

A BACKGROUND PAPER

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I. INTRODUCTION

On May 29, some 125 million Indonesians will be eligible to go to the polls to select 425 members of the national parliament (the House of Representatives, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat -- DPR) as well as representatives to provincial and district-level assemblies. These elections are perhaps the most vivid example of the fundamental paradox facing Indonesia's political development at the end of the 20th century. Indonesia's population is becoming increasingly affluent, better educated and more politically aware. But the "New Order" government of President Soeharto adheres to a 30-year-old political system that seeks to control virtually all aspects of political life. Moreover, the elections come at a sensitive and uncertain time in Indonesia's modern history, as Indonesians contemplate the transition to a post-Soeharto era and grapple with rising political, social and religious tensions. These parliamentary elections are not competitive by international standards, but they offer a brief opportunity for a higher level of independent political activity than is usually tolerated by the military-backed government. As such, the elections present a window of opportunity both for politically active Indonesians and for others concerned about Indonesia's political development.

This paper is intended to provide information on the upcoming 1997 parliamentary elections. It does not represent a comprehensive assessment of the Indonesian election system or the political environment. Rather it identifies and addresses specific issues and questions that concerned observers should be aware of as they seek to draw conclusions about the elections. The paper is based on the work of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in Indonesia over the past year.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1997 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The outcome of the parliamentary elections is predictable. The ruling Golkar party can be expected to win a sizable majority of the vote (it has set a target of 70.02%), which will provide a mandate for President Soeharto either to begin a seventh term as president or to anoint his successor. The indirect election of the President and Vice President will occur in March 1998.

These elections occur within the context of a political system that

severely constrains meaningful political competition. These elections fail to meet internationally recognized standards for open elections in a number of important ways. Among these are the fact that the opposition parties are creations of the government, the parties' candidate lists are screened by the government, and the civil service is required to vote for Golkar. Political campaigning is regulated for content as well as for time and place. Access to media is limited, candidate broadcast speeches must be vetted, and the final tabulation of results is a closed process.

Despite the elections' ritualistic character and the certainty of victory for Golkar, the elections come at a time in Indonesia's political development that make them somewhat more significant than previous electoral experiences. President Soeharto is almost 77 years old, and there is growing concern about both his intentions regarding a seventh term in office and the untested succession process. As a result, Indonesia effectively has already begun the transition to a "post-Soeharto" era, with the government, Golkar and military more factionalized and more concerned with maintaining control.

At the same time, Indonesian society is becoming more affluent, better educated, and more diverse. A whole generation of voters between the ages of 18 and 30 have little or no recollection of the chaotic and bloody period leading up to Soeharto's accession. Such socioeconomic and demographic trends serve to erode respect for the paternalistic government of the last 30 years.

Public discontent continues to mount over growing income disparities, corruption, labor conditions, unresponsive government, and abuses by the military and police. Sporadic riots have occurred throughout Indonesia over the past year. While the immediate cause of the unrest is debated and often attributed to ethnic and/or religious conflict, many analysts agree that the riots reflect an underlying discontent with the political and economic status quo, along with the absence of effective public channels for voicing that discontent.

In this context of uncertainty and change, the elections take on a significance to politically active Indonesians and to others concerned with Indonesia's political development that is largely divorced from the actual outcome. Specifically, the elections are significant for at least five reasons:

1) *The expression of discontent.* The parliamentary elections, which occur only once every five years, provide a rare opportunity for the public to express dissatisfaction by voting for the opposition or by abstaining. An open manifestation of dissent by even a significant minority of voters would be an important development because it would counter the government's claim to represent a "consensus" within the Indonesian society.

2) *Airing of public issues.* The elections also provide the primary, if not only, officially sanctioned channel for overt political competition in Indonesia. The issues raised by the three political parties during the campaign (e.g. corruption, political reform, an increasing income gap, economic development) provide insights into the concerns of Indonesia's political elite and are indicators of issues that may drive future political debate.

3) *Violence and repression.* Indonesian elections tend to be accompanied by a cycle of increased violence and repression. The cycle, which involves significant human costs and potential political costs, stems in part from a concern about stability. Election-related violence reinforces the opinion of some government officials that

democracy and stability are incompatible, and so they institute further restrictions on political activity. The absence of nonviolent means of expressing discontent, however, contributes to further violence.

4) *Political realignment.* The elections are having a potentially significant effect on the two officially sanctioned "opposition" parties: the Development Unity Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI). The traditional three-party political equation was disrupted last year by the government's ouster of Megawati Sukarnoputri from the chairmanship of PDI. This has led to the fragmentation of the PDI and to the increased assertiveness of the PPP.

