

Indonesian Political Parties From Party Machinery to Political Volunteerism

(Reflections of Representatives of Seven Indonesian Political Parties 2008)

PAN (The National Mandate Party)

PDIP (The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)

PD (The Democrat Party)

Golkar (The Functional Groups Party)

PKS (The Prosperous Justice Party)

PKB (The National Awakening Party)

PPP (The United Development Party)

Editor, Ignas Kleden



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INTRODUCTION: INDONESIAN POLITICAL PARTIES: THE SHORT-TERM DILEMMA AND THE LONG-TERM CHALLENGE

by Ignas Kleden

I

As a continuation of what had already been carried out in 2007, The Community for Political Party Dialogue (*Komunitas Dialog Partai Politik, KDPP*) in conjunction with the Indonesian Community for Democracy (*Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi, KID*) conducted a series of political consultation and discussion activities throughout 2008.¹ Unlike the activities held in the previous year, the 2008 undertakings took place mainly in cities outside Jakarta, and specifically in places where KID, in conjunction with a local NGO, had established a Democracy School. It was hoped that the choice of places outside Jakarta would enable these undertakings to have a wider impact of the political consultations and discussions conducted in a relatively regular way by Indonesia's seven biggest political parties before the 2009 General Elections. The names of these seven parties are given below the title of this booklet. In addition, it was realised that Indonesians in the regions were more in need of information than those living in Jakarta, and for that reason it was appropriate that they be given the opportunity to hear and take part in discussions of important issues in Indonesian politics through seminars conducted in their own city.

¹ The findings of the KDPP discussions and consultations held during 2007 were published in 2008 in both Indonesian and English versions. See Ignas Kleden (ed.), *Peran dan Tantangan Partai Politik Indonesia: Refleksi Wakil Tujuh Partai Politik Indonesia*, Jakarta, Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi (KID), 2008, and Ignas Kleden (ed.), *The Role and Challenges of Political Parties: Reflections of Representatives of Seven Indonesian Political Parties*, Jakarta, Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi, 2008.

The series of consultations and discussions was preceded by an internal meeting of members of the KDPP forum in the KID office in Jakarta on 28 May 2008, the purpose being to plan the format and content of the meetings that would follow. During this meeting the theme “Recruitment of Legislative Candidates”, which would be discussed eleven months later, was considered.² Then on 26 June 2008 a public seminar was held in Yogyakarta to discuss the theme “The Loss of Volunteerism in Indonesian Politics”.³ This theme had its origin in the question: is it a fact, and if so, how can it be, that at the present time the interest and the involvement of many people in political parties are almost always related to the amount of money that can be obtained as recompense? Why has transactionalism become so strong in Indonesian politics that it has pushed aside the political volunteerism that was still apparent in the political life of Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s? After that, another public seminar was held, this time in Palembang, on 24 July 2008 on the theme “Restarting the Engines of the Political Parties”.⁴ This theme arose from the observation that Indonesian political parties rely on survey institutes outside the party to obtain candidates who can be nominated for legislative positions in the DPR (House of Representatives). Apparently political parties do not have their own mechanisms by which to obtain cadres from within the party, that is, cadres who have been nurtured by the party and whose growth in maturity is known to the party.

A break occurred on 14 August 2008, when an internal meeting of KDPP and KID members was held to discuss preparations for the visit of a group of Dutch politicians, scheduled to take place from 25 to 31 August 2008. Their visit was intended as a response to the visit of members of the Central Committees (DPP) of the seven Indonesian political parties to The Hague between 25 and 27 April 2007. The members of the Dutch delegation were the chair persons or vice chair persons of seven Dutch political parties, namely, CDA (Christian-Democratic Party), CU (Christian Union Party), PvdA (Labor Party), VVD (Liberal Party), D66 (Social-Liberal Party),

² KID invited Syamsul Muarief (Golkar) to be the speaker at this in-house discussion.

³ The public seminar in Yogyakarta had as speakers Ganjar Pranowo (PDI-P), Anas Urbaningrum (Partai Demokrat) and Mohtar Mas'oeed (representing the academic community).

⁴ The speakers at the public seminar in Palembang were Abdillah Thoha (PAN), Mardani Ali Sera (PKS) and Joko Siswanto, an academic from Sriwijaya University.

GroenLinks (Green-Left Party), and SGP (State Reformation Party). While in Jakarta, members of the delegation visited the central offices of almost all of the political parties (with the exception of the PDI-P) that were members of KDPP.

On 18 September 2008 KDPP again conducted an internal meeting in the KID office, where a discussion was held on the theme “Political Parties and the Mass Media”.⁵ The aspect that was considered was whether the news presented by the mass media about political parties helps their development or in fact actually reduces public confidence in political parties in Indonesia. This was followed by a seminar, conducted in Makassar on 30 October 2008, in which the theme of “Political Parties and Non-voting” was discussed.⁶ Is the tendency for people not to vote in general elections a real development and is this development a threat to the life of political parties and to growth in democracy?

A month later, on 27 November 2008, another public seminar was conducted, this time in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, on the theme “Political Parties, Democracy and Prosperity”.⁷ This theme emerged from the question of whether democracy must produce prosperity, whether prosperity is the objective of democracy, and whether, if prosperity fails to be created, democracy needs to be replaced by some other system that is more effective, even though it may be more authoritarian. Then came the question: can a political party undertake and contribute something to create prosperity through the democratic path?

The 2008 series of discussions concluded with a public seminar in Surabaya on 11 December 2008 on the theme of “Political Parties, Democracy and the Domination of Capital”.⁸ KDPP and KID regarded this theme as important not just because of the existence of the practice of *money*

5 The following speakers were invited to this in-house discussion: Panda Nababan (PDI-P) and Saur Hutabarat (from the newspaper *Media Indonesia*).

6 The speakers at the public seminar in Makassar were Yasonna Laoly (PDI-P), Lukman Hakim Saifuddin (PPP) and Jayadi Nas, Chairman of the Regional Electoral Committee (KPUD) for South Sulawesi.

7 The speakers at this seminar were Binny Buchori from Golkar, Zulkieflimansyah from PKS and Servatius Rodriguez, an academic from Widya Mandira University.

8 The speakers at the final public seminar for 2008 were Budiman Sudjatmiko (PDI-P), Mohtar Mas'oe'd from Gajah Mada University and Ahmad Erani, an academic from Brawijaya University.

politics in Indonesian political life but also because the role of capital was becoming constantly greater in the life of political parties, which face funding difficulties as a consequence of the fact that fees from party members have not been regulated while the amount of money given by the state to political parties is very small. Those who possess capital have become an alternative for political parties in their attempts to obtain funds for party activities, but there is the risk that the interests of those with capital could push aside the views contained in the vision and mission of each political party.

As usual, the speakers at each seminar came from the political parties that are members of KDPP (usually two persons), with one discussant from among political analysts and observers or from academic circles. All meetings and seminars were facilitated by KID, which also played a fixed role as moderator of the KDPP meetings.

II

If attention is given to the themes of the meetings and seminars, the following pattern will be seen. Four meetings were conducted to discuss short-term political matters relevant to preparations for the 2009 General Elections. The themes of these meetings were recruitment of legislative candidates, the loss of volunteerism in Indonesian politics, the need to ignite the engines of political parties, and the extent of the *golput* threat for the 2009 General Elections. The break in August allowed special attention to be given to KDPP's own internal problems, namely, the political party relationship between the two countries. After that, the next three meetings discussed long-term problems in Indonesian politics, namely, the relationship between political parties and the mass media, the connection between political parties, democracy and prosperity, and the measures that can be undertaken by political parties to ignite healthy democracy in the midst of increasingly powerful attacks by capital.

In this present booklet the findings of the eight meetings have been summarised under seven issues and are accompanied by a general conclusion

at the end of the paper. The seven issues are as follows: 1) the decline of public confidence in political parties and general elections, 2) the relationship and interaction between political parties and the mass media, 3) the importance of constructing an effective party machinery, 4) the recruitment of legislative candidates, 5) political parties, democracy and prosperity, 6) the weakness of political volunteerism, and 7) business, social capital and political parties.

It is already clear that the question of public confidence in political parties and general elections is a fundamental issue. This is related to the extremely central role that political parties play as the main pillars of representative democracy. The suggestion, put forward by certain NGOs that they should take over the role of political parties as the people's representatives because they have a better understanding of conditions in the field as they relate to the needs of the people, would be difficult to put into practice, and indeed there are virtually no examples of this form of representation anywhere in the world. In any case, if NGOs became the representatives of the people, who would be their supporting constituents? Furthermore, the shakiness of community confidence in elections can be seen from the increase in issues about *golput* which emerged before the elections. As is generally known, *golput* or *golongan putih* (literally, the white group) refers to the group of people who decide not to participate in general elections, that is, they choose not to choose.

Parallel with this, the decline in confidence in political parties can be seen from the clamour of voices defending the idea of independent candidates for legislative and executive positions, that is, candidates who nominate themselves in their own names and do not follow the usual procedure by which a person is nominated by and through a political party. The extent of the influence of *Golput* on voters is apparent in the level of participation in the legislative and presidential elections. According to the KPU (Electoral Commission), the total number of people listed on the DPT (*Daftar Pemilih Tetap*, Electoral Roll) to vote for legislators was 171,265,442. But of this number 49,677,076 did not use their right to vote. This means that approximately 29 per cent did not vote in the legislative elections.⁹ At

9 <http://www.pemiluindonesia.com/pemilu-2009/jumlah-golput-hampir-50-juta-orang.html>

the time of writing (before the announcement of the results of the manual counting done by the KPU) popular participation in the presidential election was 72 per cent, which means that 28 per cent did not vote.¹⁰ In the specific context of community confidence in the political parties, it is worth asking whether those who did not vote really did prefer to belong to the *golongan putih* or whether some of them could not vote because they had encountered a hindrance or obstacle of a technical or administrative nature.

It is necessary to remember that the question of the DPT became the source of problems in the 2009 elections not only because some people whose names were registered on the DPT found that they could not vote but also because the DPT was said to include the same names two and even three times. According to Fadli Zon, Deputy General Chairman of the Gerindra Party, the number of multiple names found on the DPT by his investigation team amounted to 7.65 million and were distributed in 69 districts and cities in six provinces (West Java, Central Java, East Java, the Jakarta Metropolitan Area, Yogyakarta and Bali).¹¹ Apart from this, there were apparently a lot of difficulties for people who had the right to vote but were not registered on the DPT. This was regarded as taking away the political rights of citizens. Two presidential candidates, Megawati Soekarnoputri and Jusuf Kalla, felt that they had to meet with the KPU and urge that a solution be found to the problem, after these two candidates and their deputies held a meeting on 5 July 2009 in the Pusat Dakwah Muhammadiyah Building, Jakarta.

The demands that they presented to the KPU were that names recorded more than once on the DPT be crossed out and that those persons not recorded on the DPT be permitted to vote if they showed their Identification Cards (KTP). They also expressed the hope that the KPU would solve the problem within 24 hours. In addition, they asked the KPU to postpone the presidential election, if these demands could not be met.¹² As we know, on 6 July 2009 the Constitutional Court (MK) decided that Indonesian citizens who were not recorded on the DPT could vote in the election of the president and vice-president, provided that they could show an Identification Card

¹⁰ http://www.lp3es.or.id/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=184&Itemid=102

¹¹ *TEMPO* Magazine, 13-19 July 2009, p. 30.

¹² *KOMPAS* Daily, 6 July 2009, p.1.

