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INDONESIA
Towards the Final Countdown?

Ariel Heryanto

Among the Southeast Asian countries today, Indonesia, with an ageing New Order regime and widespread uncertainties, appears to be closest to its time of major change. This has been made possible by the unwitting consequences of the New Order’s success in achieving its original goal of restoring order, developing the nation economically, and maintaining stability through depoliticisation. Major events of the past year have accentuated further the general patterns that began in 1990. In some areas, these trends have accelerated. They all point towards a developing crisis in the New Order government’s legitimacy that prompts serious questions about the ultimate outcome. Are we going to witness a new historical transformation of the fourth most populous country in the world? Or, will the New Order regime survive the crisis and reassert its hegemony, without significant changes of the system?

It is hard to predict which scenario will ultimately become reality. The difficulty of making predictions stems partly from the fact that open political contestation has been declared illegal, thus forcing all sorts of political activities to take place behind the scenes. Under such circumstances most political bodies and individuals will not expose their true position, unless their hand is forced.

The following is an account of the major events that have taken place in 1996. It explores the probable connections among these events, and considers their significance in the light of bigger questions pertaining to social transformation. Before this is done, a general framework and comment on the overall situation is provided.

Collaboration: The Basis of Hegemony
The New Order is one of the longest-lasting regimes in the world today. A study of its present crisis requires some consideration of its formation and what solidified it for more than a quarter of a century. While a thorough analysis of these issues lies beyond the scope of the present discussion, suffice to say that the regime’s longevity has been made possible by complex mechanisms of collaboration by those formally designated as non-governmental agents.

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This collaboration has not been sufficiently acknowledged by most observers. Analyses of contemporary Indonesian politics have predominately been reduced to analyses of the most powerful elites. Some have even gone as far as to attribute the New Order’s prowess to a single individual, or a contest between two presumably clearly demarcated camps, ’state versus society’.1

Recognizing the collaborative elements of the society has several implications. First, it allows us to see that while the core of the New Order regime holds a virtually monopolistic power it nonetheless depends on the collaboration of the rest of the population to sustain the status quo, just as these subjects depend on the favour and patronage of the New Order’s state agents. While this mutual dependency is not one between equals, the subordinates are not meek and dispensable whose interests and demands can be totally ignored.

Second, given how crucial collaboration is to establishing the New Order’s social order, one can hypothesise that a withdrawal from collaboration by any major party has the potential effect of threatening not only the government but the entire social order. It does not require an overt and aggressive opposition against the central government to undermine the social order upon which the regime’s privileged position rests.

Third, and finally, over an extended period in the 1990s we have witnessed a steady trend indicating that the collaborative relationship has, in significant ways, worked as a leveller between the state élite and its various subordinates within and outside the state apparatus. Thanks to generous privileges obtained from the New Order’s policies, new groups of urban citizens, in business and informal political organizations have emerged. They are more interested in greater independence through liberalization of the economy, political representation, public administration accountability, and rule of law, than continued arbitrary patronage from individual state officials.

What needs to be considered is what in these past decades has made this collaborative work possible, involving numerous and otherwise contradictory forces in society. Conversely, we need to know what could possibly erode this bond, resulting in an eventual end of the New Order regime and the beginning of another social order. In the interest of clarity, a speculative hypothesis may be helpful at this point. At the core of what could be a complex answer to the question of the formative basis of New Order’s rule is the combination of anti-communism which found extreme expression in the mass violence of 1965–67, and in the subsequent years the sustained economic growth and its rewards.

Likewise, the present crisis can be seen as fundamentally linked to the receding memory of 1965, the waning efficacy of the anti-Communist propaganda, and a restructuring of the nation’s economy. On top of these, there are the inevitable and refractory consequences of the New Order’s developmental successes: the remarkable growth of increasingly demanding and confident urbanites, industrial workers, and retired military officers. One of the most serious threats to the New Order’s survival is the simultaneous
challenge from its own constituents and old allies. Friction within the regime’s core groups is visible, while support from its major foreign allies is more ambiguous.

The deepening of Indonesia’s incorporation into the world economy means that the state can no longer be the ever-reliable benevolent patron to favourite cronies. In order to survive, Indonesian businessmen must somehow increase their competitive position in the world market. In the past, import-substitution policies permitted favouritism that led to low efficiency, bribery and high production costs. As a result of the more recent changes, many lost their privileges in the nation’s intensely competitive economic environment. One group of losers that is of great significance is retired military officers. Their loss of privilege has inevitably brought about shifts in political alliances and new antagonisms.

The regime has tried to survive by redressing selected protests, making concessions in some areas, or containing damage in others. The use of the state’s coercive measures has declined significantly in comparison to the past, although political violence is more frequent. When state coercion is used, it has been done much more selectively, and has provoked more public outrage than in the past. The 27 July 1996 riot in Jakarta is a case in point.

In recent years public attention has focused particularly on one strategy that the government regularly employs in dealing with oppositional forces. Instead of confronting or negotiating with leaders of legitimate and independent groups, the government facilitates or sponsors a coup that leads to the establishment of new pro-government leadership. The year 1996 saw several such incidents, the saga of the PDI that sparked the 27 July riot being the most prominent example.

Not all political dissent, however, operates within institutionalised organisations that can be undermined by sponsored friction and coups. The 1990s have witnessed the sudden proliferation of counter-demonstrations to deal with stubborn street demonstrators, less institutionally-based dissent, and less penetrable NGOs. The deployment of security forces in uniform can be ineffective as it can cause public uproar and international criticism. The phenomenon of counter-demonstrations serves the role of defending the government. But sometimes such demonstrations violate existing laws more seriously than their targets, namely the anti-government protesters. The raiding in November 1996 in Kuala Lumpur of a conference on human rights in East Timor struck Indonesians as surprisingly familiar.

