

# THE END OF INDONESIA'S NEW ORDER

Indonesia, a newsmagazine recently reminded its readers, “is no obscure backwater.” It was a strange thing to say about the world’s fourth most populous country and its largest Islamic one. Yet for 30 years this vast, ethnically varied archipelago state has, by trading political freedoms for stability and material progress, avoided many of the woes that draw attention to developing countries. Now, however, the long reign of 75-year-old President Suharto is nearing its end—and with it, perhaps, the commitments and compromises that made Indonesia’s New Order possible.

*by James Clad*



*Going to Market (1985), by Dede Eri Supria*

fter many years and much speculation, a long-anticipated moment in the life of modern Indonesia may finally be at hand. Until recently, the word *transition* summed up a simple but delicate question in this nation of 200 million people: who will become president once General Suharto, now nearing the end of his sixth five-year term, departs the scene? Defined this way, the problem of who-comes-next led to a simple question of *when*, leaving the *how* unasked. It suggested, moreover, that the most acute political problem facing this fast-developing Asian country arises only from uncertainty about the precise chronological moment when the 75-year-old Suharto either hangs up his spurs or drops dead, scepter still in hand.

In the aftermath of last July's two-day riot in Jakarta that left as many as 10 people dead and a number of buildings in ashes, the city's most serious violence in two decades, all such illusions have dropped into the dust bin: this city of 11 million people is now focusing intently on the *how* of Suharto's departure. (Like many people from the island of Java, Suharto uses a single name.) So is the world beyond. What happens in Jakarta will have profound consequences not only for Indonesia but for the rest of Asia, and much of the world beyond.

Indonesia's 13,600 islands stretch across four time zones and more than 3,000 miles, a distance greater than that separating California and New York. It is the world's fourth most populous country (and its largest Muslim one), a significant OPEC oil producer, an industrializing exporter of textiles, electronics, and other goods, and the chief pillar of Southeast Asia's prosperous stability. It sits, moreover, astride two crucial shipping routes; unimpeded passage through the Lombok and Malacca straits enables huge Persian Gulf oil tankers (and U.S. warships) to pass between the Pacific and Indian oceans. All of this may help to explain why a White House staffer burred, "He's our kind of guy," to a *New York Times* reporter covering Suharto's visit to Washington, D.C. in November 1995.

Few in Indonesia think that Suharto, even now, will have any difficulty winning a seventh term as president in 1998, if he chooses to run. As in the past, a newly elected national assembly will gather after elections in 1997; then, in early 1998, the assembly will meld with scores of extra government appointees to form the supreme People's Consultative Assembly (the MPR), which will elect the president. Since 1967, Suharto has emerged the victor from each of these stage-managed convocations; it would be beyond all precedent for him to even face a presidential challenger. Yet it was precisely such a prospect that set in motion the events leading up to the July riots.

The immediate cause of the violence lay in Suharto's surprisingly clumsy efforts to marginalize Megawati Soekarnoputri, the 49-year-old daughter of his predecessor, Sukarno, and head of the hitherto tame, government-created Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). Under Megawati, the PDI had come to serve as a symbol for a variety of people and forces yearning for change in Indonesia: members of the growing



*“Mega! Mega!” chanted crowds of demonstrators in Jakarta last July. These protesters brandish images of Megawati and her father, Sukarno.*

urban middle class, industrial workers in Indonesia’s booming export zones, restive Muslims anxious about Indonesia’s rapid modernization, and a handful of organizations concerned with rural-urban income gaps, the destruction of tropical forests, and other issues. Megawati’s real sin, however, might have been to hint that she might challenge Suharto for the presidency.

In the months before the July 1996 riots, Suharto moved to undermine Megawati, blocking her efforts to build up a serious PDI organization before the May 1997 parliamentary elections. Then the regime encouraged thugs connected to a rival PDI leader to evict Megawati’s

followers from the party's headquarters in Jakarta. That ignited the riots of July 27 and 28. In the eyes of her supporters and in most Western reportage, Megawati found herself increasingly compared to Southeast Asia's most famous women oppositionists—the Philippines' Corazon Aquino and Burma's Nobel laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi. Many Western analysts familiar with Indonesia think she doesn't deserve that ranking—at least not yet.

Southeast Asia watched the Jakarta disturbances with scarcely disguised unease. In Singapore, my discussions with government leaders focused on nothing else. The same anxiety prevailed in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. Tremors in the sprawling archipelago are felt everywhere in the region. In Manila, some of that city's extravagantly free press

even trumpeted a likely “repeat performance” of the “People Power” revolution that evicted Ferdinand Marcos from the Presidential Palace in 1986.

The comparison to Marcos is not far-fetched. Since the wily, quiet-spoken Suharto

For 30 years, Suharto has been the deft *dalang* of Indonesian politics, exploiting the time-tested principle of divide and conquer to achieve his ends.

