

#### Interviews

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Mr P. Chandra, Advocate and BSP activist, 25 January 1997  
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#### Notes

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## 10 Indonesia's democratisation

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In Europe, people often say that the twentieth century came to an end with the turn of the tide in Berlin in 1989. In Asia it took another ten years. Here it was not state-socialism that was defeated but the West's own authoritarian growth project that imploded. Now there is another historical chance. In Indonesia, the world's third largest democracy is emerging. How shall we understand its problems and dynamics? How shall we go beyond the mainstream focus on Jakarta's elitist political theatre? This is difficult. At the time of writing (early 2000), there continue to be more decisive reports in a week than had previously emerged in a year. In addition, they are unusually hard to sort and interpret. Many of the common perspectives contained within are subject to substantial revision as they are less than helpful in reading the unfolding of the crisis (not to talk of predicting it).

The following is instead an attempt to analyse ongoing processes on the basis of ongoing research, focusing on research about popular politics of democratisation through repeated case studies over a decade in three different contexts (Kerala, the Philippines and Indonesia).<sup>1</sup> The draft version of the Indonesian study was concluded just before the crackdown on the democracy movement that took place on 27 July 1996.<sup>2</sup> This was when things began to change the way the research had indicated – but so fast that even though the study had to continue, it was only possible to publish brief 'instant' essays.<sup>3</sup> So before turning to the more comprehensive and time-consuming book-writing, the following is an attempt to use results from the analysis of popular politics of democratisation to both discuss approaches to the study of the democratisation and analyse Indonesia's elections and their aftermath.<sup>4</sup> For presentational reasons, however, we begin by addressing the approaches to the issues and conclude with the elections and the recent turbulent developments.

#### **The new consensus on democracy is not good enough**

Until 21 May 1998, mainstream analysts claimed that Indonesia's basic problems were financial and economic. The focus was on weak market forces, a strong state and a weak civil society. The actions of the market and its supporters, however, proved politically disastrous, contributed to a socio-economic catastrophe, obstructed democratisation, and only accidentally helped do away with Suharto.

The economic crisis did not result from excessive state regulations and despotism (which had been there for decades), but from the combination of bad regulation and deregulation (Suharto's nepotistic monopolism and the IMF-sponsored technocrats' neo-liberalism), and from (both parties') containment of popular influence as a basis for checks and balances.

Too late, then – only as Suharto's own aides dumped him in face of a revolution – analysts agreed instead that the problem was political. Nothing would improve without legitimate government, which called for some democracy. With this I agreed, of course, having insisted since the mid-1996 clampdown on first Megawati and then the democracy movement in general, that a major political crisis would develop as soon as there was a triggering factor (which then happened to be financial), because Indonesia's essential problems were its weak regulations and its inability to handle conflicts and reform itself.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, I would argue, the new general consensus is not good enough. To ask for democratic governance is fine, but what of the problematic context of disintegration of Indonesia's second attempt (since colonialism) at authoritarian nation-state development? What of the socio-economic context of a crisis with some winners, many losers and surging unemployment? What of fading trust, the rise of 'goon' politics and crime and violence? What of the instant general elections supported by the West, the elitist horse trade election of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) as new president, and the appointment of a conservative pact cabinet? What of the fact that while analysts suddenly realised the importance of certain aspects of democracy, there is little knowledge of what kind of democracy the various actors aim at, the problems of getting there, and what could possibly prevent failure? And what of the declining interest in the deepening of democracy to include ordinary people's capacity to make use of its institutions – now that sections of the elite have been legitimised through elections and have found a way of handling their conflicts through peaceful horse trading? So let us begin by discussing how to approach the dynamics of Indonesia's democratisation.

#### Biased definitions

In Indonesia, since mid-1998, most leading actors who claim that they are serious democrats tend to agree on the universal essence of democracy in terms of freedom of speech and organisation, constitutionalism and free and fair elections – including Golkar's ex-president and then-second-best Muslim alternative Habibie, and the new president Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). This is not the main problem. Within the new democracy discourse we can almost forget about Mahathir's and Lee Kuan Yew's 'Asian values' and Huntington's 'clash of civilisations'. Of course those constructs may become politically fashionable again – especially if the Indonesian democratisation derails – but the current problem is rather that internationally-reputed scholars on democracy, and so-called friendly governments and organisations, insist on the universality of more elaborated conceptualisations. What are on offer are primarily ideological packages – complete with ideals about civil society and civic virtues, special constitutional arrangements and electoral

laws, technically-oriented voters' education, unregulated market economies and enlightened compromises – on the basis of rather self-congratulatory readings of European and especially American experiences.<sup>6</sup> Indonesia, however – with its long-standing symbiosis between strong state-based patrons and bosses and private big business, in addition to weak middle and working classes, and even weaker secular popular organising – is not Spain, Hungary, South Africa, Chile, the Philippines or any other cases that are often used to form generalisations. When bad comes to worse, even bright Indonesian activist-scholars tend to forget about the situation: this is true of those who supported the compromises of Megawati, and especially of Amien Rais and Gus Dur. So the trouble is no longer the question of whether or not the essential principles of democracy are universal, but the ideological neglect of the fact that application and development of these principles are always contextual and vary both over time, and with the social forces involved. Actual democracy changes. There is no end of history.<sup>7</sup>

#### Actors' views of democratisation

To begin with, therefore, we have to ask for the significant actors' more elaborate perspectives on democratisation. Even if they agree on many principles, they do disagree on how and what to use them for. For instance, any reasonable understanding of Indonesia's future presupposes more knowledge of why certain forms of democracy and new political institutions suddenly make sense to many of Suharto's old followers. Further, there are different views on what preconditions should be present with regard to citizens' actual capacity to make use of democratic institutions before one is prepared seriously to bet on democracy; for example in terms of guarantees for free and fair elections only, or also substantial knowledge of political alternatives and the presence of ideologically and socially rooted parties. Finally, we have the quarrels on how far democracy should extend, including the basic question of for how long and to what extent the armed forces should retain political and economic privileges. In other words: the forms of democracy, their utility, their preconditions and their extension.

But let us not expand on this here, because there is a lack of space and it is probably even more important to know *how and in what way* the actors would like 'their' democracy to become real, that is, how the process of democratisation should take place.

#### Elite manoeuvres

On the surface this is well understood. Distinctions like Samuel Huntington's between the three common pathways of changing the system – of transforming it, replacing it, or compromising and 'transplanting' it – help us identify the triangular conflict that dominated until the recent presidential race.<sup>8</sup> This prevailing discord among the elite was centred on, in the one corner the then president Habibie, armed forces chief Wiranto and their collaborators, who preferred 'guided democratisation' from above; in the second corner the radical students, who argued that democratisation presupposed the replacement of the incumbents; and lastly, in the

third corner, the dominant moderate opposition, the Ciganjur four.<sup>9</sup> This last group comprised pragmatic and often liberal-oriented Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) (widely respected within the elite and with a strong mass base among rural Muslims in East and Central Java), nationalist party symbol Megawati Sukarnoputri (the daughter of the late President Sukarno), modernist and semi-liberal Muslim leader Amien Rais (with a mass following among urban Muslims), and the incarnation of 'the good Javanese ruler', the Sultan of Yogyakarta; all of whom tried to domesticate and yet benefit from the radicals' protests, while basically focusing on negotiating and winning reasonably free and fair elections, and then subsequently forming pragmatic coalitions and striking the best possible deal with sections of the establishment.

This synopsis, however, is very general and not unlike asking for the actors' ideal scenario of how various contending parties should behave and what the general process of democratisation should look like. So how can we get below the surface to analyse the ways in which the actors themselves, first, fight for their ideal models when confronted with the harsh realities, and second, try to increase people's ability to make use of democratic institutions when up against the resourceful elite? How shall we, in other words, analyse the actual politics of democratisation?

