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**‘Re-organisation’ of Mass Politics and the Weakened National
Revolution in the Era of Neo-Liberal Globalisation**

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Neo-liberal globalisation is being enforced in Indonesia at a specific conjuncture in its national history. Thirty-eight years of authoritarian regime has severely weakened representative institutions and mechanisms, including political parties of all ideological orientations, and suppressed active ideological life. These institutions and mechanisms had been the primary instruments of the Indonesian national revolution and nation construction process that unfolded between the beginning of the twentieth century and 1965. The destruction of these organisations and the maintenance of a so-called corporatist state structure constituted a profound disorganisation of Indonesian society.¹

THE DISORGANISATION OF SOCIETY DURING THE PERIOD OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION, 1965-1998

In the discussion of the New Order state in Indonesia, one widely accepted description, especially among Indonesianists, is that of a 'corporatist state'. The reference points for this description are both ideological and political. Key ideologues of the New Order justified the nature of its rule with an ideology that did sometimes borrow from political ideas associated with Javanese aristocratic political thinking, Japanese fascism or American cold-war era sociology. This ideological justification originated, in many ways, with a justification for the political dominance of what became the ruling party during the New Order period, GOLKAR.

GOLKAR was originally established as the Joint Secretariat of Functional Groups (Sekber GOLKAR) during the early 1960s. The concept of 'functional groups' was central to the corporatist ideology. Society was depicted as made up of social groups defined by their function in society. Each group fulfilled a needed function. Every group complemented the other. There was no basis for friction, antagonism or conflict.

As several scholars have documented, starting especially with David Reeve's history of GOLKAR (Reeve 1985), among others, the elaboration of this concept by Indonesian political groups did draw on elements from so-called organicist thinking. Politically, it was developed as a direct response to the Marxist and semi-Marxist political ideas whose ascendancy was reflected in the rapid growth of communist and left anti-imperialist parties, namely the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and the Sukarnoist Indonesian National Party

– Ali Surachman (PNI-ASU). These latter parties' ideologies emphasised the existence of antagonistic contradictions in society. The PKI described these in orthodox Marxist terms, as bourgeois and landlord facing worker and peasant. Sukarnoists included also a class called 'marhaen', whose objective reality coincided with the massive social layer of semi-proletarians in both town and country (Mintz 1965).

The coming to power of the New Order involved the physical and organisational annihilation of all political and social organisations advocating, supporting or sympathetic with the class oriented politics of the PKI or the PNI-ASU (Cribb 1990). These events, of course, present a contradiction for organicist theory which itself reveals the bankruptcy of the corporatist depiction of society. The victory of this ideology required the violent purge from political activity of at least ten million people, including the physical annihilation of around 1 million and the detention and exile of another 20 to 30 people. All the political, social, and cultural organisations and the extensive media reflecting the views of this section of society were banned and destroyed. These events definitely showed that society was not comprised of collaborating social groupings: a highly antagonistic conflict had taken place.

This contradiction is an important one to note. The repression that took place throughout late 1965, 1966 and 1967, as well as the policies that institutionalised the new political format over the long term, was obviously consciously formulated, organised and implemented. That is to say, the 'organicists' themselves consciously implemented policies of suppression and exclusion and not of harmonisation and inclusion.

The New Order regime did establish political structures that were seemingly in conformity with the 'organicist' or 'corporatist' ideology. Organisations were set up that were supposed to represent or organise the various so-called functional groups. There was an organisation for almost every occupational group in society, even civil servants' wives. All of these were members of GOLKAR. The old party system that grew out of a complex interaction between religio-cultural, ideological and class relations had been fundamentally undermined by the annihilation and suppression of PKI and PNI-ASU. After 1968, the remaining parties were forcibly re-organised by the government to reduce their role to a mere appendage to political life.

However, the 'organicist' or 'corporatist' re-organisation was not a real re-organisation of society. Some of the functional group organisations did operate as effective

tools of the regime, but not to *organise* their respective social sectors but rather to *block* or *restrict* organisation.

Besides the propagation of the GOLKAR functional group 'corporatist' ideology, there was another official new order ideological outlook, that elaborated by the late General Ali Moertopo, who wrote one of the primary New Order political tracts, *Accelerated Modernisation of 25 years Development* (Moertopo 1972). It was in this work he that advanced the idea of the 'floating mass'. The 'floating mass' concept proposed that the mass of the population would not become involved in politics beyond voting every five years. Political party branches were banned from all villages and small towns. This concept was often seen as compatible with the 'organicist' or 'corporatist' approach. If all functional groups were operating in harmony, went the argument, political activity was unnecessary. The citizen's primary role was the one that a person carried out in one's role as a member of a particular functional group.