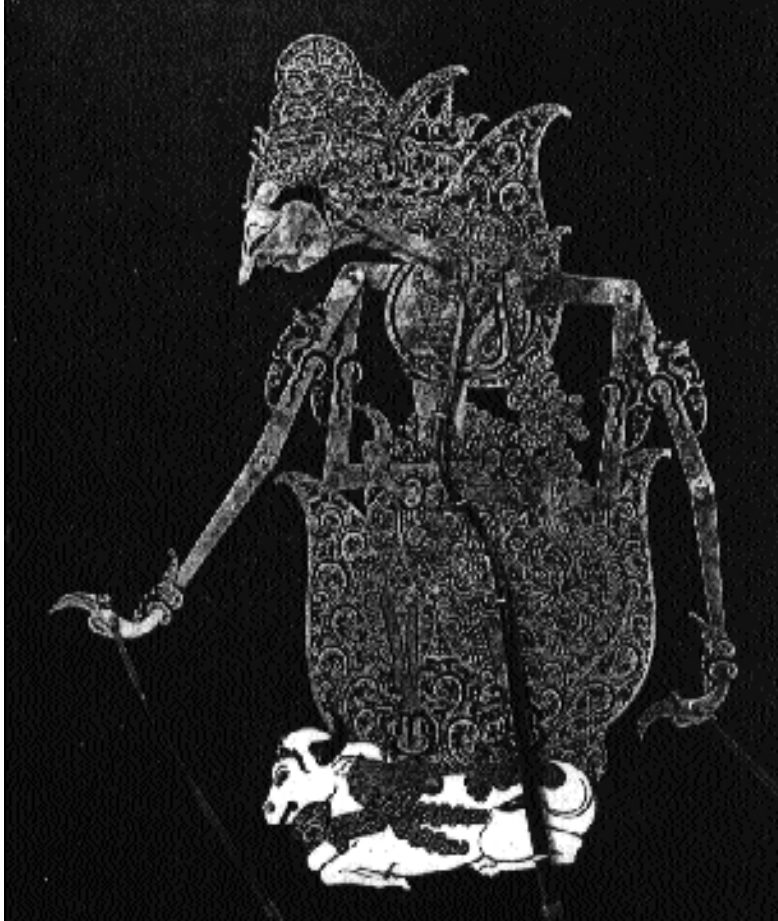
took power 30 years ago, the regime's most senior technocrats have sought to sanitize Indonesia's notoriously corrupt business culture through a succession of liberalizing measures, opening the economy to greater competition. For three decades, however, the president's own family and a favored group of Chinese businessmen have continued to exemplify the worst of the bad old ways, becoming immensely wealthy through preferential business deals. But their most egregious free riding on Indonesia's robust economy had seemed a thing of the past.

In the months before the July riots, however, local reports began to circulate about new depredations by “the Family.” There was a scheme under which a Suharto grandson would collect a tax on all the beer guzzled in Bali by foreign tourists. That came to nothing. But Suharto's youngest son, Hutomo Mandal Putra (known as Tommy), still stood at this writing to profit enormously from a plan to create an Indonesian “national car” shielded from all serious competition by high tariffs. And these were only the biggest scandals. Suddenly, the New Order (the Suharto regime's self-designated name to differentiate it from the “Old Order” of 1945–65) looked as nepotistic and greedy as ever.

Finesse matters in politics everywhere, but especially in Asia, and there is now a sense in Indonesia that Suharto, so long the master of Indonesian politics, has lost his touch. Indonesians often compare their politics to the *wayang* (shadow puppet theater), whose indigenous Javanese genre is particularly rich in intrigues and deception. In the *wayang*, the puppeteer, or *dalang*, speaks the lines for each nominally independent character. For 30 years, Suharto has been the deft *dalang* of his nation's politics, exploiting the time-tested principle of divide and

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Wayang (*shadow puppet*) performances remain the most popular form of entertainment in Java's villages. References to mythical wayang characters pop up in everyday conversation.



conquer to achieve his ends. From time to time, the old master has seemed momentarily to lose his touch—only to regain control. Now another such moment has arrived. Given his age and the country's pressing need for an orderly succession, most Indonesians agree that the old puppeteer must now attempt not the resumption of his mastery but something for which a lifetime's intrigue has poorly prepared him: the transfer of authority to a new leader.

Each visit to Jakarta—from the Sanskrit words *jaya-karta*, meaning the place of glorious deeds—disorients a traveler who first became familiar with the city in the 1970s. Huge bank buildings and shopping plazas dot the flat coastal expanses which were once rice fields and marshlands. Traffic snarls along Jalan Sudirman and other main avenues as badly as it does in the infamously gridlocked thoroughfares of Bangkok and Manila. Thousands of commuters take a new elevated railway to work, reading along the way glossy new magazines such as *Eksekutif* (Executive), which bulge with advice on how to spend their growing paychecks. Indonesia now seems set, if it manages the Suharto transition well, to become another Asian economic powerhouse early in the 21st century.

The foundations of this material success were laid after the last transition, when Suharto took power in 1965. In essence, his New Order has traded political participation for economic progress, or *pembangunan* (development). Swiftly putting out the welcome mat for Japanese and Western investors after 1965, Suharto's Western trained technocrats, including a coterie of University of California-schooled economists known as the Berkeley Mafia, prepared the way for an export-led boom that began in the early 1980s. The boom has transformed urban and, increasingly, rural life.

In just a decade, the country has witnessed a huge expansion of exported manufacturing in industrial zones located near Jakarta and other major cities in Java and Sumatra. Factories producing Nike shoes, Motorola electronics, and Matsushita electrical appliances have sprouted. Whereas, as recently as the late 1970s, Indonesia relied on oil for three-quarters of its export income, today that dependence has dropped to just over 20 percent thanks to rising overseas sales of manufactured goods and agricultural products (including many created from the felling of Indonesia's vast—though rather less vast now—tropical forests).