Of course we may try the common political science method (pioneered by scholars like O'Donnell, Schmitter and Przeworski) of distinguishing in each camp between 'hard-liners' and 'softliners' and then analysing their interplay. Habibie and Wiranto, for example, often leaned towards the hawks and have now been outmanoeuvred. Adi Sasono (Muslim leader and Habibie's Cooperatives Minister who subsidised 'indigenous' Muslim business to promote a 'people's economy') kept his options open and tried to be more successful than Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim but failed miserably. The interesting doves included Bambang Yudhoyono (armed forces reformer and the new Minister of Mines and Energy), Marzuki Darusman (Golkar party deputy leader, until recently chairman of the Human Rights Commission and the new Attorney General), and at times even Akbar Tanjung (Golkar party leader). Further, among the moderate opposition leaders, Gus Dur (until the presidential race in an alliance with Megawati) paved the way for a conservative pact through reconciliation (and may now revive his links with the nationalists), while Amien Rais was fishing for various partners until losing the elections and betting on Gus Dur to gain influence within the coming executive (but may now emerge as a main contender for power). The students, finally, kept discussing what kind of demands could keep them together, how to face the elections, and whether to remain a 'pure student moral force' or to call on urban poor and others to link up, until being marginalised within the adjusted institutional framework and then, from the outside, 'only' being able to prevent the total derailment of the process.

#### Capacities and contending forces

This way one may easily continue, mapping the actors and their followers, discussing their intrigues, and making the picture increasingly complicated.

The established recommendation of separating the radicals, marginalising the hawks and negotiating a pact among the rest – in order to promote 'limited but safe and steady' democratisation – may also be considered. Of course, we know by now that this is exactly the elite game that became dominant; and that it was won by the most skilful pact-builders Gus Dur, Amien Rais and Akbar Tanjung (while Megawati only won the elections), whereafter Wiranto lost out, Megawati's administrators have gained some influence, and Rais began to contemplate an oppositional Muslim block. But where does it take us? We are confined to central-level politics and to the elite. We may analyse its ideals and its manoeuvres in much more detail; that would be the easy part. But what of the players' room for manoeuvre? What of their capacities? International factors, then, are very important, but we will not understand much of the elections – and we do not even know much of the roots and prospects for the new moderate pact among the establishment – if we do not look into the actors' bases beyond the political theatre of Jakarta, at the local level, both in the Jakarta area and in the provinces. And perhaps even more important: if we are interested in the possibilities for further development of democracy beyond liberal electoralism (on the basis of people's involvement and actual capacity to make use of 'formal' democratic institutions) it is indispensable to look at the potential of alternative social and political forces.

So before we return to the elections, the presidential race and the new 'Pact Order', we need to ask how the central level elite tried (and continue to try) to renew its position and win support among wider circles, as well as how contending forces tried (and continue to try) to make an impact. The so-called political opportunity structure continues to change rapidly. Suharto's attempt at a second and increasingly authoritarian Indonesian state-led development project is in shambles. The central rulers, including the armed forces, are weakened. There was a power vacuum lasting one and a half years and the old institutions and rules of the game deteriorated. The new 'Pact Order' may now begin to change this picture, but alternative institutions are yet to be established. There are many new freedoms and opportunities, but the question is: who can make use of them and how?

#### Little knowledge of the most important processes

The irony, however, is that we know embarrassingly little about much of this. For years, attention was directed at the centre and the elite. Most of Suharto's 'New Order' was dictated in the leader's close circle with attached clients. Thereafter the bureaucracy and the 'dynamising' armed forces shared the control of the state apparatuses and its resources on each and every level, down to the very grassroots. Politics, in effect, was primarily about elite networks, with court politics surmounting it all. Dissidents prevented from organising people were also elitist; relying on personalities with some integrity, many contacts, and foreign funded non-membership-based NGOs. But much of this is history now. Of course, history is important. The territorially organised army, for instance, is weakened but still there. More than thirty years of demobilisation, top-down

control of almost any society-based grouping and movement, and little if any widespread knowledge among the poor masses of how democracy works will take long to compensate for. And politics, to a large extent, continues to be a matter of 'admission and circulation of elite networks'.<sup>10</sup> But to extrapolate from what we know of Indonesia until the fall of Suharto is not enough.

#### The new primacy of local and mass politics

Rather, I would argue, there are two new major trends that call for special attention. First, while the politics of elite networks may remain, the centre has lost its grip, and more power (and the struggle for it) is now spreading to the provincial and local levels. This, therefore, will also be the time of local politics. Second, any new regime and elite network need popular legitimacy. Hence, within the framework of more localised politics, this will also be the time of mass politics and elections.

Local politics is not only about the actors who, in the process of democratisation, dispute the mainstream definition of what constitutes the demos, the Indonesian people, and instead give priority to the fighting against Jakarta's domination (thus suggesting various forms of disintegration, like those until recently seen in East Timor, and still in Aceh, and West Papua). Perhaps more decisively, the growing importance of elite-dominated but local and mass-related politics is a general trend. As in the Philippines, for instance, the fall of the authoritarian regime and attempts at restoring democracy are combined with the decentralisation of politics and administration, and privatisation and deregulation of business, all of which together, I would argue, pave the way for local bosses (in terms of local powerbrokers), to – within a formally democratic framework – enjoy a monopolistic position over coercive and economic resources within their bailiwicks.<sup>11</sup>

Bossism in the Philippines, of course, is characterised by the long history of American colonialism, partially-elected government, and more private control of resources than in Indonesia. Within this framework, however, Indonesian-like primitive accumulation through political and administrative means has also been important and sometimes even decisive.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the Philippine-like liberal electoralism, decentralisation, privatisation and deregulation are now definitely entering into the Indonesian context as well. So while most local Indonesian bosses are likely to be comparatively 'petty' in terms of less private wealth and more dependency on public resources, and though there may be wider space for patrons than in the Philippines – in terms of bosses with more benevolent and reciprocal relations to their subjects – there are basic similarities.

The Indonesian patrons and bosses, as well as their local associates, have both links to outside superiors and sometimes factions of the central elite – national political struggles are often localised – but also access to the voters and direct control of many resources, including much local administration and business, the territorially-organised Indonesian armed forces, and vigilantes. This is likely to be an important focal point in Indonesia's political economy, especially now that Gus Dur's 'Pact Order' will enable the establishment to adopt revised rules of the game. In the absence of broad interest-based popular organisations (like

unions) and related parties (prohibited for decades), this is how electoral campaigns may be financed and voters mobilised over a long period of time. And this implies the usage of both private and public gold, 'goons' (thugs), and guns, in tandem with religious and ethnic communities. Such networks become increasingly important in times of economic crisis, disintegration of state patronage, and have as little respect for rights as for law and order. For example, as we know from India, and as is detailed in Wyatt's chapter in this volume, religion and ethnicity may not be a problem as such, until becoming vital parts of economic and political networks and contestation, as in the case of the Moluccas, among other hard-hit Indonesian areas.

This is not to deplore the breakdown of authoritarian central rule in Indonesia, but instead the lack of strong democratic public institutions, with a non-partisan army and police under its command to handle conflicts and prevent clashes. This framework has proved comparatively efficient in democratically solid Indian states with all kinds of ethnic and religious groups.<sup>13</sup> In Indonesia, however, there is still little chance for previously subordinated but now more important and distressed minorities, communities and regional and local interests, to voice their demands within the formal political system (for example through federative arrangements and local parties) or by referring to special rights and regulations.<sup>14</sup> Hence they turn to other means of protection. Therefore, conflicts between local patrons/bosses, their collaborators (internal and external), and their thugs – who can all draw on exceedingly vulnerable sections of the population – have probably been behind much of the so-called religious and ethnic violence that has been reported on an almost daily basis. This, then, is the fertile ground on which increasingly the majority of the national political battles between various Muslim, business and military factions takes place.

#### Popular politics of democratisation

From the horizon of studies of conflicts and opposition, this is the complicated context within which struggles for democracy have to be fought out. But how shall we, within this framework, go about reading the processes and understand the problems? Since the late 1970s, students of both the rise of capital and neopatrimonialism in Indonesia, in emphasising continuity, have tended to regard studies of popular movements for political change as idealistic and a waste of time. In addition, the West was uninterested in supporting democratic forces 'that couldn't even offer a realistic alternative'. However, during the first part of 1998 things began to change, and some months later, legitimate government – through democratisation – was put at the top of the political agenda. This interest is likely to diminish within business, media and diplomacy circles now that Gus Dur's relatively legitimate and stable 'Pact Order' is installed and Wiranto is outmanoeuvred. But as already mentioned, given an analytical (and normative) interest in development of democracy, we still have to look into the potential of alternative social and political forces.