The 27 July Raid
The widely reported 27 July violence in Jakarta has undoubtedly been the most memorable event of the year 1996. The wide media coverage in Indonesia and abroad given to the event both amplified and attested to its importance, making it difficult for the New Order regime to control the course of events. In his 1996 Independence Day address in August, President Soeharto commented on
the incident, the first time during his six successive terms in office that the head of state has made any reference to recent political turmoil.

The 27 July incident refers to hundreds of men in plain clothes raiding the headquarters of the opposition Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI). They claimed to be supporters of Surjadi, who was elected as a new PDI Chairman in a government-sponsored "PDI Congress" in Medan a week before. Surjadi's election ousted Megawati Sukarnoputri from the party's leadership. The July raid took place in the centre of the capital city with the clear support of the security apparatus. Scattered confrontations in central districts of the capital city between the angry masses and security officers ensued. A security van, a few city buses, and several government and military buildings were set on fire. According to the official report from the President-appointed National Commission of Human Rights, the confrontation resulted in 5 dead, 149 injured, 23 missing, and Rp.100 thousand million (US$42.5 million) in material damage.²

Soon after Jakarta returned to some semblance of order, the government launched a vigorous campaign to blame the Partai Demokrasi Rakyat (PRD or People's Democratic Party) for the incident. (The PRD began as the Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik or Union of Democratic People.) The government also accused this fledgling party that was barely a week old of being a reincarnation of the Indonesian Communist Party. In many cities young Indonesians in their early twenties were arrested and charged with subversion for their leadership in the PRD or alleged association with it.

Invoking the communist threat has been the standard strategy of the New Order for various political ends: to stigmatize political enemies, to enhance eroded legitimacy, to invent convenient scapegoats, to deflect public anger, to mobilize the people's support, or to improve internal cohesion. The New Order's legitimacy to rule and the main reason for the collaboration of the population stem from the narrative of the communist coup d'etat of September 1965. For over two decades afterwards, the stigmatization of all things communist proved to be an effective political weapon.

In their October 1996 report, however, the National Commission of Human Rights astonished everyone. Not only did the report completely exonerate the PRD in the 27 July riot, it also mentioned the security forces' complicity in the incident, and recommended that the government-backed raiders be brought to trial. When the leading figures of the PRD were brought to trial in December, subversion charges that carry the maximum penalty of death were used against them. Interestingly, their indictments were now based on their political aspirations and writings, rather than alleged involvement in the 27 July riot which was the initial reason for their detention. Likewise, in the series of trials of 124 PDI supporters there was no mention of the PRD.

The General Responses
The 27 July incident can be read as a complex of intertwined processes that are directly relevant to the question of collaboration introduced earlier. On
the surface, there is a direct and violent confrontation between the state apparatus and diverse groups of unarmed civilians. Knowing that this mass resentment could have further ramifications, especially with the next general election approaching, the government saw the importance of a public gathering of 30,000 people in Jakarta two weeks after the Jakarta riot. The gathering condemned the PRD as the mastermind behind the July violence, and declared an oath of loyalty to the government. Among this crowd were the Armed Forces' Chief of Staff for Social and Political Affairs Lt. Gen. Syarwan Hamid, the Greater Jakarta Regional Military Commander Maj. Gen. Sutiyoso, the Greater Jakarta Regional Police Chief Maj. Gen. Hamami Nata, and the Greater Jakarta Governor Surjadi Soedirdja. Hamid was reported in Kompas, 12 August 1996, to have said that the meeting was spontaneous; and it represented the "national" stand.

These oaths of loyalty to the regime are a regular ritual in the New Order's politics, especially in the months prior to the presidential election. Under ideal circumstances, where a ruling government enjoys maximum collaboration from most forces in the country, such rituals would be redundant. In a press release only two days after the 27 July incident, the Indonesia Council of Ulama (Religious Leaders) was the first to make such an oath and also condemn the PRD. Others quickly followed suit. It was in this context that the positions taken by the two largest Islamic mass organizations appeared remarkable.

In a mass gathering of 40,000 in early September the Angkatan Muda Muhammadiyah (AMM or Muhammadiyah Youth) made only a mild passing mention of its endorsing of the military's restoration of order. They did this despite the reported prior request (plus offers of facilities to assist the gathering) from the Regional Military Commander that they strongly condemn the PRD. Instead, the AMM opted to attack corruption and cronyism as their main targets. When addressing the mass gathering, the Chairman of Muhammadiyah (to which AMM is affiliated) stated unequivocally that the organization's support of the government "is not without reservation".3

Abdurrahman Wahid, the Chair of the largest Islamic mass organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), went even farther to urge members of the organization not to repeat the ritual oath, and criticized those who had done so.4 Wahid was not alone in his bold stance. Most media commentators questioned the credibility of the ritual of loyalty oath. What is significant about Wahid is that his political influence may be far greater than that of all these other commentators combined. Nor was this the first time that Wahid had boldly detached himself from the government's stand.

In discussing the 27 July incident, the focus here has deliberately been neither on the incident itself, nor on the PDI and its key figures.5 The main purpose of the discussion is to highlight signs of the New Order's crisis of legitimacy, and what the 27 July riot signifies. Like Wahid and members of the National Commission of Human Rights, the profile of PDI's Chairperson Megawati Sukarnoputri can only be properly understood in relation to those outside the party. She would not have appeared so eminent and threatening to the regime
had she not received substantial backing from certain segments within the political élite of the New Order. The reverse is also true: she might not have earned her credentials that attracted such a huge support had the government not sought to intimidate her in a manner that provoked the general population.