In addition to promoting export industries, the Suharto regime has emphasized self-sufficiency in rice, rejecting the World Bank's warnings that fertilizer subsidies would cause grave "distortions" in the rural economy. Since the mid-1980s, the country has produced enough rice to feed itself and has even had a small surplus available for export. This represents a stunning rebuke to conventional wisdom, which, as recently as two decades ago, dealt in images of an impending Malthusian nightmare in which Java's teeming hordes would finally exhaust the country's food supplies and bring down political disaster on the archipelago. Indonesia's current self-sufficiency in rice should by itself guarantee the aging president a place in the history books.

The economic data alone speak volumes. Per capita gross domestic product has jumped from \$90 in 1968 to more than \$1,000 today. About 60 percent of all Indonesians now live above the poverty line. In Jakarta and other cities, disposable incomes are much, much higher than \$1,000—hence the magnetic appeal to hundreds of thousands of rural migrants coming to Java, and to Jakarta, each year. Asian Development Bank surveys and other studies show that income distribution, while it hasn't improved, at least hasn't worsened much during the last 15 years. The rising tide has lifted all boats. Western critics denounce the new Indonesian factories as "sweatshops," but as Asia specialist Robert A. Manning wrote recently, "to many young women from local villages, the minimum wage they earn is far



more than anything their parents made, and is viewed as a step on the road to a better life. With unions and civic groups gaining strength in the country's power calculus, these young workers face even better prospects."

Other changes reinforce the contrasts between 1965 and today: Indonesian satellites relay telephone messages and TV images in the national tongue. Superhighways speed motorists from Jakarta up to the once quiet Dutch hill town of Bogor. All the gains and losses of global culture—the information revolution, the inane mass commercialism—all of these reside easily in Indonesia. Even the most minute details of the July 1996 riots were quickly sent out, to Jakarta's suburbs and to the world beyond, on telephone wires as faxes or E-mail.

Indonesia's peace and prosperity have been paralleled in most of the nations of Southeast Asia, since 1980 the fastest-growing region in the developing world. This is no coincidence. Indonesia's resumption of normal international conduct after 1965 allowed the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to emerge and thrive. (The association includes Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and, since 1995, Vietnam. Cambodia, Burma, and Laos are expected to join during the next two or three years.)

Today, the region's stock and domestic consumer markets, its export industries, and its oil, timber, and minerals, as well as burgeoning new business opportunities in aviation, telecommunications, and other forms of infrastructure, lure investors from Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Western Europe. Political stability, especially in Indonesia, the colossus of Southeast Asia, makes all this possible. (As recently as 1990, several senior Australian military officers identified Indonesia as the principal long-term security challenge to Australia—but the two countries have since signed a mutual security pact, apparently motivated by concern over growing Chinese power in Asia.) Indonesia's steadiness will become more important as China emerges as a great power. Any regional consensus about standing up to Chinese pressure on diplomatic, military, commercial, and other matters will evaporate if Indonesia reverts to the turmoil of the Sukarno years.

**T**he world's largest archipelagic state dates its modern origin to what must be the shortest declaration of independence on record: "We, the people of Indonesia, hereby declare Indonesia's independence," Sukarno scribbled. The date was August 17, 1945. Tokyo had just surrendered to the Allies, and British troops were steaming toward Japanese-occupied Java (where Sukarno and other nationalists had collaborated with the Japanese during the occupation) to reimpose Dutch authority. Speed was of the essence. Sukarno's declaration closed just as tersely as it opened: "Matters concerning the transfer of power and other matters will be executed in an orderly manner and in the shortest possible time." And that was that.

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Subsequent events did not share the brevity of Sukarno's declaration. The nationalist cause had only slowly gathered strength in the years before World War II, impeded by Dutch East Indies authorities determined to keep their 350-year-old empire, the brightest jewel in the Netherlands' crown, indefinitely under their stewardship. Spice, coffee, indigo, and sugar had enriched The Hague and Rotterdam during past centuries, and the rise of the automobile in the 20th century had produced another bonanza in rubber and oil, also abundant in the archipelago. "The dominating fact about the islands," reporter John Gunther wrote in 1939, "is that, like Croesus and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., they are rich. They are the Big Loot of Asia."

So the Dutch were not about to go willingly. Besides, they knew that the nationalists enjoyed far-from-universal support. Especially in the Christianized outer islands many miles from Java and Sumatra, people felt little affinity for the movement. Indeed, the Dutch might very well have stayed on much longer in the East Indies had they not been so ignominiously and speedily evicted by the Japanese after Pearl Harbor. Just eight days after the first Japanese soldier set foot on Java early in 1942, the Dutch capitulated. Like the British and French in their own Southeast Asian empires, the Dutch were never to recover from that loss of prestige.

Still, it took time for the Dutch to realize that they had lost their grip. Native troops drawn from Manado and the Moluccas fought alongside Dutch regulars in Sumatra, Sulawesi, and especially in Java, inevitably the archipelago's core by virtue of tradition and population. (Nearly two-thirds of Indonesians live on the island.)