Ideally, we should be able to base an assessment on empirically and theoretically

well-grounded comparative studies of the actors' politics of democratisation in local settings. In reality, however, much of the knowledge is lacking and time is short. Hence we begin by asking the three most vital questions: what are the actors' views of the new political situation and opportunities? What ideas and interests do they try to bring up on the political agenda, and how do they go about it? How do they try to mobilise and organise people in support of those ideas and interests?<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the crucial period of 1995–9, such questions and their answers would require more space than is available in the current chapter.<sup>16</sup> As a result, we shall limit ourselves here to a few summarising notes, before moving ahead, on the basis of them, to special analysis of the elections and their aftermath.

### Background

The basic problem for the democracy movement in Indonesia has long been that most dissidents have been isolated from the people in general. This is because of the destruction of the broad popular movements in the mid-1960s and the authoritarian rule during Suharto's 'New Order'. Until recently it was forbidden to form membership-based autonomous organisations, and even now, apart from religious organisations, those few movements that exist are weak and difficult for many people to relate to. The same holds true in terms of critical ideologies and historical consciousness. Most of the dissident groups have had to work from above, and out of the main urban centres where a certain level of protection has been available from friends and temporary allies with influential positions. As a consequence, layers of fragmented dissidents have developed over the years.

The expansion of capitalism may indirectly promote democratisation, but it is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the expansion is related both to authoritarian state intervention and to a division of labour that often breaks down old class alliances while giving rise to a multiplicity of interests and movements. On the other hand, even limited liberalisation has created some space which may allow certain people to try partially to improve their standard of living by different local efforts, instead of having always to grab political power first, and thereafter relying on state intervention. For many years, this local space and the need to overcome socio-economic fragmentation spurred on Indonesian pro-democracy work from below. Thus, despite everything, it has been possible for many development-oriented NGOs to relate to new social classes in society, and for a new generation of radical students to relate to peasants (hard hit by evictions) and new industrial workers. Hence the new movements were potentially significant many years before the students did away with Suharto. They were more than a product of the global wave of democracy and some quarrels within Jakarta's political theatre, they were (and are) also conditioned by the expansion of capital and the new classes thus emerging.

Moreover, there has been a tendency since the early 1990s to link up alternative development and human rights work in civil society with politics. Major groupings tried their best to relate specific issues and special interests to more general perspectives. But in doing so they tended to get stuck either in their limited kind of politicisation – with some social foundation among the grassroots – or in their

attempts at broader perspectives without much social basis. The result was that they were never able to generate a democratic opening. Instead, 'external' rallying points gave rise to a more general movement for transition from authoritarian rule. And within such a broader movement many of the outright democrats related to legally accepted populist democrats, while others either held on to fragmented activism and development work or insisted on 'consistent' top-down party building.

### Popular politics of democratisation, 1996–9

The development of this pattern was able to be discerned between 1988 and 1996.<sup>17</sup> And as previously indicated, this is almost exactly what happened in mid-1996 when the government ousted moderate opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri. Many genuine democrats tried to relate to the recognised political system by mobilising as much as possible behind her before the 1997 elections. But the regime displayed an incapacity to reform itself by cracking down on demonstrators and the democracy movement in general with brutal force (thus ironically generating ethnic and religious riots instead). Yet, simultaneously, the basic weakness of the movement itself became equally obvious: its fragmentation and its separation between top-down activists who tend to 'run offside' and grassroots activists who have not yet been able to generate interest-based mass organisations from below.

To understand this, we need also to take a close look at how the movements themselves read the conditions and found it most reasonable to work and go about their activities; in other words, to discuss popular politics of democratisation. Since we are short of time (and impatient), let us begin with some of the more exciting conclusions and only thereafter discuss how we have arrived at them. Two processes and one policy conclusion seem to be especially vital for an understanding of the general lack of substantial convergence (despite 'our' pro-democratic factors) between fragmented interests, ideas, groups and actions, and the very different outcome of pro-democratic politics.

### Single issues and special interests

No sphere of activity and way of mobilising people proved especially favourable with regard to democratisation. The students were very important but 'only' did away with Suharto. Rather, at both national and local levels, the common problem seemed to be the focus on politicising single issues and special interests, both within explicitly political activities and in the work of civil society.

Furthermore, many vital questions and social forces could not be incorporated even when there were attempts at deepening the politicisation by picking a strategic single issue like corruption and then broadening it to other areas. Alternatively, when explicit attempts were made to bring together issues and special interests, they were mainly added, not integrated (and prioritised between) within an ideological and collective framework. Hence, as a result, there was no focus on an alternative project in terms of government, governance and development of the society as a whole at different levels, only on promoting or resisting this or that.

*Civil versus political society; central versus local levels*

A fundamental problem in both contexts was the lack of coordination between actions in the civil and explicitly political society, as well as between the central and local levels. Even at times of intensified pro-democratic work (as when trying to form a broad front in early 1996 or going ahead from the fall of Suharto), it was possible to see how political and civil society activists on various levels (usually perfectly understandably) tended to follow different logic and agendas, not combining each other's strengths and compensating for each other's weaknesses.

This remains a major problem. While the democracy movement was (and is) unable to link work in both political and civil society, and between the central and increasingly important local level, this was (and is) instead, accomplished quite 'efficiently' by so-called moderates through populism and clientelism, and on the basis of, on the one hand, religious (plus to some extent ethnic) communities, and on the other, political clout. The result, of course, is even more divisiveness: dangerous conflicts between various communities, patrons, bosses, thugs and followers, and an even weaker democracy movement.

In Indonesia, the typical way out has been for the activists to look for shortcuts (to the seemingly hopeless attempts at integrating people) by way of alternative (and if possible charismatic) patronage. As there is no closely organised and hierarchical party, it has mainly been a question of finding 'the Leader' (or powerful NGO) and 'the Loyalties' that can be used as a node and entry point.<sup>18</sup>

**The elections and their aftermath**

The parliamentary elections of June 1999, the crisis in East Timor, the appointment of Gus Dur as new president (with Megawati as vice), the rise of his 'Pact Order' and its conflicts are all turning points which call for special analyses. In many ways those events were dominated by the top-level actors. But let us set aside the elite game as such and read instead the election and its aftermath from below, from the point of view of the basic dynamics of the democratic forces that have just been outlined.

*The birth of the world's third-largest democracy*

The June 1999 elections were boring, for parachuted journalists. Too little violence and cheating to report, and too little knowledge to explain why. Comparatively democratic rules of the game, and the inclusion of most parties involved, forced much of the elite temporarily to compete by mobilising votes rather than manipulating in closed circles and provoking religious and ethnic groups only. That was a victory of sorts. In addition, much of the frequently-reported delay in the counting was less because of successful cheating, than time-consuming checks and balances to counter this, plus frustration, of course, among elite politicians who had lost their real or imagined old constituencies but remained within the new Election Commission. Except in East Timor, Aceh, West Papua and a few other places, some 100 million people finally felt that their vote did matter and patiently

waited for the results. In a way we witnessed the birth of the second rather than the third-largest democracy in the world (as so many Americans don't even bother to cast their vote).

But while the very elections were rather free and fair, the context was not so just and the substance was shallow. There was a lack of reasonably equal opportunities to make use of the political liberties, and many fundamental problems continued to be swept under the carpet. These factors will reappear, and this, therefore, is what we should focus on, if we are interested in the prospects for stability and substantial democratisation.

First, *the unjust electoral system*. One single result was not delayed: that the armed forces would receive 7.6 per cent of the seats in the parliament (or four more seats than *reformasi* leader Amien Rais' party got in the open elections). Further, 34 per cent of the delegates who then elected the new president in October were not elected but appointed by the military and political elite in closed, smoky metropolitan and provincial rooms. Also, beforehand, ex-communist as well as local parties were prohibited, and remarkably many seats were allotted to provinces where Habibie's Golkar-party machinery remained intact.