(KTP) or passport on which the address was the same as the address of the voting place. Even so, the KTP had to be accompanied by a Family Card (*Kartu Keluarga*), because in Jakarta a person could have several KTPs. The main consideration on the part of the Constitutional Court was that the list of voters is a procedural matter, whereas a citizen's right to vote is a matter of substance and is of a fundamental nature. A question of procedure cannot obstruct the implementation of a citizen's substantial rights.¹³

This decision was made to grant the request for a judicial review put forward by two citizens called Refly Harun and Maheswara Prabandono on 16 June 2009, which meant that the Constitutional Court would examine two clauses in Statute No. 42 of the Year 2008 concerning the election of a president. Both Clause 28 and Clause 111 of this Statute state that those who have the right to vote are Indonesian citizens who are registered as voters, and that they must be registered on the DPT at the relevant Polling Booth (TPS) or on an additional list of voters. The two proposers considered that this was in contradiction to Clause 27 Article (1) and Clause 28 Article (1) and Article (3) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees all citizens the same treatment in law and government.¹⁴

The above description shows that the question of whether or not a person took part in the legislative and presidential elections was not always related to *Golput*, because there were many problems connected with administration of the elections. *Golput* was a political gesture involving a choice not to vote, whereas the debate that is taking place at present in Indonesian politics centers around the fact that many people who wanted to vote could not exercise their right to do so because they were blocked by administrative obstacles. With a figure of 29 per cent for non-participation in the legislative elections and 28 per cent in the presidential elections, no conclusion can yet be drawn about the extent of the influence of *Golput* in Indonesian politics and the extent to which public confidence in political parties in Indonesia has declined.

Another phenomenon that demonstrates the level of public

13 Interview with the Head of the Constitutional Court, Mahfud Md., in the news magazine *TEMPO*, 13-19 July 2009, pp. 117-119.

14 *GATRA* news magazine, 9-15 July 2009, pp. 86-87.

confidence in political parties is the appearance of legislative and executive candidates who nominate themselves not through a political party but as non-party candidates, known in Indonesia as independent candidates. The emergence of these independent candidates has given rise to severe jolts in party circles, because it turns out that it is possible for political recruitment to occur through channels outside the caderisation conducted by political parties. The important role of political parties in conducting training and guidance of prospective politicians is being questioned increasingly, since it turns out that people who do not pass through guidance in a political party can obtain political support in their candidacy for a political position in the legislature or executive. In confronting this development, the seven political parties in KDPP have declared that this trend should be regarded as a special, temporary phenomenon in a period of transitional democracy, and that it should be a strong warning to political parties to undertake better planned political training and guidance. Nevertheless, the presence of independent candidates, in the view of KDPP members, cannot constitute an alternative to the role of political parties in representative democracy.

The existence of independent candidates and the support given to them by the community is one indicator of the weakness of political party machineries in undertaking political education and guidance. The meaning of a political machinery is nothing other than a party's organisational capacity to carry out the party's tasks. It is not just the emergence of independent candidates that reveals the weakness of party machineries. Another indicator is the fact that in recruiting candidates who wish to be nominated, the parties depend more on the results of surveys carried out by independent survey institutes and not on the mechanisms of the party itself in monitoring the development of cadres, from among whom several can be selected as candidates for both legislative and executive positions. The services of independent survey institutes are sought to select not only prospective legislators but also district heads/city mayors and governors, even though this process may cost much more money than if it were done through the party machinery itself.

The problem, which has been debated very widely in the mass media, is not just one of being for or against the use of survey institutes. Rather, it concerns the tendency for parties to have more trust in and more reliance on

outside institutes to decide on candidates than to rely on its own political machinery.¹⁵ In this context the question arises of whether the decline of volunteerism in Indonesian politics and the rising tendency to see politics as transactions are related to the rise and fall of public confidence in political parties. As was stated at the KDPP meeting, in the 1950s people were still prepared to buy tickets to attend a political rally and to hear a politician speak. At the present time, people even have to be paid so that they will be willing to come to a venue where a politician wants to present his or her political ideas and programs.

There are several assumptions and speculations about the increase in these transactional tendencies in Indonesian politics today. One assumption says, for example, that, to the extent that they concern people who want to vote, these tendencies can be regarded as a sign of loss of confidence on the part of the people in political parties and party politicians. The majority of people are no longer convinced that politicians, after occupying the political position that they had dreamed of, will still give attention to the interests of the people who are their constituents. For that reason, requests for payment in cash made to politicians while they are campaigning represents an initiative on the part of the people to obtain a concrete service from the party politicians in question before those politicians gain the political position that they are seeking.

Obviously, generalisations about the validity of information of this kind are not possible, mainly because we still have to await fairly broad empirical research about transactional tendencies in Indonesian politics. The fact that can be readily seen is that, by comparison with the situation that prevailed in the 1950s, the situation in the 2000s is very different, because

¹⁵ This debate included, among other things, the question of whether a survey institute may at the same time act as an institute for political consultancy. In actual practice, survey institutes not only investigate the ranking of candidates but also assist certain candidates to win executive and legislative positions in elections. *Lingkaran Survei Indonesia* (LSI), which is an independent survey institute, claims that it has, by means of surveys and political consultations, managed to help 7 governors, 13 district heads (*bupati*) and 8 city mayors win in their respective elections. See <http://www.lsi.co.id/halaman.php?page=02success03>. In addition to *Lingkaran Survei Indonesia*, mention should be made of two other survey institutes that undertake surveys and provide political consultation services, namely, *Lembaga Survei Indonesia* and *Lembaga Riset Informasi*, both of which are domiciled in Jakarta. See <http://www.pemiluindonesia.com/pemilihan-presiden/quick-count-mana-yang-paling-presisi.html>

the money that exists nowadays is far greater in amount than the money that existed in the 1950s. Any demands to pay cash to each constituent in the past were extremely difficult to meet and were perhaps never even thought of. Besides that, Indonesian politicians in the 1950s still displayed a willingness to lead simple lives and even to live in a state of insufficiency, to the point where this attitude was imitated by the people, who saw a model in their political leaders themselves.

III

It is understandable that, in addition to a number of issues linked to preparations for the 2009 General Elections, Indonesian politicians in KDPP, that is, those occupying positions of leadership in the seven biggest parties in Indonesia prior to the 2009 Elections, were of the opinion that two issues very much warranted discussion in connection with the long-term interests of Indonesian politics. The first of these issues is the relationship between political parties, democracy and prosperity, while the second is the relationship between political parties and economic and social capital.

The relationship between democracy and prosperity can be seen from two perspectives, namely, the practical and the theoretical. Practically, the question arises of whether there is any point in a nation adopting democracy as its political system if the people of that nation remain in a state of poverty and their standards of welfare do not improve. In terms of the government's poverty yardstick and that of the World Bank, the number of poor people in Indonesia is still high. The government defines poverty as a situation in which a person lives on an income of less than one dollar a day, while the World Bank regards a person as poor if he lives on an income of less than two dollars a day.¹⁶ In terms of the Human Development Index, Indonesia ranks 107th by comparison with Malaysia in 63rd place and Thailand in 78th place. It is clear that this situation also gives rise to the question of what the political parties

¹⁶ According to the World Bank concept, the poor are those who live on less than two dollars a day, while absolute poverty refers to those who live on an income of less than one dollar a day. See Joseph Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, Penguin Books, Allen Lane, 2006, p. 10.

have done to reduce the level of poverty, but perhaps it must be assumed that the political parties in fact do not have the will and the capability to eradicate poverty. This practical question also faces a practical risk because many people who do not experience prosperity in a democratic system can be easily tempted to choose to return to an authoritarian political system, provided that the system can offer greater prosperity for the community.

As a theoretical question, the relationship between democracy and prosperity is a difficult theme because, among other things, prosperity is not an objective that is regarded as adhering to the essence of democracy, as is the case with freedom, equality and justice. The question becomes more concrete if it is translated into a negative formulation: can democracy help to eradicate poverty and reduce the threat of starvation, for example? In this context the study carried out by Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998, can help us greatly.¹⁷

Sen developed his theory by starting from the relationship between political freedom and civil rights on the one hand and freedom from economic disasters on the other hand. There is a kind of political incentive given by democracy to a government that is endeavouring to overcome poverty and in particular starvation. In his study Sen provides extensive empirical data to show that serious famines occur more frequently in authoritarian nations (even though economic growth in those countries is relatively better), while famines very rarely occur in democratic nations that have a multiparty system (although economic growth in these countries may be relatively low). As an example, in the 1979-1981 and 1983-1984 periods there was a fall in food production of 17 per cent in Botswana and 38 per cent in Zimbabwe. In the same periods, Sudan and Ethiopia experienced a decline in food production of 11 per cent and 12 per cent respectively.¹⁸ But the outcomes were very different, for in Sudan and Ethiopia, where the drop in food production was smaller, famine occurred on a large scale, whereas in Botswana and Zimbabwe, which experienced a more severe fall in food production, there was no famine because their governments, which were democratically controlled, were forced

17 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

18 A more detailed description of famine in Ethiopia can be found in Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford & New York, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 86 - 112.

to take serious steps to prevent the occurrence of hunger.¹⁹ Meanwhile, control of this kind did not exist in Sudan and Ethiopia, which had authoritarian governments. In India the last big famine was in the spring and summer of 1943. Known as the Bengali famine, starvation took the lives of two to three million people. Since India became independent in 1947 and after a multiparty system was introduced, famine has not occurred again, even though major crop failures have happened repeatedly.

In the same way, before its economic reformation China was far more successful in developing its economy than was India. Prior to economic reformation in 1979, average life expectancy in China had reached 70 years of age and was far higher than in India. But despite its success in economic development, China did not have the means to prevent starvation. In the three years between 1958 and 1961, there was a famine that took close to 30 million lives, that is, 10 times the number of deaths in the big famine in Bengali, India, in 1943.²⁰

Sen emphasises repeatedly that famines occur in authoritarian countries because of a kind of political immunity of the government. Supposing that an authoritarian government did not take steps to prevent starvation, it would not be subject to disincentives and would not be punished politically by opposition parties. By contrast, democratic governments that did not endeavour to prevent starvation would face criticism from opposition circles and also from the mass media, to the point where those governments would be motivated to take measures to prevent starvation by creating short-term government projects to provide emergency employment opportunities in order to raise purchasing power.

Development, in Sen's understanding, is nothing other than all efforts to increase freedom, of which two kinds can be distinguished, namely, substantive freedom and instrumental freedom. The objective of substantive freedom is to enrich human lives and not just raise incomes. Its content is the capacity and opportunity for a person to choose the type of life that is of value in his or her view. In a negative formulation, substantive freedom takes

19 Amartya Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

20 Amartya Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 181. A more detailed description of the Bengali famine can be found in Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, pp. 50 – 85.

the form of a situation in which each person is protected from the possibility of losing his or her rights or experiencing deprivation.²¹ Substantive freedom is implemented if a person does not experience a lack of food or inadequate nutrition and does not suffer from illnesses or die at an early age. These are democratic rights that concern the quality of life and in particular physical life. Nevertheless, this freedom is connected with a situation in which a person can experience a life of well-being because he is free from illiteracy, can take part in political life and can express his opinion about the political situation.²² In this sense a person who is very rich but who has lost the right to express his political opinions has been robbed of his right to something regarded as valuable.

The second kind of freedom is called instrumental freedom because it is an effective means of promoting economic progress. Sen distinguishes between several sorts of instrumental freedom, namely, 1) political freedom, 2) economic facilities, 3) social opportunity, 4) guaranteed transparency, and 5) protective security.²³ Instrumental freedom is a means and a requirement that must be present so that substantive freedom can really be created.

Political freedom means guaranteed political rights (political entitlement) that are related to democracy. Political freedom takes in the opportunity for people to decide who will govern them and the principles by which they will be governed. For that reason people also have the right to supervise and criticize political power, the right to express political opinions, especially through a censorship-free press, and the freedom to participate in forming political organisations through political parties that they choose without pressure. Political freedom also includes the right to vote in legislative and executive elections.