In 1946 and '47, despite having endured five grinding years of Nazi occupation, The Hague managed to dispatch 150,000 troops to reclaim Holland's East Indies treasure. Although Indonesia's post-independence historiography depicts an epic struggle for freedom, much of the fighting was inconclusive. Eventually the Dutch will to win was broken by a combination of United Nations condemnation, stubborn guerrilla resistance, and American pressure. (Once anticommunists got the upper hand within Indonesia's nationalist movement, after 1948, Washington tied Marshall Plan aid for the Netherlands to Dutch concessions).

A loosely federal "United States of Indonesia" was born in 1949, but the independence agreement lasted barely a year, with new fighting then breaking out between the Dutch and the nationalists. A unitary state with a parliamentary form of government emerged in 1950, with Sukarno as president. But this system, in turn, survived just seven years, undone by economic strains, Sukarno's vast ambitions, and regional rebellions in the Moluccas and West Java. Martial law was imposed in 1957. Uprisings the next year in Sumatra and Sulawesi, aided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency—which was alarmed by the growing power of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), then the third largest communist party in the world—gave Sukarno the excuse he needed to impose what he called "guided democracy." This was basically a quasidictatorship in which Sukarno played *dalang* over a variety of competing forces: the PKI, the armed forces, and the nationalists.

**I**t was to the PKI that Sukarno increasingly turned for support after 1958, as his conflicts with the Indonesian army intensified. Moscow gave Sukarno as much as \$1 billion in aid between 1960 and '65—much of it going, ironically, to the anticommunist military. Already possessing vast authority under martial law, the generals increased their power even more as



they assumed effective control of many nationalized Dutch enterprises during the 1950s—mines, plantations, and transport systems. But the military's corrupt and inept management of these enterprises helped to pitch Indonesia's economy into chaos.

Sukarno didn't help matters. He governed erratically. Moreover, he launched a bombastic policy of confrontation in reaction to plans to create a new Federation of Malaysia by merging the Federation of Malaya, independent since 1957, with two

giant, British-administered territories in Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak. Sukarno's "*konfrontasi*" campaign came on top of a series of commando incursions to "recover" West New Guinea, the only part of the former Dutch East

Indies not ceded to the new Indonesian Republic in 1949. To top it off, Sukarno pulled his country out of the United Nations with great fanfare in 1965, announcing his intention to establish instead a new "anti-imperialist" axis with China, North Vietnam, and Cambodia.

These were years of wild political rhetoric, economic disintegration, hyperinflation, and rising anger among Muslims—a chaotic period whose mood was captured in Philip Koch's novel *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1979), later made into a movie. Finally, on the night of September 30, 1965, a small band of army officers, claiming they were acting to head off a CIA-sponsored coup, murdered six senior Indonesian army generals, then seized the Jakarta radio station and announced the formation of a Revolutionary Council.

Egged on by Suharto, the army and civilian vigilante bands embarked on a months-long campaign of terror and violence against the Communists. The death toll may have reached one million.



President Suharto and his wife Ibu Tien (who died recently) in a mural promoting a five-year plan to build a more "just and prosperous society"

Suharto, then a little-known general, quickly made his own power play. He too claimed to be acting in defense of Sukarno but charged that the coup attempt was part of a communist plot to take over the government. The original plotters—who, many Indonesians believe, might have received Suharto's secret encouragement to act—were quickly arrested. Egged on by Suharto, the army and civilian vigilante bands (including many Islamic foes of the PKI) embarked on a months-long campaign of terror and violence against the Communists. Hundreds of thousands of Indonesians died. The death toll may have reached one million.

By March 1967, Suharto had installed himself as acting president and had put Sukarno under house arrest. "Sukarno was first immobilized," observed anthropologist Clifford Geertz, "then, with that controlled, relentless grace the Javanese call *halus*, deposed." (He died a few years later.) Ever since then Suharto has presided, with only the occasional disturbance, over the long political stillness of the New Order.

**T**hirty years ago, then, Indonesia had all the makings of a Third World disaster story. That the country has prospered mightily instead is due partly to Suharto's leadership, and partly to some pre-existing or latent strengths that existed well before Suharto assumed control.

Indonesia is lucky that its early-20th-century nationalists decided not to elevate Javanese into the national language. Although Indonesians today either speak Javanese or one of more than 250 distinct languages at home, the nation's schools instruct them in *bahasa Indonesia*, a national language consciously adopted from the Malay trading dialect of a lesser ethnic group in Sumatra. Made back in the 1920s, this decision meant that the numerically preponderant Javanese would not come to dominate the archipelago with their language (though the question of Javanese *cultural* domination is another matter)—thus sparing Indonesia the debilitating linguistic politics that have bedeviled India, Sri Lanka, and many other countries.

A clear separation between the state and the predominant religion of the islands, Islam, has also helped Indonesia to remain united. The separation has been easier to maintain than one might imagine. Although about 90 percent of Indonesians describe themselves as Muslims, the degree of their orthodoxy varies considerably. People in the lightly populated outer islands far from Java and Bali generally tend to be more religiously observant. Yet it is also true that people living along the coasts of Indonesia's many islands tend to profess a stricter mode of Islam than those dwelling in the interior, especially in Java and the other larger islands, such as Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), Sumatra, and Sulawesi.