5) *Emergence of domestic election monitoring.* These are the first elections in which a domestic group, the Independent Election Monitoring Committee (KIPP), has been established to monitor the elections. Though nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have monitored certain aspects of previous elections (e.g. media coverage, intimidation of voters, irregularities in the vote count), KIPP is the first organization created with the sole purpose of monitoring elections. As such, it is perhaps at this point the only voice in Indonesia offering a mechanism for truly independent public participation in the electoral process.

III. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

A. *Indonesia Today*

President Soeharto and the ruling Golkar party have been in power for 30 years and have led the country through a period of political stability and remarkable economic growth. According to the World Bank, over the last 25 years Indonesia has experienced average annual growth of six percent. Twenty-seven years ago, about 60 percent of the population lived below the poverty level; today this number is less than 15 percent. By the end of this century the World Bank estimates that the per capita income of Indonesia's nearly 200 million people will exceed \$1,000.

Under Soeharto, Indonesia, the fourth most populous nation in the world as well as the country with the largest Muslim population, has also played an increasingly important role in regional and international affairs. Indonesia is a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and plays an active role in ASEAN and other regional groupings like the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Non-Aligned Movement. At the same time, Jakarta maintains close ties with the United States, Japan and other industrialized nations. These ties reflect Indonesia's growing economic importance, its strategic position, its influence in ASEAN and other regional and international organizations, and its role as a moderate Muslim country. However, Indonesia's record of human rights abuses and its invasion and ongoing occupation of East Timor continue to deprive the nation of the full measure of international stature and respect sought by its leaders.

Despite economic and diplomatic achievements, discontent with the government has risen in recent years. While Soeharto has been credited with deregulating the economy, opening the country to foreign investors and generally increasing the standard of living in Indonesia, there is a growing sense that not all Indonesians are benefiting from the growth and that some benefit greatly at the expense of others. Many Indonesians believe that the family of the President has amassed enormous wealth and owns a significant percentage of the country's most successful business ventures. Government-sanctioned monopolies and other interventions have

fueled the perception that the rules of economic competition can be adjusted to favor those in power. This perception, in turn, adds to existing frustrations over the growing income disparity and increases demand for greater accountability and openness in government.

Public discontent with the Soeharto government also centers around the lack of political freedom in Indonesia. Throughout Soeharto's 30 years in power, the military-backed government has tolerated little political opposition and has imprisoned many political opponents, including members of politicized Islamic groups. The government has prohibited the existence of trade and labor union activity and has heavily censored the press. As the middle class has grown in Indonesia, so has the demand for greater openness. Even Soeharto's recent efforts to "Islamicize" the government and to ally himself with the more fundamentalist Muslim factions in Indonesia have been met with displeasure among some in the military and among more moderate Muslims.

Against the backdrop of increasing discontent in the long term, recent events in Indonesia seem to be following a short-term pattern established in recent Indonesian political history whereby the government, perhaps in response to increasing expressions of popular discontent, somewhat relaxes its tight grip on political power until signs of real opposition emerge, at which point the government again limits opportunities for political openness. To a large extent, this cycle follows the electoral cycle. Groups eager for a more open electoral system begin to voice their discontent a year or two before the parliamentary elections, and the government restricts political activity until the elections are completed. The current cycle, however, is different from preceding ones, in that both public expressions of discontent and the ensuing crackdown have been more extensive.

B. Political Developments since 1996

The ouster of Megawati. By far the most significant action taken against opposition forces was the ouster of the elected chairperson of PDI, Megawati Sukarnoputri, in June 1996. Megawati, daughter of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, was ousted from her position as Chair of one of two officially recognized "opposition" political parties, the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI), during a government-backed party congress. Megawati's election as chairperson in 1993 represented the first time an elected party leader had not been hand-picked by President Soeharto.

Claiming that her ouster was illegal, Megawati and her supporters refused to vacate the PDI headquarters in Jakarta. Supporters occupied the headquarters around the clock for a month, holding "free speech fora" on a regular basis during which Megawati supporters publicly stated their desire for greater political freedom and in some cases their opposition to the Soeharto regime. (It is important to note, however, that Megawati herself does not "oppose" the Soeharto regime and has publicly stated as much.) On July 27, government troops stormed the PDI headquarters to evict Megawati's supporters and riots erupted. About five people were killed, more than 50 were injured, and numerous buildings were burned in the worst riots to take place in Jakarta in over a decade.