Neither Wahid nor Megawati is a puppet in the hands of some clever manipulative power. What has happened is a series of incipient, perhaps experimental, collaborations with immediate and practical aims tinged by mutual suspicion rather than long-term commitments. What has brought the different groups, both within and outside the power élite, together is largely common dissatisfaction with the status quo. For the purposes of this discussion, the opposition groups can be separated into two main types: those still operating within the state apparatus or at its margins (and thus having to maintain a low profile) and those who are outside it. Each has different assets and liabilities. Under the present situation they are pleased to regard themselves complementary. People like Megawati and Wahid have more room to ignore the government-sanctioned politics of harmonious appearance. But this privileged position can only last and expand with the covert protection from those inside the ruling circles.

The problems of the New Order’s cohesion came to surface not only in the responses to the 27 July riot. Why and how the riot could have occurred in the first place also provides us with indicators of divisions within the regime and the President’s waning ability to deal with them. Much of the media coverage of Indonesian politics immediately following the 27 July incident featured photographs of Megawati and interviews with her as a charismatic individual. Although many of these reports acknowledge the limits of her political prowess and prospects, there has been little attempt to understand the internal dynamics of PDI prior to 27 July, the role of relevant external forces that brought her to high prominence, and the connections between the two. The following is a brief account of these less explored issues.

The Undercurrent
Megawati Sukarnoputri has been the first living Indonesian who enjoys the popularity and high profile to challenge President Soeharto. The only other figure was the deceased Sukarno, Suharto’s predecessor and Megawati’s father. Comparing Megawati to Aung San Suu Kyi or Cory Aquino (as many do) makes sense from this modest perspective, but it is more problematic if one measures political capacity, militancy, or opportunities. Megawati’s prominence has come neither from effort, nor talent; it is a product of history and circumstances. To a considerable extent, her prominence can ironically be credited to the government’s measures to undermine her.

Megawati has represented the PDI both inside and outside the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR or People’s Representative Council) for more than 10 years. She had not been taken seriously as a political figure, let alone an opposition leader until her triumph in a controversial election for the PDI chair in 1993.
Previously the PDI could be described as a loyal opposition party at best. For much of its life during the New Order the PDI has acted as an inconsequential element within the New Order style "Pancasila Democracy". With the exception of the election campaign week when some people expressed their discontent with the government and its ruling party GOLKAR by voting for PDI and PPP (Development United Party) the latter two parties have played no significant role in Indonesia's politics. Not only has GOLKAR retained the majority vote (around 70%) in all elections and dominated the Parliament, in no instance has PPP or PDI been able to seriously challenge the government's policies and proposals.

Although the government had regularly intervened in the political parties, what happened between 2 and 6 December 1993 constituted a watershed. The PDr made another attempt (after a series of failures due to external intervention) to hold a Special Congress in Surabaya with the chief aim of electing a new chair. For reasons that are outside the scope of the present discussion, party members and external supporters succeeded in appointing Megawati as the new PDI chair in spite of blatant intervention by government officials who tried to prevent it. The supporters came to Surabaya from distant places; some even risked their lives during this troubled congress.

They gathered outside the Congress hall everyday and staged demonstrations to convey their unanimous support for the nomination of Megawati as the security officers watched closely. Newspapers reported these activities on front pages with large pictures and enthusiastic words. Significantly, the divided security apparatus gave their passive endorsement to this unusual reporting. The size and determination of these peaceful demonstrations overwhelmed those who attempted to abort the congress from outside.

Meanwhile inside the Congress, when it was clear that Megawati's nomination was assured, some participants attempted to boycott the Congress, and render it invalid. However, Megawati took swift action and declared victory through the formal voting procedure. Eventually the government officially recognized its embarrassing defeat and Megawati's victory was legitimated. The event gave rise to the now celebrated catch phrase "Arus Bawah" or Undercurrent in respectful reference to those stubborn people who fought for Megawati's election. Megawati rightly claims to be "the only party leader in the history of the New Order who has been elected from the grass-roots". Her election also marked one of the very few cases of the New Order's public defeat when confronted by popular demand.

History may never be able to give due recognition to the rise and nature of this so-called Undercurrent movement. The passionate masses come and go, beyond anyone's control, and they seem to evade familiar categories, very much reminiscent of the Philippine's 'People Power'. The same kind of masses emerged in Jakarta, and grew in number and militancy up to the 27 July 1996 climax. From the time Megawati was elected to chair the PDI on 6 December 1993 until the fateful raid on the PDI headquarters on 27 July 1996, Megawati's PDI became the target of constant attacks by government officials and pro-
government elements within the party itself. The most intense and longest battle over Megawati during this period took place in East Java. Without taking all this background into account, the much reported 27 July riot would look like a surprising and fleeting phenomenon.

Much has been written on the style and character of Megawati’s political leadership. Many of her supporters acknowledge that her style is not confrontational, not one of a fighter that some would want her to be. Megawati is often considered too soft and too forgiving. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that her perseverance and steadfastness is admirable. And yet these qualities would not have rendered her powerful if there had not been complementary factors both inside and outside the PDI. The former deserves a couple more paragraphs below. The latter includes the anonymous Arus Bawah, the more easily identifiable middle-class groups and movements, as well as the elusive top political elite. The next section will take a closer look at some of these.

Megawati’s supporters within the PDI include thousands of radical youths who swore an oath of support with thumb prints of their blood, pledging that they were ready to die for her. A few weeks later they confronted fully armed troops, and predictably, several of them died on 27 July for their chosen cause. In the weeks leading to the 27 July riot, hundreds of thousands of other PDI supporters in many parts of the country marched in the streets in protest against the government’s sponsorship of the Medan Congress. In various cities, people launched separate protests that they called the (English original) “long march”.

