without taking this into account, and unless we delude ourselves with the myth of distinct ‘eastern values’, it would be difficult to understand how the world’s fourth most-populated nation could have tolerated an authoritarian rule for more than a quarter of a century. Likewise, it is difficult to understand why a regime feels so inclined to ratify a seemingly liberal law one day, then ignore or abuse it the next.

A presidential election is held by the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (MPR, People’s Consultative Assembly), once every five years. It has always elected the same man; in fact he has been the only nomination for all six successive terms. If we look at how the Assembly is constituted, this state of affairs is understandable. The President has the power to appoint 600 out of the total 1,000 members of the Assembly. The remaining 400 are the elected members of the national parliament, the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR). Even within the DPR, the government party Golongan Karya (Golkar, ‘Functional Group’), has always won the majority of votes (around 70 per cent). All members must pass government screening tests before being eligible nominees, a requirement that poses particular difficulties for the opposition. Once appointed, Members of Parliament are subject to recall if they speak critically of the regime. In 1973 the government fused the existing ten political parties into three convenient groupings, and prohibited the establishment of new parties. Apart from Golkar, there are the Islamic-based Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP, United Development Party) and the Christian Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI, Indonesian Democratic Party) of predominantly secular nationalists. Given the nature of such externally motivated fusion, each of these two parties suffers from perennial frictions.

Until very recently the parliament has not proposed a single Bill to the executive. It has
only once rejected proposed legislation coming from the executive. The judiciary shares the same fate. Under the Basic Law 14/1970, the Ministry of Justice (which is responsible solely to the President) has the power to control the budget of courts below the Supreme Court, to promote judges and transfer them. The same law stipulates that the President appoints and dismisses judges. Presidential Decree 82/1971 demands that all state employees be members of Korps Pegawai Negeri Indonesia (KORPRI, All Indonesia Civil Servant Corps) headed by the Minister of the Interior. Prosecution of individual citizens for peaceful political activities has been a regular activity of the courts.

Heavy surveillance and severe censorship operate in the administration of formal education at all levels, in the mass media, religious rituals, and artistic productions. Most curricula must be approved by local authorities. No electronic media are allowed, at least in theory and, until recently, in practice, to produce and broadcast their own news. Reporters and editors from print media receive regular threats. To make the threats effective, actual closure of selected media without due legal process occurs from time to time. In certain areas or periods religious leaders have been banned from giving sermons. Theatrical productions, academic seminars, and poetry readings are all vulnerable to attempts by the police and local military authorities to control the content of texts before they can be delivered in public.

Political opposition is officially declared illegal, despite the regime’s continued claim to enforce a self-styled democratic polity called ‘Pancasila Democracy’. Separation of powers is officially denounced. The image of familial harmony is deployed to justify the systemic suppression of any expression of grievances and potential conflicts. Under this condition any public expression of opposition is by definition extra-legal, not simply extra-parliamentary.

Despite all the restrictions, oppositional forces regularly emerge from time to time. They have come and gone throughout the New Order rule, some with more consequences than others, but none has come near to overthrowing the regime or radically transforming the existing social order. The President-centred New Order regime remains one of the most durable in the modern world, while its steady economic success impresses many. At the time of writing in 1995, no single identifiable social force seems to have the capacity or potential seriously to challenge the regime.

In the 1990s, however, the political scene shows some changes which may develop greater significance in the years ahead. In 1994 we witnessed for the first time in New Order history several historic events. Mass rallies of hundreds of thousands of workers took place in protest against abuse of their rights. Six NGOs filed a lawsuit against the President in a case of reallocation of state funding. Another lawsuit was filed by a private corporation against the government for having banned its news magazine. The recall of vocal Members of Parliament provoked nationwide controversy in 1995. Meanwhile, there were public challenges to the most sensitive ideological area, namely the official history of the 1965 coup d’état which caused the birth and swift rise to power of the New Order. These are just a few examples.

What follows is an account of these recent changes, focusing specifically on two processes: the decline of the regime’s hegemonic power, and the rise of the oppositional forces. It must be noted from the outset that the two processes are not simply two sides of the same coin, one necessarily resulting from the other. The two processes are fairly
independent of each other in their origins, although the effects of one in practice enhance the effects of the other. Each process has its own internal dynamics and contradictions, as well as external pressures from different sources.

The regime’s waning power is more related to internal friction within the ruling elite, and to international pressures, than to the strengthening of its domestic opposition. But the consequences of the regime’s decline provides more room for the consolidation of existing opposition. Conversely, the rise of the oppositional forces cannot be directly or primarily attributed simply to the regime’s political recession. In one respect, the two processes have something in common: they are both taking place in a period during which global capitalism more comprehensively conditions the Indonesian domestic political economy and renders the nation-state boundary less meaningful.

I will proceed with an examination of highly publicised tension between the regime and the urban middle classes. The incident illustrates empirically the general argument outlined earlier and will thus be followed by an attempt to link it with broader processes of social change. The concluding section will consider the question of hegemonic relations during the New Order high points and their possible break-up.

THE 1994 MEDIA BANS

On 21 June 1994 the Indonesian government banned three major Jakarta-based weeklies, namely the tabloid DeTIK and two news magazines, TEMPO and Editor. At the time of the bans, TEMPO and DeTIK were the most prominent media in the country. Of the three, DeTIK had the biggest circulation, approximately 600,000, while Editor was the smallest, with roughly 60,000. According to FORUM Keadilan (3(7), 21 July 1994:33), TEMPO’S circulation reached 200,000 before the government closed it down. These bans may prove to be of greater historic importance than first appearances suggested in mid-1994.

Daniel Dhakidae provides an additional note on the significance of the figures above. In his view, DeTIK’s achievements were miraculous. The tabloid had survived with professional dignity and no dependence on revenue from advertising—an imperative for most media in the country. In a matter of months, during its first year, DeTIK managed to gain the largest circulation of all print media in the country, demonstrating what had previously been thought to be impossible: that professional journalism can sell itself (Dhakidae 1994:53). With regard to TEMPO, Dhakidae (1994:55) describes it as ‘the largest magazine published in national language in Asia outside India, Japan, China, Korea, and Taiwan…in Asia-Pacific…outside the USA and Russia’.

Curiously, when the June 1994 bans took place, most of the initial protest attacked the government on moral grounds and in political terms, apparently overlooking the economic dimension. This is not so surprising if we consider contemporary discourse on the press in Indonesia. In recent years Indonesians had spoken disparagingly of the national press as having become heavily and dangerously ‘industrialised’, as opposed to having been, presumably, ‘socially engaged’ during the national struggle for independence and soon afterwards. Dhakidae’s remark on the economic dimension of the affair is rare and of great importance. Although press bans have been regular
incidents throughout the history of Indonesia, no ban has hit a press industry on the scale of the June 1994 measures.