Arrests and Detentions. In the wake of the riots, the Indonesian government engaged in a major crackdown on pro-democracy activists in an apparent effort to quell all potential political opposition. More than 200 political activists were interrogated, detained or arrested after the riots for their alleged involvement in inciting the riots or otherwise disturbing national security. Nine members of the

recently formed but unofficial People's Democratic Party (PRD), including its chairman Budiman Sudjatmiko, were sentenced in April to prison terms of up to 13 years under Indonesia's Anti-Subversion Law. The Anti-Subversion Law, which carries a maximum penalty of death, makes it a crime to engage in acts that could "distort, undermine, or deviate from the state ideology or broad outlines of state policy, or which could disseminate feelings of hostility or arouse hostility, disturbances, or anxiety among the population." (U.S. Department of State, Indonesia Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996.)

Two other leading pro-democracy activists have also been arrested and charged with subversion. Independent labor leader Muchtar Pakpahan was arrested in August for his alleged involvement in the July 27 riots, and former parliamentarian Sri Bintang Pamungkas was arrested in March for sending out holiday greeting cards in which he urged people to boycott the May 29 elections.

Violence. Frequent riots have occurred throughout Indonesia since July 27 of last year. The immediate cause of the violence has varied from ethnic and religious conflict to direct campaign-related confrontation. The extent to which this violence is politically motivated, and the degree to which violence continues to play a role in these elections, may provide some insight into the nature of the political transition to come.

The recent violence is a disturbing reminder of the bloodshed that occurred in Indonesia in 1965, a memory that remains vivid in the minds of the older generation, and increases concern about political stability. In 1965 officers in the presidential guard regiment, in apparent cooperation with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), attempted a coup in which they murdered a number of senior generals. The Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI), with the help of Muslim groups, retaliated by killing thousands of PKI supporters and virtually eradicating the party. The violence spread to the countryside where hundreds of thousands of Indonesians alleged to be communists were killed. It is estimated that between half a million and a million people died.

Given the memory of the traumatic events of 1965, the government uses the fear of social instability to justify its intolerance of dissenting voices. Moreover, the memory of those events, which are associated in the minds of many with the communist PKI, makes it easier to scapegoat dissenters as "communists."

Seeds of Political Reform. The prospect of a transition of power in the near future, coupled with an increasing demand for greater political openness, has generated several attempts to initiate public dialogue about possible reform. In recent months, academics, quasi-governmental think-tanks, and some within the military and government establishment have floated certain ideas about electoral and other political reforms as "trial balloons" in the domestic press.

Such trial balloons have included, among other things, the possibility of reconsidering the army's role in politics ("dual function," or *dwifungsi*, allows the military a role in politics as well as national defense), rethinking the meaning and role of an opposition, liberalizing the existing requirement that civil servants vote for Golkar, allowing the advocacy of boycotting elections, and inviting foreign election observers. Each of these ideas has drawn an official response rejecting further discussion, but they have not disappeared from public debate. In fact, the extent and nature of continued efforts to

highlight inequities in the existing electoral system and the degree to which they are tolerated by the government could provide key insights into the nature of the transition to come and the possibilities for long-term political reform.

IV. PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS

A. Political Parties

Only three political parties are officially recognized in Indonesia. They include the ruling Golkar party and two "opposition" parties: the Development Unity Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI). Multiple parties competed in Indonesian elections until 1975, when Soeharto's New Order government passed a law limiting the number of legal political parties to three: Golkar, PPP and PDI.

In several important respects the two competing political parties, PPP and PDI, are not genuine opposition groups. Both were formed by government-mandated mergers of existing parties: PPP combined several Muslim parties and PDI was formed from Christian and nationalist parties. The ideology and to a lesser extent the platforms of both parties are determined by law, and all candidates for office are screened by the government. Neither party has ever nominated an alternative to Soeharto for presidential election.

The two opposition parties also face structural obstacles that limit their capacity to represent a serious opposition to Golkar. First, both parties are made up of artificial coalitions of minority parties, which has hindered the development of strong leadership and has resulted in factionalization within the parties. Second, the government is the major financier of the parties, which leads to obvious limitations. Third, the government imposes its preference for party leadership, as demonstrated by the ouster of Megawati. Finally, despite the fact that by law the opposition parties are permitted to have official representation at the village level, in reality they are denied such access by the military. The result is that only Golkar has party offices at the village level throughout Indonesia.

All three political parties are constitutionally required to pledge their support for the state philosophy of Pancasila, or the "Five Guiding Principles": monotheism, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy by consensus and social justice. Pancasila forms the basis of Indonesian political discourse and serves as a guiding force in Indonesian governance.