Two of these events drew more attention from the public than others. In Surabaya, supporters of Megawati and those against the government-sponsored PDI Congress in Medan were about to begin an ambitious long march from Surabaya to Jakarta (900 kilometres), when their leaders persuaded them to cancel it for fear of the retaliation it might provoke. In Jakarta, violent scuffles broke out when 12,000 demonstrators confronted the troops on 20 June 1996 the day the Medan Congress began. Several of the protesting demonstrators, and many more security officers, were injured. This was the worst incident in the series of confrontations that took place after Megawati was elected but before the raiding of the PDI headquarters. It was clear that the security apparatus was unusually self-restrained and took a defensive stance when facing the aggressive protestors. Towards the end of 1996 the angry masses continued to launch mass demonstrations in various cities and small towns, and attacked those they considered responsible for the 27 July violence. This continued resistance made it barely possible for Surjadi’s government-backed PDI to organize itself for participation in the coming general election.

**Point of Convergence for Opposition Forces**

Soon after the 27 July raid, commentators raised the question as to why the government should have felt the need to support (if not directly carry out) the raid against the PDI headquarters. There is general consensus among observers that both Megawati and the PDI would have been harmless had they been left
alone. Neither would they have challenged GOLKAR's anticipated victory in the next election in May 1997, nor would they have obstructed Soeharto's nomination for the next presidential election. There are at least two ready answers.

First, the New Order has never encountered any serious opposition and neither has it expressed any interest in learning to face such a possibility. It does not pretend to tolerate any form of opposition, be it token or even loyal. Throughout its history the New Order government has sought not only to win parliamentary and presidential elections but to achieve absolute victory, or at least one that in public appears to be so. Repeatedly it argues that the “Pancasila Democracy”, modelled after the ideal image of a family, has no place for opposition. If the regime means what it says, then the attack on Megawati/PDI is understandable, even if it is not justifiable.

The second explanation of the raid against the PDI headquarters is one that views Megawati and the PDI as having transformed into something far bigger than themselves — that is, they became the point of convergence of many diverse opposition forces that would otherwise have remained unrepresented, silenced, unorganized, underground, or illegal. It is possible that these people were the actual targets of the assault on 27 July, not solely or even primarily Megawati and the PDI as such. The scapegoating of the PRD and the trials of PRD’s leaders, rather than the core group within the PDI, substantiates this logic. But only partially so, because no one would be so naive as to believe the official accusations that the PRD could be so dangerous and so powerful as to topple the existing government.

Many of these diverse forces came to the PDI headquarters without invitation. Most likely, they came neither to defend and identify themselves with the cause of Megawati’s PDI, nor to infiltrate and undermine it. Given the diversity of the crowd, it is not possible to list their different, and perhaps unconnected, agendas. One broad category of groups that needs mention, however, is that of pro-democracy NGO activists.

These activists did not simply find in the PDI headquarters a common and convenient rallying point. Long before Megawati/PDI became an issue, the absence of a legitimate forum for any constitutional opposition had been a major topic of debate in Indonesia. To a large extent, this absence has been responsible for the New Order's long lasting 'stability' and economic growth. Dissent, grievances, and public protests have come and gone with little trace. Since 1985 independent mass organizations have been prohibited by law.

Protests against this law and a demand for its repeal intensified as the PDI's conflict with the government escalated. Apart from finding a battle ground in this conflict, many of these middle-class NGO activists were already engaged in a longer-term battle for the creation of a more permanent and legal basis for democracy. As part of the legitimate political apparatus, the PDI provided the strategically necessary space, albeit provisionally, to these activists. As a target of government assault, the PDI could not, in return, resist the temptation to
obtain the sympathetic support of these external forces. The raid on the PDI headquarters was apparently more in response to these more radical demands for the revocation of the 1985 Regulation, the dissolution of the Dual Function of the Armed Forces, and support for East Timorese nationalists.

There has been widespread discontent in the country that underscores the need for legitimate space for establishing independent mass organizations. It is increasingly clear to the regime that it is no longer possible to ignore or repress the dissidents with the ease it did in the past. Unfortunately, there is no viable and legitimate representation for this immense energy of the opposition forces and neither is there a mutually agreed upon mechanism to manage discontent. Consequently, stability is under threat from periodic outbursts of violence. Conflicts and political contests often operate by proxy, and the politics of appearance continue to predominate.

**Opposition Parties**

As mentioned earlier, opposition forces over the past three decades have had little success in contesting the New Order’s supremacy. Most of these past challenges were reformist in nature. They were notably elitist (key proponents were former top state officials, or their relatives), Jakarta-based, ideologically liberal, and short-lived. They protested on an ad hoc basis against individual cases of corruption, irregularities in state administration, undesirable effects of government-sponsored development projects (e.g., forced land appropriation, environment degradation, rising unemployment), widening gap between the rich and poor and restrictions on the freedom of association and expression. Meanwhile, in several areas far from Jakarta, there were armed ideological, separatist or national struggles which had little, if any, contact with dissent close to the centre of power in Java. The East Timor issue only came to the forefront after the Santa Cruz tragedy in November 1991.

While today’s opposition forces have not achieved greater successes than their predecessors, they have charted new ground and aimed for a more radical agenda in a more favourable environment. Much of the present opposition is middle-class based, and strongly populist in its orientation. At the same time, working-class politics has grown rapidly and steadily both with and without the collaboration of middle-class activists. Not only has the contemporary middle-class politics consciously kept a distance from the state elite (especially in the initial stages of its emergence in the 1980s), it has frequently attacked the elite and its basis of legitimacy. Significantly, many of the new radicals come from provinces away from the capital city with more modest family backgrounds than their predecessors, as exemplified by the leadership within the PRD and its affiliated organizations.13

In the 1980s and early 1990s Indonesia’s political dynamics were characterised by various attempts of the disadvantaged to find ways to express their grievances. Mass demonstrations were exciting regardless of the issue because they were illegal. The excitement died down quickly as these demonstrations became
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routine. The same was true of labour strikes soon after the ban on them was lifted in the early 1980s. By the early 1990s it was difficult to keep track of the frequent labour strikes across the archipelago, especially around the industrial centres in Java. Since then the frequency and militancy of labour strikes have continued to increase.