It was this 'floating mass' policy that the New Order tried to implement. Namely, it enforced a political system where the majority of citizens were denied, as much as possible, any political activity and restricted, as much as possible, to their so-called 'function'. However, this meant that the functional group organisations, which included various trade unions, farmer and fishermen federations, and youth organisations, were turned into mechanisms to block or restrict the actual organisation of these social sectors. Combined with the suppression and restrictions on political party organisation, this so-called corporatist 'floating mass' policy amounted to a fundamental and active *dis-organisation* of society, but most especially a dis-organisation of the vast majority of society that sat outside the boundaries of the newly forming Indonesian capitalist class and its state apparatus.

DIS-ORGANISATION AND THE INDONESIAN NATIONAL REVOLUTION

Does the suppression or control of organisation amount to active dis-organisation? Of course, there can be various levels and extent of suppression of organisation. Even within the organisations established by the New Order to represent sectors such as labour, farmers, fishermen, and teachers some tiny levels of genuine organisation took place. This is clear when we survey the state, for example, of trade unions today, after the fall of Soeharto.

Among the 12,000 registered enterprise unions and the 12 or so registered national unions, a few can trace their embryos back to small kernels of workers or administrators in the New Order's official single trade union, the Indonesia Workers Union Federation (FPSI). The same applies, although to a much lesser extent, in the peasant, fishermen and teachers unions. However, the number of people involved in this carry over is infinitesimal.

In the case of Indonesia, however, the nature of the dis-organisation goes beyond an assessment of the levels of suppression and control. The social significance of the suppression and control of political parties and union-type mass organisations in Indonesia after 1965 cannot be assessed except in relation to the stage of development of Indonesia's national revolution.

Much recent analysis of Indonesian politics is based on a too short-term time frame. Indonesia has been an independent country since only 1945. This formal independence was won after only thirty years of political struggle. The Indonesian nation state is, by general historical standards, still a relatively new being. Furthermore, this new nation-state formation has been forged out of a series of societies, whose levels of social, cultural and economic development was very uneven. Further complicating this nation formation process was that social, cultural and political development in all of these societies had been distorted and stunted as a result of suffering defeats from European colonialism and of having their societies integrated to Dutch colonial needs and not to the needs of any significant components of the local societies.

The establishment of the independent country and state of Indonesia in 1945 was a single moment in a long process of nation creation and consolidation carried out in the face of resistance from a powerful colonial occupier. In other words, it was a revolutionary process in that it involved the overthrow of existing dominant class forces (the Dutch bourgeoisie) and the creation of something that did not at all exist previously, namely an Indonesian nation as well as state.

The primary vehicles for the power struggle against Dutch colonialism, as well as for the forging of a common national cultural outlook, were the political parties and mass organisations. The history of the Indonesian national movement is precisely a history of such organisations: the Sarekat Priyayi, the Sarekat Dagang Islam, the Sarekat Islam, the Sarekat

Rakyat, the Indonesian Communist Party, the Indonesia Party, the Indonesian National Party, the MASYUMI, a whole gamut of trade unions and so on.

These political parties and mass movement organisations were not only key to building a power base to confront Dutch colonialism, a confrontation that came to a head during 1945-49. They were the vehicles that propagated the idea of the new Indonesian nation and played the key role in spreading the ideas and even the language of the new nation. All of these mass organisations were essentially political: they developed and spread ideologies concerning the nature of politics and society and how an independent Indonesia should look. Of course, other non-party and non-union organisations did exist. However, most traditional cultural, social and religious organisations reflected the interests of those increasingly isolated sections of society tied to traditional, that is feudal (in the Asiatic sense), forms of society – those that existed prior to European colonialism and which survived in defeated and remnant form.

Political parties or political movement organisations and trade unions were the overwhelmingly dominant form of organisation among the mass of the population as the national revolution progressed.

These organisations expanded dramatically after independence, especially after 1949 when the armed conflict between the Netherlands and the republican government ended. In almost all of Indonesia, political parties and their affiliated mass organisations became the vehicles not only for political campaigning but also for organising much of social and cultural life. This phenomenon, of social and cultural as well as political life being organised through political party groupings, became known as ‘aliran’ politics. People identified with their ‘aliran’ or ‘stream’, based on an ideological and political outlook connected to a party, and participated in social and cultural life through organisations attached to that party.

This also applied to religious life. Every major religious organisation, including the large organisations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama, were integrated into the aliran political party structures. Nahdatul Ulama itself, in fact, acted directly as a political party.