21 In order to explain poverty and the way to overcome it, Sen uses the concepts of entitlement and deprivation. The first of these concepts refers to the guaranteed rights and open access of a group of people to food, while the second refers to the expropriation of rights and the closing of access to food. Starvation is a matter not of lack of food but rather of the lack of access to food. For that reason starvation is a problem of the relationship between a group of people and the food that is available; it is not a question of whether or not food is available. Although the availability or non-availability of food is one of the reasons for starvation, this is not the only reason but is only one of a number of existing reasons. See Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, p. 154 ff.

22 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. 36

23 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. 18

Economic facilities refer to the opportunities that an individual has to enjoy and utilise economic resources for purposes of consumption, production and exchange. These economic rights (economic entitlement) are connected with the economic resources that a person possesses or that he can use. They also depend on exchange conditions like prices and market mechanisms. It is at this point that there lies a dynamic relationship between a country's level of income and implementation of the economic rights of an individual or a family or, to put it in another way, the manner in which the aggregative aspects of the economy are brought into harmony with the distributive aspects.

Social opportunity is related to the regulation that exists in the quality of life and enables a person to live properly in keeping with what he regards as valuable. In so far as it concerns the physical quality of life, social opportunity is connected with health guarantees, the prevention of illness and hunger or inadequate nutrition, and improvements in mortality rates. In connection with the political quality of life, the eradication of illiteracy, which can obstruct a person's participation in politics and economic affairs, is a matter of concern. The inability of a person to read a newspaper in the political sphere can be compared with a person's inability to add figures in economic matters.

Guaranteed transparency is related to an assumption about whether or not a person can act on the basis of confidence in other people or in a state institution. For that reason there must be some guarantee of a person's freedom to act based on the existence of guaranteed openness (that is, a situation in which necessary information is not covered up) and guaranteed clarity (that is, a situation in which the information that is provided is not blurred or distorted). Sen refers to this as "the right to disclosure and lucidity".

The fifth element of instrumental freedom is protective security, which refers to protection given to citizens in the form of social safety nets which ensure that a change in material circumstances does not cause a person to fall into poverty or hunger or even to die. Protective security includes regulation of a permanent nature concerning assistance for the unemployed and supplementary income for the poor and needy as stipulated in legislation; the aim is to prevent hunger by increasing the purchasing power of this group through emergency employment opportunities that are created by the

state.²⁴

Sen stresses that our attention to instrumental freedom must never cause us to forget its link with substantive freedom in the form of the individual's freedom to live a life that he regards as having value. The individual's freedom to use and develop his capacity and talents is seen by Sen as the essence of substantive freedom. In that connection poverty, in his view, does not only mean the loss of freedom and opportunity to obtain a proper income, but in particular the loss of rights and opportunities to apply and expand his capacity. Poverty primarily means not income deprivation but capability deprivation. In Sen's view a state that guarantees a rise in its people's incomes but at the same time restricts their right to express their opinions and to participate in politics, does not respect substantive freedom, and for that reason does not carry out development in a manner that is in keeping with the demands of democracy.

IV

The second problem that constitutes a long-term challenge for Indonesian politics is the increased role of capital in politics. This can be explained by looking at the situation in national politics or by considering the general situation of today's world, which is undergoing a process of rapid globalisation.

In the case of Indonesia, the steadily growing dependence of political parties on capital and on people with capital from outside the party basically stems from the shortage of public funds for political parties, which has amounted to 90 per cent since 2005. The drastic reduction in the government subsidy cannot yet be balanced by party funds that are collected in the form of membership fees. Virtually no party in Indonesia, with the possible exception of the PKS, has been able to discipline its members to pay regular membership fees. It should be apparent that with such a small government subsidy and with membership fees that can be described as meaningless, political parties

24 Amartya Sen, *op.cit.* pp. 38 – 40.

have to look for other sources of funds from people who have capital, both those people who are members of the party and those from outside the party. The need for funding assistance from people with money is steadily growing because many party activities, especially approaching and during a general election, require a lot of money. Large financial resources are needed to pay survey institutions, the cost of political consultations for political consultants, the cost of advertisements on television or in the printed media, the travel expenses involved in campaigning and the expenses involved in holding political rallies.

It is understandable that the political parties become busy fostering relations with people who have money in order to obtain financial assistance. The risk faced by the parties in this matter is that party leaders must give attention to the interests of those who possess capital and their political wishes. The consequence, which can be easily imagined, is that politicians who have succeeded in obtaining political positions in either the legislature or the executive have to think about “repaying favours” to these owners of capital, while their attention to the interests of the people who are their constituents is easily pushed aside. An even greater danger is that the interests of those with money might cause an executive to make decisions that are advantageous to the people who once financed his political career and even to give them political concessions that are non-transparent and difficult to explain, according to the principles of accountability. An equally serious danger will also emerge if the politicians who have achieved legislative positions make laws that favour the capital owners who funded the electoral campaigns of the legislators in question.

The suggestion put forward by KDPP members as a way to remove this difficulty is to urge the government to provide public funds once again as a government subsidy to political parties. The amount should not be determined on the basis of the number of seats held by a party in the DPR but should be based on the number of votes obtained by each party in the general elections. The proposal made here has already been accepted by the government and the DPR in the 2007 revision of the Statute concerning Political Parties. As long as the size of the subsidy for each vote remains undecided, the KDPP proposes that the minimum should be Rp 1,000 per vote, as was done in the past

until the practice was annulled in 2005. This suggestion warrants government attention, because the political parties cannot yet rely on membership fees as a source of funds.

Does this mean that the participation of businessmen as party members needs to be restricted? Apparently not. The politicians in the KDPP are only suggesting that businessmen who are party members or members of the legislature and executive, should preferably not take part in the planning of legislation or in the formulation of policies that have a connection with the type of business that they run. This is necessary to avoid the presence of vested interests and any conflict of interests.

Nevertheless, the increased role of money in politics cannot be separated from developments in the world today. Globalisation has enabled capital from anywhere to penetrate a country and create new demands that frequently cannot be dealt with by the economic and political forces of that country. In short, economic globalisation has moved faster than political globalisation. There are demands for global governance but there is no global government.²⁵ Nation states have been weakened by pressure from the effects of globalisation, but at the global level democratic institutions have not yet emerged that can handle the problems that appear at the global level because of the influence of globalisation. Meanwhile, not all international economic institutions are managed in accordance with democratic principles.

The end of the Second World War was followed by the formation of the United Nations Organisation (UN) in order to prevent the possible occurrence again of a war that had reduced the world to ruins and caused great losses to human civilisation. Because of fears that stemmed from memories of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the formation of the UN was followed by the establishment of two world institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The main task of the IMF was to safeguard world economic stability, and its main focus was on control over inflation. Meanwhile, the main task of the World Bank was to encourage development in a number of countries, its focus being on poverty alleviation. These two world institutions were formed by wealthy countries whose interests can still be seen in the selection of the leaders of each institution, a selection that has

²⁵ Joseph Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, Penguin Books, Allen Lane, 2006, p. 21.

not always followed the path of democratic principles. The United States of America, for example, agreed that Europe could appoint the head of the IMF, provided that the second position in that institution was held by someone from the United States. At the same time, Europe agreed that the person entrusted with the highest position in the World Bank would be appointed by the president of the United States.²⁶

Supposing that, given this democratic leadership, these two world economic institutions had succeeded in carrying out their missions, other nations would perhaps have been able to accept them. But in its policies the IMF has tended to side with the interests of creditor countries rather than the interests of other countries that have needed assistance. In the event of an economic crisis occurring, IMF has always had money to bail out banks in Western countries but has had no funds to give food subsidies to people in countries threatened by famine. In facing the global crisis at the end of the 1990s, the IMF can be said to have failed to provide assistance to countries that took its advice. By contrast, China, which had its own policies, was able to overcome the crisis with great success.²⁷

The basis of this problem is the fact that at the global level the relationship between capital and democracy is influenced by economic globalisation, whereas there is as yet no world institution that has the authority to solve in a democratic way the problems that have already arisen from the globalisation process and in particular from economic globalisation.

Nevertheless, apart from the influence of globalisation as a new development in the 20th century, the connection between democracy and capital can also be seen – at the macro level – as a manifestation of the relationship between democracy and capitalism, which had been in existence long before globalisation became a new challenge in the national economy and national politics, as is happening now. Is a capitalist society basically (not just by chance because of historical coincidences) more suitable for the development of democracy than is a socialist society? In answering this question, democracy should be understood as a political system (thus, not as a general atmosphere in social groups or in kinship or family systems) that is

²⁶ Joseph Stiglitz, *op.cit.*, p 18.

²⁷ Joseph Stiglitz, *ibid.*

formed by the majority of votes obtained through a general election and is limited institutionally by the participation of the people in politics.²⁸ Given this meaning of democracy, the question then arises of whether modern democracy today can grow without the presence of capitalism? Is democratic politics possible in a non-capitalist society?

The answer given by the sociologist Peter L. Berger is that, although not all capitalist societies observe democracy, all the democracies in existence at the present time have developed in capitalist societies and none have developed in socialist societies (despite the fact that several socialist countries describe themselves as “democracies”). Democracies that have succeeded in establishing welfare states, like the Scandinavian countries and a number of countries in western Europe, cannot be classed as socialist states because capitalism and socialism, as two socio-economic organisations, are defined on the basis of relations of production and not on the basis of redistributive activities and programs. All the nations that have established a welfare state adhere to a market economy and an economy based on private ownership rights (and not on community ownership rights).²⁹

This is due to the fact that in a capitalist system the economy belongs to private space, where the freedom of each individual is made possible and is developed. Private space of this kind is done away with in a socialist system because the power of the state penetrates private regions of a personal nature.³⁰ It is said that technically political freedom in a democracy is always linked to economic freedom in a capitalist economic system. Indeed, a modern democratic state, of the type that we know today, always has a tendency to expand its power within society, assuming that there are no means and possibilities of limiting the power of that state in institutionalised ways. A modern nation of this kind represents the most effective agglomeration of

28 Peter L. Berger, *The Capitalist Revolution*, New York, Basic Books, p. 74.

29 P.L. Berger, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

30 Private space is considered important in safeguarding and managing personal freedom, whereas public space is important for the realisation of justice. Economising is a matter connected with “the question of a good life” and must be placed in private space, whereas taxation is something related to “the question of justice” and for that reason must be included in public space. See Seyla Benhabib, “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the *Liberal* Tradition and Juergen Habermas”, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London, The MIT Press, 1996, pp. 82 -83.

power in history. This has happened not because it is supported by a totalitarian ideology but because there exist various institutional and technological means that enable the government to increase its control over the community. From another point of view, even though a capitalist economy faces a number of restrictions imposed by the state, it can always create its own dynamics and face the state as a reality that is relatively autonomous in nature.³¹

Indonesian political parties face a unique dilemma in dealing with the problem of party funding. On the one hand, they expect public funds as a state subsidy for political parties in carrying out their activities. On the other hand, the same political parties, which face a shortage of public funds, are forced to seek financial support from businessmen and persons with capital who represent the economic sector, which lies within the private sphere. In this tug-of-war, the political parties face an equally heavy risk. If they are very dependent on a state subsidy, it is hard for them to become a political force that balances the power of the state. By contrast, if they rely a lot on the strength of capital from business circles, they can be obliged to follow the political wishes of those who funded them, the risk being that all political measures of a public nature could undergo distortion and turn into measures that serve the private interests of certain moneyed persons.

In their relationship with the strength of the state, they face a risk that is “socialistic” in nature, namely, that the state could extend its power into democratic institutions that should in fact play a role in setting limits on state power. In their connection with the business world, they experience a risk of a “capitalistic” nature in the fact that market conditions could later on defeat all the political aspirations and programs of a party. In this sense neither state subsidies nor contributions from business circles should be their only sources of money or even the most important source of money. It is necessary for political parties to seek other democratic ways for the provision of funds for party activities, whether through party membership fees, party programs that can earn money, or other non-binding ways. It would seem that the political independence of a political party is very difficult to achieve if the party is not relatively independent in finances and funding.