Nowhere is the difference between *pedalaman* and *pesisir* (the interior and the coastal area) more obvious than in Java. The interior of the world's most densely populated island, home to tens of millions of Indonesians, remains so strongly influenced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions predating Islam that its people are sometimes described as "nominal Muslims." In rural Java, where wet rice farming is still the primary occupation, I have often come across floral offerings left in the ruins of ancient Hindu temples. The principal characters of the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* appear in Javanese shadow theater, and, perhaps more revealingly, in print and TV advertisements for common consumer goods.

Indonesia's syncretic religious style is a legacy of its rich past as a center of Asian trade and commerce. Blessed by a superior location athwart the trade



*A procession of the faithful at the Hindu Mother Temple in Besakih, Bali*

routes between China and India and by favorable trade winds, many small trading kingdoms were flourishing in Java and Sumatra by the early years of the Christian era. With trade came settlers and new religious faiths, including both Buddhism and Hinduism. In A.D. 671, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim reported that it took him only 20 days to sail from Canton to the Sumatran kingdom of Śrivijaya, then entering its centuries-long heyday as the leading entrepôt of Southeast Asia.

By the 10th century, Java had emerged as the political and cultural center of Indonesia—the monumental Buddhist temple at Borobudur was erected around A.D. 800—and its dominance was assured after King Kertanagara reunified much of Java and extended his rule to southern Sumatra between

## The Java Question

*The quest for an Indonesian identity, observes anthropologist Clifford Geertz in After the Fact (1995), inevitably revolves around the country's dominant island.*

The great florescence of Indic civilization—Barabudur, batik, gamelan music, the shadow-play—occurred in Java. The 16th century trade emporium was centered on its north coast, even if the most profitable cargoes came from elsewhere. The Dutch settled the headquarters, first of their Company, then of their colony, there. The rise of nationalism and the revolution against the Dutch mostly took place there. And today Java and the Javanese remain, despite strenuous efforts by the government to cloud the fact and occasional efforts, occasionally violent, by non-Javanese to alter it, the axis upon which the national life of the country turns. . . .

Indonesian nationalists have always regarded this situation as a heritage of colonialism, the result of a deliberate, divide-and-rule tearing apart of an ancient unity. But it is rather more the effect of the impact of an integrate-and-manage mercantile imperialism upon an ancient fragmentation. If the French were obliged to “pacify” Morocco sheikh by sheikh, the Dutch were obliged to gather up the East Indies people by people, fighting a series of extremely bitter and in some cases extended ethnic wars: against the Ambonese, Tematens, and Gowans in the 17th century; against the Javanese in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries; against the Minangkabau in the 1830s; against the Acheneese from 1873 to 1904; against the Bugis, the Balinese, the Torajans, and various smaller groups in the first decade of the present century. In unifying the archipelago under their hegemony, a process which took about 200 years, the Dutch turned a competitive diversity in which Java was prominent into a hierarchical one in which it was preeminent.

By 1925, when the Netherlands East Indies reached its *faux apogée*, this Java-and-the-others structure of ethnic identification was locked thoroughly in place. Only northeast Sumatra, where tobacco and rubber growing were concentrated (and half the laborers were indentured Javanese), approached Java as a locus for Dutch attention, Dutch presence, and the billiards, whist, fans, and *rijsttafel* form of life that the planters, soldiers, and civil servants who lived it called *indisch*. . . .

Nationalism, too, despite the fact that a number of its leading figures were transplanted Minangkabaus from West Sumatra (who, in any case, soon lost out in the power struggles that followed Independence) found its main battleground in Java and its champions mainly among the Javanese. The chief of these was, of course, Sukarno. . . .

The massacres of 1965 were also for the most part a Javanese, indeed an intra-Javanese, phenomenon; a conflict not between peoples but within one people, as to the symbolic basis, Islamic, Javanist, Civic, or Populist, on which “Java” and “The Seberang” were to be held together. Since then the history of the Republic has been broken, by the Indonesians themselves and by foreign observers, into the “Old Order” under Sukarno, a time of romantic nationalism, leftward drift and final catastrophe, and the “New Order” under Suharto, a time of army domination, managerial rule, and seeming permanence. But whatever the differences in style, tone, policy, and technique of the two leaders, and whatever the contrasts in esprit or efficiency of the regimes they put in place, the continuity between them is a good deal greater than partisans of either would like to admit. . . .

It is not simply the multiplicity of groups, cultures, languages, races, and social structures, but the depth of their disparities—in size, in centrality, in setting, in wealth, in complexity, and in world view—that insures that the politics of *suku*, the reconciliation of communities to one another, all of them to Java, and Java to itself, will remain at the heart of government. What Sukarno sought to do with rhetoric, charisma, and the mystique of revolution, Suharto has sought to do with soldiers, technocracy, and a ritual commemoration of revolution—to contain the divisiveness of cultural difference, pride, rivalry, and weight.

Suharto may have been the more successful: at least he has so far not so dramatically failed. . . . Whoever (or whatever) will succeed him is unclear. But whoever (or whatever), they will still be faced with a gathering of peoples imperfectly balanced.

1268 and 1292. His Hindu successors founded a new capital at Majapahit in 1293, and ruled for centuries. By the time Majapahit was founded, traders were already carrying Islam to the archipelago, where it spread slowly (and, unlike in many other lands, peacefully), its strength diminishing with distance from the coast. Christianity arrived in a few places with the Portuguese and other Europeans in the 16th century.