Second, *the unjust preconditions*. While Golkar made good use of the state apparatuses and control of foreign funded credits for cooperatives and social safety net programmes, especially on the outer islands, self-appointed Western democrats gave priority to stable government through instant elections of 'legitimate' rulers, rather than democracy in terms of people's rule and stability through acceptable chances for everyone to influence politics and keep track of elected politicians. Foreign support for democratisation was limited to electoral arrangements, technical information, and some promotion of civic virtues through NGOs. Meanwhile critical voters' education about the actual political forces involved was scarce, and promotion of democratic organisations among labourers, farmers, civil servants and employees was almost absent – not to talk of potentially important parties on the basis of ideas about how societies work and may be changed. Such priorities may be in line with a shallow version of democracy where parties are just machines for the election of elite politicians, and people can only make some difference through a myriad of single issue and special interest groups. But they differ from a more informed understanding of the dynamics involved, as well as from European, Indian or South African experiences where broad popular organisations and parties were essential for the birth and growth of democracy.

Predictably, on the one hand, the Indonesian outcome was top-down mobilisation of votes on the basis of populism and clientelism through the established political machines of Golkar (22.4 per cent of the votes and 120 seats), PDI-P, Democratic Party of Struggle (33.7 per cent; 153 seats), PPP, the Muslim Democratic Development Party (10.7 per cent; 58 seats), and the established socio-religious organisations of NU with its major party PKB, National Awakening Party (12.6 per cent; 51 seats), plus Muhammadiyah in support of 'modernist-Muslim' candidates. On the other hand, the exciting attempt to form a new liberal middle-class party, PAN, the National Mandate Party – with secular centre-left politics, Muslim values and *reformasi*-leader Amien Rais as a

locomotive – proved much more difficult (7.1 per cent; 34 seats). Aside from the armed forces' 38 seats, the remaining 46 seats (13.5 per cent of the votes) were shared by minor parties, which were primarily Muslim-based. The students, moreover – who forced the elite to do away with Suharto, were in the forefront of the reformation process, and put pressure on the traditional politicians – lost momentum and were marginalised. Veteran development, human rights and democracy activists often said that their attempts to help people themselves to organise were distorted by the neo-traditional political competition.

Third, *the shallowness of the elections*. This is not to agree with the many observers who talked of excited masses in support of a weak woman and a blind man without real programmes. The largest and second-largest democracies in the world, India and the USA, have elected and survived equally qualified leaders. Moreover, aside from PAN's educated middle-class programme, certain issues did play an important role in terms of people's expectations and trust in Megawati of PDI-P and Gus Dur of PKB. They were symbols both of dignified resistance against Suharto and of peaceful improvement without religious and ethnic conflicts, according to the old ideals from the struggle for independence. No, the major problem is rather that it will be very difficult for the essentially traditional and conservative politicians who were elected to live up to the expectations of ordinary people, especially of the broad and essentially unorganised social movement around PDI-P and Megawati. While there might be a rather long honeymoon for the new leaders, the fact is that voters in the new instant democracy were mobilised through old perspectives, loyalties and machines which did not correspond, and may not be able to cope, with the new major conflicts and ideas in society.

Let me turn now to four areas that are all related: first, the economic and social problems; second, East Timor and the centrifugal tendencies; third, the role of the new middle classes; and fourth, the established parties and the future of the anti-monopolistic struggle. I analyse these issues one by one in the sections that follow, before concluding with a discussion of Gus Dur's 'Pact Order' and the political violence, neglected democratic preconditions, and (thereby) the democratic vacuum.

#### **The major hidden crisis**

The major issue for most Indonesians was a non-issue – how they should be able to cope with the most severe economic crisis since the birth of the nation. Corruption, of course, was at the top of the agenda. Nobody denies the importance of fighting it and of totally reforming the relevant legal and economic institutions. But what were the interests involved? What were the social and political forces that could enforce efficient checks and balances? Some honest top-level politicians are not enough. The IMF's fundamental structural adjustment programme was kept outside the election campaign, and even the *Asian Wall Street Journal* (21 June 1999) questioned the fact that the Indonesian people were not allowed to take an independent stand on such a vital issue in the elections. But the depoliticisation of the crisis was a good illustration of the structural

character of Indonesia's dependence on international business and finance, as well as the 'international community'. It testified to the weakness of Indonesia's trade unions and other popular organisations, as well as also being a good indication of the consensus between Washington and the Indonesian elite, or at least of the submission of the latter to the former.

With Gus Dur's 'Pact Order' there might now be somewhat more emphasis on small-scale industry and agricultural development. But generally speaking, Gus Dur was betting on as good as possible relations with international business and finance, and on living up to the expectations of the IMF. The major current problem is the struggle within the political, economic, and military elite over which companies and banks should be looted or saved and/or sold out, and who shall be the winners, and who the losers in the process. Equally, the new instant democracy cannot offer a legitimate institutional framework for the handling of people's socio-economic hardship and protests. The ministry for social affairs was closed down, with the argument that civil society should take care of people's problems. Furthermore, the new minister of 'manpower' was an old Golkar man. Meanwhile genuine labour activists found established politics irrelevant, 'as it does not matter much in workers' daily lives'. For their part, employers made up for the loss of outright military intervention in labour disputes by drawing on their market bargaining power in times of crisis, establishing fake 'unions', and setting up their own security forces with police and military personnel as part-time 'consultants'.

#### **The regional grievances and the crisis in East Timor**

In addition to the economic crisis, the second major problem – the regional grievances and the struggle in East Timor – was also removed from the mainstream political agenda. As previously mentioned, local parties were not even allowed in the local elections, and the new laws on decentralisation remained as abstract as the military repression remained concrete. While this was in order to 'preserve national unity', the real problems of domestic colonialism and the occupation of East Timor persisted, and soon popped up outside the new democratic framework, where they immediately proved even more difficult to solve. The killings and protests in Aceh continued, as did the struggles between migrants and 'sons of the soil' (of various beliefs and ethnic origins) in Kalimantan or Maluku. There were even new economic conflicts between migrant groups in free-zone Batam next to Singapore.

The situation in East Timor, however, was special, and worse. Its status as a Catholic, former Portuguese colony without rich natural resources was unique in the archipelago, and so was the engagement of the 'international community'. At least by June 1999 (in a lengthy talk with East Timor leader, Xanana Gusmão) it seemed to me that the National Council of East Timorese Resistance (CNRT) might prove right in 'trusting its (the international community's) alternative institutions and give priority to reconciliation' (Gusmão). But it did not turn out that well. Nevertheless it is important not to forget that everybody, including the CNRT, agreed to brave the risks and seize the unique opportunity that arose

when the then president, B. J. Habibie, in January 1999 sought to trade East Timor for international support while insisting on full Indonesian responsibility for security arrangements.

Actually, the unfolding of violence in East Timor was more a repercussion of the domestic crisis in Indonesia, which in many ways went from bad to worse following the elections in June. It was primarily the kind of elections that the West then supported, which helped to create the political vacuum and space for the military, paving the way for the human catastrophe in East Timor and the renewed attacks on democracy in Indonesia. For, as previously noted, basic problems – such as protests in the provinces – could still not find an outlet in the open political system. So such problems were consigned, rather, to the military and to the parliament of the street. And while the democracy movement was marginalised in the process of liberal electoralism, the military and the old corporative organisations were granted continued political representation. So the elected politicians were made dependent on the non-elected 34 per cent of the delegates who were to select a new president.

With regard to East Timor, the logics of the military and its civilian associates (including internationally well-respected figures such as then foreign minister Ali Alatas) were to first create semi-civilian counterparts to the CNRT in negotiations; then to further develop and empower militias to promote the pro-autonomy side in the referendum by creating both fear among the immigrants for what would happen if East Timor became independent, and fear among the East-Timorese for terror in the future in case they did not accept Indonesian dominance. Finally the intention was to display for protesting people in other Indonesian provinces the kind of problems and horror they would have to face in the event that they persisted. In the event of losing the referendum, the other aspect of the logics was a plan to create a mini-civil war in order, first, to eliminate, if possible, the Falantil (the armed liberation movement), and, second, to avoid losing face and to be able to say 'we invaded East Timor in 1975 to save the country from a civil war and when we leave there will again be a civil war'.