Ideas about the problem of funding require much more attention

31 P.L. Berger, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

from the political parties themselves, because this question represents a stage that they must pass through to reach maturity as political parties and independence as democratic institutions. Another choice for political parties is to develop better social capital.³² The development of good relations with constituents, regular visits to the various regions to maintain contact with constituents, more serious commitment to fighting for the people's interests in the DPR, and the political defence of the welfare of people who have experienced marginalisation, either because of disadvantageous policies and laws or because they have been overwhelmed by a disaster (as in the Lapindo case)... All of these actions will restore the community's confidence in politicians and their tasks. Confidence of this kind is a strong foundation for the formation of social capital in politics, which in many instances has demonstrated that it is capable of leading a number of candidates to electoral victory, although they had to face political rivals who possessed far stronger economic capital.

In the case of long-term politics, the Indonesian community must and will learn that there are limits to the role and influence of money because, if everything has to be expressed in money terms, it will ultimately be impossible to have politics because the cost of transactions will be too high for politicians to bear. Money politics is a sign of venality, which means that all social actions must be evaluated and paid for with money. Venality of this kind cannot continue in an unrestricted way since transaction costs will become so great that community activities will collapse because expenses have exceeded the capacity of the community to pay. Social capital demonstrates the limits of venality. Because, even in politics, confidence is one service that cannot be purchased, which means that only those people who are trusted will obtain votes in an election.

Trust is "hope that emerges in a community due to behaviour

³² Social capital is the ability of people in a group or organisation to work together to reach a common goal; it depends on the ability of a person to communicate and work together with other people. The ability to communicate depends on how far the members of a community observe the same values and norms, and how far they are willing to place their own individual interests below the interests of those common values and norms. See Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity*, New York – London – Toronto, The Free Press, Simon & Schuster, 1996, p. 10.

that is regulated, honest and cooperative, based on norms that are held in common.”³³ These norms can involve basic values concerning the existence of God and justice, but they can also relate to secular norms like professional standards and professional codes of ethics. This confidence may not be lost because sociologically it constitutes a mechanism for the reduction of social complexity.³⁴ Social interaction becomes complex if every action has to be demonstrated, guaranteed or purchased. In sociology, social complexity is a synonym for high costs in the economy. The presence of confidence simplifies social interaction and makes it inexpensive. The reason is that we believe, for example, that a doctor will carry out his job of curing patients and not harming them. The same confidence makes us assume that the politicians whom we elect as representatives of the people will carry out their task of defending the interests of those people.

It should be clear that the high cost of politics nowadays stems from the existence of the social complexity that has developed in politics because of the decline in community confidence in politicians and political parties. The high costs that have appeared as a result of the loss of confidence must be borne together by politicians, political parties and the community as a whole. The effective way to reduce the cost of politics and simplify the social complexity that exists in politics is by restoring community confidence in politicians and political parties and even in politics as a whole. This confidence will emerge if the community sees that politicians and political parties, together with the constituents who elect them, have confidence in the same values and norms and are prepared to put their own personal interests second to the values and norms of democracy.

Jakarta, July 2009

³³ Francis Fukuyama, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

³⁴ The German sociologist Niklas Luhmann defines confidence as “a mechanism to reduce social complexity”. See Niklas Luhmann, *Vertrauen : Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion Sozialer Komplexitaet*, Stuttgart, Enke, 1989.

FOREWORD

In 2007, representatives of seven political parties of Indonesia met in a series of in-house meetings and public seminars to discuss the current state of party politics in Indonesia. These events were organized by the Indonesian Community for Democracy (*Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi, KID*), and covered issues ranging from party financing to local political parties. The results of our discussions were published in 2008 in the booklet “Roles and Challenges of Political Parties – Reflections of Representatives from Seven Indonesian Political Parties” (*Peran dan Tantangan Partai Politik – Refleksi Wakil Tujuh Partai Politik Indonesia*). This booklet attracted significant attention from society, encouraging us to continue our debates and raise problems of party organization that we hadn’t talked about before. Thus between July and December 2008, we met in both in-house meetings and public seminars to exchange our views as leaders and functionaries of political parties. Once again, KID acted as the host of our discussions.

In order to broaden our focus and accommodate a wide variety of viewpoints from different areas, we decided to hold our public seminars outside of Jakarta. This allowed us to interact with many stakeholders in Sumatra, Sulawesi, Java and East Nusa Tenggara Timur, and to avoid a “Jakarta-centrist” perspective on party politics. This booklet summarizes the main points of our discussions and invites the reader to reflect critically on issues related to Indonesia’s ongoing democratization process and the role of political parties in it. It is important to note that the opinions and recommendations expressed in this booklet are very diverse – they mirror our different political and social backgrounds. Accordingly, whenever we agreed to disagree on a certain issue, this is clearly stated in the text, and our conflicting positions are outlined in a neutral way. We hope that readers will benefit from our discussions and the solutions we offer, and we look forward to continue the debate in the future.

I

THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC TRUST IN POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Many press reports and opinion surveys have pointed to an acute crisis of public confidence in political parties. While there are many indicators for this crisis, its most important and consequential manifestation is the large number of people who choose not to cast their ballot in national and local elections. In some areas, voter participation in elections has been only around 50 percent, in some rare cases even less. We are concerned about this development, and are aware that we as representatives of political parties have to work hard to strengthen the credibility and effectiveness of the electoral process. In the following, we discuss some of the main reasons for the phenomenon of low voter participation and identify possible solutions to the problem.

1. Non-Voting in Indonesia: A Historical Perspective

First of all, we would like to emphasize that non-voting is not a new phenomenon, neither in Indonesia nor in other parts of the world. There have always been groups who have deliberately abstained from voting, either because they reject the existing political system, feel that their votes wouldn't make a difference or simply believe that they have better things to do on voting day. Even in consolidated and healthy democracies, voter participation in national elections is only around 70 percent, and in local elections significantly lower. Accordingly, Indonesia – with national voter participation standing at between 75 and 93 percent, and local participation rates at around 69 percent – still fares better than many other, more established democratic states. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the recent decline in voter participation

as a worrying sign of increasing political apathy in Indonesian society, which we intend to reverse.

While there was non-voting in the 1955 parliamentary elections, the phenomenon of “*Golongan Putih*” (*Golput*, The White Group) only emerged as a serious political movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Driven by academics and activists like Arief Budiman, this group called on voters to express their dissatisfaction with the Soeharto regime by either not voting or by punching holes into the symbols of all three state-sanctioned parties, making the vote invalid. The New Order government was very nervous about this movement as it undermined its claim on a credible electoral process and strong public legitimacy. But the overall impact of the *Golput* movement under Soeharto remained limited. It was not much more than a minor disturbance to the regime, which continued to record massive wins for its electoral machine, Golkar. Soeharto was in full control of the state and society, and the “political parties” operating under him hardly deserved that name. In reality, these “parties” were no more than puppets designed to legitimize the authoritarian government.

It was only after Soeharto’s fall in 1998 that real competition between political parties began. Parties became largely independent of government influence, and the elections of 1999 and 2004 were judged by international observers to be free and fair. However, even in these remarkably democratic elections, non-voting did occur. While some people did not vote because they faced administrative difficulties such as non-registration in the voters’ lists, others abstained by choice. Especially some student- and civil society groups dissatisfied with the extent of political reform after 1998 called on Indonesians not to vote, promoting a “revolutionary government” instead that would remove the remnants of the New Order system. But their appeal was not very effective. Voter participation in 1999 and 2004 was high, and although it has been constantly declining, this does not seem to be a serious threat to the existing democratic polity.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between two different kinds of non-voting. First, there is the disenfranchisement of voters by election commissions, mostly by their exclusion from voters lists. In Indonesia, this is

a largely technical and administrative issue concerning the competence and capacity of electoral institutions, and is unrelated to the *Golput* movement. Nevertheless, continued disenfranchisement of voters can severely erode public confidence in elections and the political parties that compete in them. Second, there is the intentional boycott of and abstention from elections, whether for political or apolitical reasons. It is this deliberate non-participation in elections that the Indonesian press has usually termed “*Golput*”, although it is substantially different from the movement against Soeharto’s pseudo-democracy in the 1970s to the 1990s. The next sections will therefore first discuss administrative problems that have led to non-voting in Indonesia, and then analyze the deliberate abstention from elections since the beginning of democratic elections in 1999.

2. Voters’ Lists and the Number of Parties: The Role of the KPU

The exclusion of voters from the electoral process can lead to widespread discontent with the democratic system. While we do not deny that many voters deliberately abstain from voting because of their dissatisfaction with the existing political parties, we also wish to point to the important role of the electoral commission in organizing professional elections. There have been many reports that voters who wish to vote are frequently not allowed to do so because their names have not been on the list. On the other hand, many voters have been registered several times, and in some cases even dead or under-aged persons were listed. Most of these people have been counted as non-voters as they obviously could not cast their ballots, inflating the number of statistical non-participants in the election. These problems need to be addressed, and the election commission and other related government agencies have to improve their performance in order to reduce the frequency of administrative shortcomings in the electoral process.

The most essential issue in this regard is the accurate drafting of the Preliminary Voters’ List (*DPS, Daftar Pemilih Sementara*) and Final Voters’ List (*DPT, Daftar Pemilih Tetap*) by the Election Commission (*KPU, Komisi Pemilihan Umum*). In this effort, the KPU is usually assisted by various government agencies, including the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Central

Bureau of Statistics (*BPS, Biro Pusat Statistik*). Often the data submitted by the government to the KPU are outdated, with many voters having moved or died. Similarly, new entries into the list are sometimes not registered - mostly young voters who have reached voting age without the relevant agencies taking notice. As a result of these outdated lists, the KPU often issues DPS and DPT documents that include voters that no longer live in the area and concurrently exclude those who have newly moved into the sub-district for which the lists were drafted. It is therefore of utmost importance that the exchange of data between the KPU and the government is professionalized, allowing for better voters' lists that do not trigger protests from society.

Another problem that has increased the disappointment of society with elections and parties is the unwillingness of the KPU to limit the number of political parties. Under the previous KPU, 24 parties participated in the 2004 elections. But while the conditions to become a participant in the elections did not change significantly after that, the new KPU authorized 38 political parties to take part in the 2009 elections. Given that there will be 6 local parties in Aceh, the total number of parties is in fact 44. This is a remarkable increase, and can only be explained by the KPU's reluctance to strictly apply the parameters that are stipulated in the law. We regret this development, and believe that it has helped undermine public trust in the party system. For that reason, we hope and expect that the KPU will not yield to the pressure of those smaller parties that will not pass the parliamentary threshold of 2.5 percent, which will be implemented for the first time in 2009. The threshold must be upheld consistently, despite the expected protests of individual politicians and parties against it.

We also call on the KPU to concentrate all its energy on the organization of the electoral process, and avoid unnecessary distractions. There have been many disturbing press reports about the KPU's plans to go on trips abroad to inform Indonesians living outside the country about the electoral rules. We, and most other Indonesians, believe that such trips are not necessary, particularly at a time when other organizational issues related to the elections remain unresolved. There are many domestic problems that need the immediate attention of the KPU – such as the production and timely delivery of election materials – while expatriate Indonesians can easily

obtain information on the elections from their respective embassies or from the internet. We are convinced that a professionally organized election can go a long way to reduce the disappointment of voters in the current political system, and the KPU plays a critical role in this effort.

3. Non-Voting as a Political Phenomenon: Frustration with Reformasi?

While we believe that flaws in the organization of elections have contributed to the crisis of confidence in party politics, we accept that the behaviour of politicians and their parties is equally responsible for this trend. This means that we acknowledge that the phenomenon of non-voting is not only an administrative issue of electoral organization, but a substantive political problem. Many voters do indeed stay away from the ballot booth because they are frustrated with the quality of governance in Indonesia. They have no trust in the credibility and effectiveness of our democratic institutions and therefore express their dissatisfaction by abstaining from voting. Convinced that all parties and politicians are the same, these citizens view voting as a waste of their time as a change in government would not bring real change for them. We, as leaders of political parties, do not share many of these perceptions, but we are aware that they are widespread in Indonesian society.