Party organisation spread after 1949, facilitated by the expansion of political liberty following the achievement of formal independence and the end of the war with the

Netherlands. This expansion was, however, driven by another factor: the intensification of struggle over the nature of the newly created Indonesian state and society. Between 1957 and 1965, this struggle had begun to take on very clear class lines. Electoral competition between parties in 1955 and 1957 developed into struggles involving the occupation of factories and plantations, occupation of landholdings, direct worker representation in management of state owned and nationalised enterprises, campaigns for land distribution and other similar issues.

While all political parties, those on the left and right, expanded during this period, the parties and mass organisations advocating policies based on the perceived interests of the mass classes, i.e. workers, semi-proletarians and peasants, expanded the most dramatically. It's estimated that by 1965, the PKI and its affiliated organisations had a total membership of at least ten million. The PNI-ASU had a support base of several million more. The popularity of the symbol of this ideological trend, Sukarno, was enormous. But, indeed, the opposition to the PKI, PNI-ASU and Sukarno was also organised primarily through political parties and mass organisations.

The Indonesian Armed Forces, also opposed to the PKI and the PNI-ASU, formed GOLKAR and tried to establish its own mass organisations in order to be able to engage in this battle. However, the military's efforts to build such organisations created only unions on paper. The final response of the military, in collaboration with the increasingly weak right wing parties, was a military coup, followed by *suppression of all mass political organisation*. So we arrive again at 'floating mass'.

This coup and program of suppression resolved, for the time being, the struggle over the nature of state and society. But it also destroyed the organisations which had been the primary vehicles of the Indonesian national revolutionary process, including the struggle over the nature of state and society itself. Even the right wing struggled through parties and mass mobilisations for almost all this period. Only the resolution of this battle, the purge and suppression, was carried out by another instrument, namely the army.

The destruction of political party and mass organisation life during and after 1965 destroyed the primary instruments of the national revolution itself and the primary vehicles for social, political and cultural organisation within that revolutionary process. The New Order was not only profoundly counter-revolutionary in terms of suppressing the incipient

social revolution represented by the increased level of organisation and radicalisation of workers and peasants, but also counter-

revolutionary in that it virtually destroyed the vehicles of the national revolution itself.

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY STATE

The New Order state was, therefore, a profoundly counter-revolutionary state in both social and nation-building terms. It institutionalised a system of exclusion of the mass of population from effective organisation to either represent, advocate, campaign or struggle for their interests, whether perceived in the framework of reform or revolution. At the same time, it implemented economic, diplomatic and cultural strategies which negated in practice stated goals of the national revolution, namely the establishment of an independent and sovereign nation.

The economic strategy that the New Order pursued did include attempting to ensure that some elements of the political elite and their associates might develop as a locally based capitalist class. After 1975, when business activity in Indonesia increased due to the sudden inflow of petrodollars, a layer of large Indonesian capitalists did develop. But no class, or sub-class, of industrialists developed. Heavy industry and the manufacture of industrial goods remained insignificant in the Indonesian economy. As 1997 showed, Indonesia's economic growth remained almost totally contingent on the whims of international capital. Indonesian capitalists are now trapped in an economy which no longer has the capacity to significantly increase production or productivity.

It is outside the task of this paper to assess the full gravity of the failure of cultural and educational policy during the New Order. It is clear, however that Indonesia now stands woefully equipped to defend itself in the era of neo-liberal globalisation where the World Trade Organisation regime is even insisting the country open up its professional and education service sector to so-called 'free trade'.

But perhaps the most fundamental feature of its counter-revolutionary nature has been the active, indeed forced, disorganisation of the majority of society.

RE-ORGANISATION AND OPPOSITION TO THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY STATE

Politics, like nature perhaps, abhors a vacuum. Only extensive and intensive surveillance following on the heels of a dreadful terror delayed the start-up of a process of social re-organisation. Of course, survival organisation at the level of family, friends and so on continued even in the immediate aftermath of terror. Indeed tens of thousands who were the immediate victims of military terror only stayed alive through years of cooperation for survival. While there were outbursts of worker and farmer organising in the late 1970s, attempts at organisation in any kind of sustained manner did not start until the late 1980s and then only on a relatively small scale.

The first politically significant attempt at re-organisation was the 1989 campaign by students and farmers to gain compensation for loss of their land to a dam project in Java, called the Kedung Ombo dam. This campaign attracted great attention from the government as well as the media. It was followed by many joint student-worker and student-peasant campaigns throughout the early 1990s until 1996. At this point these campaigns only involved small numbers of students and workers in terms of percentages, but many strikes involved thousands of workers. The actions were well reported and worker and peasant protest (and organisation) established itself as a significant issue in the national political agenda. The first open attempt to form trade unions independent of the 'organicist' functional group union federation also took place in 1990.