In superficial public discourse there was a common view that the June 1994 ban punished the three publications for their extensive coverage of the bitter conflict between Research and Technology Minister Habibie and Minister of Finance Marie Muhamad over the former’s controversial purchase on behalf of the government of thirty-nine former East German warships. But this is only one element of the probable reasons for the ban. Soon after it, it became clear that certain conglomerates were impatient to take over the market left by the closed publications, and intended to purchase and renew their press licence.

Legally, the government cannot ban the mass media. Several regulations still in effect stipulate that the freedom of the press should be protected. In June 1994, as in similar cases in the past, the government described its decision not as a ban, but as a revocation or cancellation of the press licence of the publications concerned. However, instead of satisfying the public, this explanation provoked protests over issues of legality. Moreover, the decision raised larger questions. First, if the government was powerful enough to close down the press on a whim and get away with it, as it had done before, why did it feel a cloak of legality was necessary? And if so, why did it not come up with something more credible? Why did the government not revoke the legal stipulation of the freedom of the press, and thus remove any trace of legal ambiguity?

The second set of questions concerns the government’s motivation for announcing the provocative bans. Had the three publications really been a threat or was this ‘threat’ imaginary? What was the nature of the threat? Was it more economic or more political? Were there any premeditated attempts on the part of the journalists to challenge the government that had provoked a severe retaliation? What characterised the relationship between the New Order government and its detractors around the time of the ban?

These questions are extremely broad and all that can be attempted here is a partial response. First, the heavily moral overtones in the immediate outrage at the government measure strongly typifies much of the urban middle-class opposition in New Order Indonesia. This moral approach has strengths and weaknesses. While it projects the cause to the public as noble, it lacks critical analysis of the way in which industrial capitalism pervades the whole situation.

Second, the mass media serve as a crucial ground for ideological battles in this country. Although the Indonesian press has always been highly politicised, its political prominence has increased sharply in the current climate. This is partly due to the fact that the more formal political venues (party politics, parliament, judiciary, etc.) have been reduced largely to mere instruments of the ruling executive power. The new prominence of the press is also linked to its transformation into a fast-expanding industry. Major agents in the ideological battle in the press include state officials, the business community, and urban professionals. Although all are aware of the press’s increased political weight, the new situation cannot be attributed to a clever design of any of these participants. None is yet in a position to dominate.

Third, the ban is one of a series of signs of the regime’s paranoia, itself an indication of a decline in its power and confidence. The ban has injured the government itself as much as the press. The regime may remain in power for some time, in the absence of an
effective opposition. However, it appears unprepared to face the fact that it can no longer rule with the same ease as it has for the two previous decades.

In sum, what we witness is a situation where old hegemonic power starts to decay, but no vigorous counter-hegemonic force seems yet available to take its place. It is a period of transition where an ageing regime and its emergent opposition are highly antagonistic but both are too weak to dominate fully. All of this is happening in a period where the economy is surviving fairly well, slanting progressively towards pro-market policies and privatisation vis-à-vis the old state protectionism. The June 1994 media bans should come as no surprise when considered in a broader context of political and ideological struggles in the 1990s. The bans and the response to them from the urban middle classes offer clues for a broader study of the form and direction of political opposition.

**RESPONSE TO THE BANS**

The ban on the three publications in June 1994 was neither new nor particularly interesting in itself. More than thirty media organisations have been ‘banned’ under the New Order. What is so remarkable about the event is the series of public reactions to it. For the first time in the New Order’s history we encounter the following four phenomena, whose significance goes beyond the internal intricacies of the ban itself.

**Nationwide demonstrations**

For the first time in New Order Indonesia, the June 1994 bans provoked a long and continuous series of protests across different islands of the archipelago. These included mass demonstrations in the cities of Medan, Padang, Palembang, Bandarlampung (Sumatra), Manado, Ujung Pandang (Sulawesi), Samarinda (Kalimantan), Kuta (Bali), Mataram (Lombok), and Sampang (Madura), apart from those in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Salatiga, Solo, Jombang, Surabaya, Malang, and Jember (Java). In many of these cities, several demonstrations took place in the months after the June bans. When they began in late June 1994, many of the demonstrations attracted several hundred participants. The list of protests above does not include those staged overseas.

On paper and according to officials’ speeches, demonstrations are still illegal. Despite, or rather because of, this illegality, demonstrations always carry special weight in political discourse. Launching a demonstration is in itself a strong political statement, regardless of the cause and the issues presented on banners or in slogans. Heavy sentences have been given to many defendants for participating in peaceful demonstrations against the government. Demonstrations occasionally play a significant role in political change, although until June 1994 they have not usually been called in response to press bans. Before June 1994 most demonstrations against the New Order regime took place over quite different issues, with considerable gaps between them, for instance the demonstrations against the new traffic regulations in 1992–3, and those against the national lottery in 1993–4.

Demonstrations usually attract world attention according to the level of easily documented violence, rather than their historical significance. The series of
demonstrations described above did involve some violence, arrests, and trials though not on a very serious scale. However, they may have greater historical significance than previous demonstrations in the country that involved more violence and material destruction. For instance, demonstrations in Jakarta (1974) against the government’s foreign and economic policy were the biggest and most violent in New Order Indonesia. Next in their notorious violence is the series of demonstrations in Ujung Pandang (Sulawesi) in 1987 against the new regulation on wearing helmets for motorcyclists. In both, however, the protests were largely localised. Their impacts were fairly minimal for the costs involved.

A middle-class alliance

With the exception of the violent upheavals in 1965–6 that gave rise to the New Order regime, this is the first instance of widespread urban protests against the government by the middle classes, who are often dismissed as politically insignificant. Participation in these protests cut across divisions that have often been regarded as of major significance, apart from the geographical differences indicated above: religion, ethnicity, gender, profession, ideological orientation. In most of the demonstrations, student and NGO activists, academics, lawyers, religious leaders, artists, union leaders, and women’s groups were prominent.

What I observed in the small university town of Salatiga, Central Java, may be similar to what happened in most other cities as reported in the press. In Salatiga hundreds of students set up an open forum where they and their lecturers, as well as a priest, a newspaper seller, a poet, and a member of the local legislative body, spoke to a big cheering crowd, condemning the bans. Then they marched to the local government office to present their grievances.

Public criticism of the bans also came from Members of Parliament, the President-appointed National Committee on Human Rights, mass organisations, legal aid institutions, and the Indonesian Democratic Party, as well as individual government officials and top military officers. However, all of this criticism appeared in the regular ‘official’ channels, such as media interviews or press releases. Regardless of their substance, such protests do not carry the political weight pertaining to the mass demonstrations.

Since the late 1980s, demonstrations have become a regular phenomenon in Indonesian politics but they develop rather sporadically or fragmentarily. In the foregoing I have suggested such discontinuity in terms of geographical difference. But a similar lack of convergence has for years been apparent among middle-class urbanites and politically conscious activists in various fields. Not only have religious, gender, or ethnic differences been obstacles to the formation of a political alliance, but tensions between passionate student activists and NGOs, and rivalries among fellow activists, have impeded attempts towards a more collaborative oppositional effort. The government’s repressive bans provoked a movement of unification among opposition elements for the first time.