There are indeed many shortcomings in the activities and organization of political parties that have severely damaged their reputation. Some of these deficiencies have been discussed in our previous booklet in 2008, and others will be raised in the following chapters of this publication. Among the most serious problems are the non-transparent financing of parties, corruption among party leaders, the isolation of parties from society, and the inability of party cadres in government and parliament to improve the welfare of ordinary Indonesians. These issues have led to a deep frustration of many voters, who do not believe that casting their votes in elections will have an impact on the behaviour of political parties. Many of the 30 to 40 percent of registered voters who regularly opt not to participate in elections belong to this category, and it is this group that we should pay most of our attention to when discussing and implementing changes to the way we do politics.

One of the most negative features of Indonesian political parties and their leaders has been their unwillingness to accept defeat in elections. Many politicians who lost against their opponents in the election for a party leadership position, for instance, prefer to leave the party and establish a new one, rather than wait for the next congress and compete again in an open contest. Similarly, candidates who lost in legislative or executive positions often challenge their defeat in court instead of fairly congratulating the winner. It is difficult to expect from voters to put their trust into electoral procedures and their outcomes if politicians themselves do not endorse the results of such elections. Thus in order to convince current non-voters to go to the ballot box again, party leaders must first demonstrate that they are willing to accept the consequences of free and democratic electoral competition, regardless of whether they emerge as the winners or losers.

We also notice that many voters have become tired with the extremely high frequency of elections in their areas. In some cases, voters in particular districts have voted 10 times in the last five years. This includes voting for the national and local parliaments, two rounds of presidential elections, ballots for district heads and governors (which both can have second rounds as well if no candidate achieves more than 30 percent of the votes in the first round), elections for village heads, and in some localities even elections for religious authorities such as the *imam*. In some districts of East Java, voters went to the polls three times within a few months to elect their governor after the courts had ordered re-votes. This large number of elections has contributed to a certain level of apathy among voters, reducing the initial enthusiasm for newly granted political rights after 1998. Accordingly, we believe it would be prudent to think about ways to combine several elections on a single voting day; for example, elections for the presidency could be held concurrently with the parliamentary ballots, or the elections for district heads and governors could be conducted on the same day as well. This would not only save money for the organization of elections, but also help voters to regain their excitement about electoral processes.¹

1 In the present election system it is impossible to carry out this proposal, since nomination by a political party or by a group of political parties depends on the result of the legislative election. It is stipulated that the president candidate can be proposed by a political party or a group of political parties that win 20% of the seats

At the same time, however, we would like to stress that any reform of electoral procedures or political institutions should not weaken the role of political parties. Political parties remain the pillars of every democracy, even if much needs to be done to improve their performance. There have been many calls to respond to the current crisis of confidence in political parties by strengthening the position of independent candidates. Independent candidates are already allowed to run for the governorship and the post of district head, and many civil society groups now demand that independent candidates should be granted the right to contest the presidency as well. We do not believe that weakening the role of political parties is the right answer to the existing problems of non-voting and declining public trust in democratic institutions. Instead, every effort should be made to turn political parties into more professional and transparent organizations. We accept that the political parties themselves bear the greatest responsibility in this regard.

Finally, we wish to remind the public that non-voting is not an effective instrument to “punish” incumbent governments or their political parties. On the contrary, non-voting tends to strengthen the political status quo, as unpopular politicians find it easier to gather the necessary number of votes to defend their position. For that reason, we encourage voters who are disappointed with the current situation to select candidates that credibly promote change and reform. We understand that Indonesia’s democracy is still far from perfect, but it does offer a wide variety of candidates to the electorate to choose from. We sincerely hope that all citizens make use of this opportunity, especially given the fact that democratic electoral rights had been withheld from Indonesians for more than four decades and thus should not be taken for granted.

4. Recommendations

From the discussion above, it is clear that two different sets of action will be necessary to address the problem of non-voting and the negative image of political parties. First, the technical and administrative conduct of elections needs to be improved. This is primarily a challenge for the KPU, but also

in the parliament or 25% of popular votes in legislative election (ed).

involves the government and us as electoral contestants. The most serious problem in this context relates to incomplete and inaccurate voters' lists, which both inflate the number of voters and exclude some citizens who wish to vote. The cooperation between the KPU and government agencies such as the BPS needs to be increased in order to produce voters' lists that are up-to-date and complete. The movement of voters from one district to another needs to be tracked, and the new data need to be adjusted immediately by the relevant government offices. In the long term, only a computerized system of data management will achieve this. By reducing the number of disenfranchised voters we hope that the credibility of the electoral process can be enhanced and the phenomenon of non-voting reduced.

As far as the role of electoral agencies and regulations is concerned, we also recommend to reconsider both the number of political parties and the frequency of elections. The KPU should be more restrictive in verifying parties that want to participate in elections; to have more than 30 parties is unsustainable for a democracy in the long term because it creates confusion among voters, ultimately leading them not to cast their ballots. In addition, many parties that the KPU allowed to participate in the elections will eventually turn out to be elite-driven micro-organizations without significant grassroots support. As previous elections have shown, these parties often get less than half a percent of the vote. It would therefore be useful to significantly reduce the number of electoral contestants. Furthermore, the political elite should agree on a rationalized schedule for national and local elections. More ballots on a single voting day will reduce apathy among the electorate and make our political system more effective.

But beyond these issues of electoral organization, the political parties have to work hard to repair their bad reputation that has discouraged many citizens from using their right to vote. This includes reducing the incidence of corruption and other unlawful acts committed by politicians in the executive and legislature, bringing the parties closer to society, increasing the accountability of elected officials towards their voters, and develop our parties as professional and transparent organizations that are based on democratic principles. We need to win back citizens who have turned their back on us because they no longer believe that parties are genuinely interested in

improving the people's welfare. If we succeed in this effort, Indonesian voters will once again enthusiastically go to the ballot booths, just as they did in 1999 when the first democratic elections since 1955 were held.

II

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE MEDIA

One of the most important elements in building public perceptions of political parties and other democratic institutions is the media. Citizens form their view of political parties mostly through television, radio and print media, giving these press organs a lot of power and responsibility. Journalists decide which stories get covered and which are not, and they often determine the fate of a politician, party or institution. Not all reporters and editors have handled this authority well. Often the negative side of party politics is disproportionately represented in the news coverage, while very little is said about the achievements of the government, parliament or parties. For instance, while we do not deny that corruption is a serious problem in party politics and needs to be addressed comprehensively, we also note that some newspapers have portrayed the whole political class as corrupt and power-hungry. We do not think that such clichés accurately reflect the work that many of our party cadres do on the ground, and they also lead people to overlook the positive results of executive and legislative governance at both the national and local level.

In discussing the difficult relationship between political parties and the media, we would like to focus on three different aspects: first, the quality of media reporting on the activities of political parties; second, the influence of business interests on the media in general and on their political coverage in particular; and third, the challenge for political parties to ensure better cooperation with the media. Based on our analysis of these three areas, we offer several recommendations on how both sides – the media and political parties – can contribute to improved news coverage on the workings of our political system.

1. The Quality of Political News Reporting

Of course politicians of all times and cultures have frequently complained about the news coverage on them. In a democratic society such as Indonesia, it is obvious that much of the reporting on the actions of elected officials and their political parties is of a critical nature, drawing the anger of those who are affected by a particular news item. We are well aware that Indonesia is fortunate to have left behind the censorship so prevalent under the authoritarian New Order regime, and under no circumstances would we propose a return to these practices. But while we treasure Indonesia's newly won press freedom, we also wish to highlight some weaknesses in the current reporting on political parties and their leaders.

To begin with, it appears to us that many reporters who are sent by their newspapers to investigate stories and interview politicians are young and inexperienced. Often they have no background knowledge about the topic they are supposed to cover, leading them to ask irrelevant questions or misunderstand the substance of the subject matter. Unlike in Europe or the United States, where journalists with decades of experience still conduct field research, Indonesia's senior journalists are no longer involved in reporting. They are editors or publishers, leaving the investigative ground work to high school graduates with little expertise. Many of the issues covered by these junior reporters are highly problematic. It is impossible for untrained journalists to grasp all the nuances of state budget management, for instance, or appreciate the sensitive nature of diplomatic relations or economic policy. Because they lack the understanding of complicated subjects, these reporters often resort to sensationalist coverage of so-called scandals, which are easy to write about and even easier to sell to their editors and the readers. While we believe that the uncovering of illegal actions of the governing elite is an important task for journalists, it should not be their sole focus.

Second, even some of the more senior journalists do not have specialist knowledge in the field that they cover. In internationally acknowledged magazines, newspapers or television stations, journalists are assigned portfolios according to their expertise and education. For instance, journalists covering defence issues are expected to have a university degree or extensive experience

in security studies. Reporters reporting on science, health or the environment also tend to have an educational or professional background in their respective areas. In Indonesia, however, very few journalists have any kind of grounding in their focus subjects. Reporters sometimes move from the sports section into the politics department without any further training or education. This absence of specific expertise seriously undermines the ability of journalists to provide balanced, comprehensive and accurate reporting on matters related to governance and political affairs. We feel that journalists better educated in their various fields could do a much better job in covering our actions, even if they do it in a critical way.

We also believe that the Indonesian media have adopted the premise “bad news is good news” in an excessive manner. Despite many problems, our country has had remarkable success in building a functioning democracy since Soeharto’s fall in 1998. Yet in some of our newspapers, one could get the impression that Indonesia is at the brink of collapse, riddled by corruption, communal conflict and bad governance. We understand that media organs around the world have a tendency to emphasize negative stories because they attract more readers; but we also think that the press has a responsibility to report good news as well. We would therefore like to see the Indonesian media pay due attention to the progress that has occurred in Indonesia, particularly since 1998. There are many areas in which Indonesia’s achievements have received more praise from foreign institutions and observers than from our own press; the stability of our democracy ten years after the end of authoritarian rule is newsworthy, especially when compared to much less successful democratic transitions in other parts of the world. We do not wish to question the role of the media as an instrument to control the government and the political elite; but we do want to encourage the Indonesian media to give credit to the people and the political leadership when such credit is due.

2. The Influence of Business Interests on News Reporting

One of the most controversial issues concerning the relationship between the media and political parties is the influence of commercial interests on the news content. This is not only relevant in Indonesia, but also occurs

in democracies that are more developed than ours. Wealthy and powerful entrepreneurs often buy newspapers, magazines or TV stations in order to make their political views known and promote their business interests. By endorsing one politician or attacking another, these media tycoons can decide elections and the composition of government. Some even use their media enterprises to facilitate their own political careers. In the same vein, political parties have entered the media business in order to have a forum for their policy platforms and as a means to communicate with their members. All this raises the question of the independence of our media. Can print and electronic media really objectively report on political news if they are owned and run by business conglomerates with predominantly commercial interests, or if they are even the property of the political elite that they are supposed to critically control?

While commercial interests in the media are never unproblematic, we believe that the competitiveness of the Indonesian media landscape has made it impossible for openly partisan newspapers or TV stations to survive. Apparently, the public doesn't put trust in news media that take sides and do not cover all aspects of a certain story. This trend has forced media entrepreneurs and publishers to carry news that may be harmful or unsupportive of their political or economic interests. A prominent example of this was the news coverage on the May 1998 demonstrations against Soeharto. It was quite ironic that even though most TV stations were owned by Soeharto's children or cronies, they could not afford not to cover the protests in their news. A news blackout by these stations would have ruined their credibility and therefore driven viewers away, resulting in a loss of advertising revenue. As a result, the Soeharto-owned stations broadcast pictures of the protest movement to the whole archipelago, accelerating the decline of the New Order regime. After Soeharto's fall, the competition in the media became even more intense, with editors well aware of the fact that they can't suppress news for political reasons because their competitors are certain to publish the story anyway.