Meanwhile, the CNRT impressively kept its promise to keep a low profile, not allowing itself to be provoked by consistently stressing reconciliation. However, it had difficulties in simultaneously shaping a back-up in the event things went wrong. At the same time, the UN proceeded with the referendum on 30 August, although also, to my knowledge, without any serious back-up. Both parties, to my understanding, felt that they would have had to give in to the militias' intimidation and give up this unique opportunity, if they had not gone ahead with the referendum, despite the risks. So, while people bravely resisted intimidation and terror, and the armed forces respected the electoral operation (as during the Indonesian elections), the militias began to follow their own logic. Moreover, even after having arranged the proof of its point (that some kind of civil war would follow if East Timor would go for independence), the central armed forces command proved incapable of finally also displaying its strength by 'handling' (suppressing) the situation; a process which used to be the 'normal' pattern. Apparently a monster had been created which now ran wild.

In this situation it was difficult for the CNRT to do more than refrain from

being provoked and thereby eliminated, which must have been difficult enough. Moreover, the UN also found itself rather helpless. Of course, immediate UN strengthening of its local representatives in order to maintain its presence would have been in full accordance with the May agreement (Article 7) – and disgracefully enough, this was not done. But while most people wished that the UN had intervened further, it is important to remember that this simply was not realistic.

So let us discuss instead the increasingly popular 'truth of the day' within the Western 'international community': that the UN ought to have been able, without hindrance, to sanction armed intervention when hell broke loose, but that it faced opposition from China in particular and several other developing countries. That indeed can be said to be true. But it was the US which approved Indonesia's occupation of East Timor in 1975; it was Australia which recognised its annexation; both countries sponsored Jakarta's special military forces; Sweden and Norway (among others) gave top priority to business dealings with Suharto's Indonesia; and the entire West adopted the particularly rigid Asian version of the principle of non-intervention in the area even in the face of genocide (by backing the Khmer Rouge regime).

East Timor certainly shows that international emergency assistance must be a matter of course when people are being terrorised and murdered, as surely as when they are starving and dying. Yet the basic question remains: will an intervention strengthen the forces of democracy that must be capable of assuming the leadership? Presuming, that is, that we do not propose making most countries in the world into Western protectorates with UN soldiers in every bush.

I myself persist in the view that an armed intervention without Jakarta's consent would have made it possible for the Indonesian military and militias to ideologically transform their terror and murder into a war of 'Indonesian national self-defence', eliminate the independence movement, and reintroduce autocratic rule in Indonesia itself. Not even the brave students would have been able, in such a scenario, to stand in their way. Luckily, however, the West was not able to start a war, and the International Monetary Fund itself wanted to put the squeeze on Jakarta (for the Baligate bank scandal). So the Indonesian democrats were able to stand up to the military and its allies and thus pave the way for international assistance to East Timor.

Thereafter, given that massive aid would soon reach all those needing it, that Xanana Gusmão would be able to undertake his policy of reconciliation, and that Indonesia's occupation would not be followed by donors' domination, the remaining problems in East Timor seemed to amount to the following three. First, the militias had an escape-hatch in Indonesia's western part of the island. Second, even at the time of updating this text in early 2000, some 150,000 refugees were still stranded with them there; and, third, all atrocities (which were terrible enough even if some estimates must have been exaggerated) have to be investigated and their perpetrators judged.

Back in Indonesia – without which those problems could not (and cannot) be solved – the situation looked grim indeed, until 23–4 September 1999. The military was fanning the flames of extreme nationalism, and it had pushed through



a law making possible a constitutional *coup d'état*, should it and the then president Habibie take the view that people were protesting too much and thereby threatening stability. In the long run, it would thus have been easier for the military to preserve its power, either by entering into a conservative alliance with Megawati (then the strongest presidential candidate), or by 'saving the nation' from protests against Habibie (should he have been able to buy himself votes enough to become president in the end). So the standard line reiterated in diplomatic and business quarters (and among scholars nourished by them) was as usual that now was not the time to push too hard, as everything might go to rack and ruin. Rather, 'the best' would be a stability pact between Megawati and Wiranto.

Fortunately, however, the students intervened instead. (Collectively they deserve the Peace Prize!) Yet again it was they who, along with some few reformist politicians, came to the succour of the dawning Indonesian democracy. And they did so by using the only method that really bites: resolute popular actions. The military and its allies retired. The respite was but a temporary one, of course. But this is practically inevitable when real political democracy is almost as dangerous for the establishment as if their property rights had been at stake.

It would be a good thing if the 'international community' were finally to learn this lesson, as this was not the first instance. As we know, even one of the world's most devastating economic crises and harsh external pressures were not enough to persuade the elite to dump Suharto. What was needed to effect this was collective popular action. That was decisive. And in the absence of a strong democracy movement, this took the form of riots and student demonstrations. Thereafter the democracy movement was ignored again and the students abandoned. So no transitional government was set up, only instant and shallow elections took place, a political vacuum was created, a catastrophe developed in East Timor, and the military and its civilian associates held on to their positions.

#### **A politically frustrated new middle class?**

In processes like these, much hope is usually vested in the capacity of the educated new middle class. In face of the elections, however, the irony is that the Western craftsmen of middle-class democracy did not even manage to make life easier for those who aimed at this within the new liberal oriented PAN-party. It is true that PAN's own performance, abandoned as it was by most Muslim stalwarts as well, was a clear indication of the increasing importance of urban and semi-urban intellectuals, professionals and educated business people. On the other hand, however, some of the democratic potential of the new middle class may now get lost because of its problems making a difference within the neo-traditional political framework. The already-appearing 'alternative' cynicism, the East European-like privatisation of public social and economic policies, as well as the preference for extra-parliamentary lobbying and pressure group activities, do not automatically promote democracy. It also remains to be seen how middle-class groupings now react to the fact that Amien Rais was very active in mobilising the conservative Muslims rather than the reform forces behind Gus Dur during

the horse-trade election of the new president, thus brokering a conservative pact that gave sections of PAN and the other Muslims much more influence in the government than during the elections.

By now, as Gus Dur and his liberal pragmatic allies are consolidating their positions in the central government, Rais is obviously trying to rally what remains of the Muslim 'axis forces' behind himself. Meanwhile PAN itself is deeply divided and only survived its first congress in mid-February 2000 by postponing the entire debate on whether it should turn explicitly Muslim or not, given the rather poor results in the parliamentary elections.

#### **Beyond *aliran* politics: de-Golkarisation or elite reconciliation?**

The electoral achievements of the PDI-P, the PKB, the PPP (and to some extent PAN) are likely to be interpreted as the return of *aliran* politics based on the old cultural-cum-religious pillars of the syncretic *prijaji-abangan* combine (PDI-P), and the traditional and modernist Muslim *santris* (primarily PKB and PPP respectively). A brief comparison between the results from the only previous free and reasonably fair elections, 1955, shows some striking similarities. In 1955 the combination of the nationalist party's 22.3 per cent, the Christian and Catholic parties' some 5 per cent and the reformist Communist Party's 16.4 per cent comes to almost 45 per cent. The latter party was destroyed in the mid-1960s but in 1999, the PDI-P got 33.7 per cent, some splinter parties a few percent each, and most of 'the others' may be part of Golkar's 22 per cent (Golkar did not exist in 1955). Further, in 1955 the NU got 18.4 per cent while this time PKB got 12.6 per cent and 'the rest' probably voted for the minor NU-related parties and NU-sections of Golkar and PPP. Finally, in 1955 the urban-oriented modernist Muslim alliance of Masjumi, the minor Muslim PSII and the West-oriented Socialist Party got some 25 per cent, while this time, the combination of PPP's 10.7 per cent, PAN's 7.1 per cent, some minor Muslim parties (including Partai Bulan Bintang and Partai Keadilan), and the ICMI-cum-Habibie parts of Golkar came to roughly the same.