The significance of protests against the bans lies primarily neither in what they achieved among the demands listed in their slogans, banners, or petitions, nor merely in
what they did to the government. Of more importance is what these protesters did to themselves. These urban activists experienced an unprecedented sensation of collective identity and a middle-class political consciousness that previously existed only on paper and in academic debates. It was like a child amazed by the first sight of itself in a mirror.6

Journalists’ confrontation

Journalists took part in many of the protests mentioned above, and their participation constitutes a phenomenon with a special merit of its own. For the first time in the New Order’s history, hundreds of journalists went to the streets to launch a mass protest. More significantly, this protest was launched against the government and the sole, government-sanctioned union of journalists, Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia (PWI). The defiant journalists went further by establishing an overtly oppositional professional association called Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI, Alliance of Independent Journalists) in August 1994. In the ensuing months the government took various measures with the collaboration of intimidated press companies to suppress the AJI, and harass individual members. Several AJI reporters lost their jobs, others were removed to other positions or remote places. Despite all the pressures, the AJI continued to consolidate itself and gain support from other segments of the urban middle class in Indonesia and abroad. Under the leadership of their chief editor Goenawan Mohamad, many former employees of TEMPO filed a lawsuit against the government’s bans. A group of lawyers filed a separate lawsuit on behalf of hundreds of individual readers of the three publications against the same government decision.

To appreciate these acts of resistance fully, a few words of background information are called for. Indonesian journalists have always been close to the world of student politics and demonstrations. Many of the journalists have close personal friendships with student activists. Some journalists had been key figures in student politics in their earlier years. The special link between these two groups is visible in the media’s recruitment of new reporters as well as in their style of reporting. In the eyes of many, DéTIK was the clearest example of this connection, being the ultimate embodiment of the spirit of youthful activism.

Despite all the above, in their professional activities and public posture, until June 1994 Indonesian journalists appeared largely as impartial reporters of incidents involving protesters (demonstrations, arrests, and trials of activists). Even in cases where their collective professional interest or individual fellow reporters suffer repressive measures from the authorities, these New Order journalists usually do not launch confrontational protests, let alone street demonstrations. Instead, they usually publicise interviews with important figures to express their grievances by proxy. In fact, the familiar self-imposed censorship reasserted itself again when certain reporters were sacked from their employment presumably for involvement in the AJI, and when the government faced legal charges as a result of its decision to ban the three publications.

In many previous press bans, journalists had not only been embarrassingly silent; worse, some had reportedly even been pleased, for reasons which cannot be proved conclusively but could involve business rivalry, differences of work ethos, or ideological orientation. The dramatic closure in 1990 of Monitor, the largest-circulation publication
in the country ever, was a case in point. The New Order government did not intend to ban this TV guide tabloid, until a large and aggressive public demanded that it do so. Among segments of ‘civil society’ that endorsed the banning of Monitor and the prosecution of its chief editor, Arswendo Atmowiloto, were his fellow journalists.7

Before the reluctant government did anything to close down the publication, Jakob Oetama (a leading member of the national, government-sanctioned association of press publishers, and a key figure in the leadership of the Kompas-gramedia Group, the biggest press empire and owner of Monitor) ‘voluntarily’ made a recommendation. He asked the Minister of Information to close down the tabloid without any due legal procedure by revoking the publication’s licence (as happened in the June 1994 bans).8 The government complied, and also prosecuted Arswendo Atmowiloto, who was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment. Atmowiloto received further punishment. His employer dismissed him from the company and revoked his reporting licence.

In other and immediately related cases, a similar lack of professional solidarity has prevailed. In 1992, three top editors of the news magazine Jakarta-Jakarta, also owned by the Kompas-gramedia Group, were removed from their prestigious positions by their superior. Apparently this was an attempt on the part of the company to show loyalty to the military leadership which was angry following a report of what happened in Dili, East Timor, after the killings on 12 November 1991— a report that contrasted strikingly with the official version.9 The case provoked no public protests from those directly affected or from anyone working in journalism or elsewhere in the country.

A few months earlier in 1992 Surya Paloh, whose daily Prioritas was banned by the government in 1987, made a historic first attempt to file a case to the Supreme Court asking for a judicial review of the regulation by which the Minister of Information can close any publication with a stroke of a pen. While, as expected, the Supreme Court dropped the case in 1993, it was significant that the general public and journalists’ professional bodies gave Paloh no meaningful support. But the June bans made the public think again.

**Government on the defensive**

The press bans were one of the rare occasions when the New Order government appears to be very susceptible to pressures from the domestic opposition, and swiftly becomes apologetic about its own repressive action. This is the first and maybe the only time that a press ban has immediately been followed by a government offer to renew the publishers’ licences which had just been revoked. In all previous cases, press bans were followed by months of further recrimination against the victims and intimidation of other media. The victims were blamed without a trial or opportunity for self-defence. The surviving media were expected to learn the lesson, or even to take part in publicly denouncing their fellow journalists.

What are we to make of it all? Do the four developments outlined indicate a decline of what has thus far looked like a very strong authoritarian regime? Or are they simply part of a clever strategy of governance on the part of the New Order regime? Do the same phenomena suggest the rise of middle-class political alliances? Does the weakening of the regime necessarily mean the strengthening of ‘civil society’? If not, how do we
understand the relationships in play in contemporary Indonesia?

There is no simple yes/no answer to these questions. The next section will deal with the questions of the government’s shrinking power and the blossoming of urban middle-class politics. I will try to relate the June 1994 bans and the public response to them with several other political events in a broader context. But first I will sum up the above and introduce the arguments I will make in the following section.

The four phenomena do indicate a significant retreat of the New Order regime vis-à-vis ‘civil society’. But this is not to suggest that the government is crumbling. In fact, no single force has yet appeared to rival the regime. I am only arguing that for reasons to be explored below, the regime has lost much of its previous prowess and the ease with which it used to handle and mishandle things. Now in order to survive, the regime is having to make more substantial concessions to the dissenting urban middle classes, giving them more room to assert their own agendas. The moment may be conducive to ‘democratisation’, but is an inadequate condition for it. Neither is it evident that political opposition from ‘civil society’ is on the rise.

If the middle classes do appear to be better consolidated and politically more assertive than before, as I believe they are, the reasons need to be sought elsewhere than simply in the decline of the government’s hegemonic power. After all, the various acts of opposition to the regime described above do not portend significant changes in the main structures of New Order Indonesia. The next section will therefore submit a broader view of the recent decline of the regime and the coincidental rise of opposition movements. The question to be confronted is how social inequalities and political repression in New Order Indonesia have managed to persist and reproduce themselves, and under what conditions they can be expected to dysfunction or break down.

A DECAYING REGIME?