Until a few years ago, the most important development in the intelligentsia-led political opposition was the survival and consolidation of several hundred critical groups (NGOs, artists, and other associations). By definition none of them could claim to be engaged in ‘political’ activities, or to constitute a political party, let alone an opposition. The year 1996 saw a number of significant developments: the establishment of opposition parties, the formation of coalitions of opposition NGOs, and the founding of independent associations to counter the existing government-sanctioned ones. In short, the common theme of the contemporary opposition is reduction of collaboration with the regime at the institutional level as far as possible. Rather than maximizing the resources within given parameters set by the government, or negotiating the existing boundaries of what is permissible, these contemporary opposition movements have taken unilateral action to practise a new political language, create new social organizations, and expand political imagination beyond the narrow limits circumscribed by the New Order.

In 1996 two clusters of long-standing groups of dissidents launched new political parties in direct defiance of the government’s repeated warning. One of them was the PRD, inaugurated on 22 July 1996 that began as the Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik (Union of Democratic People). Led by young radicals in their twenties, PRD had previously developed successful outreach programmes — especially among the industrial workers, socially committed artists, and student activists — for a couple of years before its inauguration as a political party at the height of PDI affair. The creation of the other new political party on 29 May, Partai Uni Demokrasi Indonesia (PUDI), involved more senior politicians. From the outset PUDI claimed to be an opposition party with the initial agenda of succeeding the New Order government through constitutional means. In October 1996 it nominated its Chair, Sri Bintang Pamungkas, to be the next president.

As expected, the government immediately declared these new parties illegal. In response, the parties argued that the government had no authority to grant them legitimation or to withhold it. Such legitimation, they added, would originate “from the people”. On paper, even though having won considerable sympathy from the public, neither party had the capacity to take over the nation’s leadership either through election or other means. Ironically but not surprisingly, the New Order’s administrators were among the first to take these new parties more seriously than might have been warranted.

There may be two reasons why the PRD, and not the PUDI or the PDI, has drawn the government’s strongest reaction. Firstly, because the PRD is less well known and less connected to the nation’s political élite than the PUDI or the
PDI, it is very likely that the government underestimated the consequences of crushing the PRD arbitrarily and of accusing it of reviving communism. Secondly, the PRD is also much more radical and leftist than the PUDI, not to mention the PDI. Instead of following the more conventional route to state-power, PRD has opted more for organizing grass-root struggles in the name of a 'socialist democracy'. PRD begins all its official statements with slogans such as “One Fight-One Change”, “Minimum Wage Rp.7,000 ($3)”, “Prices Down”, “New Parties, New President”, “Referendum for the Maubere”, “Repeal the 5 Political Rules”, and “End the Military Dual Function”. During its inauguration, PRD held a ceremony giving human rights awards to individuals. Without exception, these individuals were the government’s main enemies. Among the awardees were Sri Bintang Pamungkas, Pramoedya A. Toer (Indonesia’s most accomplished writer whose works have been banned because of his association with the bygone Communist Party of Indonesia), and Gusmao Xanana (prisoner, and former commander of the armed wing of the East Timorese nationalist movement).17

The fuller significance of the founding of these opposition parties lies not in themselves, or their individual interactions with the government. Their emergence makes a substantial contribution to a mental breakthrough for most Indonesians after three decades of depoliticization and a general sense of powerlessness. It conveys a powerful message that creating a new opposition political party is no longer just an intriguing idea for discussion purposes (as had been the case before). It has become both possible and necessary to start a bigger process of struggle and change.

United Front
The emergence of the two new political parties was a timely vindication of the long-standing and prevailing conviction that alternative political mobilization and political contestation could only operate outside the existing formal institutions. The first half of this decade also saw the proliferation of groups of critically-minded and politically well-connected people who established ostensibly ‘apolitical’ bodies. The New Order government unwittingly contributed to the politicization of such nominally apolitical associations through the establishment in 1990 of Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (ICMI or the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals), under the auspices of President Soeharto himself. ICMI was one of the first major associations that functioned like a quasi-political party during this period. Others followed suit, and towards the end of 1995, there were associations more critical of the government and its new intimacy with certain Islamic circles.

New challenges to the New Order’s state corporatism in 1996 did not come only from the establishment of legally apolitical associations and illegal political parties. Two other forms of political challenge have recently come from the Majelis Rakyat Indonesia (MARI or the Council of Indonesian People), and the Komite Independen Pengawasan Pemilu (KIPP or the Independent
Committee on Election Monitoring). The former is intended to be a rainbow coalition of the more radical opposition forces. It consists of thirty member organizations, including some NGOs, the opposition Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (SBSI or the Prosperous Labour Union of Indonesia), and the opposition Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI or the Alliance of Independent Journalists). KIPP is an unprecedented alternative to the existing and government-sponsored Central Committee for Monitoring Elections.

KIPP achieved its main goals even before it could carry out its plan of action of monitoring the election scheduled for 29 May 1997. It succeeded in providing both political education and a form of political participation to the general population. Soon after its establishment, KIPP was met with positive response from enthusiasts in many provinces who volunteered to establish regional branches. Because Indonesia never had anything like this before, KIPP made people think about and discuss in great detail the legal, moral, political, and technical issues involved in an electoral process. It did not take long for the government to realize that the impact of the founding of KIPP could be far reaching. It quickly took several measures to contain the activities of KIPP, but to little avail, partly because the government was already under heavy attack from all directions and had to select its priorities. As we have seen, that dealing with PDI was a top priority. The post-27 July witch-hunt forced KIPP, MARl and most other opposition groups to make a temporary retreat.