Golkar. Golkar, the ruling party, is described in the election law not as a political party, but as a network of "functional groups." (Golkar stands for Sekretariat Bersama Glongan Karya, or Joint Secretariat of Functional Groups.) It claims to embody the aspirations of all elements of society, thereby diminishing the need for other political parties.

Golkar was formed in 1964 as a coalition of 200 social and political groups which purportedly focused on issues relevant to farmers, workers, veterans, women, and youth. Today, Golkar acts more as the political arm of the Soeharto government. It claims a total membership of 25 million people, including most members of the military and the civil service. President Soeharto selects the leadership of Golkar. The current chairman, Minister of Information H. Harmoko, became the first civilian to hold that office.

Golkar has consistently won a majority of seats in the DPR, and in 1987 won over 70 percent of the vote. In the 1992 parliamentary

elections, however, Golkar experienced a relative decline from 72 percent in 1987 to 68 percent, while the two "opposition" parties, PPP and PDI, increased their share of the vote. For the 1997 elections, Golkar has stated that its goal is to win 70.02 percent of the vote.

The Development Unity Party (PPP). The Development Unity Party (Partai Pembangunan Persatuan -- PPP) was formed in the 1975 government-enforced merger of political parties. PPP is a rural-based consortium of Muslim groups which has consistently chipped away at Golkar's dominance in the parliament. Despite losing significant support when Nahdlatul Ulama (N.U.), the country's largest Muslim organization, pulled out of the PPP consortium in 1984, the party won 16 percent of the vote in 1987 and 17 percent in 1992. The PPP maintains significant popular support at the grassroots level and in rural areas, and though it has had difficulty with internal factionalism in recent years, it has emerged during the current campaign period as the stronger of the two opposition parties. The PPP is led by Ismail Hasan Metareum.

The Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI). The Indonesian Democracy Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia -- PDI) was formed in the 1975 merger of five minority parties, the largest of which was the Indonesian Nationalist Party, or PNI. Today, PDI is often regarded as the party of the non-Muslims. PDI has also enjoyed discreet support from some elements within the military. Several retired generals and other officers joined PDI, and more than 15 were listed as PDI candidates for the 1992 parliamentary elections. PDI gained 15 percent of the vote in 1992. PDI was predicted to win more seats in the 1997 parliamentary elections, but since Megawati's ouster the party has experienced a significant loss of popular support. Megawati was replaced by Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Soeryadi.

Nongovernmental Organizations and Domestic Election Monitoring
The past decade has seen remarkable growth in Indonesian civil society. Hundreds of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have formed, and, at times, they have been granted increasing amounts of political space. Though many NGOs are not officially recognized by the government, they are often allowed to exist as "social organizations" and, as such, have contributed to the expansion of dialogue about democracy and the need for political reform.

A significant new factor in the electoral equation is the advent of a new nongovernmental organization, the Independent Election Monitoring Committee (Komite Independen Pemantau Pemilu -- KIPP), Indonesia's first independent domestic election monitoring organization. Although Indonesian election law allows party representatives to observe registration, voting and counting, the close affiliation between the ruling party and the government-controlled election administration has led to allegations of fraud in past elections. In response to these charges, the government established an official monitoring body, the Committee for the Supervision and Implementation of Elections (PANWASLAK), which includes representatives from the three official parties. The Committee, however, is government-run and its members are government-appointed. KIPP was formed in response to the need for a genuinely independent monitoring effort and the need to promote electoral reform.

Existing nongovernmental organizations have monitored certain aspects of previous elections (such as media coverage, intimidation of voters and irregularities in the vote count), but KIPP is the first organization created with the sole purpose of monitoring elections. KIPP was established in early 1996 by civic activists, journalists,

intellectuals, lawyers and former government officials to monitor the parliamentary elections. It is chaired by Goenawan Mohamad, a well-known independent journalist who was the editor of the news weekly Tempo, which was closed down in 1994. With 46 branches nationwide and thousands of potential volunteers, KIPP enjoys significant popular support.

KIPP was modeled after similar monitoring organizations elsewhere in Asia, including the Philippines' National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) in Bangladesh, and PollWatch in Thailand. These election monitoring organizations have contributed to more genuine election processes by encouraging fairer campaign practices and a more informed electorate, as well as by reducing the possibility of fraud and irregularities on election day. Moreover, election monitoring organizations have motivated citizens to become involved in public affairs and have transformed attitudes about participation in politics and governance.