This long era of greatness left Indonesia a magnificent cultural legacy of lyric poems, epics, and legends, and a history of courtly life and political achievement that remains profoundly influential. The layers of religion (not including Christianity) have blended more than they have remained distinct, much like the colors of an intricate batik. Indonesia's few practicing Buddhists today are ethnic Chinese; Hinduism is largely confined to Bali. But, in a deeper sense, Buddhism and Hinduism are everywhere. To be sure, the major life passages—birth, marriage, death—continue to have an important Islamic gloss, but the spiritual temperament of the region bears obvious traces of the pre-Islamic past.

This is not to say that Indonesia's 180 million Muslims do not have their differences with the existing order. Some, not many, would dearly like to see the imposition of *sha'riah* (Islamic religious law) on the entire country. Others see Indonesia's rapid modernization (which they equate with Westernization) as morally destructive. But Indonesian Islam has too many faces to permit either generalizations or easy description. Repelled by greed and emboldened by Qu'ranic injunctions against usury, some Islamic reformers in Indonesia seek a more equitable social order. For these people, social control of key industries, and public subsidies of basic staples for the rural and urban poor, have much appeal. At the Friday observances at the mosques, one can hear oblique (and sometimes not so oblique) criticisms of corruption and of the extravagant lifestyles enjoyed by the regime's ethnic Chinese business collaborators. Yet Abdurrahman Wahid, the head of a moderate-to-conservative Muslim organization called Nahdlatul Ulama and a man who has tens of millions of followers, is "conservative," as the *Economist* notes, "only in that he believes in the relaxed and generally tolerant kind of Islam that has existed in Indonesia for centuries."

**A**nother important reason why politicized Islam in Indonesia has always failed to reach a critical, pan-archipelagic mass has to do with the role of the Indonesian military, which both gives to, and borrows from, the secular course set by Indonesia's founding fathers. Because the 365,000-man ABRI (the Indonesian acronym by which the military is known) has special roots in Java, which supplies most of its officers and enlisted men, its outlook remains decidedly—even aggressively—secular. ABRI's aversion to radical politics became entrenched during the fighting against the Dutch when a PKI-endorsed revolt-within-a-rebellion erupted in 1948 in the East Java town of Madiun, challenging the infant Indonesian Republic's authority. ABRI put down that revolt with some difficulty. During the 1950s, it suppressed a number of Islamic-inspired regional revolts.

In part because of these experiences, the secular Indonesian state ideology *Pancasila* (Five Principles) has no more fervent supporters than the leaders of Indonesia's military. Created decades ago by Sukarno and still faithfully committed to memory by Indonesia's schoolchildren, this five-point mantra calls for humanitarianism, social justice, consensual politics, adherence to the constitutional process, and a belief in "God who is the Great One." That



*Outside Jakarta, a new highway thrusts across land once occupied by farms and villages, part of Indonesia's continuing transformation.*

god need not go by the name “Allah.”

ABRI's special place in Indonesian society has a name, *Dwi Fungsi* (Dual Function). Under this doctrine, the military claims both the traditional role of guarantor of national security and a special place in society—and in the economy—as the guardian of “national resilience.” Often seen as a threadbare excuse enabling military hands to plunge deeply into the ample cookie jar of Indonesia's economy, the Dual Function arises from a profound historical experience.

In essence, and like the Thai and Burmese military, ABRI sees itself as the only truly reliable guarantor of national cohesion, unity, and longevity. ABRI is the institution from which Suharto comes; he has bent it and blended it to suit his purposes for 30 years, most recently directing a rapid series of high-level reshufflings in top officer corps positions to discourage anti-Suharto plotting. In military eyes, Indonesia in its half-century of independence has weathered many challenges by the grace of God and, more important perhaps, with the help of ABRI's vigilance.

But the military itself has created two conflicts that still cause Jakarta endless trouble. The first arises from the bullying takeover, in the 1960s, of the Dutch-administered territory of West New Guinea. The reluctant Indonesians of Irian Jaya, as the territory is now called, have their sense of grievance kept alive by the contempt that many Javanese and other Malay peoples feel for Melanesian peoples, whose physical traits—wavy or wiry hair, broader noses, darker skin—become steadily more prevalent the farther east one travels in the archipelago. In 1996, the world's attention focused briefly on Irian Jaya when ethnic Melanesian separatists kidnapped seven European university researchers. After the hostages were freed by Indonesian commandos, the world resumed its indifference to Irian Jaya's fate.

Indonesia's second trouble spot is the product of its forcible incorporation in 1975 of the eastern half of the island of Timor. A sleepily administered Portuguese colony for some 400 years, Timor attracted nobody's attention until a leftist former customs official declared independence from Portugal in 1975 following a revolution in Lisbon the year before. Alarmed by the prospect of "a Cuba on the doorstep," Suharto launched an invasion. Between 1975 and 1978, perhaps 200,000 East Timorese died in the fighting or from starvation and other causes following the invasion. The chronic unrest and separatist yearning in East Timor—what Indonesian foreign minister Ali Alatas calls "that pebble in my shoe"—refuse to go away, and East Timor remains the blackest blot on Indonesia's international reputation.

Apart from East Timor and Irian Jaya, only one other region poses a serious, recurrent challenge: the formerly independent sultanate of Aceh, on Sumatra's northwestern tip, where separatists have hijacked airplanes and destroyed bridges. Elsewhere in the archipelago, however, separatist troubles have receded in recent decades.