The four phenomena described in the preceding section can be seen as part of a train of events. In varying degrees they all display the New Order regime’s continued failure to keep control of domestic discontents. This became highly visible in the first half of the 1990s, progressively accelerating in pace and intensity to the time of writing. I will illustrate this point with six successive incidents which took place over a period of several months prior to the media bans.10

**Government Regulation No. 20/1994**

Three weeks prior to the June 1994 bans, the government issued a new and no less controversial regulation. This was the most pro-market economic policy it had ever introduced, allowing 100 per cent foreign ownership of locally based new investments or the purchase of existing companies with only a 1 per cent divestment required after fifteen years. The regulation also opened major areas of infrastructure and the public sector to management by domestic and foreign private joint ventures: ports, electricity generating and distribution, telecommunications, air-lines, water, railways, and the mass media. According to the constitution, all these areas are prohibited to private companies,
whether foreign or domestic. With the new regulations, foreign investors may have as much as 95 per cent ownership of an enterprise operating in these areas.

One interpretation of this dramatic decision suggests that the government must be in an enormously powerful position to feel it can afford such a significant policy change. Another interpretation that sounds more tenable is that the government was in a desperate situation economically and politically. This latter interpretation is in fact in line with the admission of the President and his aides in response to criticism from politicians and domestic business communities.\(^{11}\)

Financially, the regime appeared to be in an urgent need of a huge amount of capital in an increasingly competitive climate to fulfil its ambition of retaining a 6.5 per cent growth rate for GDP. It also had to face its breathtaking foreign debt (approaching US$100,000 million in 1994, or 10 per cent more than the previous year) and the formidable scandals concerning non-performing loans in the state banking sector (see below).\(^{12}\) The government prefers foreign investors, because they are politically much less threatening than their domestic counterparts.

Immediate opposition to the new regulation came not from anti-capitalist forces as such, but from business communities which have enjoyed government protection, including the press,\(^{13}\) and from neo-classical economists who subscribe to the rigid notion of separation between public and private economies. Though not intended to do so by those who drafted and ratified it, the new regulation challenged the powerful myth of such a separation.\(^{14}\)

The new regulation also makes the media bans which followed it three weeks later remarkably ironic. While the government worked hard to attract foreign investment by banning the three publications, it stirred up social unrest which was liable to discourage foreign investment; and the government also demonstrated its heavy-handed inclination to act without due respect for legal procedures which was also of little comfort to foreign investors (see McBeth 1994:70; Dhakidae 1994:55). Furthermore, the government was actually sacrificing the same benefits of existing domestic capital investment associated with the drive for foreign investment. When the government banned the three publications in June 1994, \textit{TEMPO} had an annual turnover of Rp. 40,000 million (Utami 1994:6), and it alone contributed Rp. 5,000 million in tax revenue to the government (Mohamad 1994:34).

While there is yet no guarantee that the new regulation will eventually yield any benefit to the New Order regime or any other domestic parties in the long run, it had the immediate effect of undermining the regime’s political stature in the public eye. It makes the government look ideologically anationalistic; it is legally in contravention of the constitution; socially, it is putting public welfare at the mercy of capitalism.

**Bank loan scandals**

Following the disclosure in May 1994 of the Indonesian Rp. 1.3 trillion (US$650 million) non-performing bank loan, a big Chinese-Indonesian business man and several top executive managers of the government’s Indonesian Development Bank (BAPINDO) were brought to trial. The court found many of the defendants guilty and gave them long prison sentences. Several former state Ministers were implicated. Under strong public
pressure from the media and student demonstrations, they were summoned to testify in court. Things seemed to be falling apart.

Corruption may be an inherent part of a system that runs a country for many years. But some corrupt practices and abuses of power are more excessive and do more serious damage to the system than others. The public exposure of major corrupt practices is usually initiated and further protected by few among country’s top elite. Public disclosure of such scandals often, though not invariably, occurs when distribution of the fruits of corruption among the elite has become problematic, leading to bitterness or jealousy.

The Indonesian state banking system had been causing concern among many analysts several months before the BAPINDO case came to light.\(^{15}\) Already in 1993, one observer estimated that ‘at least 20 per cent of state-bank loans [were] non-performing (that is, no interest has been paid on them for three months or more)’; others considered the figure of 20 per cent far too low (Sender 1993:76). In one bank it could have been as high as 75 per cent (Sender 1993:75). Less controversial is the view that the figure was increasing from year to year (in 1990, it was estimated at 6 per cent), and the scandal was more rampant in state banks than their private counterparts.\(^{16}\)

The scale of media interest in the BAPINDO case and its political implications may be the biggest since the mid-1970s scandal of PERTAMINA, the state-owned oil company. The collapse of Bank Summa (in December 1992) and Bank Duta (in 1990) had already astonished the nation. But the BAPINDO affair far surpassed them. And yet there are strong indications that the BAPINDO credit scandal is neither the only nor the worst in operation (Sender 1994). According to Bank Indonesia Governor Soedrajad Djiwandana, the total non-performing bank loans by the end of April 1995 reached Rp. 9.78 billion, of which the notorious BAPINDO’s scam constituted Rp. 2.98 billion or 30.5 per cent (Kompas, 22 June 1995:1, 11). Other, and perhaps more serious, cases managed to escape public scrutiny and legal investigation, although their existence were subtly hinted at in the media. The BAPINDO scandal was serious enough to shake up both political and economic institutions in the country, threaten business people and top state bureaucrats, and to destabilise the New Order regime, at least for a time.\(^{17}\)

**Rising labour unrest and demonstrations in North Sumatra**

While things go wrong at the highest political and economic levels, new and challenging forces rise up from below. Between 14 and 16 April 1994, the North Sumatran city of Medan and its surrounding areas saw a series of the biggest worker demonstrations since the New Order came to power. Some 30,000 workers took part in the rallies, demanding: (i) an increase in the daily minimum wage from the official figure of Rp. 3,100 (US$1.50)—one of the lowest in Asia—to Rp. 7,000 (US$3.50); (ii) the repeal of the Ministry of Manpower Decree (No. 1/1994) that recognised only the sole government-sanctioned trade union Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (SPSI, All Indonesian Union of Workers), and recognition of the alternative union Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (SBSI); (iii) an investigation into the death of their fellow worker Rusli; and (iv) the reinstatement of nearly 400 workers who had recently been dismissed following a strike at a local factory.
Unusually, the security forces used minimal violence to disperse the demonstrations. Both civilian state bureaucrats and the military leadership alleged that the mass rallies had turned violent, attacking the local ethnic Chinese, and that NGOs had manipulated the masses to demonstrate in ways typical of the former Indonesian Communist Party. Among these NGOs, the SBSI was accused of being most responsible for the damage. The government arrested and tried over sixty people, including key figures from the SBSI and other NGOs, as well as dozens of the workers themselves.