The assault on New Order state-corporatism in 1996 has been much more broad and complex than what it is possible to outline here. The long-standing dual demands of student activists for the abolition of the existing scheme of student representation in the university system and for the revival of the pre-1978 autonomous Student Council found some of its strongest expressions in 1996. Rather than simply voicing a common demand, student activists from many campuses — several hundred kilometres apart — managed to establish a united front. Meanwhile the illegal labour union SBSI and the illegal journalist association AJI continued to assert themselves beyond the New Order's capacity to intimidate and control.

In sum, in 1996 we did not simply witness the multiplication of separate opposition forces, and the organizational consolidation of old ones. There have been significant attempts to increase the intensity and diversity of confrontation with the regime, and to build wide-ranging alliances as a counter to the government-sanctioned bodies. There has been a steady growth of cross-sectional solidarity among anti-government forces. Student political movements, for example, enjoyed a great deal of support from their fellow activists across the archipelago. When at least three students from Ujung Pandang were killed during violent confrontation with the military on 24 April 1996, there was a series of demonstrations over many months in solidarity with the students. Students give and receive support from the opposition labour union, independent journalists, socially engaged artists, banned academics and writers, and critical and loyal opposition figures within the state apparatus.
While new issues prompted new challenges, older issues have not been forgotten. For instance, the 1994 banning of three weeklies continued to draw attention in 1996, not only from the affected journalists but also from artists, students, lawyers, and academics. Workers did not only go on strike; they composed protest music, staged theatre productions, and wrote poetry. During mass strikes at factories, workers demanded not only better working conditions and pay, but also the repeal of the 1985 Regulations concerning mass organization and political parties, as well as the end of the privileged Dual Function of the Armed Forces.

Deterioration at the Centre
While the unrest at the bottom and in the middle of the social strata has eroded the foundation of the New Order’s hegemony, the regime has also suffered from set-backs.

The year 1996 began with a major controversy over reports of corruption of Minister for Transportation Haryanto Dhanutirto. While there is nothing new or surprising about allegations of corruption among officials, what distinguished this particular case from its predecessors was its source of exposure. It came to light when a report prepared by another top state agent, the Development Inspector General Kentot Harsono, was leaked. The leak apparently occurred in the State Secretariat under Moerdiono. Public demonstrations and counter-demonstrations ensued. Observers see the event as yet another display of a purely intra-elite battle between those affiliated with ICMI (to which Minister Haryanto Dhanutirto belongs) and outsiders who are critical of it. Just before the year 1996 ended, yet another Minister had to face allegations of corruption, namely Minister for Mines and Energy, I. B. Sudjana. Once again, the revelation came from the bold questioning in Parliament and outside of another state official, MP Tadjuddin Noer Said.

The year 1996 also witnessed a low point in the public perception of the Supreme Court’s accountability following a series of highly controversial issues that aggravated differences among state officials. In December 1995, Supreme Court judge Adi Andojo Soetjipto made a public statement alleging that serious malpractice had occurred in the Supreme Court. In response to an extended public uproar, judge Soerjono, Head of the Supreme Court, established a fact-finding committee. On 10 June 1996 Soerjono submitted the committee’s finding, that the allegation was unfounded, to the President. The Head of the Supreme Court has since penalized Adi Andojo in several ways. The general population, in contrast, viewed Adi Andojo as a new hero. Students went on a hunger strike in protest against the Supreme Court’s hostility towards Andojo. A theatrical production was staged to depict Andojo’s courage and integrity.

Differences within the military and its extended organizations surfaced in 1996, especially around the issue of PDI and around the time of the raid on PDI’s headquarters in July. It had been suggested that without any dissension within the military and considerable support from some segments of the officers,
Megawati could not have been appointed the PDI chairperson in December 1993. Most observers regarded Maj.-General Agum Gumelar and the Jakarta military commander Maj.-Gen. Hendropriyono as being partly responsible for Megawati's succession to the party leadership. This observation seemed to gain confirmation when the two officers were transferred to less important positions soon after Megawati gained prominence.

Not all high-profile military officers made unanimous statements blaming Megawati, PDI, or PRD for the July violence. On the contrary, in an official address before the nominally highest political institution in the country, the MPR/DPR (People's Consultative Assembly/People's Representative Body) less than a week after the 27 July riot, Chairman Wahono stated that "the Armed Forces must take less repressive actions".

The third most important military figure in the country Lt. Gen. Soeyono was removed from his prestigious position as the Armed Forces' General Chief-of-Staff immediately after the July 1996 riot. He could not hide his resentment about his sudden removal during an interview with reporters. Soeyono's removal was only one of several high-ranking transfers within the military that took place in 1996.

Just a few weeks before the PDI headquarters was raided, public attention focused on a political statement, officially dubbed the "July 1 Petition of Concern" (Petisi Keprihatinan 1 Juli). In spite of carefully veiled words, the intent to defy was clearly evident in both the content of the statement and signatories who stood behind it. The President gave an immediate response, saying that the statement did not deserve serious attention.

The document is a criticism of the moral decadence, corruption, and abuse of power in contemporary Indonesia. Implicit reference was made to the plight of the PDI. When it was first read to the public at a press conference, the initiators claimed that they would collect a million signatures. This ambition was never realized, but its pronouncement was enough to draw attention. The signatories included retired senior officers such as Lt. General (Ret) Bambang Triantoro, former Chief-of-Staff for Social Political Affairs of the Armed Forces, Lt. General (Ret.) Kharis Suhud, former Head of the MPR/DPR, and Abdurrahman Wahid, Chair of the largest Muslim mass organization.