KIPP is not recognized by the Indonesian government, and at times KIPP leaders have feared arrest. Emphasizing its role as a nonpartisan, nonconfrontational organization, KIPP has thus far managed to avoid significant government censure. One KIPP training session in the city of Ujung Pandang, however, was closed down despite the fact that organizers followed government requirements for notifying local police. Some government officials have publicly stated that KIPP members may observe elections from outside the polling stations as long as they do not interfere with the process. It remains to be seen how the government will define "interfere" and whether KIPP members will be hindered or harassed on election day.

In the face of some government opposition, KIPP has scaled back its initial plans and expectations for the 1997 elections. KIPP will focus its monitoring efforts on certain geographic areas, determined by the strength of the local KIPP chapter as well as by the history of election-related conflict in the area. KIPP plans to continue to monitor media coverage of the campaign, election-related intimidation and violence, and, to a limited extent, the counting of votes cast on election day. KIPP will not be allowed to observe the tabulation of votes at the provincial and national levels.

Although KIPP will not be able to affect the electoral system's inherent bias toward the ruling Golkar party, an independent, credible assessment of the electoral process would be an important development. If KIPP is successful, it may mark an important step in expanding the role of the nongovernmental sector in Indonesian elections, which could in turn advance the debate on political reform by bringing it into the public domain. A successful citizen movement, whatever the scope, could enhance the acceptance of the importance of citizen participation in the electoral process.

V. THE CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

A. Campaign Regulations

Political party campaign activities in Indonesia, as in other countries, are restricted to an officially designated campaign period preceding election day. While certain campaign regulations are mandated by law, the government has issued a number of additional "guidelines" for the 1997 campaign which further restrict party activity. The new regulations were implemented ostensibly to avoid clashes between party supporters and to maintain stability.

The 1997 regulations include the following (see the Jakarta Post, April 28, 1997):

- street rallies and motorcades, which were integral parts of previous campaigns, have been banned;
- campaigning is limited to specially designated zones, such that no two parties are allowed to campaign in the same geographic area on the same day;
- public gatherings must be held between certain hours of the day and campaign materials may only be posted or hung between certain hours of the evening;
- police must approve the time, location and nature of all proposed campaign activities in advance;
- vehicles used to transport party supporters to political gatherings must be registered with the police;
- material for campaign speeches are required to be in line with the State Policy Guidelines, and broadcast speeches must be approved by the official Election Committee;
- moderators of campaign debates are appointed by the Election Committee;
- no campaign advertising is allowed; and
- all contestants must uphold Pancasila and the Indonesian Constitution and should not "slander" any government officials or government policies.

The new regulations appeared to indicate a significant change in the way the campaign would be conducted. In place of the traditional and popular campaign rallies, the government announced that the new provisions would introduce the idea of a "dialogue campaign," whereby parties would focus on small meetings, usually indoors, where members of the public could pose questions to a political party. The interest in dialogue did not extend to debates between the parties, however.

The new regulations have made it more difficult to organize campaign events because of the lengthy process required for gaining approval. In some cases, PPP has not received permission in time for planned events. The party announced a brief boycott of the campaign in Jakarta and Yogyakarta in protest over the difficulty in gaining permission.

In reality, the campaign has not differed much from previous ones, in part because the parties have essentially ignored one of the key changes from previous elections -- the ban on motor rallies -- and in part because PPP and PDI have objected to certain regulations loudly enough to have them rescinded. In particular, the two parties objected to prohibitions that would have the Election Committee select the discussion moderator who would chair each party's televised dialogue. Following these objections, and after several PPP chapters threatened to boycott the campaign, the government allowed the parties to name their own moderators.

B. Other Forms of Control

In addition to the legal restrictions placed on political parties, political control during the election period manifests itself in other ways. Members of the country's extensive civil service, which also controls the electoral apparatus, are expected to vote for the ruling party. Though not a law per se, this policy of "monoloyalty" is strictly enforced. On February 28, 1997, the Jakarta Post quoted the

Chairman of the Civil Service and Secretary General of the General Elections Institute, Suryatna Subrata, as saying:

Members of Korpri [civil service] must vote Golkar
The current administration is one of Golkar. Therefore the corps members will automatically support and be loyal to the Golkar-dominated government It is one of the consequences of being government employees
. . . Legally, Korpri members are free to vote for any of the three political organizations. However, they are also bound to the statutes of Korpri and the result of its congress which say that members must channel their political aspirations through Golkar.

The Jakarta Post continues, "Suryatna said the policy of 'monoloyalty' for civil servants was flexible, depending on which group was ruling the country. If Golkar is no longer in power, this monoloyalty policy would be reevaluated." The monoloyalty policy is reinforced by the fact that thousands of polling stations are placed within government office buildings, and voting is held during working hours.