Despite sufficient conflicting evidence in public reports, nearly all media coverage in Indonesia and overseas, as well as reports from human rights organisations, were pressured to follow the official version. Overlooking the glaring class conflict in this industrial dispute, they diverted the story into a discussion of anti-Chinese issues. Much space was given to the long history of ethnic tension (see Heryanto 1994b), with no regard to the question of labour and capital. Several unpublished reports prepared by NGOs which were involved in the incident commented in passing that anti-Chinese pamphlets had appeared mysteriously towards the end of the first series of demonstrations. Others, like Mochtar Pakpahan, leader of the SBSI, claimed to have evidence that a third party had used thugs and agents pro-vocateurs to divert the workers from their original cause and incite anti-Chinese sentiment at the rally. But this point did not receive the attention it deserved.\(^{18}\)

Labour demonstrations in Medan and the surrounding area had occurred regularly since 1991, leading up to the inevitable climax in mid-April 1994. In most other industrial centres, especially the outskirts of Jakarta and Surabaya (the only Indonesian cities larger than Medan), labour disputes, strikes, and mass rallies were also overwhelming in size and frequency throughout much of the first half of the 1990s.\(^{19}\) For reasons beyond the immediate issues of labour, some of these events became better known than others.

The death of Marsinah, a 25-year-old female labour activist, in Porong (a small town near Surabaya) in early May 1993 quickly became legendary. Icons, ceremonies, demonstrations, songs, art exhibitions, theatrical performances, posters, scholarly analysis, and rumours honoured her courage in the defence of labour rights and the memory of her heroic death.\(^{20}\) The Medan labour demonstration took place as the trial for Marsinah’s murder was in progress. Urban middle-class activists had been instrumental in the development of the labour movement as a whole and in the public notoriety of cases like the death of Marsinah.\(^{21}\) Space does not afford a fuller development of the significance of middle- and working-class politics, although it is critical to the shape and potential of more substantive opposition movements.

The developments discussed in the three subsections above signal the weakening of the New Order regime. They may have serious repercussions in the long run, but they do not mean the unequivocal defeat of the regime in its public confrontation with social groups supposedly subject to its control and domination. The following three cases are more interesting because they exemplify embarrassing defeats for the government in public disputes with the seemingly powerless masses.

The victory of Megawati
As mentioned earlier, depoliticisation has been thorough and systemic under New Order rule. No political opposition is legitimate, not even as rhetoric or tokenism. Nevertheless, one of the two nominally ‘non-government’ parties, the PDI, appears recalcitrant from time to time. Though always a loser in general elections, the PDI at least presents the appearance of a threat, and to that extent it compromises the regime’s desire for public appearance of totalitarian rule.

Government intervention into PDI affairs has been regular. During the party’s congress in 1993, this intervention was unashamedly gross and the press exposed it vividly. Consequently it came as a great embarrassment when all these efforts failed. The government could neither install its supported nominee nor silence the persistent demand from the party’s supporters nationwide to elect as party leader Megawati Soekarnoputri, daughter of President Soeharto’s predecessor and chief rival in the national myth.22

The PDI’s miraculous success generated the new catchword arus bawah, ‘undercurrent’, an admiring reference to the politically conscious supporters of Megawati. These people came in their thousands to the party congress in Surabaya despite local intimidation in their many different places of origin. What Megawati and her party realistically could do after the election was questionable, but the dramatic defeat of an old authoritarian regime by the common people in a public contest created the perception that a new phase was approaching. Many observers attribute this to the endorsement of Megawati by certain elements within the military leadership. What may have been less acknowledged is the contribution of bold and partisan journalistic reports during the event. This suggests the need to examine the politics of the middle-class professionals in general, and the threat that the press in particular posed in the months prior to the June 1994 bans.

The closure of the national lottery

The closure of the national lottery on 25 November 1993 was another celebrated success for public confrontation against the otherwise apparently very powerful state apparatus. The state-sponsored lottery has been a major social phenomenon since the 1970s, under different names and through various reorganisations. Regardless of its form or title, the enterprise always generated enormous revenue.

Protests against this legal form of gambling came and went over the years. One reason why the enterprise survived and succeeded was the fact that a great portion of the population, mostly the underprivileged, enthusiastically welcomed it. It absorbed much of their energy, time, and money. The lottery established new social relationships and redefined old ones for millions of Indonesians, and thus assumed a significance well beyond the question of participants’ monetary loss and gain.

Two waves of student-led mass demonstrations against the lottery prior to its dissolution are worthy of mention. The first, in late November 1991, was the biggest series of student-led demonstrations since 1978 when the government clamped down violently on all campus-based student politics. Thousands of students in different cities joined separate but equally peaceful protests. These protests were so overwhelming that the international outcry against the notorious killings at the Santa Cruz cemetery (Dili, East Timor) on 12 November 1991 found no immediate echoes in otherwise politically
volatile Indonesia. Heavily armed soldiers broke up most of these anti-lottery demonstrations, rescuing Rp. 580,000 million (US$289 million) worth of revenue-generating business.23

The second wave of anti-lottery demonstrations that eventually closed down the enterprise took place two years later, by which time lottery earnings had doubled to Rp. 995,000 million (US$460 million) (Jakarta-Jakarta, 385, 20–26 November 1993:18). As before, students appeared in the forefront of these demonstrations. But to a greater extent than in the preceding protests, senior leaders within the Muslim communities took a leading role, and the protests were based on religious and moral values.

The event had four important features relevant to our discussion. First, the closure of the lottery was all the more dramatic in that the government had insisted in public just a few days before that the enterprise would continue despite popular objection. It is thus strikingly similar to the embarrassment over the election of Megawati. Second, the incident underscores the recurring evidence that real politics in Indonesia takes place primarily outside the confines of formal institutions (elections, parliament, or political parties). This suggests a marked contrast to what happened in the Philippines in the first half of 1994, where the dispute between the state-proposed lottery and its critics took place in court (see Tiglao 1994). Third, the mass protest in Jakarta was the first protest rally to reach the Presidential Palace complex. Fourth, to the surprise of many, the military were remarkably soft on the demonstration, again prompting speculation about their deliberate, if passive, endorsement for any move against the President.

**Questioning the New Order’s genealogy and legitimacy**

In discussing issues of ideology in New Order Indonesia, many observers focus on the official state ideology, Pancasila. That is a very tricky endeavour, as the regime’s formal propaganda may be a distraction from the real point. In itself Pancasila tells us little about Indonesia. It contains western-derived modern, globally upheld values, formulated in high abstraction. The values of the five principles are not really in dispute. But they also have little bearing on the everyday lives of Indonesians which are, as elsewhere, full of contradictions and ambiguities.24