However, this seemingly stable pattern may be a hangover from the past in terms of the available political machines and mass organisations, while the socio-economic fundamentals have changed. For instance, while the nationalist party behind Megawati's father, President Sukarno, had its major base among the rulers, administrators and educators of the state on each and every level (and their capacity to command votes), this stronghold, which also monopolised the military and big-business, was captured by Suharto and Golkar after 1965. So even if Megawati's PDI-P may try to recapture some of this, it is now more rooted in general anti-monopolistic sentiments, often led or backed-up by small and medium business people (including many ethnic Chinese) who did not benefit much from privileged political contacts under Suharto. This may also be partially true of Gus Dur's PKB. So even though their own resources are scarce, some of those new local political and business leaders are now likely to develop into more private-based patrons and bosses in close contact with religious leaders, military commanders, and important

persons at the centre, while also mobilising voters to get 'democratic access' to state resources.

Over the years they may not be able to retain their popular support in face of the great expectations and the possible emergence of groups that try to substitute for the old communists by catering to the less privileged. But of course, the most immediately vital issue is if and how PDI-P, PKB and their allies will try to 'de-Golkarise' the administration, the military, the public companies and the educational system. A compromise with previous clients of the old regime under new central leadership, as in the Philippines, would hardly promote democratisation and prospects for long-term stability but rather an elected oligarchy and potential unrest.

#### Gus Dur's 'Pact Order' and the political violence

Much pointed in this direction, however, even before the counting of the votes was finished. For instance, the '*pro-reformasi*' parties did not come together and make use of their popular electoral mandate to prevent manipulations and money politics, and promote democratic reformists in the appointment of the sixty-five plus 135 representatives from various sections of the society and the provinces respectively, who would join the 462 elected parliamentarians and the thirty-eight military representatives in selecting the next president.<sup>19</sup> Rather, elitist horse-trading got the upper hand.

Far beyond the elections, the outcome, as we know, was a transition from Suharto's 'New Order' to Gus Dur's 'Pact Order'. The Megawati camp held on to the election results and neglected the need to form a coalition. Even the pet stability-pact of the market and many diplomats between her and Wiranto did not materialise, although the latter abandoned Habibie. Hence, when Habibie was also refuted by the Assembly and gave in, it was rather the Muslim 'axis forces', brokered by Amien Rais and with Gus Dur in the forefront, that got a new lease of life. This was the least-worst alternative for the establishment, and all alternative contenders abstained.<sup>20</sup> For Rais (who had been kicked out of Habibie's and Adi Sasono's attempt under Suharto to provide a Malaysian-like transition via ICM) and for Gus Dur (whose main priority it had been for six years to oppose this ICM-strategy by all means, even by linking up with Golkar in the 1997 fake elections) this was a victory of sorts. But it took massive demonstrations and riots by Megawati's supporters to then also consider and take on board her and her party. So the only magic that was involved in turning the rioting into dancing in the streets, was that Gus Dur responded by political manipulation rather than military repression.

Thus, the new pact includes the slightly reform and secular-oriented sections of Golkar and the military, Amien Rais' and Gus Dur's tactical Muslim alliance, plus Megawati and a few representatives of her party. Aside from objecting to any minister with a corrupt past, and insisting on a formally civilian minister of defence, Gus Dur's main formula seems to have been the inclusion of almost all major sections of the elite (minus Habibie's Golkar-cum-ICMI camp), at the expense of a coherent and strong cabinet and a functioning opposition.

This kind of pact between softeners among the incumbents and moderates among the opposition is not just mainstream analysts' standard recipe for a smooth transition to democracy, but also the long-standing path nourished by Gus Dur and his associates. The first thing to note, however, is that although Gus Dur himself is more democratically oriented than Megawati, and a sharp liberal-oriented Muslim intellectual (rather than a cleric), whose statements like 'we make a perfect team - I can't see and she can't talk', have already charmed international media, he remains an elite manipulator whose despotic statements and manoeuvres are too confusing to be predicted by potential enemies.

Furthermore, and more importantly, the forces and compromises that he is relying on are likely to turn his pact into a more preservative than reformative one. This is not because Gus Dur or people in his inner circle, like Marsilam Simanjuntak, who came from their joint attempt in the early 1990s to form an Eastern European-like Democratic Forum, necessarily would like it that way, but because they lack a solid and reasonably radical popular mass movement. The basic logic, therefore, is that Megawati's populist mobilisation of people, and the expectations of the mainly unorganised social movement of urban poor that has rallied behind her, would probably have given more space for anti-monopolistic efforts at de-Golkarisation than Gus Dur's pact. Essentially Gus Dur's pact harbours and draws on established organisations and clientelistic networks (including not just religious ones but also Golkar, reasonably loyal businessmen and military officers) that may now shape revised rules of the game and adapt to them.

More fundamentally, moreover, *any* scholarly celebrated pact between moderate incumbents and reformers is up against serious problems in Indonesia. To begin with, and as already noted, substantial political democratisation is especially difficult here. The establishment is less solidly based on private and thus non-contested ownership of the essential resources than in many of the 'Third World' countries that have formed the basis for empirical generalisations. One indication is the current struggle related to the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency (IBRA). After years of privatising public assets and profits, the crisis has now given rise to a general need among domestic as well as international investors to socialise their losses. Hence, the state is back again as a major owner-cum-actor in the economic field, and those (domestic as well as international and public as well as private) who wish to win rather than lose in this far from transparent process of 'reconstruction' need the best of contacts.

Another indication is the heavy involvement of the armed forces in the economy and administration. To roll them back is not just a matter of saying no or trying (as Gus Dur has) to form an elitist pact and assemble international support. The military entered into business on a massive scale already with the nationalisations of (primarily) Dutch companies in the late 1950s. To alter this is about as difficult as removing armed landlords through land reform. But the worst aspect of this is the violence committed by the military or supported by it. East Timor has taught the entire world how it works. Violence was made into established state policy in the massacres of 1965-6. The military and the militias acted the same way then as now. Conflicts and antagonisms are consciously exacerbated. People become so afraid - both of the military and of each other

(including of those who have reason to take vengeance) – that the military has been able to make itself seem indispensable, by virtue of its 'protection against instability'. In East Timor, however, those instigating action by top military and civilian leaders lost control.

Indonesia calls to mind Germany just after the Second World War and the Holocaust, and still more so South Africa before it settled accounts with apartheid. The truth cannot be repressed if reconciliation and a reasonably functioning democracy are to be possible. But no Nelson Mandela is in sight, nor any ANC. So now, when the democracy movement must be able to recreate that part of Sukarno's and Mohammad Hatta's national project which built on equality and freedom – as opposed to autocracy plus xenophobia – what is needed is extra-international encouragement for such a renewed and refined project. Not a mixture of unilateral interventions and concessions to new and old rulers, in combination with a blind aversion to all kinds of nationalism.

Hence, the persistent special importance of the state and the military in the economy makes heavy-duty popular pressure particularly important in Indonesia. But this may now be contained by the new pact. It is indeed promising that the national commission for human rights, and especially a whole ensemble of human rights activists in civil society, have managed to put the spotlight on the military atrocities as well as making use of international pressure with regard to East Timor (rather than the other way around). This in turn has allowed Gus Dur to hold back the military, undermine the hawks, and to resist their insurgency campaigns related to political-cum-ethnic and religious violence. But it is important to realise that despite some attempts at building an organised mass base – of which the independent commission for missing persons and victims of violence (KONTRAS) support for the organising of the victims themselves is among the most impressive – most of the human rights work still rests with elitist middle-class groups in Jakarta and a few other cities.<sup>21</sup> So once again we come back to the basic weakness in the process of democratisation: that the civil and especially political societies are extremely weak in Indonesia due to more than thirty years of repressive 'floating mass' politics, which were accepted by the West and which prevented all kind of popular dissident organising.