The military also plays a role at election time in ensuring continued Golkar domination. The Army, which is closely associated with Golkar, has intensified its preparedness for the elections, with 189,000 troops having reportedly been put on alert at the beginning of the campaign period. In certain regions that are historically considered "trouble spots" by the government (e.g. Aceh, East Timor and Irian Jaya), the Army has increased its presence and its visibility in preparation for the elections, as it has to a lesser extent in areas that have emerged as specifically election-related problem areas, such as Central Java. Given that the military as a whole is closely associated with President Soeharto and the ruling Golkar party, its presence on election day -- particularly in smaller villages -- may well influence voters.

C. The "Golput" Movement

In response to the fact that the election system favors the ruling party, by law and through other forms of political control, some Indonesians have turned to "golput," or an election boycott, as a way of voicing their opposition to the system. Golput is an abbreviation for golongan putih, or "white group," which technically refers to mismarking the ballot or boycotting the elections out of protest. As with all other votes cast, the extent of golput in recent elections has been difficult to assess; the validity of official figures is uncertain because the final tabulation is a closed process. Moreover, the term golput has also been used to refer to any eligible voter who does not participate on election day, whether as a protest or not. In any event, golput has become a major factor in the upcoming elections.

Golput remains one of the few unanswered questions in these elections. Since Megawati's ouster, a key question has been whether her supporters would vote golput. In April Megawati publicly urged her supporters not to participate in the campaign and on May 22 announced that she herself would not vote. She did not explicitly call for others to boycott. Certain PPP leaders also had publicly called for a boycott of the campaign. Eight member organizations of Nahdlatul Ulama (N.U.), Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, publicly stated their position that it would be acceptable for voters to boycott the elections if they so chose, but their leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, criticized this position. Former parliamentarian Sri Bintang Pamungkas was arrested for encouraging Indonesians to vote golput.

The government has strongly criticized the golput movement. While

acknowledging that people have the right to not vote, officials have made it clear that they will not permit anyone to encourage others to exercise that right. The government's concern over the golput movement is a clear manifestation of its desire to maintain its claim to represent a consensus within the Indonesian society.

In 1992, the official figures put voter turnout at 90 percent. Accordingly, some have characterized the entire 10 percent that did not vote as golput. But given that voting is not mandatory, it seems unpersuasive to claim all people who have failed to go to the polls have done so as a protest.

Whether or not there will be a significant protest vote, what form it will take, and the accuracy of the estimates made remain to be seen. What is clear at this point, however, is that a significant increase in golput figures will be seen as a vote of no confidence for the current regime.

D. The PPP and PDI Campaigns

Notwithstanding the extent of government control over the electoral process and the leadership of opposition parties, the election campaign has been in many ways a vigorous one. The extent and stridency of campaigning against Golkar and the government seems paradoxical, given Golkar's control. But some degree of criticism is accepted, and in any event authorities seem increasingly less able to fully contain expressions of discontent. Moreover, the opposition parties, especially the PPP, have become increasingly assertive, as leaders around the country and young party supporters have pressed a vigorous campaign.

Although the election law and campaign regulations aim to gear parties toward presenting competing plans for implementing national development, in practice the campaign appears to be shifting to a focus on issues of governance that are important to voters. Included among the issues raised during the campaign are corruption, accountability, freedom of expression and human rights, reform of the election law, "clean" elections and the neutrality of the civil service. Even Golkar has followed the lead of the minority parties in putting forth its plan to combat corruption. Education, religious harmony, narrowing the economic gap, development for the poor, and "moral decay" have also been issues raised during the campaign, which may influence the content of political debate in the future.

At another level, however, the campaign is less about competing versions of governance and issues of concern to voters than it is about protest and challenge. The campaign appears to have become a test of the parties' abilities to demonstrate their strength. Although the main scheduled campaign events are speeches or dance performances in parks or other public places, the focus of public attention is more on what happens in the streets going to and from the events than on the events themselves. The street rallies present an opportunity for the parties to demonstrate the extent of their support. The PPP in particular appears insistent upon using street rallies to achieve a series of brief moments of power -- power over traffic laws or power over taxi drivers and pedestrians. In the same vein, PPP's pre-election maneuvers, including threats to boycott the campaign, confrontational response to Golkar supporters' attempts to paint public property yellow (the Golkar color), and strong criticism of the campaign regulations can be seen as important tactics in developing the image that the party is strong enough to stand up to Golkar.