As I discussed on p. 242, the crucial foundation of the New Order’s ideology lies in its discourse of a violent genealogy. Officially the abortive coup d’état of 30 September 1965 by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), provoked the ‘birth’ and quick ascendance of the army-dominated New Order regime. Unlike Pancasila, what has officially been termed Pengkhianatan G-30-S/PKI (The Treachery of the 30 September Movement/PKI) is full of historically specific referents. Further, unlike the high-flown Pancasila, the narrative on the PKI’s treachery has much bearing on the mass killings in 1965–6, among the bloodiest in modern history, where ‘in four months, five times as many people died in Indonesia as in Vietnam in twelve years’ (Bertrand Russell, as quoted in the Foreword of Caldwell 1975).25 The killings and intimidation of opponents that ensued in the next twenty-five years laid the foundation of the New Order regime and its impressive economic growth rates. The same events generated a master-narrative of ‘Communist threats’ that has been a crucially determining principle in the restructuring of social relationships and the redefining of social identities and notions of ‘reality’.
The discourse on the threats of Communism and the canonical narrative of Pengkhianatan G-30-S/PKI have not gone without challenge. But criticism is usually voiced outside the formal public domain in anonymous pamphlets, for example, circulated only among urban opponents of the regime. When they enter into the formal public domain, they are too obscure and timid to carry any weight. The following account of an incident involving Wimanjaya K.Liotohe is therefore unprecedented. Ironically, it was brought about by the President and his officials. On 23 January 1994 the President complained that someone had seriously discredited him:

I was accused of having masterminded the G-30-S/PKI on the pretext that Untung [a lieutenant who led the self-styled ‘Revolutionary Council’ that kidnapped and killed six generals on the eve of 1 October 1965] was my subordinate. This defamation was presented in the book Primadosa.

(Kompas, 29 January 1994:1, 11)

A recurrent event in New Order political ritual has been the prosecution of journalists in the 1970s and students activists in later years for speaking out against the status quo and against state bureaucrats. They were tried under a series of colonial-derived Penal Codes that punish anyone for publicly expressing what the regime arbitrarily defines as hatred, insult, or hostility towards the incumbent authorities. Charges of insulting the President have been predominant in recent political trials, although not once has the President himself hinted that he felt insulted, or that he knew or cared that these trials were taking place. Now when for the first time the President has alleged that he has been insulted, no state apparatus has moved to arrest and prosecute the perpetrator. Indeed, the complaint signalled that something had gone seriously wrong.

The President’s complaint was more than simply a warning or expression of anger over the book. It was an expression of helplessness, and anger with his state agents for having done nothing to protect him against Wimanjaya K.Liotohe, the author. The next morning the office of the Attorney General issued a decree banning Primadosa. Three days later Probosutedjo, a big business person and the President’s half-brother, acting as the chairperson of Himpuan Pengusaha Pribumi Indonesia (HIPPI, Association of Indonesian Indigenous Businessmen), more bluntly expressed deep outrage against the President’s aides for their failure to protect him. He mournfully described his half-brother’s position as a solitary one, abandoned by those responsible for his safety. Probosutedjo demanded that the office of the Attorney General prosecute the author of Primadosa (Kompas, 29 January 1994:1, 11). But, again, this call met with no enthusiasm. On the contrary, in April 1994 Wimanjaya K.Liotohe filed a lawsuit against the office of the Attorney General for having banned his book.

The six cases outlined above are far from exhaustive. The list could be tripled to cover the beginning of the 1990s, and to include less significant cases.26 In yet another significant development, the Jakarta State Administration Court was required to consider whether a lawsuit against the President brought by six NGOs over the reallocation of reforestation funds worth Rp. 400,000 million (US$185 million) had any validity. As it happens, the Court judged that the NGOs did not have the right to bring the case since they were not directly injured parties (‘Majelis PTUN: Gugatan Enam LSM Tidak Bisa

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TOWARDS COUNTER-HEGEMONIC STRUGGLES

Although none of these cases is dealt with comprehensively, to differing extents each offers evidence in support of the following main points.

The 1990s are witnessing a significant increase in the prominence of opposition movements in Indonesia. The geographical areas involved in the various popular protests have expanded, as have the social backgrounds of those participating in them. There has also been a marked escalation in the frequency and militancy of movements against the New Order regime. Strong moral and religious overtones in several of the protests indicate a continuity with the popular protests of the past. However, opposition in the 1990s features new secular elements.

One outstanding feature of the recent opposition movements is the re-emergence of a populist tendency clearly distinguishes recent dissenters from their predecessors since the New Order came to power. Before 1989 student movements found their bases in state universities in the capital city of Jakarta and its close neighbouring city, Bandung. Key figures in these movements reportedly had links, at least informally, with top political elites in Jakarta. Since 1989, centres of the student movements have moved away from Jakarta to various regional cities. Their main partners are predominantly peasants and industrial workers. Not only have state ministers, military or party leaders been excluded from their alliances, in fact those representing the authorities have been the targets of the students’ attacks.

As in the past, the new opposition movements are still dominated by university-educated activists and professionals. As well as undergraduate students, they include journalists, artists, lawyers, academics, and NGO activists. This is not surprising. As many have noticed, the urban middle classes include people who have both the resources (material and educational) and the incentives to demand social change. These people certainly benefit from the status quo they claim to want to undermine. But a growing proportion of the urban middle classes can no longer accept the status quo and their own privileged position in it as morally or politically correct. Even in material terms, these people seem to believe that the majority would benefit more than they would lose from a new social order in the long term.

Obviously, this only applies to limited segments of the urban middle classes, at a particular point of time. Even some of the most radical middle-class activists are more heterogeneous and liable to change than this chapter can describe. Bearing this in mind, we can draw some minimal conclusions about their salient features. Only with some degree of generalisation can we speak of the forms and directions of their opposition movements.

Certain themes predominate in the agenda of the urban middle-class opposition. Daniel Lev (1990) has discussed them most succinctly. The core of these themes comprises ‘the separation of society from state’, the establishment and reinforcement of the notion of
‘rule of law’, and social ‘equality’ (Lev 1990:31, 35–6, 36). These constitute, I believe, what has lately come to be called demokratisasi, ‘demoralisation’.

A closer scrutiny will undoubtedly reveal ambiguities and differences in meaning in the seemingly unifying and unified word demokratisasi as used among activists. The heterogeneous middle class in Indonesia has for some time now appeared to have a significant degree of cohesion. This is not of its own making, but has been made possible by events and forces that lie outside relationships among these diverse middle classes. They virtually all find themselves in a commonly dependent relationship with the New Order state, the central sponsor of political repression and economic development. Antagonism has come to predominate over other elements in their easily changing relationship. If middle-class activists appear to have played a leading role in the struggle for demokratisasi, it is partly thanks to specific cultural and political histories. Culturally, middle-class intellectuals in many Third World and former socialist bloc countries enjoy the popular myth of moral superiority. Politically, capitalist industrialisation in countries like Indonesia has not been accompanied by a strong capitalist ideology. Even in the period of highest economic growth and consumerism, the government launched a nationwide campaign for asceticism. This is ostensibly an attempt to fight against the arrival of a hedonist consumer society. The notion of a free market is largely unacceptable and kapitalisme (capitalism) is a dirty word.27

After this sympathetic account of the middle-class opposition, one still has to gauge the effectiveness of their struggles and their prospects for success. Here I can only briefly review the New Order regime’s performance in confronting its domestic opposition as illustrated in the cases above. I will also offer a few preliminary thoughts about middle-class alliances with other social groups. In this way, we can examine Indonesian middle-class opposition in synchronic relationship with—not in isolation from—its political environment.