Thus while the immediate outcome of Gus Dur's conservative 'Pact Order' is likely to be rather positive in generating relative stability for the time being and even 'domesticating' the military, the perspectives for the future are rather bleak. The stability is fragile. In general, but far from in all parts of the country, instant democratic institutions have so far provided legitimisation of a revised political leadership down to the regency level and enabled the major sections of the elite to regulate their conflicts relatively peacefully. That is not bad, given the preconditions. But there is no coherent democratic opposition, not to talk of a mass-based democratic movement. The elite is into politics for the purpose of attaining resources in a legitimate way. While Gus Dur's 'Pact Order' is inclusive of the established elite (including a few democratic personalities), it is exclusive of most of the actors and movements that really enforced democratisation. And there are few firm links with ordinary people.

### Neglected democratic preconditions

The kind of more substantial democratisation which is therefore needed is no far-fetched ideal type. It simply means that people in general, and not just competing sections of the elite, must have the chance and capacity to make use of the democratic institutions that go with liberal political democracy, so that they can develop and advance their own societal ideas and interests, and select and control their own representatives.

Most scholars would agree, then, that this calls for reasonably genuine political parties – between government and the people – and reasonably genuine mass organisations (behind and in addition to the parties) on the basis of people's societal ideas and/or interests. But Indonesia is short of the first (there is not even a coherent opposition) and lacking the second. Yet, as we know, this has not been given priority to, even by self-confident Western 'democracy supervisors' (and now it is neglected again among liberals who like to alter the electoral reform in the direction of American or Philippine politics). Yet, for example, even reasonably enlightened business managers do not seem to bother much about the fact that it must be better to negotiate with genuine unions than to have to repress people both inside and outside the factory gates.

Moreover, everyone would agree that democratisation calls for fundamental administrative reforms and real rule of law – constitutionalism – in addition to popular sovereignty. The only problem is that when constitutionalism does not precede popular sovereignty (as in the West), we either have to say that the time is not yet right for democracy, or discuss which socio-economic forces and which societal dynamics would simultaneously enforce constitutionalism *and* democracy. Most literature on the subject (including that produced by the World Bank) talks at length of what should be done, but avoids the problem of what should possibly comprise the motivational forces.<sup>22</sup> So as long as there is no sign of a viable alternative, we have to return to the basic need of pressure from genuine organisations among the subordinated and abused sections of the population (workers, professionals and businessmen alike). And there are very few such organisations in Indonesia.

The problem is similar with regard to decentralisation, which is increasingly seen as another precondition for democratisation. New and better laws are crafted. But there is absolutely no forceful policy in support of forces and organisations that might prevent the rise of local patron and boss rule; especially not below the district level, where people live but where not even instant democratic changes have taken place – aside from where people themselves have protested against corrupt village leaders and Golkar hegemony.

Or we can turn to the absolutely vital educational sector which has to be totally reformed and de-Golkarised after centuries of indoctrination and subordination of both teachers and students. Who will enforce that, if progressive students, teachers, and cultural workers are not encouraged and actively organising?

Let us finish with the need to contain the conflicts between religious and ethnic communities. How shall this be possible, if neo-liberal and religious politicians are linking up with libertarian activists in closing down welfare state

measures in favour of rival civil society associations rather than reforming the public sector, and are offering universalist alternatives to increasingly important primordial communities?

#### A democratic vacuum – and a race to fill it

While the major problem between the fall of Suharto's 'New Order' and the rise of Gus Dur's 'Pact Order' was the political vacuum, the new primary obstacle is, thus, the democratic vacuum. Neither the established elite nor most genuine pro-democratic actors have firm roots in parties and organisations on the basis of people's societal ideas and interests.

This vacuum will now be filled – or at least compensated for – and the race is already on. As we know, the neo-traditional politicians have so far been comparatively successful in making up for their isolation by using populist and clientelist top-down incorporation of ordinary people and drawing on old perspectives, loyalties and machines. This is likely to be preserved and consolidated during Gus Dur's new 'Pact Order'. Indonesia may be turning from one-man bossism to petty bossism. So while the Indonesian breakthrough is remarkable it is only the end of the beginning. To a large extent the outcome rests with the capacity of the genuine democracy movement to regain the initiative, exert pressure and offer a political alternative. This will be increasingly difficult if many domestic experts and most foreign supporters keep on promoting liberal American personality and middle-class lobby and pressure group politics, including attempts to further alter the electoral laws in this direction.

The prospects are not the best. Despite all advances there is still no unified democratic front. While some leaders prefer to work within the established parties or try to make use of their access to new leaders and influential administrators, others have been marginalised or have got new opportunities to expand their private projects in civil society. As we have seen in previous sections, the movement is fragmented, focuses on single issues or general propaganda, and often fails to link up with, coordinate, and guide grassroots activities in civil society. So who is interested in political democratisation? NGOs, for instance, might become membership-based and give priority to the support for popular mass organising. But other NGOs prefer to stay away from involvement with the state and politics, so we do not know what will happen. Many rather autonomous popular initiatives at the grassroots level, including local unions and action groups, might now federate openly. But there are also top-down and foreign funded initiatives. Increasingly many people, and hopefully the students too, are getting engaged in investigating the history and truth about state-sponsored crimes against human rights, in order to fight militarism and religious and ethnic conflicts among people. But anti-statism and civil society romanticism are also part of the problem when there is a need for alternative politics to handle 'un-civil societies'. Out of some of this, genuine parties might develop. But currently it is even difficult to turn electoral watch movements into parliamentary watchdogs, and now there is mainly a process of fragmentation and depoliticisation, so again we do not know what will happen. The only thing we

know for sure is that those are uphill tasks that have proved difficult enough under less harsh conditions, such as in the post-Marcos Philippines – and those tasks call for support and close studies.<sup>23</sup>

By the end of 1999, moreover, interest and concern had shifted to the problem of disintegration, primarily in relation to Aceh. The nature of the problem is that both unitarists who hail nationalism and federalists who call Indonesia a colonial construct seem to believe that the country will fall apart without harsh central control. Few recall how Indonesia emerged out of the anti-colonial struggle for freedom *and* democracy. Few pay attention to the fact that the democratic part of the project was purged from the late 1950s onwards. And few discuss whether the problems and demands on the local level can be handled in a more fruitful way by returning to the concept of democracy in the original national project, than to the despotic modernism in Jakarta or the competing ethnic and religious communities in the provinces.

This is not just a question of groups and provinces that would like to break away from Indonesia. On a more general level the central structures of authoritarianism are crumbling and the economy is in a shambles. As we know, politics will become more localised and the economy more privatised and internationalised (though hardly de-monopolised). So when leading democratic activists often say that local actions and processes, especially in local towns and villages, stand and fall with their own political advances at the centre, they might not be entirely correct. In fact, the political and economic processes of decentralisation might well imply instead that a stronger democracy movement may and must also grow from below.

The very processes are complicated and there are no ready-made paths. In the Central Java village of Gebjok, for instance, in Karanganyar district, right after the fall of Suharto, a few dissidents asked democracy activists in Solo for help to sue their corrupt *lurah* (village head). The advice, however, was that nothing would change unless they themselves linked up with others and sought the support of the villagers in general. So this they did. A *komite reformasi* was formed to fight the *lurah* who had appropriated money for a fresh water project, overcharged people for land certificates and privatised public land in favour of his cronies. Demonstrations, for instance, were held at the *lurah's* and *bupati's* (the head of the district) offices (the *lurah* is still legally responsible to the *bupati* rather than to the villagers). The *lurah's* office was occupied for two weeks, and an absolute majority of the villagers came forward to prevent the military and the police from intervening. When the *lurah* was brought to trial and temporarily discharged, the committee continued its work with regular meetings and public gatherings, initiated a cooperative to support agriculture, added the disclosing of local Golkar leaders' usage of the public social safety net for their own political purposes, and then discussed how to gear up by demanding total reformation of the local administration. This was not dependent on the ups and downs in the rate of foreign reported demonstrations in front of Hotel Indonesia in central Jakarta.

The committee members were hardly revolutionaries. The chairman was a dynamic local factory mechanic in his mid-twenties. Other members included a retired schoolteacher who used to hunt communists in the 1960s but also a

much younger, well-dressed and educated radical businessman, and a farmer-cum-agricultural labourer. Their party affiliations varied, some supported PDI-P, others the small NU-based PNU and one the conservative Muslim PBB. 'But that doesn't matter', they told me, jokingly picking at each other. 'That's just general and traditional affiliations. The important thing is our list of what should be done here.' This was in June 1999.