The effort by Suharto and the army to prevent the rise of a divisive politics growing out of regional, religious, and cultural differences was probably essential to Indonesia's success during the past 30 years. Now, however, as the end of the Suharto era approaches, it can be seen as the nation's biggest handicap.

Perhaps the most noteworthy void in Indonesian life today is the lack of a robust civic life. The regime emphasizes *mufakat* and *musyawarat*, words that mean "consultation" and "consensus." But though the words connote a mushy consensual decision-making process, the truth is that Indonesia's political culture makes a virtue of an almost complete lack of overt contention in the political arena. For 30 years, Suharto has marginalized virtually every Indonesian leader with enough independence, popular support, or charisma to emerge as a potential challenger. He has tried to root out or control not only all manifestations of ethnic or religious politics but more narrowly focused activism as well. After this summer's rioting, Suharto and his top officers warned ominously that the environmentalists, social reformers, and labor activists attracted to Megawati's cause had been seduced, "consciously or unconsciously," as Suharto put it "by PKI-like" rhetoric.

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Suharto's hatred of communism and distrust of politicized Islam only slightly exceed his dislike of liberal democratic politics—the fractious, quibbling politics of "50 plus one," as Sukarno used to say. Twenty-five years ago his successor created a mostly for-show electoral triptych composed of two government-created political parties, and a pro-government organization, Golkar, which functions as the government's parliamentary party. Megawati's PDI originated in a forced merger of pre-1965 nationalist and socialist parties; the Development Unity Party (PPP) combines the principal Muslim-oriented political parties that existed in 1971. Golkar and its putative opponents come to life every five years to contest a carefully

stage-managed parliamentary election which Golkar always wins, although never so overwhelmingly as to discredit the entire process.

Such acts of electoral artifice have a comfortable intellectual foundation in parts of Asia. In the early 1990s, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and other Malaysian, Singaporean, and Chinese writers castigated the West for its "corrupting" embrace of individualism and human rights. Asia, they said, stood out by contrast as a place where social responsibility, order, and stability take pride of place. It is an argument that Suharto and his allies could have comfortably endorsed.

On the other side of the debate over Asian and Western values, editorial writers at periodicals such as the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Asian Wall Street Journal* point to the "inevitability" of greater political freedom once economic freedom is widened. Rapid economic growth normally creates a larger middle class which, so the argument goes, makes a strong push for greater political participation. The Clinton administration's embrace of "democratic enlargement" as a major U.S. foreign policy objective leans heavily on this model of democratic transformation. The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta reckons that Indonesia's middle class (households with annual incomes of at least \$5,000) now includes between 14 and 18 million people, or roughly eight percent of the total population. But it is not at all clear that the Indonesian middle class is ready to take risks for a new political system after Suharto is gone.

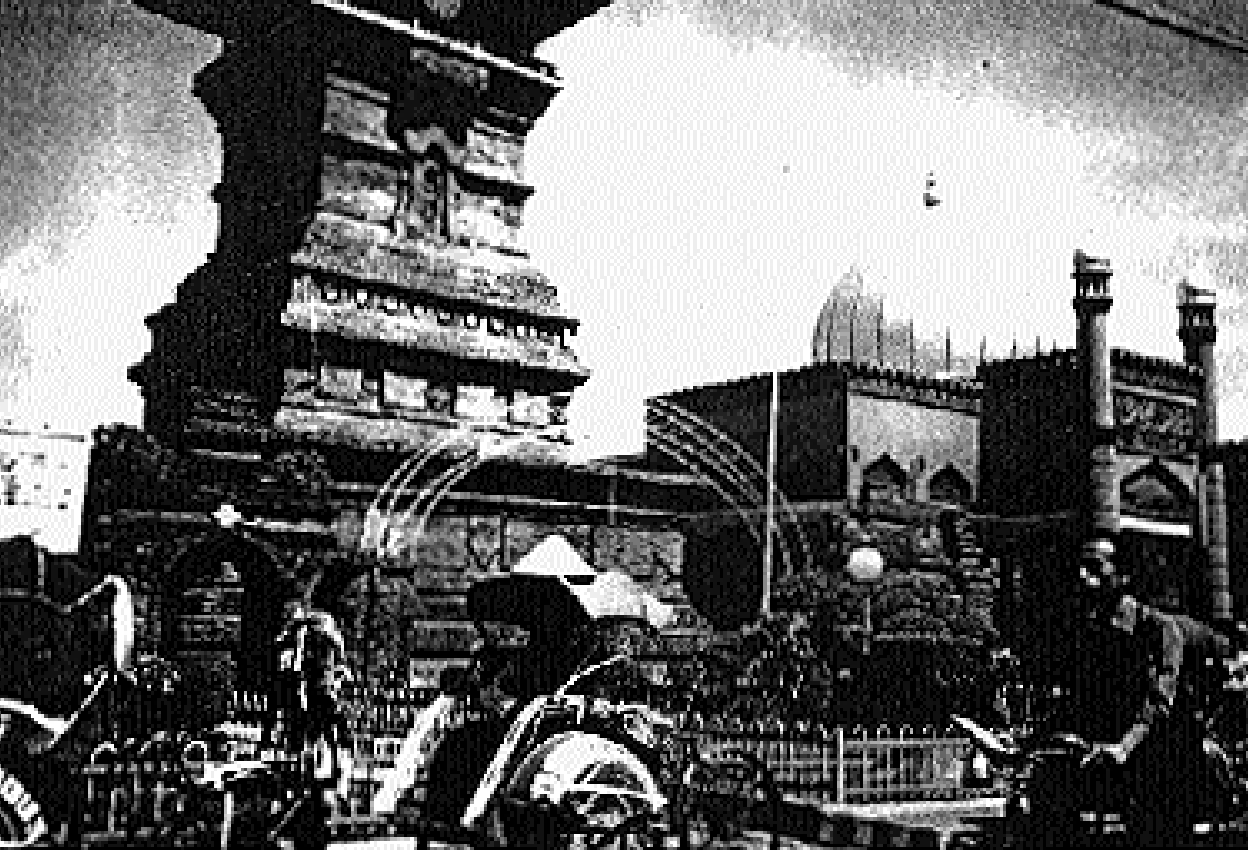
"Leaving aside the arguments about whether middle class size has much to do with democratization or not," Indonesia specialist Douglas Ramage says, "it is likely that the Indonesian middle class will not, at any time in the foreseeable future, be large enough or sufficiently united to act in concert politically." Indonesian environment minister Sarwono Kusumuaatmadja complains that he is "tired of analyses contending that Indonesia's growing middle class will agitate for democratization." Sarwono sees Indonesia's middle class as quite different from that of Thailand or Taiwan, where democratic reform has gone much further, in part because its members are very beholden to the economic opportunities provided by Suharto's authoritarian government.