It must also be noted that media run by political parties have not been successful in Indonesia. Whether we look at the performance of the tabloid *Amanah* owned by PAN, the daily *Duta Masyarakat* run by PKB or the newspaper *Suara Karya* published by Golkar, none of these publications

has been commercially viable. Some of the party-owned papers only survive because they are heavily subsidised, while others have faltered. This trend demonstrates that Indonesian readers (and viewers) prefer to be presented with a broad range of views, and are not interested in one-sided propaganda by a party or politician. Similarly, newspapers affiliated with a certain religion or ideology have also not been able to grow and establish themselves as influential national media outlets. *Republika* or *Sinar Harapan* are prominent examples of this phenomenon. Accordingly, all available trends and sales data show that media organs need to be inclusive and pluralist in order to be popular and profitable.

Despite these facts, there have been many concerns that political parties could exert influence on the media because the latter is dependent on their advertising funds. It is true that at least 65 percent of the revenue of print and electronic media are derived from advertisements. But it would be an exaggeration to conclude that the media therefore relies on the advertisement funds that parties spend during election campaigns. In fact, the 5-year cycle of national campaigns makes it impossible for media outlets to make themselves dependent on political parties as the main sources of advertisement income. Publishers and broadcasters need constant and predictable income in the long term, and political parties can't provide that. By contrast, advertisements aired during commercial breaks in soap operas deliver much higher and much more stable advertisement income for the media. Thus while political parties do control sizeable advertisement budgets, these are less relevant when calculated over a whole 5-year period.

Finally, we do not find that owners of Indonesian newspapers or TV stations have excessively used their power to impose their opinion on their editorial staff. Of course publishers like Jakob Oetama or Surya Paloh have made use of their right to write or broadcast editorials, but this is a practice that can be found all around the globe. Newspapers in Europe and the United States often carry editorials written by their publishers, sometimes even endorsing candidates in elections or expressing particular opinions on government policies. This happens in Indonesia too, and so far we do not think that it has damaged our democracy. As we stated above, the commercial competitiveness of the Indonesian media arena has discouraged publishers and

owners of TV stations from misusing their outlets as political instruments. If they ever feel tempted to do so, Indonesian readers or viewers are certain to punish them severely for it.

3. Political Parties and their Media Work

So far, we have concentrated on the media and made observations on its relationship with political parties. Naturally, the political parties need to reflect on their own contribution to this relationship as well. We are aware that there are many shortcomings on our side that need to be addressed. In the following, we will discuss some of them.

First, we have to acknowledge that very few political parties have professional departments for media relations. In more consolidated democracies, political parties have well-funded and properly staffed public relations offices that deal with media inquiries and press releases. This ensures that the policies of a particular party are consistently and accurately reported in the media. In Indonesia, however, the press finds it difficult to get coherent messages from central party leaderships about policies and strategies. Instead, individual party leaders often give contradicting statements, which are confusing for the media and damaging for the parties. It is thus in the interest of both the media and the parties that party boards establish press relations departments that can interact with the media effectively and help them to understand the complexity of political work in parliament, the executive and in the parties themselves. In other words, political parties should not only demand that journalists improve their expertise and professionalism, but the parties should also increase the quality of their input into contemporary news coverage.

Second, we as leaders of political parties also need to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the importance of the media as a non-state institution that controls government executives and legislators. An effective system of checks-and-balances can't function without a free and critical press. Accordingly, politicians should not view all critical reporting of their actions as a personal attack; instead, such scrutiny is necessary in order to prevent corruption and mismanagement in our political system. While we do believe

that the press often crosses the very delicate line between exercising control and spreading unsubstantiated rumours, we nevertheless accept that many politicians are unable to grasp the crucial role that the media play in democratic societies. Political parties must do more to educate their functionaries at both the national and local level about the media's control function, and advise them on how to react properly if they are targeted by critical reporting.

Third, we admit that political parties have provided the media with lots of material for their negative reporting. The involvement of party leaders in many corruption cases is not a creation by the press, it is a social reality. We can't blame only the media for the damaged reputation of political parties, but we need to take concrete steps to enforce discipline in our organizations and reduce the number of criminal incidents involving our members. In this sense, we should take the press coverage of such criminal cases as an encouragement to increase our efforts of preventing such incidents in the future.

Fourth, there is also a need in both the media and the political parties to reduce their excessive concentration on charismatic leadership figures. We have often made the experience that journalists are only interested in the chairmen of the parties or very vocal party figures who offer "sensationalist" statements. This is despite the fact that each party has functionaries who are responsible for particular policy portfolios. For instance, most parties have deputy chairs for religious affairs, foreign relations, agriculture, and so forth. But often there is very little coordination in the party when it comes to making a public statement on a specific issue. It should be the deputy chair coordinating a certain portfolio who is the primary contact point for the media in such cases. Instead, these deputy chairs rarely seek to make their views public, and the media are also not very interested in publishing their statements because they may not be "colourful" enough. We as leaders of political parties need to delegate the task of giving public statements to those party officials with the most expertise and authority to make them, and the media should gradually reduce their exclusive focus on the most senior party leader and seek qualified input from the deputy chairs of the various policy departments.

Fifth and finally, we also need to increase the transparency of our political deliberations. Many discussions on important political issues take

place behind closed doors, particularly in parliament. As a result, the press feels shut out from the political process and therefore needs to speculate on what is going on behind the scenes. This stands in sharp contrast to the 1950s, when key political problems were debated openly in plenary sessions in parliament, giving the press the chance to cover the discussions with much more detail and depth. A more open political culture in the legislature would avoid misunderstandings by the press about the substance of the ongoing deliberations, and would give the public much better insights into the amount of work that politicians put into drafting legislation, approving budgets and controlling the executive.

4. Recommendations

Our discussion on the relationship between the media and political parties has led us to several important recommendations. As far as the media are concerned, we propose that more intensive training be provided to journalists who cover political affairs. Reporters should have specialist knowledge of the subject matter that they cover, allowing them to ask relevant questions when interviewing politicians. We also suggest that newspapers, magazines and TV stations should not only highlight the transgressions of political parties and their leaders, but point to their achievements as well. By doing so, the media would present a more balanced picture of party politics: one that doesn't hide the shortcomings of our democracy, but at the same time emphasizes its strengths. We believe that such a balanced and comprehensive media coverage is necessary to maintain the stability of the current democratic system; stereotypes spread by the media - such as that of parliament being controlled by corrupt and incompetent crooks - may in the long term undermine public trust in the political system.

As party leaders, we too have to work on our relationship with the media. Parties should establish professional media departments that can provide the press with consistent information on policy issues. Without such departments, the media will have to continue collecting information from a wide range of party sources, many of whom may not be qualified or authorized to make a statement. We should also enhance the knowledge of

our cadres in parliament and government about the roles and functions of the media in modern democracies. Such training will help reduce the tensions between the media and the politicians who believe that negative reporting on their activities is aimed at their personal destruction. Furthermore, we need to ensure that corruption and other forms of criminal behaviour within our parties are reduced to a minimum. This would be the most effective way of convincing the press that the performance of political parties is not as negative as its portrayal by most journalists. Finally, we should practice more openness in our political discourse, allowing the press to report policy debates in a more authentic and direct manner.

III

BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTY MACHINERY

Many of the problems we have discussed in this and in the previous booklet are related to the issue of effective party machineries. What we mean by “party machineries” (*mesin partai*) is the organizational capacity of a party to act as an effective political vehicle in elections, in parliaments, in government and in society. This requires a coherent network of branches, clear organizational rules, sufficient funding and a joint mission that motivates all members to act as a team. While we have touched upon some of these elements in other sections of this publication, the following discussion will focus on three main problems: first, the extent to which a strong ideology is necessary to maintain the functioning of party machineries; second, the issue of whether the emergence of non-party executive leaders can undermine the effectiveness of party machineries; and third, the “outsourcing” of party work to professional political consultants, which points to the structural weakness of Indonesia’s political parties both in the centre and in the regions.

1. Ideology – A Necessary Precondition for Effective Party Machineries?

When it comes to the role of ideology in building an effective party machinery, there are two different schools of thought. First, there are those who believe that a consistent ideology is instrumental to the coherence of political parties and their organizational structures; they argue that without the binding force of a common belief system, parties won’t be able to exist as solid political groups. The second school of thought is convinced that ideology no longer plays a significant role in political parties; as voters are more concerned

about their welfare than about ideology, parties have to be as inclusive as possible to be successful at the ballot box and survive as an organization. The following paragraphs will weigh the arguments of these diverse viewpoints without expressing any particular preference for either of them.

The proponents of a strong role for ideology in party organization argue that parties can't turn into effective political actors without giving their members a sense of mission and purpose. Only a powerful system of values shared by all its cadres can create the bonds between party functionaries necessary to prevent fragmentation and fractionalization. If cadres are only driven by pragmatic considerations when joining a particular party, nothing can stop them from moving to another party if they receive a better deal there (i.e., a better position). The result of such ideology-free parties would be incessant party-hopping, with politicians changing parties like they change vehicles. Accordingly, some Indonesian parties have developed stringent ideologies and values for their members, which are reflected in the party's organizational structures and its code of conduct. PKS is such a party, defining itself as an Islamic party derived from the *tarbiyah* movement. The joint religious and moral beliefs among its members has made the party solid, unified and disciplined. In addition, it has allowed PKS to develop an effective party machinery, with all members fulfilling their function in a sophisticated organizational structure that reaches from the centre down to the village level.

The "ideologues" in political parties also insist that ideology is increasingly important for party leaderships to distinguish themselves from the other parties. With 38 national parties competing in the 2009 elections, it is essential for parties to explain to voters what exactly it is that makes them differ from their competitors. Without such an ideological framework, even well-funded and well-organized party machineries can't mobilize the electorate for the party's cause. That cause must be clearly formulated, coherently presented and easily understandable for large masses of voters. At the same time, it must include references as to how this ideological framework differs from parties with similar worldviews. For instance, what distinguishes an Islamic party from another Islamic party? What are the main differences between a secular-nationalist party and an Islamic party? And if two or more parties

share the same ideology, why do they still run as separate parties? Parties that can't answer these kinds of questions will find it difficult to attract voters. Ultimately - according to the "ideologues" - ideology is an indispensable tool to maintain internal coherence within the party and create an attractive "label" to win elections.

The "pragmatist" school of thought believes that ideology is not only an unnecessary, but in fact obstructive element in building successful party machineries. In their view, voters are no longer interested in ideology, but in concrete solutions of their daily problems. These problems revolve around unemployment, high living costs, corruption in government agencies, and insufficient or lacking public service institutions such as schools and clinics. The pragmatists believe that effective party machineries should focus on these real-life issues and offer concepts that other parties do not. Only in a hard-fought competition over programs and platforms, they argue, can party machineries attract votes from across Indonesia's social, religious and political spectrum. By contrast, ideologically oriented parties hinder the efforts of their machineries to mobilize as many voters as possible at the grassroots. For instance, an explicitly Islamic party will find it difficult to attract non-Muslim voters, while secular parties may not receive support from devout *santri* voters. For the pragmatists, excessive emphasis on ideology can exclude voters rather than attract them to the party. Consequently, parties should develop programmatic platforms rather than abstract and exclusivist ideologies.

The pragmatist paradigm also stresses the fact that party machinery is run through political skills, sufficient funds and sophisticated strategies, and not ideologies. Functionaries in the centre and at the local level need to know how to manage people and budgets, how to organize a campaign and how to recruit nominees for legislative and executive office. According to this concept, party machinery can't be fuelled with ideological slogans, they have to be organized like professional businesses or goal-oriented civil society groups. Professional campaign management and ideological fixations on certain constituencies are difficult to reconcile, with the latter often undermining the former. Hence, the less ideology interferes with the technical organization of the party machinery, the more successful a party will be in elections and in its long-term institutionalization.