My fear was that they would be co-opted and divided by the established politicians and administration on the district level. But their own response at the time was that they did not know what would happen. They just wanted to hold on to their own programme and relate to similar committees in nearby villages, and if possible on 'higher' levels too. I asked if they knew of any such committee 'up there', but of course they did not, since hardly any existed.

Between hope and reality, my wonder at the time was, thus, if it was really beyond the capacity of the politically more 'advanced' pro-democrats at the more central levels to learn from Gebjok, to unite on more aggregate but yet concrete minimum platforms (rather than acting as isolated pressure groups or ideological spearheads only), and thus help to provide links and an organisational and ideological framework between committees on different levels (before they too were infected by neo-traditional politics).<sup>24</sup>

Six months later, little of this had happened. On 27 November instead, just as I revisited Gebjok, the committee failed miserably. The new bitter lesson, however, is equally important to learn. It had started well. Golkar lost massively in the June elections and the committee won its legal case against the *lurah*, so an election of a new head of the village would also take place. But then a political reconciliation took place among the elite on various levels. The new climate of 'Pact Order' took over and no common enemy was left to fight. Personal ambitions gained ground in the committee which split. Two candidates were nominated; one was brought in from outside the group by its until-then leader, the dynamic skilled worker; another emerged from within, the educated radical businessman. While PDI-P won the June general elections but remained politically and organisationally weak, and neither caused problem nor gave help to the committee, Golkar lost the people's sympathies but retained its organisation and informally remained in control of the local administration. Hence, the latter candidate (the radical businessman) was skilfully prevented on legal grounds from running (formally he was residing just outside the village). The politically less experienced committee was not able to work out an equally smart counter-move. Rather it stubbornly opted instead for boycott. Even worse, it actually tried to prevent the election on that Saturday morning of 27 November when I returned, and was stopped, of course, by the administration and the police, which, thus, appeared as defenders of democracy and people's right to vote. And this people did, rather massively – and in favour of a Golkar candidate.

In short, it was possible virtually to see (and not just analytically realise) how even the initially best possible local and popular *reformasi* group turned out to be totally insufficient without ideological and political structure and leadership.

Finally, on a more general level, the risk is that this kind of failure of the post-Cold War idea about instant democracy through the injection of human rights,

civil society groups and liberal elections, opens up with the return of the other extreme thesis that stability and unity can not yet be upheld by democratic means, but that elite-led modern development is the only way to stable democracy. In Gebjok an idealist local *komite reformasi* loses out to Golkar and at the centre a hawkish new civilian minister of defence, Juwono Sudarsono, is even making use of the argument about lack of sufficient modernisation and middle class to threaten the entire nation with the return of the military if the generals do not get a 62 per cent increase in the state budget and if, as he put it, the politicians are not able to create a 'healthy and strong' political atmosphere.<sup>25</sup>

There must be an end to the vacillation between the two extremes. It is not enough that the US finally, on 14 January 2000, repudiated any attempts at coups in Jakarta. The idealist thesis is not sufficient and the determinist path ends up in dictatorship. The latter argument was used to legitimise Western support of Suharto's authoritarian modernisation, and not even its thirty years of development helped. Democracy did not emerge until the project broke down. So if we like to learn from history, we must realise that the present problem is not the lack of state control of people, but the lack of democratic institutions and of people's chances and capacity to develop and make use of them. In other words, the healthy and stable growth of the world's third-largest democracy primarily depends on the development of the popular democracy movement, beyond instant elections and new conservative pact rule. So the historical compromise between the two extremes would be to develop the insufficient civil rights plus elections path to also promote the kind of popular capacities for further democratic development that the practice of top-down modernism has constantly undermined.

### Conclusion

To summarise briefly: the new consensus on the need for democratisation in Indonesia is not good enough. What are on offer are primarily superficial ideological packages and empirical generalisations from quite different cases. There is a need to discuss instead Indonesia's own problematic context and the actors' politics of democratisation. One of several conclusions is that the democracy actors have failed to build links between civil-society-oriented movements and organised political work with ideological perspectives, and focus on collective interests. Another is that elite politicians and local patrons and bosses seem to be more capable of adapting to a neo-traditional electoral framework, in ways that are reminiscent of the Philippines. A third is that the June 1999 elections were rather free but not so just and very shallow. A fourth is that this in turn was a major factor behind the September 1999 catastrophe in East Timor. A fifth is that there are no shortcuts to reasonably substantial democratisation and stability in Indonesia, as the deeply embedded state-political violence, the symbiosis between political and economic power, and thirty years of 'floating mass' politics are major hindrances. So while Indonesia has now gone from Suharto's 'New Order' to Gus Dur's 'Pact Order', this, as I stated before, is only the end of the beginning. The healthy growth and

stability of the world's third-largest democracy depend instead on the further development of the popular democracy movement. If this is accepted, the focus in scholarly studies and international aid should shift from the rights and institutions of liberal democracy to the factors and processes that may empower people to really use them.

#### Notes

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- 1 I am most thankful to all friends cum colleagues, political leaders and activists who in a spirit of mutual trust and interest in critical ideas have spent a great deal of time in informative and exciting discussions with me. Also, in Indonesia, I am most thankful for Bimo's dynamic operational assistance. My research is currently financed by Oslo University and, over a long period, by SAREC, the department for research cooperation within Sida, the Swedish International Development Authority.
- 2 See Törnquist 1996a. A shorter and slightly updated summary was later published; for this see Törnquist 1997b.
- 3 From late 1996 my results were primarily based on news clippings and continuous visits and follow-up interviews with 'key informants' (as well as an ongoing project on the democracy actors and their constituents (at ISAD), jointly led with Arief Budiman). These were reported on in a series of mostly brief articles. See Törnquist 1996b, 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1998e, 1998f, 1998g, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 1999e, 1999f, 1999g.
- 4 A major problem for this kind of summary is that, because of word limits, it has been impossible to include full references. Readers with specific queries are welcome to contact olle.tornquist@stv.uio.no.
- 5 See Törnquist 1996b.
- 6 This, for instance, was already obvious at the August 1998 International Jakarta conference, 'Towards structural reforms for democratisation in Indonesia', organised by the Ford Foundation and the Centre for Political and Regional Studies at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, LIPI. I shall return later to observations in relation to the parliamentary elections.
- 7 For one interesting perspective, see Markoff 1996 and 1997.
- 8 See Huntington 1991. This, of course, fits well with the general results of the transition projects led by (a) Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, (b) Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and S. M. Lipset, (c) Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, and (d) Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle.
- 9 So titled because of the Islamic School run by Gus Dur where students managed to get the four leaders to meet on 10 November 1998.
- 10 See Sidel 1998: 165.
- 11 For inspiring comparative analyses, see, for instance, Trocki 1998. For the problems of popular democrats under such conditions, see, for example, Törnquist 1998b. The definition of bossism is adapted from Sidel 1998.
- 12 Sidel 1997: 167.
- 13 For India, here and in the previous paragraph, see, for example, Brass 1996 and 1997; Dreze and Sen 1996; and Basu and Kohli 1998.
- 14 For outlines of the new electoral system, see National Democratic Institute 1999.
- 15 For the argument in favour of the questions, see Törnquist 1999a: chapter 13.
- 16 See Törnquist 2000.
- 17 See references in note 2.
- 18 'Node' here refers to something similar to the computer-technical meaning of the word, that is, to indicate a kind of meeting point or intersection.

- 19 Minus, as it turned out, the representatives of East Timor.
- 20 Including, finally, Yusril Ilza Mahendra of the small, conservative Muslim Crescent Star Party PBB who got himself instead the position as Minister of Law and Legal Affairs in the new cabinet.
- 21 Komite untuk Orang Hilang dan Tindak Kekerasan.
- 22 See, for example, World Bank 1997b.
- 23 See, for example, Törnquist 1998c.
- 24 See Törnquist 1999d.
- 25 Juwono Sudarsono quoted in the *Jakarta Post*, 23 November 1999. Sudarsono was later replaced by another conservative, M. D. Mahfud.