The petition was sponsored mainly by those running the newly established Foundation of National Fraternity and Harmony (Yayasan Kerukunan Persaudaraan Kebangsaan, YKPK), one of the organizations referred to above as quasi-parties. It is chaired by Bambang Triantoro with Kharis Suhud and Suprapto (former Jakarta Governor) as members of the Advisory Council. Heads of the Executive Board include Maj-Gen (Ret.) Sunarso Djajusman (former Ambassador to Malaysia) and Maj.-Gen. Samsudin (former MP representing the Armed Forces faction within the DPR). The heavy involvement of these high-profile figures was neither recent nor accidental. This is a logical consequence of the unmanageable increase of retired military officers after three decades of New Order rule. As the heading of an article in an Islamic
magazine said: “Retired generals do not always have a place. Consequently they are not ‘bound’. (Ummat, 1996).

Likewise, the continued growth of GOLKAR, the ruling party, over an extended period has brought new challenges from within. Most of these conflicts found quick internal resolution, though not to the satisfaction of all those involved. They revolved around the question of power distribution among the increasingly diverse groups that constitute contemporary GOLKAR. The situation was aggravated when many of these member organizations had to choose new leaders, and compete with one another to represent GOLKAR for the upcoming parliamentary election.

International Pressures
While there was no event in 1996 that significantly elevated Indonesia’s stature in the international community, there were two that adversely affected it. The most damaging was the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1996 to the Roman Catholic bishop of East Timor, Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo and to Sydney-based pro-independence East Timorese representative, Jose Ramos-Horta. The event sent a resounding message of support to the pro-independence movement and acknowledged the plight of its sympathizers under the New Order rule since 1975. The event would also make it more difficult for Indonesia and its foreign allies to ignore or avoid further negotiations with the East Timorese pro-independence movement.

The other issue that has done considerable harm to Indonesia’s international standing came with the Presidential Decree No. 2/1996 on 29 February. It granted the company PT Timor Putra Nusantara (TPN) the exclusive status as producer of the ‘national car’. This status exempts TPN from both import tariffs and luxury goods taxes. TPN is owned by Hutomo Mandala Putra (Tommy) Soeharto, the youngest son of the President, in partnership with KIA Motor Corporation of South Korea. On top of that, the President issued yet another controversial Decree No. 42/1996 on 4 June, allowing TPN to import the first 45,000 cars from South Korea duty free for a period of one year, because TPN could not manufacture the cars domestically.

Resentment permeated the automotive industry. After a series of fruitless negotiations the United States, European Union, and Japan brought the case to the World Trade Organization (WTO). As of December 1996, there had been no outcome. While most believe that there is no way Indonesia can win the dispute, informed observers were of the opinion that the limitations of the WTO itself will prevent serious penalization of Indonesia.

Conclusion
The foregoing account has outlined the mounting challenges to the New Order government. However, there is no sign that the opposition to the New Order regime will be able to force it to step down from power in the near future. No clear oppositional organization has emerged as a potential successor. Yet there
is no sign that the regime is revitalizing itself, regaining support from the general population, or willing to make radical concessions.

Under such circumstances everyday life is marked by widespread uncertainty and violence. In 1996 the judiciary became a target of public anger and derision following a series of separate incidents. These included the escape in May of convicted tycoon Edy Tansil from Cipinang prison; the escape in August of suspected drug-trafficer Zarina Mirafsur; the controversial trial in May of Sri Bintang Pamungkas that found him guilty of insulting the head of state; the Supreme Court’s overruling in June of both the State Court and High Court that initially declared the 1994 banning of Tempo newsmagazine illegal; the Supreme Court’s reversal in October of its own decision (in September) over the trial of Mochtar Pakpahan, Chair of the SBSI; and, most interestingly, the frustrations of the judges who were assigned to try Megawati’s sympathizers following the 27 July riot. Neither does the combination of the 27 July riot in Jakarta, the fatal confrontation in Ujung Pandang (Sulawesi) on 24 April, the burning of the state court and twenty-five churches in Situbondo (East Java) on 10 October, the attack against some seventeen local police offices/posts and shops in Tasikmalaya (West Java) on 26 December, and inter-ethnic fighting in Sanggau Ledo (West Kalimantan) on 29 December give the full picture of the character of everyday life in the country.

The government made a series of unprecedented concessions, most visibly in selectively restraining the use of force in provocative situations that it would not have in the past. Likewise, it has legally punished selected numbers of its security officers in response to public outcry against their behaviour. It duly accepted the National Human Rights Commission’s critical testimonies. All these concession were, however, not enough to impress the general public. The potential for more violent unrest in the near future is considerable. Many of the pro-democracy activists have a point when they argue that what Indonesia crucially needs in the short term is not simply a change of head of state, but an effective and credible mechanism that can facilitate a peaceful transition to a post-New Order Indonesia. There is no guarantee that change will make things any better. Nonetheless, some form of change seems inevitable.

NOTES

While retaining the sole responsibility for all shortcomings in this chapter, the writer thanks Tan Joo-Ean for her helpful editorial suggestions on an earlier draft.
1. The general practice has been to analyse only the President, the Armed Forces, and the ruling party GOLKAR, rendering the whole population largely irrelevant.
5. For an account that focuses more on the PDI and Megawati, see Santoso et al., Megawati Soekarnoputri: Pantang Surut Langkah ["Megawati Soekarnoputri: No Retreat"], (Jakarta: ISAI, 1996).
6. Langenberg may be correct to point out that "None of Megawati's public statements, for example, suggest a coherent understanding of how a democratic polity might function in Indonesia.... The Megawati forces would not seem to offer any coherent agenda for structural change to a new, democratic political order; nor to be a focus for a populist 'people's power' movement that may replace the present Suharto government." See Michael Van Langenberg, "How Might the Suharto Era Conclude?", *Inside Indonesia* 48 (Oct-Dec): 13–14. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that these shortcoming would preclude them from the most important roles in a fundamental transformation of the society. To put it more generally, a neat organization and a brilliant mind do not always precede a profound historical change. Chaos and uncertainty rather than well-organized movements, have characterized successive transfers of state-power in modern Indonesia, including the one that led to the ascendancy of the New Order.