As we stated above, we do not make a judgement at this point as to which school of thought is right and which one is wrong. There are proponents of both paradigms among us, and we acknowledge this difference of opinion openly. But we do agree that a sense of purpose and a feeling of working towards a joint goal can inspire cadres to engage enthusiastically in party activities. Similarly, a clear political identity can help parties to distinguish themselves from their opponents, and thus help the electorate to make their choice in an informed manner. We are not certain, however, whether such a sense of purpose and identity is best described with the term “ideology”. As a country that has suffered greatly under deep ideological divisions in the 1950s and 1960s, Indonesia should be most careful with efforts to re-ideologize the political debate and competition.

2. Popularity or Party Loyalty? Non-Party Candidates in Local Elections

Nowhere is the tension between ideology and political pragmatism in party politics more palpable than in the emergence of non-party candidates for executive office in local elections. As “non-party candidates” we define those nominees who have been nominated by a political party, but have had no previous relationship to it. In recent years, even parties with strong ideological orientations have found it necessary to nominate affluent, powerful and popular figures for key positions in local government although these candidates have had no prior political or ideological connections to the parties that support them. For instance, Islamic parties have supported nominees who have not been known to be particularly devout Muslims, while secular parties have backed *santri* candidates. In all these cases, the performance, popularity or wealth of nominees took precedence over their ideological disposition. Lacking both qualified cadres and the money to fund expensive campaigns, many parties have simply opted for a pragmatic deal with influential bureaucrats who have the cash and influence to run successful campaigns. Obviously, this raises the question of how this new tendency in local politics affects the efficiency of party machineries at the grassroots.

The nomination of non-party figures for public office has had both

a positive and negative effect for party machineries. On the one hand, party machineries have benefited from the wealth and popularity of these candidates. In contrast to cash-strapped local party branches, non-party candidates often possess the funds to run expensive campaigns and thus provide the “fuel” that party machineries need in order to function properly. In addition, such nominees often have high levels of name recognition and are popular among voters. It is much easier for party machineries to mobilize support for affluent and widely known candidates than for unpopular party nominees with no name recognition. Furthermore, the greater chance of electoral success energizes the party base, which sees a realistic chance of gaining power. Most importantly, under the rule of a non-party candidate as governor or district head, the incumbent is expected to reward the nominating party with bureaucratic positions and other political and economic favours. These positions of power can subsequently be used to develop and expand the party machinery.

But often the party machineries fail to reap these potential benefits from the nomination of non-party candidates. To begin with, many non-party figures who win elections do not believe that they owe any favours to the parties that nominated them. Accordingly, they do not appoint party functionaries to key positions in the bureaucracy, denying them the chance to gain important executive experience and raise the profile of the party. As a result, party machineries stagnate as they lack the necessary resources to expand. However, not only the independent candidates are to blame for this development. Unfortunately, some of our cadres have privately made “deals” with these nominees, based on which the candidate pays a certain amount of money in exchange for the nomination. After this payment, the nominee has no further obligations towards the party, and thus feels that he doesn’t need to include party cadres in his administration. Moreover, much of these payments is pocketed privately by party functionaries and therefore does not flow into the maintenance of the party machinery.

The nomination of non-party figures can also have a negative impact on a party’s coherence. Many party functionaries at the grassroots feel that they have earned the right to run for public office by sacrificing much of their energy and time in tiresome party work on the ground. Consequently, they view

it as unfair if non-party nominees who don't have any prior relationship with the party suddenly are chosen to represent it in elections. Often disgruntled party officials then obstruct the party machinery during the campaign, or they simply do not participate in the efforts to mobilize support for the party candidates. As a consequence, the party machinery does not function as it should, and both the party and the nominee suffer the consequences: weaker voter mobilization and possibly electoral defeat.

Finally, nominating non-party candidates might also undermine the reputation of a party. The chance of this occurring is particularly high if the candidate's political, social, religious or ideological profile differs immensely from the party's platform. For instance, if a party known for its tough stance on anti-corruption nominates a bureaucrat against whom corruption charges have been laid, the electorate is likely to respond unfavourably. In the same vein, the nomination of a non-Muslim candidate by an Islamic party can drive away that party's core voters. Party machineries will then find it difficult to run a credible and efficient campaign. At the end, parties may not only see their candidate lose the ballot for the governorship or the position of district head, but might also experience a significant drop in support at the next parliamentary election.

Evidently, the issue of whether non-party candidates have a positive or negative impact on the effectiveness of party machinery depends on various factors. If non-party candidates are affluent, popular and willing to accommodate the interests of the nominating party after the election, the party machinery can benefit from such a nomination. If, however, the non-party candidate has political or ideological convictions that run counter to the nominating party's platform, then such a nomination can undermine the unity and solidity of the party machinery.

3. "Outsourcing": Political Consultants and Party Machineries

One of the most important developments in party politics since 1998 – and particularly since 2004 – has been the increasing influence of opinion polling on the political behaviour of parties. Compared to the early phase of the post-Soeharto transition, parties are now much more likely to follow opinion

polls when making crucial decisions, whether these be in the nomination of candidates for parliament, local executive office or the presidency, or in essential policy matters. However, we acknowledge that only very few of our political parties have developed the capacity to conduct such polls on their own. Instead, this task is outsourced to professional polling institutes, which charge high fees for their services. As a result, a handful of highly profitable pollsters has emerged, who offer their services to all parties that are willing to pay. Within some of our parties, this has led to some dissatisfaction, as party leaders are now more inclined to heed the advice of opinion pollsters than that given by their own cadres. This triggers the question: do hired political consultants and pollsters support or damage the existing party machineries?

We believe that independent polling institutions can be effective additions to party machineries if certain conditions are fulfilled. First, party leaderships should not treat polling results as the only basis for their decisions on crucial matters. They should also take the opinion of party functionaries and cadres into account, particularly when the decisions relate to issues that are closely related to the party's political and ideological identity. Second, party leaders need to limit the role of independent pollsters within the party organization. Outside consultants should not be put in a superior position vis-à-vis party officials as this is certain to lead to unproductive tensions within the party machinery. Third, party managements should carefully choose the survey institutions and consultants that they want to work with. Some polling bodies are only interested in the commercial aspect of their work, and do not really care if their polls and advice lead to electoral success of their client or not. We believe that truly professional and committed consultants and pollsters can be easily integrated into party machineries; but advisers solely focused on their profit could be more of an impediment than a useful addition.

If the conditions described above are met, independent pollsters can have several advantages over survey institutes affiliated with the party itself. Most importantly, independent consultants find it easier to confront party leaders with the political reality of their poll numbers than low-ranking functionaries who conduct surveys for their superiors in the party. Party cadres may be tempted to present manipulated figures, either because they want to please their leaders or simply because they believe low figures would

demoralise party supporters. Professional, independent consultants do not face such limitations, and are much less constrained to deliver painful polling results than their colleagues who are members of the party they surveyed. We as party leaders need independent and reliable assessments; we can't prepare effectively for elections if we are given numbers that were derived from the ABS principle ("*Asal Bapak Senang*", "As Long as the Boss is Happy"). In this context, we value the input from outside experts highly, and the data they provide can be used to make our party machineries work more professionally and precisely.

Many observers have argued that the outsourcing of opinion surveys to independent survey institutes is an indication of the institutional weakness of our political parties. We do not entirely agree. In fact, some of our parties do have internal polling departments, and they function fairly well. But these internal surveys are no substitute for independent, objective assessments of our electoral position. As outlined above, internal polling might be biased and thus not reflect the reality on the ground. Accordingly, hiring external consultants is a sign of our professionalism and our determination to analyze the aspirations of voters in comprehensive and balanced manner. And as we indicated above, the employment of consultants does not necessarily obstruct the work of our party machineries. If handled appropriately, pollsters and advisers can make a significant contribution to the strategic, logistic and substantive campaign preparations of our party machineries at the national and local level.

4. Recommendations

Effective party machinery is crucially important for parties to function properly. We do believe that while ideologies are potentially divisive, members of each party need to share a common sense of purpose in order for the party and its machinery to be solid, coherent and efficient. We therefore recommend that parties work hard to develop comprehensive platforms that are acceptable to all members of the party and can define its identity. A complete lack of a political and paradigmatic framework would make parties weak, with their members likely to move on to other parties if their short-term pragmatic

interests dictate them to do so. Such party-hopping, in turn, would seriously undermine the power of party machineries. However, we also suggest that parties adopt platforms that are as accommodating and inclusive as possible towards Indonesia's many social, political, cultural and religious constituencies. Exclusivist programs are more likely to damage party machineries than to assist them in the highly competitive election campaigns.

In order to build effective party machineries, the leaders of political parties should choose a very careful approach to both non-party candidates in local elections and external consultants to the party. Both can be very useful for party machineries, but there are certain risks that party leaderships need to take into account. In choosing non-members as candidates for local elections, party officials should make sure that these nominees are willing to cooperate with the party before, during and after the election. Otherwise, the party grassroots are likely to be unsupportive of the nominee, and the party machinery will suffer as a result. Similarly, party functionaries should ensure that outside consultants working for the party are considerate towards the sensitivity and internal dynamics of the party. We do believe that such external advisers are a great addition to our party machineries; we just need to make sure that they fit in well with our grassroots activists and cadres who have been working very hard for our parties for a long time and play a key role in our activities, both during election campaigns and routine political work.

IV

THE RECRUITMENT OF LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES

The recruitment of legislative candidates is one of the most important tasks of party leadership. The actions of members of parliament will to a large extent determine the public reputation of the party they belong to and thus have a great influence on its performance in the next election. If a legislator is seen as responsive, clean and committed to advancing sensible policies, his or her party will profit from it. If, on the other hand, members of parliament are corrupt, ineffective and focused only on their self-enrichment, the image of their parties will be damaged. Accordingly, the standards for the recruitment of nominees for parliament is of crucial importance. What should parties look for when selecting candidates? Is it performance or education? Should gender, age, religion or race play a role in the recruitment process? How important is it for nominees to be wealthy or popular? The following discussion of recruitment parameters will concentrate on three main areas: first, the increasing tendency of parties to nominate celebrities as legislative candidates; second, the question of female nominees and their prospects in elections; and third, the role of personal wealth as a major criterion in the recruitment process.

1. Celebrities as Legislative Candidates: A New Trend

Many of our parties have very strict standards for recruiting parliamentary candidates: they must be experienced (as proven by a certain number of periods in lower-level parliaments), have been in the party for an extended period of time, fulfil educational standards (some parties demand

bachelor degrees for a candidature for the national parliament), free of any criminal convictions or investigations, and possess an impressive track record of service to society. These high thresholds for nomination are set in order to ensure that only highly qualified candidates can become members of parliament, as poorly performing legislators would become a burden for both our nation and our individual parties. However, in recent years changes in the electoral system have forced us to pay attention to another important selection criterion as well: personal popularity. With the introduction of a partially open party list in 2004 and a fully open party list in 2009, voters are no longer only electing parties (as was the case in 1999), but vote for candidates as well. As a consequence, candidates with high levels of recognition are in a considerable advantage over nominees who may be more qualified but are largely unknown.

In this situation, parties have increasingly turned to prominent television presenters, actors and models to represent them in elections. As figures widely known in society, they have remarkable electoral assets: their names have been popular for many years, thus reducing the need to introduce them to the electorate; they are (mostly) well liked, as they often play sympathetic characters on television; they have not been involved in the corruption and machinations of party politics in the past, allowing them to present themselves as fresh and dynamic newcomers; they tend to be good-looking and charismatic; and they are reasonably affluent, making them able to fund their own campaigns. It should thus not come as a surprise that many of our parties have nominated such celebrities for both legislative and executive office. And the success that these celebrities have had has motivated our party leaders to recruit even more actors and television presenters. Angelina Sondakh, for instance, became a member of parliament for *Partai Demokrat* in 2004, as did Adjie Massaid. Similarly, Dede Yusuf was elected as deputy governor of West Java in 2008. Their triumph has triggered a wave of nominations of celebrities for the 2009 parliamentary elections.