The re-organisation process became more complicated and diverse in 1996. A conflict developed between the inner core of the capitalist class, represented by Soeharto, and marginalised but aspiring lesser and essentially provincial capitalists, represented – for the time being – by Megawati Sukarnoputri. In fact, the two non-GOLKAR parties that had been maintained by the New Order as decorative features of New Order democracy, the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and the United Development Party (PPP), started to be infiltrated and used by many provincial smaller capitalists as vehicles to resist the carnivorous appetites of big Jakarta capital, represented by Soeharto, the Soeharto family and GOLKAR. In this process, the PDI was more active than the PPP. (The PPP was based in the urban commercial

and middle class Islamic community which has been undergoing a serious and prolonged cultural decline, represented politically by extensive fracturing.)

Megawati sought mass support in her struggle with Soeharto and thereby promoted additional opportunity and momentum for political organisation. Large-scale mass mobilisations took place in June and July 1996 through coalitions of political groups, including sections of the PDI (or PDIP as it had become after a split with pro-Soeharto supporters in June, 1996). Between July 1996 and the 1997 general elections, the PDIP organisation expanded dramatically, involving thousands more people in setting up local branches, staffing neighbourhood posts (posko) and in demonstrations.

In this period also, spontaneous and temporary organisation among the urban semi-proletariat also exploded (Marlin 1997). The form of organisation involved ranged from the most anarchic and only symbolically organised (organised in terms of consensus over targets and slogans), namely rioting, to the spectacular mass campaign mobilisations in the 1997 elections when hundreds of thousands of urban workers and semi-proletarians carried protest banners against the government and GOLKAR and shouted their hope for a Mega-PPP anti-GOLKAR coalition, or even a Mega-PPP-popular opposition to GOLKAR. Megawati and the PPP's lack of interest in a confrontation with Soeharto and GOLKAR demobilised this sentiment. It was not until late 1997 and early 1998 that another sector that had been actively disorganised in the 1970s reorganised and launched an effective protest movement (Lane 1999).

In 1965 the largest student organisations of the time, the communist Indonesian Student Movement Center (CGMI) and the left wing of the Indonesian Nationalist Student Movement (GMNI) had been suppressed. A small, new organisation, backed by the military, called KAMI, emerged as the student allies of the military and the New Order. The fact that such a student organisation had provided such important political cover to the establishment of the dictatorship at its birth gave one or two succeeding generations of students some freedom to organise outside of the state's corporatist control. While a state controlled youth organisation did exist, Student Councils were also able to operate on campus. These Councils were, however, banned in 1978 after two large waves of anti-government protests, in 1974 and 1978. Between 1978 and 1998, students had no effective organisation.

Between November, 1997 and February, 1998, alliances of campus based activist committees were able to form and then lead quickly growing student led campaigns in almost every major city in Indonesia, from Banda Aceh to Jayapura. These culminated in the mass mobilisations of 28 May 1998, including the million strong demonstration in Jogjakarta and the mass student occupation of the Indonesian parliament in Jakarta (Aspinall et al 1999).

The first mass explosion in direct response to the impact of intensified neo-liberal economic policies accompanied this student led mass protest. Urban riots broke out in May 1998 in response to worsening economic conditions, exemplified by massive inflation and threatened and real food shortages. This combination of mass rioting and organised political protest threatened to completely unravel the stability of the system established under the New Order. Soeharto was sacrificed to save the system, but at the expense of opening up new space for the re-organising process to accelerate.

NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALISATION AND THE CLASS-STRUGGLE ORIENTATION OF RE-ORGANISATION

There has been an explosion of what can be called re-organisation initiatives since the fall of Soeharto. The New Order's main instruments of repression – the army, GOLKAR and the Ministry of Home Affairs – remain intact as institutions and are continually striving to find ways to make a comeback. But they have all lost significant ability to implement repression and control. The army has been politically discredited and will soon lose its representatives in parliament, has lost its formal right to be involved in civil policing, has had the police force taken out of its control, has lost significant elements of its budget after the 1997 financial crisis and is no longer seen as vital in GOLKAR's political campaigning. It is only in Aceh that the army can act like it used to under Soeharto. GOLKAR is also now much discredited, its support base limited to specific regions, its chairperson sentenced to gaol. The civil service is in disarray as a result of the new decentralisation policies. It may be able to act oppressively in some regions, but it has nowhere near the power it did before May 1998. In this situation, initiatives for reorganisation at the mass level are now much more feasible.