This subtle battle for control of the streets has been played out in

particular through the "color wars" that have marked the campaign and the pre-campaign period. Each political party is associated with a certain color -- Golkar is yellow, PPP is green and PDI is red. Even golput has been associated with a color: white. Traditionally, public property (such as road markers, street-side fences, roadside curbs) is painted yellow at the time of elections. Critics complain that "yellowization," or kuningisasi, unfairly associates the ruling party with public property and serves as a pervasive reminder of the extent of Golkar wealth and control. The opposition parties have also tried to paint property the colors of their parties in protest, thereby creating "color wars." In 1997, such color wars have erupted in violence between Golkar and PPP supporters in several towns in Central Java, a populous and strategically importance region.

In addition to the confrontation over "yellowization," PPP has enacted a second important and apparently successful act of defiance during this campaign period. The party has refused to abide by new campaign restrictions on street rallies, a popular form of campaigning. From the beginning of the campaign, PPP supporters have taken to the streets in massive green convoys, which the government has criticized but has not stopped. In fact, as such rallies have been so successful in demonstrating popular support for PPP, Golkar itself has turned to using street rallies despite the regulation against them. These steps have strengthened the PPP's appearance of independence and have provided an unusual demonstration of the limitations of government control over politics.

The PPP's assertiveness stands in sharp contrast to the lackluster performance of the "official" PDI faction, which appears to have lost the support of many PDI members since Megawati's ouster. The party, currently led by Deputy Speaker Soeryadi, is divided and weakened, and in many cases has had to cancel events or carry forward with rallies despite minimal attendance. Although Megawati has urged her supporters to boycott the campaign, there have been several incidents where her followers have disrupted PDI/Soeryadi activities. PDI officials also complain that they have limited funds for party activities.

A potentially significant -- and unexpected -- development in the campaign period is a loose alliance across religious lines that may be forming between Megawati supporters and certain elements of the PPP. (Although Megawati herself is Muslim, many of her supporters are Christian.) While the true extent of Megawati's popular support was unclear before her ouster, she has since become a symbol of political opposition to the Soeharto regime. Some PPP street convoys have carried a new slogan: "Mega Bintang." ("Bintang," or star, is the symbol used to represent PPP on the ballot.) It remains to be seen whether this somewhat unusual alliance across political and religious lines will be formalized by Megawati and the PPP leadership and to what extent it will be tolerated by the government. Notwithstanding a government ban on any public reference to the informal coalition, PPP supporters have continued to carry banners supporting the coalition and wear T-shirts with pictures of Megawati. The fact that the alliance is even a possibility is an important indication of a new popular dynamic in Indonesian elections. Citizens are finding vehicles to express opposition, despite the government's attempts to prevent such developments.

E. Campaign Violence

The campaign has resulted in more than 70 deaths thus far, mostly due to accidents during motor rallies. Incidents of direct violence related to the election have also occurred, some in the period immediately preceding the official start of the campaign period. A

confrontation between Golkar and PPP supporters erupted into violence in Yogyakarta, Central Java, in April, when the PPP office there was attacked, reportedly by Golkar supporters. Violence between the two factions of PDI broke out during a campaign rally on the first day of the campaign period in Surabaya, East Java. In addition to Yogyakarta, clashes between PPP and Golkar have occurred in other towns in Central Java, including Pekalongan, Temanggung and Banjarnegara, among others. Several PPP and Golkar campaign rallies in Jakarta have erupted into violence as well.

F. Media Coverage of the Campaign

With the growth of both private and international media, Indonesia's media are becoming more diversified. The country now has several prominent news magazines, several major papers in Jakarta, papers in most other major cities, and three news-related television stations (one government-run and two owned by individuals in or close to the Soeharto family). The media operate under government restrictions, although the extent of the restriction varies. Television stations generally present less information that is critical of the government than do the print media, although even the specific allegations of government corruption that emerge in newspapers are often the result of statements from government sources rather than the result of investigative reporting. Newspapers will not present criticism directed at the military or the president.

News organizations that are seen as having become too critical may have their licenses revoked by the Ministry of Information, as was the case in 1994, when the popular news weekly Tempo was closed down. Journalists critical of the government through the underground news media have also been arrested for expressing dissent. Most recently, on April 7, Andi Syahputra, printer of the underground magazine Suara Independen (Voice of Independence), was convicted and sentenced in Jakarta District Court to 30 months in prison for having insulted President Soeharto.

As television reaches more than 65 percent of the Indonesian population, it is recognized as an effective means of reaching voters. During the campaign period all three news-related television stations have provided extensive coverage of campaign activities through periodic news bulletins and a half-hour campaign dialogue for one of the three parties every evening. Coverage of the campaign has been fairly well balanced with respect to the time allotted to the political parties, with each of the three parties receiving several minutes on each news program, which include images of campaign activities in different parts of the country and reports on campaign themes.