**I**f correct, this view augurs poorly for any rapid moves toward more representative and participatory government in post-Suharto Indonesia. There is, moreover, precious little raw material with which to build democracy. To be sure, the country has a superabundance of pluralism—ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural. Its 27 provinces are home to 366 distinct ethnic groups and dozens of distinct language groups. But mature institutions of *political* pluralism do not exist.

The trade-off between political and economic development is felt acutely in Indonesia. Suharto's foreign and internal critics tend to minimize the importance of the economic transformation wrought by the New Order. Yet the fear of jeopardizing these solid gains probably remains the regime's single most effective claim on public support. The fear of disruption can delay change just as effectively as troops and tear gas. In any succession scenario, stability will probably remain the overriding concern—to the generals, to peasants, to foreign investors, and to the middle class.

Thus, even after Suharto leaves, Indonesia will probably remain essentially autocratic, with a clear delineation of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" political behavior. There is little reason to expect a quick democratization and the rise of a more parliamentarily-focused, less hierarchical system. Indonesia's





*With its Hindu-style minaret and its more obviously Islamic main hall, this mosque in Java embodies Indonesia's syncretic style of worship.*

only fully free election occurred during the despised parliamentary period, back in 1955. Electoral democracy suffers from its association in the popular mind with the revolving-door governments of the early post-independence era. And almost every political experience of Indonesia's people, from the era of the great kingdoms, with their elaborate political culture of deference, to the revolts and upheavals of the recent past, argues for strong, unitary leadership from the center.

Indonesia's future will probably look more like its present than its past. Certain styles of governance will continue. The stage-managed People's Consultative Assembly will be convened to anoint whomever emerges to step into the general's shoes. Unlike the former Yugoslavia or Soviet Union—also multiethnic entities dominated by authoritarian leaders—Indonesia has achieved a transcendent nationalism. It is not an ethnic time bomb waiting to go off once its Tito departs the scene. Fifty, even 20, years ago, citizens of the country still counted themselves Batak, Sundanese, Balinese, Malay, or Javanese—to name just a few of the country's ethnic groups. With few exceptions (the East Timorese are one), they feel today that they are Indonesians.

Similarly, even active participation in the Suharto succession by politically energized Muslims will not likely lead to an Islamic state or even, as in Malaysia, to a state embracing Islam as its official religion. Indonesian tolerance, the country's syncretic approach to religious practice and traditions, will continue because they are rooted in the Javanese heartland.

Standing against all of these arguments for continuity is the fact that the New Order, which would serve as the foundation for whatever came next, itself enjoys only uncertain legitimacy. Outsiders wondered why Suharto insisted, as recently as the early 1990s, on executing a number of alleged

coup plotters from 1965 and why a number of others remained in jail for decades. These elderly men, after all, posed no plausible danger to Suharto.

Except, perhaps, to Suharto's version of what happened during those hours back at the end of September in that crucible year. For many suspect that Suharto played a classic double game that night of September 30, 1965; that he caught the Communists off guard and eliminated his chief rivals within the military for good measure. Whatever the truth, the New Order began in the way most dynastic changes began in ancient Java, with acts of betrayal and then a slaughter of lesser players—which in 1965 extended to a great crowd of innocents.

With this history, no one can be sure that Indonesia's next transition, that polite term still given the process, will be as "orderly" as Indonesians and others would like. But Suharto, the enigmatically smiling general with his ambiguous past, the indulgent family man, the master of Javanese obliqueness, must soon pass from the scene. Whatever autocrat emerges to promise the preservation of unity within this archipelago's extraordinary diversity, Indonesians whose memories extend back to 1965 can only hope that the new ruler comes to power swiftly and painlessly.