Furthermore, the impact of the policies of neo-liberal globalisation is creating an environment in which more people feel the need to organise: to complain, to defend

themselves from greater exploitation, to rid themselves of what they see as the cause of their problems, sometimes involving scapegoats, or to gain or defend (relative) privilege in a worsening socio-economic situation. In Indonesia, neo-liberal globalisation involves a comprehensive package of policies, involving not only an acceleration of the depth and extent of economic exploitation, and a steady collapse in production and productivity. It also involves changes in so-called 'governance', the methods of state administration. In Indonesia, the main change in state administration is a dramatic reduction in central control over the economic regulation as well as many aspects of provincial government, i.e. decentralisation. This decentralisation is taking place in a fairly anarchic manner. Collapse and anarchy are underlying trends in the socio-economic situation created by neo-liberal policies.

A relatively significant lifting of control and repression now combines with economic collapse and administrative anarchy. But there is more than that. The almost four decades of disorganisation mean that there are no pre-existing national organisations that can house, channel or centralise any re-organisation initiatives. In fact, the virtually totalitarian suppression of political and ideological life also means that there are no *ideas* sufficiently alive in society to centralise any re-organisation processes. This even applies to Islam, whose various larger organisations are bankrupt of any social or political programmes. As I mentioned earlier, their tendency is also to fracture rather than unify.

The absence of any pre-existing national organisation is just one reflection of another legacy of the period of counter-revolution: an absence, or at least a very weak sense of problems, and therefore solutions, existing at a national level. Problems, and solutions, are more often identified purely at the local level. Or, the solution to a problem that actually exists nationally, such as economic crisis, is seen as located overseas, i.e. in the form of an influx of large scale (but imaginary) foreign investment.

(a) Embryonic, class based organising

In other words, almost all re-organisation initiatives are starting from scratch *at the local sites of grievance, issue or problem.*

The only exceptions to this are initiatives taken within the framework of political organisations that emerged at the beginnings of the 1990s opposition to Soeharto and were able to develop and sustain an ideological orientation. There are few of these. All of these are

still small, and only one has developed a significant political profile, namely the Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) (Lane 1994; Lane 1995; La Botz 2001). Other such national networks include the Indonesian Youth Struggle Front (FPPI - Front Perjuangan Pemuda Indonesia - FPPI), the National Students Front (Front Mahasiswa Nasional) and the Socialist Youth (Pemuda Sosialis) (Widjojo 1999).² The Agrarian Renewal Consortium (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria – KPA) and the Indonesian Environmental Forum (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup – WAHLI), although looser and with weaker ideological focus, are also significant national networks of re-organisation. All of these networks and organisations are based on institutionalised collaboration between former students, factory workers and farmers.

These nationally organised or networked re-organisation initiatives, however, represent only a small minority of the total re-organisation process. The fact that most initiatives are based at the local sites of grievance and are organised outside a national network makes it very difficult to quantify the extent of these activities. It also makes it very easy to underestimate their extent and depth. International Labour Organisation statistics note around 12,000 enterprise unions, registered since 1998. They also show around 67 national union federations (UN 2003). There is little data to give a real sense of how many active members these unions have; however, the registration of these unions has required a more genuine activation of the unions, old and new, than ever existed during the New Order period. There are no equivalent official statistics for farmers unions, or other organisations such as teachers' or women's organisations or local action committees.

In any case, the reality is much larger and more complex than any statistics that any section of the Indonesian bureaucracy could accord. Hans Antlov aptly summed up the situation:

All over Indonesia peasant federations, *adat*-based associations, indigenous people's groups, labour unions and other groups are claiming political space for their members. Village councils, citizen's forums, social movements and civil society organisations have mobilised millions of people to become involved in local politics, people who during the New Order were excluded from political participation (Antlov 2003: 84).

Antlov emphasises the extent that this expansion of organisation (in fact, a re-organisation from scratch) is providing a strong basis for the establishment of democratic political processes. While seeking examples of this organisation increasing 'citizen

participation' in local government processes, he does at the same time make key points emphasising the ultimately objective confrontational nature of this re-organisation process. He states the elites 'are not ready to abolish state patronage and give up their privileged access to power and resources' (Antlov 2003: 84). This is an accurate assessment but points to the ultimately confrontational dynamic of the re-organisation process.

In the comments above, I have been essentially pointing to social re-organisation processes involving groups organised to respond to grievances perceived as socio-economic injustices. Most of these represent embryonic class-based organisations: labour, peasants, exploited fishermen, waged teachers, underpaid state employed doctors, sugar or tobacco plantation workers and so on. Even most adat-groups are essentially associations of subsistence farmers organising to defend themselves from the encroachment of larger enterprises.