Some analysts have found that before the official campaign period, however, there was less balance in television coverage. The Independent Journalists Alliance (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen -- AJI), for example, monitored television news coverage of the three parties during three weeks in October, November and December and found that Golkar appeared on television news 19 times during that period, PDI twice and PPP once.

Finally, television news has not covered several stories that have received lead headlines in newspapers during the campaign period. One example was PPP's allegation that election officials had determined results in advance of election day. Another example was the limited television coverage given to the recent emergence of a possible alliance between Megawati and PPP, which has been the lead story in numerous newspapers and the subject of at least one editorial in which the alliance is referred to as an "alliance for change"

through which voters are sending a strong message about the need for political reform (Jakarta Post, May 12, 1997).

VI. CONCLUSION

These elections may have two important implications for the future of political reform in Indonesia. First, despite the government's best efforts to prevent it, a genuine and more unified political opposition movement may emerge. Second, the increasingly obvious limitations of the election process may serve to fuel the efforts of Indonesia's increasingly confident and sophisticated civil society to advocate electoral and other political reforms.

Despite the fact that the outcome of these elections is predictable, the electoral process is contributing to a growing demand for a broader social dialogue about political reform. Ultimately, real reform in the short term will depend in large part, as does much of Indonesian public life, upon the decisions and actions of one man, President Soeharto. But it is a time of dramatic change in Indonesian society. The most important contribution the international community can make is to recognize and encourage the forces of political reform developing within the government, political parties and civil society of Indonesia.

APPENDIX: ESSENTIALS OF THE INDONESIAN ELECTIONS

I. Parliamentary Elections

A. 425 of the 500 members of the House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat -- DPR) will be elected. The other 75 members are members of the military appointed by the President.

B. Voters will also elect representatives to 27 provincial assemblies and more than three hundred district-level assemblies.

II. Election of the President and Vice President

The President and Vice President are elected by the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat -- MPR). The MPR meets once every five years to elect the two highest officials in Indonesia and to set government policy for the next five-year period. The MPR consists of 1000 members, including the 500 elected and appointed members of the DPR as well as 500 other members appointed by the President. The next meeting of the MPR will take place in the spring of 1998.

III. Electoral System

Indonesia is divided into 27 multi-member districts. Within each district, representatives are elected through a proportional system, whereby voters have a choice only between the three parties, each represented by a slate of candidates. There is no system through which voters can adjust the ranking of the individual candidates on the list. There is no requirement that candidates reside in the region where they are competing. The election law does not specify how remaining seats are allocated.

IV. Candidates

Candidates must belong to one of three officially recognized political parties, the ruling Golkar Party, the Development Unity Party (PPP), or the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI). Candidates must be 21 years or older and must not be a member of the long-banned Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) nor "directly or indirectly involved" in the 1965 coup attempt. Candidates are screened by the military and must receive a letter indicating that they meet these requirements. Members of the military cannot be candidates.

V. *Electorate*

All Indonesians who are age 17 or older (or already married) and who are not members of the PKI, nor involved in the 1965 coup attempt, may vote. Members of the military may not vote. Approximately 125 million Indonesians are eligible to vote, out of a total population of 200 million. Voter turnout was 90 percent in 1992.

VI. *Election Administration*

The national elections are administered under the supervision of the Institute on General Elections, within the Home Affairs Ministry, and by national, provincial and regional election commissions. The three competing parties are allowed to have members on the election commissions at the different levels. The Minister of Home Affairs serves as Chairman of the Institute on General Elections. The system provides no system for appealing electoral registration, candidate refusal, or final results.

VII. *Campaign Period*

Election day is preceded by an officially designated 30-day campaign period in which the three official political parties may conduct their election campaigns. The 1997 campaign period began on April 27 and will end on May 23. The campaign period is separated from election day by a week-long "quiet period" during which no campaigning is allowed.

VIII. *Election Observation*

There is an official government-organized monitoring body called the Committee for Supervision of the Implementation of the Elections (PANWASLAK), which is chaired by the Attorney General. An independent domestic monitoring organization was formed in early 1996 (the Independent Election Monitoring Committee, KIPP) to monitor the elections. For the 1997 elections, the government has indicated that it will accept applications from foreign observers, but it will not extend official invitations.

IX. *Previous Elections*

The May 29 elections will be the sixth in Indonesia since the beginning of the "New Order" period which began in 1966, and the seventh since Indonesia declared independence from the Netherlands in 1945. Golkar won an absolute majority in each of the last six elections. The results in 1992 were: Golkar 68

percent, PPP 17 percent and PDI 15 percent.



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