As suggested earlier, contemporary middle-class opposition is ideologically friendly with the rural peasants and industrial workers. ‘Empowering the powerless’ has become a common aim of many NGOs, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists, and socially committed artists. Peasant resistance to the Kedong Ombo dam project, protest at the death of Marsinah, and worker protest in Medan are only a few examples of such alliances that have gained impressive success and international fame. They combine grassroots opposition with strategic support from middle-class activists. Peasants in remote areas and urban workers in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods are increasingly aware of the importance of support, however imperfect, from urban middle-class activists in its various forms: journalistic and human rights reports, non-governmental training, litigation in court, academic seminars, and artistic works.

Sustained international support from liberal governments and human rights organisations to enhance such domestic alliances has been useful. Nevertheless, the links between middle-class activists and the less privileged remain ad hoc, fragmented, short-lived, and clandestine. State surveillance, periodic prosecutions, and constant intimidation impose severe external pressures. Nor have limited material and educational resources among the oppositional groups—not to mention subjective inter-class divides in lifestyles and values—helped to foster long-term joint strategies and alliances. Where conflicts have not been resolved quickly, the famous ‘success stories’ of grassroots
opposition in alliance with middle-class activists have not ended happily. This leads to the question of alliances between desperate or disillusioned members of the middle classes and those in ruling circles.

Alliances between certain middle-class activists and state agents do sometimes occur, on formal and informal bases. It is never easy to investigate and describe this sensitive area—especially in the limited space available here. Nevertheless, some limited observations are warranted. First, such alliances are in no way systematically orchestrated or controlled by any centre of power. Instead, they develop in a piecemeal fashion, and tend to be open-ended, diffuse, quickly shifting, and mutually suspicious. Second, these various alliances have less and less connection with the 1965–6 violence, or its protracted aftermath. Short-term political and economic interests seem to predominate over the exploration of new alliances. Third, no such alliance seems to have played any significant role in the recent conflicts between the government and its overt opponents. Alliances with the ruling elite may claim to operate quietly behind closed doors for reasons of long-term strategy, but there is no way of assessing their efficacy. This brings us to the final issue to be considered, the question of effective opposition under state hegemony.

Most power relations involve some degree of compromise and trade-off. Even a hegemonic power does not mean ‘making a clean sweep of the existing world-view and replacing it with a completely new and already formulated one. Rather, it consists in a process of transformation and of rearticulation of existing ideological elements’ (Mouffe 1979:191–2).

The series of events presented in the preceding sections indicate a steady weakening of the New Order over an extended period; there are no counterbalancing cases favouring the regime. This is more significant if we look back to the past. A decade ago foreign observers described the New Order regime as an omnipotent institution. Ben Anderson described the leitmotiv of New Order governance as the strengthening of the ‘state-qua-state’ (1983:488, 1990:111). More recently, Richard Tanter has asserted that the New Order had the ‘capacity to ignore, or at least postpone, cultivation of domestic support and the class compromises which that process requires’ (1990:77, 1991:13, 204).

In view of the above, we have grounds to argue that the long-standing hegemonic power of the New Order has encountered a serious crisis in the 1990s. However, the selected cases examined here do not provide evidence for attributing the crisis solely to opposition forces. Neither can we assume that the crisis will necessarily lead to the regime’s final dissolution. As things stand, there are chances for the New Order to revitalise itself. Unless the regime makes fatal blunders or sinks into deeper crisis beyond its control, it may have some hope of re-creating its hegemonic position. To do so will require making necessary concessions to, and then appropriating, the opposition’s demands. Unless the opposition manages to transcend its present agenda, and go beyond demands for immediate redress in particular cases of abuse of power, or beyond issues of presidential succession, it will not engender substantial consequences for the existing social order.

NOTES
1 The estimates of those massacred vary and it is unlikely the actual figure will ever be known. The figure of one million is cited by Caldwell (1975:13), but this is by no means the highest estimate. Southwood and Flanagan (1983:73) point out, for instance, that Amnesty International’s investigations revealed independent estimates of ‘many more than a million’. For other estimates, see May (1978:120) and Crouch (1978:155).

2 Some of the most important writings on the topic include *Indonesia*, April 1966:131–204, Notosusanto and Saleh (1968, 1989); Anderson and McVey (1971); Caldwell (1975); Crouch (1978); May (1978); Wertheim (1979); Holtzappel (1979); Southwood and Flanagan (1983); Scott (1986); Bunnell (1990); Cribb (1990); Budiardjo (1991).

3 Pancasila, (Five Principles) is the name of the official state ideology, first formulated by the late President Soekarno in 1945. The five principles are: Belief in the One Supreme God; Just and Civilised Humanity; Unity of Indonesia; Deliberative and Representative Democracy; and Social Justice.

4 For a discussion of the significance of the controversy over the recalling of Bambang Warrih, see Arief Budiman (1995).

5 Yayasan Keluaga Bhakti (ed.) (1993) *Tajuk-Tajuk di Bawah Terik Matahari* (‘Buds Under the Heat of the Sun’), Jakarta: Gramedia, is probably the best compilation to date of Indonesians discussing the press. This over-500-page volume gives a good illustration of the wide recognition of the regrettable but unstoppable industrialisation of journalism. The press is portrayed as ‘buds’ (small, delicate, innocent) that suffer injustice from ‘the heat of the sun’ (imposition of powerful forces from above). For a view of the general moral outrage following the June 1994 bans, see Utami et al. (1994). David Hill (1994) offers an excellent overview of the Indonesian press under the New Order regime for English readers.

6 The joy of discovering a middle-class identity in the aftermath of the June 1994 bans is presented in a reflexive essay by Ayu Utami, a young reporter of *FORUM Keadilan*, and an activist of the Alliance of Independent Journalists (1994:11). See also Pranowo (1994) for a more detached view.

7 In his defence plea, Atmowiloto described how reporters from other media exaggerated the incident and reinforced the mass demand for *Monitor’s* closure. The incident that ostensibly triggered the affair was a readers’ poll of their favourite figures that included the Prophet Muhammad and placed him several ranks below other names, including President Soeharto, pop artists, and Atmowiloto himself.

8 In fact, Jakob Oetama handed down not one but two publication licences to the government in response to the angry masses over allegations of offending Islam, leading to the closure of *Monitor* and *Senang*.

9 Interestingly, after losing his previous position in *Jakarta-Jakarta*, Seno Gumira Ajidarma (one of the three editors) managed to publish more than ten short stories in separate but major newspapers. These stories depict more vividly than any journalist reports can possibly do, the horrific violence inflicted upon East Timorese around the time of the Dili killings in 1991. None of these publications provoked anyone. The Jakarta Arts Centre Taman Ismail Marzuki sponsored a public reading of these short stories by eminent literary figures on 19 November 1994 (see *Kompas*, 23 November 1994:16).