8. Several months earlier the PDI congress in Medan (21–25 July 1993) attempted to defy the government's wishes by electing someone other than the person the government proposed. Before the congress concluded, violence broke. A jeep rammed through the walls and invaded the ostensibly guarded congress hall. All that resulted from the congress was declared invalid; no one was investigated or brought to trial.


10. In essence, the East Java conflict is about who had the legitimate status to chair the PDI regional branch. The Central Board of PDI under Megawati appointed someone that the governor removed, and vice versa. This seemingly simple conflict had not found any resolution at the end of 1996. It threatened to undermine the government's indispensable project, namely the parliamentary election. Under the existing regulations, each electoral contestant must send regional as well as national representatives to the formation of the Election Committee. Because of the unresolved conflict, the PDI was not represented in East Java. According to Megawati this renders the whole electoral process invalid.


12. This surprisingly soft stance was most likely in response to a series of separate and widely reported protests across the country over the death of several students in Ujung Pandang in demonstrations against a new traffic regulation.

13. Out of twenty-seven PRD activists on the police wanted list following the 27 July riot, twenty-four were from Central Java (*Kompas*, 8 August 1996).

14. There was an unsuccessful attempt by student activists in Ujung Pandang to give birth to a third opposition political party in early October 1996. In a matter of days the regional military authorities moved to dismantle it once and for all, arresting its key figures.

15. See *Straits Times* (12 October 1996, p. 19) on this nomination. For Pamungkas' increasing political confrontation with Suharto's New Order since 1995, see Stanley et al., eds., *Saya Musuh Politik Soeharto* ['I am a Political Enemy of Soeharto'] (Jakarta: Pijar Indonesia, 1996).

16. A week before PUDI's inauguration, President Soeharto had warned in a special statement that no one should attempt to establish new parties (*Kompas*, 24 May 1996). When the birth of PUDI flew in the face of this warning, the Co-ordinating
Minister for Political and Defence Affairs called for a special plenary meeting the next day. The outcome of this meeting was only to announce that PUDI would not be banned (despite GOLKAR’s demand for a ban in a public statement), but the government could not recognise its legitimacy (Kompas, 31 May 1996). A few years ago neither the establishment of something like PUDI, nor such soft reaction from the government, could have been imaginable.

17. It is significant that at the height of its crisis in 1996 the New Order regime chose to prosecute the leaders of only two of the new oppositional movements: PRD and Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (Prosperous Labour Union of Indonesia) headed by Muchtar Pakpahan. This was the time when the regime, under pressure, was making a wide range of concessions to the opposition.

18. Andreas Fua, a judge of the Ujung Pandang State Administration Court publicly identified himself with KIPP during a press conference on the inauguration of Ujung Pandang Branch on June 8, 1996. A few days later the Head of the State Administration Court, Erhanuddin Effendy, announced Fua’s withdrawal from KIPP. On 18 June 1996 Fua was questioned by a deputy Supreme Court judge about his action (Kompas, 20 June 1996).

19. At a press conference on 8 July 1996 KIPP declared that the election of May 1997 could not proceed with due validity even if existing regulations were all implemented. KIPP attributed this to the excessive external intervention against the PDI, rendering it impossible for the party to function as a contesting party for the election. (Kompas, 9 July 1996). The next day the Chair of the officially-sanctioned Central Committee for Monitoring Elections, Attorney-General Singgih, argued that the President had the sole discretionary power to decide whether or not the electoral procedure was legitimate (Kompas, 10 July 1996).


21. While the government managed to close down the three major print mass media in 1994, and won the legal justification from the Supreme Court in 1996, the victims proved to be resilient. Tempo, one of the banned newsmagazines, has been revived on the Internet without any disguise. Journalists from Tempo and Detik (the other banned weekly) found new journalistic employment from sympathetic media elsewhere. Tempo- and Detik-style investigative journalism has spread to various other media. Many of the more credible newsmagazines have reproduced the styles and colours of lettering of either Tempo or Detik to print their own names.

22. Details of the case can be found in Forum Keadilan’s series of investigative articles (5, no. 20 (13Jan 97): 12–20, 36–40.)


24. Kompas, 1 August 1996. A further account of Wahono’s antagonism to the Soeharto’s loyalists can be found in Forum Keadilan (7 October 1996). For more details on the reservations about and reluctant support of the Medan congress and of the PDI
raid among civilian and military state officials, see John McBeth, "Clearing the Ranks" (abid.).

25. *Forum Keadilan*, 9 September 1996. *Forum Keadilan* suggested that his dismissal might have something to do with his refusal to endorse the idea of raiding PDI headquarters. He is also reported to be the ally of Edi Sudradjat, the Minister for Defence, who was not present at the PDI Medan Congress.

26. See a report in *Kompas* (30 October 1996) entitled "Hakim: Kasus ini Berantakan dari Awal" [Judges: This Case is a Big Mess from the Start]. The piece describes how frustrated all the judges presiding over the 27 July cases were. These state officials did not try to hide their frustrations. At one point judge Zulkifli Lubis approached the standing reporters and screamed: "Reporters, you may quote me. The court never wanted to investigate these cases here. These cases were messy from the very start. Take note, my name is Zulkifli Lubis. I don't fear to take risk. I'll be sacked, at worst."