The 'millions of people' that Antlov refers to are mostly involved in such organisations – although there are some very important (nationalist and ethnicist) exceptions that I will discuss later. While this organising can be described as having an objective class struggle character only the minority organised into the smaller PRD, FMN, FPPI and Pemuda Sosialis networks reflect this in any clear ideological manner. Most of the organising – at least at this moment – is propelled by the need for responses to immediate grievances. There is constant pressure, however, for this process to burst out of the constraints of focusing on the immediate issues alone. This pressure also stems from the objective situation all these sectors face. None of the immediate grievances they are dealing with can be resolved satisfactorily separate from a consideration of the fundamental nature of neo-liberal economic strategy or of the counter-revolutionary political heritage of the New Order. Industry closures, decline in agricultural production, price rises, accelerating privatisation, expansion of plantations onto small crops, corruption, as well as arbitrary exercise and abuse of bureaucratic power all flow from either neo-liberal economic policy or the protection of New Order inherited political privilege (Setiawan 2004).³

There is, therefore, a constant pressure to seek general analytical answers to the problems that are propelling the re-organising process. It is this pressure that has, in fact, brought into being, even if still in embryonic form, the nationally structured re-organising processes represented by the PRD, FMN, FPPI and PS. On July 26-27, 2003, an interesting

initiative took place when 300 representatives of 60 organisations gathered in Jakarta to establish the first political party attempting to form a broader structure for this process. The July 26-27 congress formed the Party of United Peoples Opposition (Partai Persatuan Perlawanan Rakyat – POPOR). This party is seeking to gain electoral registration, meaning that it will need to prove it has branches on two thirds of all provinces and in more than half of all districts in each province. Among the founding 60 organisations is the PRD. But most of the other organisations are trade unions, peasant organisations, NGOs and action groups not formerly associated with any national network. The congress adopted policy platforms presenting alternatives to neo-liberal economic policies and the continuing entrenchment of the privileges of the political elite inherited from the New Order.

The formation of POPOR is an extremely significant development, whether or not it succeeds dramatically in the coming election campaign. Already the founding congress has been well-reported in the press and more organisations are joining at the local level. *This development has now placed the question of the national political organisation of locally based class-oriented groups on the national political agenda, in a clear way, for the first time.*

(b) Populist re-organising

The conflict between an established inner core of capitalists, centred around the Soeharto family, and a layer of aspiring middle level national and especially provincial capitalists, organising through the PDI and then the PDIP, had provoked huge semi-spontaneous mobilisations between June 1996 and April, 1997. The PDIP maintained its branch and especially its POSKO (neighbourhood post) structure as an active structure until the 1999 elections. However, since Megawati Sukarnoputri lost the initial presidential elections to Abdurrahman Wahid in 2000, the level and quality of organising through the PDIP has degenerated.

After Megawati's loss to Abdurrahman Wahid there was a first wave of demoralisation and many former PDIP members left the party. Then, since Megawati assumed the presidency after ousting Wahid, the PDIP has become divided between its elite, based on aspiring provincial capitalists and elites, and a significant section of its rank-and-file membership. Since the beginning of 2001, there has been an unbroken series of

demonstrations against Megawati by party members, usually related to decisions more closely aligning the PDIP with GOLKAR or ex-military figures.

These internal protests are themselves well organised and represent a specific re-organising process, providing the basis for a potential split with the PDIP in the future. The political dividing line of for or against collaboration with former New Order figures does not reflect a direct class interest articulated through a stand on a socio-economic issue. The tension relates to a sense of betrayal among the mainly semi-proletarian and micro capitalist layer of members in the PDIP who joined the PDIP in the first place out of opposition to the dictatorial and corrupt nature of the New Order. The oppositionist wing of the PDIP is driven more by an ideological commitment, although the ideology is articulated in a very general way. One of the most important of the oppositional leaders is Dr Tjiptaning, author of the book, *I am proud to be a child of the PKI* (Tjiptaning 2002). Besides being secretary of the West Java branch of the PDIP, Tjiptaning is the Secretary-General of Pemuda Demokrat (Democratic Youth - PD). PD was the youth organisation associated with the PDI before Megawati formed the PDIP. The PD now comprises youth (though usually above 25 years old) associated with the PDIP, PNBK, and several other smaller Sukarnoist oriented groups.

A general populist ideological orientation also provides the basis for two other organising efforts taking place out of the initial catchments population of the PDIP. These are those based in the formation of the Banteng National Awakening Party (PNBK) and the Vanguard Party (Partai Pelopor - PP). Both parties have been established during the last two years and have been forming branches in various provinces by recruiting PDIP members dissatisfied with Megawati's conservatism and closeness to New Order figures and groups. Like the oppositionist wing inside the PDIP, both PNBK and PP also regularly organise large protests and rallies against the government, using very general ideological formulations. Whereas POPOR or FMN or FPPI, or even WAHLI and KPA, will stipulate specific social classes or groups – workers, farmers, urban poor – and propound specific alternative policy measures, PNBK and PP will speak in generalities. This is also true for the PDIP oppositionists, except on issues relating to collaboration with New Order people.