10 I am grateful to Chua Beng-Huat for bringing my attention on many of these events for broader analysis.

11 President Soeharto’s statement was made on Sunday, 5 June 1994, in Bogor, to 200 college graduates and former recipients of Supersemar state scholarships (*Kompas*, XIII, 6 June 1994).

12 Although many of the figures in this chapter are shown in US dollars, British usage is
retained throughout, rendering 1,000,000,000 as ‘a thousand million’ and equating ‘one billion’ with 1,000,000,000,000.

13 Both Jakob Oetama, on behalf of the Association of Newspaper Publishers, and Harmoko, in his capacity as Minister of Information, aired some of the earliest and strongest opposition to the possibility that foreign capital had invaded the media industry. Soon spokespersons of the government amended the earlier official position, assuring that the new regulation would not apply to the media.

14 Conservative economists in Indonesia launched attacks on the new regulation on the basis of a rigid separation between the so-called ‘public’ and ‘private’ economies. They appeared to defend and respect the ‘public’; but what they actually did—either consciously or not—was (i) defend the rights of ‘private’ property; (ii) reinforce the notion that the separation was given and/or desirable; and (iii) imply that in practice the private companies have so far restrained themselves from invading the so-called ‘public’ interest, space, and economies. I recall Althusser’s discussion of Gramsci: ‘The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law’ (**Ideology and the State**, 1971:18).

15 See **Far Eastern Economic Review**’s cover story on this (1 April 1993:72–7).

16 The state banks dominate the total financial assets and bank loans in the country, despite the recent mushrooming of private banks. In 1993 the divide between state banks and private banks in a total of US$ 68.2,000 billion worth of loans was 49 per cent to 41 per cent. The figures in 1989 were 63 per cent to 30 per cent (Habir 1994:54).

17 The World Bank expressed deep concern about the direct and indirect implications of the case (**Republika**, 9 June 1994:1).

18 This reference to a ‘third party’ is generally interpreted as an oblique reference to the military or a faction therein. For details of this matter that run counter to the official version, see Amnesty International’s report ‘Indonesia; Labour Activists Under Fire’ (ASA 21 September 1994, May 1994, pp. 6–7) and a ‘White Book’ prepared by two local pro-labour NGOs (Yayasan Kelompok Pelita Sejahtera and Yayasan Pondok Rakyat Kreatip), entitled **Tragedi Aksi Akbar Buruh Medan** (**The Tragedy of Medan Labour’s Great Action**) (esp. p. 17). Pakpahan’s counter-allegations appear in many major news magazines such as **FORUM Keadilan** (3(2), 11 May 1994: esp. 16) and **DeTIK** (18(59), 27 April–3 May 1994:9). For a preliminary interpretation of the overall event as a class, rather than racial, conflict see Heryanto (1994a, 1994b).

19 See Hadiz (1993, 1994) for more on the phenomenal rise of working-class politics in the 1990s.

20 For a detailed report prepared by an independent fact-finding commission whose conclusion runs counter in almost every respect to the official version, see ILAF (1994).

21 SBSI was one of them. It was established on 25 April 1992 under the leadership of Mochtar Pakpahan, a Ph.D. graduate in State Administration Studies, University of Indonesia. Although the government has repeatedly declared it illegal, no serious legal action has been taken with the specific aim of dismantling it. What the government has done is take a series of minor and **ad hoc** measures to cancel some of the union’s activities and arrest the key figures. In 1994 SBSI claimed to have eighty-seven local branches throughout the archipelagic country, embracing an official membership of some 250,000 workers. For more on SBSI see **FORUM Keadilan** (3(2), 11 May 1994:15), and on Mochtar Pakpahan see **Kompas**, 18 September 1993:20).

The exact vitality of SBSI and its contribution to the worker movement has been a point of debate among some observers. Apart from the competence of leading individuals within the union, before Pakpahan’s prosecution some speculated that the phenomenon was a result of a
covert back-up from certain segments of the military. The government’s restrained measures must also be related to international pressures, especially from the American human rights organisations. In 1993 the US government threatened to suspend US$600 million worth of benefits enjoyed by Indonesia under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), unless it showed a better performance on human rights issues. In early 1994 the New Order hastily repealed the Ministry of Manpower Decree No. 342/1986 that gave the military the power to intervene in labour disputes. Despite the repeal, military intervention reportedly continued (see Amnesty International’s report cited in Note 18).

22 For more on the election of Megawati see a report by Gerry van Klinken (1994). It must be noted that the only single significant figure to threaten the incumbent ruler in the New Order ideological battle has been Soekarno, the deceased. Soekarno’s picture was virtually the only human face other than President Soeharto’s to appear in posters and banners in the campaign period during general elections. Myths about Soekarno apparently became a means of ideological articulation in the urban discontent during the 1987 election. So serious did the government feel this threat that it banned the traditional display of any human representations for campaign purposes in the 1992 general election. It also co-sponsored the publication of books that question, if not undermine, Soekarno’s credentials. The effects have been counterproductive.

In September 1994 the government succeeded in ensuring that a loyalist became the leader of the other ‘non-government’ party, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), but also at high cost. The more popular but defeated nominees opened a hot debate in the media with the object of forming a new party, and thus challenging the government’s decision to keep the number of parties to a maximum of three. More seriously, they can be seen to challenge the government’s delusion that it rules the country with unanimous consent from its subjects.


24 However, Douglas Ramage (1993) demonstrates how a close examination of competing discourses of Pancasila within specified contexts can be instructive.

25 See Robert Cribb’s (1990) edited volume for a recent investigation into the killings themselves, with selected references to relevant literature on the broader perspective.

26 For example, the list can be added to with the cases of: (i) the stubborn insistence of the Medan Church congregation to conduct an independent election of its religious leadership; (ii) the successful demands of some of the thousands of peasants evicted from their villages for the Kedong Ombo dam construction; (iii) the cancellation of a newly drafted Bill against extra-marital relationships; (iv) the cancellation of some traffic regulations and the delay of closely related regulations as a direct result of mass demonstrations; (v) the cancellation of privatisation of tax collecting for television licences; (vi) the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission in response to the international pressures after the Dili killings; (vii) the failure of the monopolistic Body for the Protection of Clove Farmers; (viii) the recurrent unrest of city youths at concerts, attacking specifically the rich and security officers; (ix) the ongoing protests against the government’s construction of a nuclear plant in Central Java; (x) the acquittals of those previously found guilty in the trials in the murder of Marsinah.

27 This paragraph draws on Hagen Koo’s (1991) insightful analysis of the South Korean middle classes. I found many similarities between the two nations’ middle-class politics.

28 The fate of the Kedong Ombo peasants remains unclear at the time of writing, after the Supreme Court cancelled its previous decision in their favour. Labour protests subsided
dramatically following the arrest and prosecution of Mochtar Pakpahan (leader of the SBSI). The stubborn Indonesian Democratic Party under Megawati’s leadership encountered exasperating ‘internal’ conflicts.

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