The generalness, or abstract nature, of the ideological appeal propagated by the PNBK, PP and PDIP oppositionist leaderships mean that they do not respond at all to any of the specific issues being created by the impact of neo-liberal policies. They remain

imprisoned in a struggle among themselves and with the PDIP for access to a voting constituency defined by allegiance to the specific political vocabulary associated with a censored version of the ideas of former President Sukarno. This is a fragile constituency based on the remnants of an ideological life that lost its vitality 40 years ago, cemented only by patron-client relationships based on a very uncertain economic future.

These (re-)organising tendencies have shown no inclination to break out of this prison. While they remain silent and generally unresponsive in relation to the specific problems generated by neo-liberalism, their further expansion is likely to be blocked.

(c) Religion – Islam

In the wake of the overthrow of the New Order, increased space has opened up for social and political organising for all groups. Islamic political organisations appear to have taken only minimal advantage of this situation, or are incapable of doing so. Of course, there remain active thousands of Islamic groups organised around mosques and religious schools. Long established religious organisations, such as the urban based welfare and education organisation, Muhammadiyah, and the village based Nahdatul Ulama remain intact.

However, these organisations have offered little or almost no response to any of the issues generated by neo-liberalism, and non-consistent opposition to the New Order political heritage. There have been no significant initiatives by Islamic groups to establish labour unions, farmer organisations, or any other sectoral or socio-economic grievance based organisations. They remain locked into the forms of organising that existed under the New Order, or have become integrated into the political party life of the elite that stands above, and alienated from, the re-organising processes taking place at the mass level. Even some organisations trying to appear to stand outside the political elite, such as the semi-fundamentalist Partai Keadilan (Justice Party – PK), which has organised student mobilisations, has been absorbed into this framework.

(d) Mass re-organisation, regionalism and class factors

I have referred already to one aspect of the setback suffered by the national revolution in 1965: the absence of pre-existing national organisations and ideological approaches that could centralise or unify mass re-organising. The general impact of this absence has been to

give the mass re-organising process an even character throughout the country and to slow the development of a political representation of such re-organisation.

In some areas of Indonesia, the impact has been different. In these areas, grievances have been perceived as injustices carried out against ethnic groups or regions. This is often based in reality and has been magnified by the weakening of national perspectives and national identity. Re-organising along ethnic lines has been pronounced in Ambon, Central Kalimantan and in some parts of Sulawesi.

Re-organising along regional lines has occurred in perhaps a more subdued fashion in almost every part of Indonesia, including in central and east Java. Throughout the country there have been movements for new province status for lesser districts, for example. But in most cases, this trend did not develop as a real re-organising process, especially after the needs of local business and bureaucratic elites were met through financial decentralisation.

However, in Aceh, the re-organisation process has taken on a form dominated by the idea of a regional based solution: namely, separation and independence. The largest pro-independence organisation, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) is itself a large-scale, even if unwieldy and confused, attempt to re-organise a society disorganised through the New Order period and further dislocated by ten years of intense military operations in the 1980s. GAM represents a re-organising process based in the countryside while a range of organisations, in many ways similar to the embryonic class oriented organisations in the rest of Indonesia, have emerged in the urban areas. The most significant of these is the Acehese Peoples Democratic Resistance Front (Front Perlawanan Demokratik Aceh – FPDRA). However, they too have adopted separation and independence as their goal.⁴

The nationalist movement in West Papua can be viewed in a similar light. Both the Papuan Presidium, representing the interests of the Papuan elite created during the New Order, but more significantly the Dewan Musyawarah Masyarakat Koteka (Koteka Tribal Assembly for Rights, Justice and Peace in West Papua -DEMMAK), are examples of nationalist forms of re-organisation in an area of Indonesia where the setback for the national revolution has been so great as to delegitimise the project of building an Indonesian nation altogether. Even in these extreme cases of Aceh and West Papua, however, the socio-economic dislocation among workers, peasants and subsistence tribal peoples caused by neo-liberal policies has created, from the very moment of the expansion of the nationalist

movements, class-oriented left wings of this movement. In Aceh, the political outlook of GAM stands in stark contrast with that of the Acehese Democratic Peoples Resistance Front (FPDRA), a network of student, labor, women's and peasant organisations, similar to the national networks, such as that organised by the PRD in Indonesia. A similar tension exists between the Papuan Presidium and the Dewan Musyawarah Masyarakat Koteka (Koteka Tribal Assembly for Rights, Justice and Peace in West Papua –DEMMAK), which is a network of student, lower civil servant and village tribal organisations.⁵

STATE AND CLASS, NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALISATION, AND THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION

A conflict between sections of the Indonesian capitalist class that sharpened during the 1990s opened up space for a restarting of organising among sectors of the population who had been suppressed and then actively disorganised since 1965. The monopoly control of state power by Soeharto and his military and business allies was broken by a political struggle carried out by a de facto alliance between new aspiring national and provincial capitalists and a newly reorganising mass sector. The latter's impact was felt through both organised mass actions and spontaneous rioting.

The fall of Soeharto has provided extra space for this reorganising to further expand, but in a social and political environment where many of the gains of the national revolution have been destroyed. The mass political parties and mass organisations of the period of national revolution are absent, as are the ideologies associated with them. As a result reorganisation is starting virtually from nil, with the majority of initiatives emerging spontaneously at local sites of grievance, and usually, though not always, without affiliation with a national network or nationally active ideological stream.

This organisational and ideological vacuum at the national level also reflects the weakening of perceptions of social and political problems as national questions, opening up more space also for regional and ethnic political movements. However, the severe socio-economic impact of neo-liberal economic policies continues to generate issues of social grievance throughout the country mushrooming groups with incipient class-orientations, with the objective need for national coalescence. Initial manifestations of the search for a political form for that coalescence have recently occurred.

These processes are at an early stage of development. No large scale class based political movement has emerged to pose a direct challenge to the current regime, based as it now is on a coalition between the old core business groups of the New Order and newly aspiring groups, both nationally and in the provinces with their new financial autonomy. The energies of those who share in the wielding of state power are primarily invested in the struggle amongst themselves over access to power and resources.

However, despite the embryonic, and therefore politically weak, position of the social classes presently in a state of re-organisation, their re-organisation and the inherent confrontational sentiment involved in that re-organisation has already acted as a restraint on the state. The economic crisis and the neo-liberal policies introduced in its wake since 1997 continue to degrade the productivity of the Indonesian economy. Domestic investment has collapsed and continues to collapse. With no confidence in any quick resumption of production by domestic capital, the Indonesian business, political and military elite has one idea, and one idea only, about how to revive the economy. This single idea is to attract foreign investment back into Indonesia on a scale that can relaunch the economy. For reasons to do with the state of the world economy, this is a pipe dream in any case. But in their thinking, one key incentive for foreign capital to 'return' is social stability, exemplified by no more rioting. The elite is aware however of the volatility in mass sentiment. They can feel, and see, the angry re-organisation happening around them. They might not yet be frightened by the prospects of it developing into a political movement, but they are afraid of anarchic outbursts of rioting that could scare away possibly returning foreign investment. It is for this reason that they measure carefully the pace and timing of implementation of some reforms, such as fuel price rises, and that they are willing to make some concessions in the political sphere such as the recent liberalising amendments to the Indonesian constitution. Of course, they take these back when protest is paused, or when they think people are not looking.

For the time being, the processes of the factions of the Indonesian bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie establishing a new power-sharing arrangement and the process of re-organisation of the mass sectors of society are likely to occur relatively separately. The exception to this being where nationalist re-organisation involved launching armed struggle for separation. This situation of two processes proceeding at arms length, so to speak, cannot however continue indefinitely. In the end, they are hostile processes. The current separation is, of course, relative. Protests are met with harassment, including shootings and detentions.

Legislation is set in place allowing for future repression. The current relative peace simply reflects the fact the re-organisation has not yet reached threatening levels. Until the re-organising process does more fully develop attempts to categorise the current regime as a particular form of democratic rule or of authoritarian rule are premature. The frequent talk of a country and state in transition is meaningful only if the totality of social and political processes is taken into account.

NOTES

- ¹ Analysis of recent social and political developments contained below relies primarily on newspaper and television reports, direct observation during the several stays in Indonesia since 2000, including May 2002 – July 2003, participation in public discussions and political meetings in Indonesia and dialogue/discussion with political figures and other participants.
- ² This is the best published account of the development of some of the national networks mentioned here. However, the emergence of the FMN and PS as national networks is a very recent development. My observations are based on interviews with FMN leaders and observers from other organisations active in the field. Observations on WAHLA are based on discussion with WAHAL leaders and attendance at their last national working meeting.
- ³ This is a comprehensive survey of the socio-economic impact of almost all sectors of Indonesian society. See also the data available at www.increase.or.id.
- ⁴ See for example, www.fpdra.com. This website is maintained by the FPDRA based in Aceh. I have had extensive discussions with several different leaders from FPDRA during their visits to Jakarta.
- ⁵ See www.melamesianews.org/demmak. This website is maintained by DEMMAK. I have had also had discussions with DEMMAK leaders who are based on Jayapura as well as Jakarta and Jogjakarta.

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