But while we believe that nominating celebrities for public office is an effective way of mobilizing electoral support, we are aware of the drawbacks of such a trend as well. First, the qualification and capacity of celebrities to serve competently in parliament or government has often been questioned by

outside observers. The tasks of a legislator or government official are highly complex, requiring much expertise and experience. Especially when it comes to drafting and scrutinizing budgets, controlling government departments and security agencies, as well as writing new laws and regulations, tertiary education and other training in such fields is not only desirable but necessary. Obviously, celebrities rarely possess such qualifications and thus face a very long and difficult period of adjusting themselves to the new working environment, while other professional politicians taking up new office are usually functional from the first day. We also acknowledge that some celebrities elected to political office in previous elections have not been at the forefront of new policy initiatives; instead, the media has been more interested in reporting on their private lives. This has not only damaged the reputation of these celebrities, but also of our parties.

Second, some of our cadres have also complained about the privileges that celebrities enjoy in political parties. As explained above, there are usually very strict criteria for party functionaries to run for political office, ranging from educational thresholds to distinction in their service to the party. However, these conditions do not apply to celebrities. There is typically a certain number of nomination slots reserved for persons outside of the party structure, and celebrities tend to be nominated in that category. In Golkar, for example, 10 percent of nominations are handed to such external figures, including celebrities. This special treatment of celebrities has angered some of our deserved functionaries, who feel that they are sidelined in favour of people who have no proven track record in loyally serving the party. We fully understand that these dynamics has undermined the solidity of our parties, and we are determined to ensure that all our nominees, regardless of whether they are popular figures or long-time members of the party, feel committed to the party's cause and its electoral campaigns.

We would like to point out, however, that our nomination of celebrities is not a reflection of our own agenda and priorities, but a direct result of societal trends and changes in the electoral system. Because voters have demanded more rights in selecting their candidates, we have agreed on an electoral system in which citizens vote for parties and individual candidates. Under such a highly competitive system, we as leaders of central party boards

can no longer place qualified but unknown policy experts on our party lists. They would find it very difficult to get elected as they have had no time no campaign intensively at the grassroots. Instead, voters support candidates that they know, find likeable and view as trustworthy. In this context, celebrities are in a very good electoral position, and parties have therefore happily nominated them. We would welcome it if voters preferred committed policy experts with long-standing experience in technocratic managements over popular celebrities; however, the reality on the ground is different, and we therefore have to follow this dominant socio-political trend if we don't want to be overrun by it.

2. Female Candidates: The Struggle for Equality

Another important cornerstone of our recruitment system has been the search for qualified female candidates. Women voters are obviously a crucial constituency for every party, given that more than 50 percent of Indonesians are female. Accordingly, high-profile women are sought as candidates to attract votes and to advocate women's interests in parliament after they get elected. But the recruitment of women into our parties has not been easy. It has been a challenge for them to compete with their male counterparts, who are often prepared to use all available means – their power, influence and money – to obtain a nomination. Women often lose out in such tough competitions, partly because they are reluctant to resort to intimidation and dirty tricks in order to push aside their male rivals. It is also a social reality that men still dominate leadership positions in businesses, the education sector, security agencies and the bureaucracy – all important recruitment pools for our parties. How should parties go about recruiting female candidates if open competition for key positions and nominations disadvantages women? Is “affirmative action”, i.e. the reservation of certain quotas for women, the right way?

In this regard, there are two different ways of thinking among us. First, some of us believe that women deserve special consideration in candidate selection processes because they have been structurally disadvantaged by male dominance in all sectors of society and politics. Without giving women

the opportunity to occupy strategic positions in parliament, parties and the executive, a new class of experienced and skilled women will not emerge. It is thus imperative to hand a certain amount of positions to women without subjecting them to the same criteria as their male colleagues. This paradigm is reflected in the 2007 law on political parties and the 2008 elections law, which require parties to have 30 percent women in their senior leadership and to place one woman among every three candidates for the parliamentary elections (the so-called “zipper system”). Although the latter regulation was weakened by the Constitutional Court’s decision to allocate seats to those candidates with the highest number of votes regardless of their ranking on the party list or their gender, the new stipulations were groundbreaking for Indonesia. The supporters of this regulation argue that it will help entrench women in political institutions; after a certain period of time, it is hoped, this system will outlive itself once it has achieved its goal.

The opponents of affirmative action argue that treating women differently will not strengthen, but in fact weaken them. Interestingly, many women active in our parties are of this opinion. They are convinced that they have reached senior positions so far because of their qualifications, not because of their gender. The introduction of quotas for women appears to them like an act of charity, and they suspect that society will therefore not take them seriously as politicians with competitive achievement and skills. The quotas would thus have achieved the opposite of what women groups had in mind when they demanded them: the regulations will reduce societal respect for women, and especially male competitors will claim that women only got elected or appointed because of the discriminative quota system. Those who reject quotas for women believe that only by competing with men for key positions will women gain the experience and skills they need to survive in politics and the bureaucracy. While this may take some more time, they are convinced that Indonesia is already on the way to providing more political space for women, and that ultimately equality will be established.

We acknowledge that the question of recruiting women candidates for senior legislative and executive positions is dilemmatic for many of our parties. On the one hand, we believe that we need to do more than in the past to ensure that women are proportionally represented. Since the 1950s,

the percentage of women in parliament has only slightly increased, and since the New Order it has stagnated or partially even declined. Evidently, new approaches must be found in order to address this serious problem. On the other hand, we are committed to upholding our quality standards in the selection process for candidates for public office. Generally, we do not view gender as a criterion to run for office; expertise, experience, skills, and service to the party are - and should remain - the key conditions. As outlined above, the only exception we have made in this context is the nomination of popular celebrities and other candidates with extraordinary backgrounds. Significantly, many women who become candidates for the 2009 elections are celebrities. In the future, the challenge will be to entrench as many competitive women in business, politics and the bureaucracy as possible as there are already in the financially hugely important entertainment sector.

3. A New Oligarchy? Money and the Recruitment Process

The third element that complicates our recruitment process is the necessity to nominate candidates with considerable financial means. As we have stated previously, political parties face serious financial problems, mostly because only few members are prepared to pay membership fees and the state has reduced its subsidies in recent years. This financial weakness of parties has led to a situation in which they are no longer able to fund the campaigns of their various nominees. Accordingly, personal affluence has become an additional criterion in our search for nominees, as we expect them to carry the costs of their electoral activities. Ideally, the candidates should not only pay for themselves, but also contribute to national campaigns of our parties, for instance the presidential elections. In doing so, the nominees make sure that the party machinery too benefits from the nomination of legislative and executive candidates with large financial resources.

We are aware that the selection of wealthy candidates has a number of negative implications, both for our parties and for the political system in general. To begin with, the inclusion of personal affluence as an additional selection criterion has watered down our otherwise strict system of quality checks. Candidates who are highly educated, experienced and skilled, but

who lack the money to fund their campaigns may find it difficult to secure a nomination if his or her competitor can provide evidence to the party leadership that he or she is rich enough to fund the campaign. Given the increased costs of running for office, parties are reluctant to hand a nomination to someone who has no resources at all, however qualified he or she might be. Obviously, this has significant repercussions for the composition of our caucuses in the parliament. In addition to celebrities who were selected because of their popularity, and women who were chosen to meet the legally regulated quota, our caucuses will increasingly feature members of parliament whose most remarkable quality is their wealth. We do not view this as a good development, but as a reflection of broader socio-political dynamics.

Another unwelcome side effect of the increasing importance of candidates' wealth is the emergence and expansion of political hooliganism (*premanisme politik*). We accept that particularly some of the chairpersons of our local branches have secured their election entirely because of their financial power, sidelining more qualified and sophisticated candidates for these positions. As leaders of local chapters, they have tried to take influence on the policies of the national leadership as well, leading to heated and sometimes violent discussions at party congresses and conferences. Of course we do not condone such actions, and would prefer if money played only a minor role in party organization and the recruitment of cadres and candidates. But the political costs of running a party have become so high that unfortunately some oligarchic interests have been able to penetrate certain layers of our parties. A comprehensive restructuring of our party financing system would be required in order to overcome this problem, and we hope that the new government will finally take steps in this direction.

In principle, we believe that parties and their recruitment processes should be driven by considerations of merit alone. The best-qualified candidate should be identified and chosen. However, we have not reached this ideal goal yet. We still need to make compromises that are born out of the difficulties in our democratic consolidation. We hope that in the years to come, further improvements in our efforts to identify the right people for legislative and executive positions can be made.

4. Recommendations

Our recommendations in this section are directed towards both the general public and the leaderships of political parties. First, we would like to appeal to the electorate to reflect carefully on the qualifications they expect from candidates for political office. There is often a huge discrepancy between the theoretical criteria stated by voters and their concrete voting behaviour. In general opinion surveys, voters often claim that they want their nominees to be qualified, honest, responsive and capable. But in elections at both the national and local level, the candidates that are most successful are celebrities and rich bureaucrats, who often meet only very few of these requirements. Frequently, voters also expect their nominees to hand them gifts, pay for travel expenses or provide scholarships, without realizing that such demands stand in sharp contradiction to the theoretical conditions they have set for candidates. Therefore, we recommend that voters try to insulate themselves from the growing influence of money and “celebrity” politics. The less voters feel attracted by celebrity figures or candidates offering financial incentives, the more parties will have the courage to nominate candidates based solely on their merits.

We also call on the electorate to increase their support for female nominees in local and national ballots. More than half of all Indonesian voters are women, yet female candidates still face an uphill battle in winning elections. As a result, women have fewer chances to collect experience in legislative and executive positions than their male rivals. In turn, parties are reluctant to nominate them. Indonesian voters should break this vicious cycle by strongly backing women who run for office. Ultimately, such strong support would make affirmative action unnecessary in the long term, and women could gain office in an open political competition instead.

Of course, we as leaders of political parties are also tasked with improving our recruitment processes and offering to the electorate better candidates. We should be more prepared to prioritize the institutional development of our parties over short-term political gains. This would mean to still nominate well-qualified, experienced and skilled candidates even if they might lose against celebrities, oligarchs or hooligans. In the long term, it is possible

that professional quality will prevail over superficial popularity and money politics, and we should do everything in our power to make this happen. We also recommend to our representatives in the legislature and in government to revamp the current party financing system. The current dependence of political parties on rich figures who offer themselves as candidates for political positions is undermining our recruitment systems, which should be based on clearly defined qualifications rather than the amount of money a nominee may or may not be able to provide.

V

POLITICAL PARTIES, DEMOCRACY AND WELFARE

One of the most controversial issues among Indonesian politicians and intellectuals in recent years has been the relationship between political parties, democracy and the people's welfare. This debate gained new momentum in 2008 when Vice-President Jusuf Kalla declared that democracy was not a goal, but only a tool to achieve welfare for the people. The unspoken implication of this statement was that if democracy failed to lift people out of poverty or failed to advance the material interests of the middle class and entrepreneurs, other forms of government should be tried that can do a better job. But the issue of democracy and welfare can also be seen from a different angle: to which extent is it justified or realistic for voters to demand material gifts from politicians in exchange for their votes? Is the "welfare" that voters expect from political parties and their representatives simply the money that politicians hand out to attract support? In order to discuss these questions, we have identified three areas in which the relationship between welfare, democracy and parties is most relevant. First, we evaluate whether Indonesian political parties have done enough to advance people's welfare. Second, we focus on the role that "welfare" plays in elections, both as a campaign topic and as the instrument of money politics. Third, we address the demands from certain civil society organizations that political parties be disbanded because they have allegedly failed to bring welfare to the people.

1. Democracy and People's Welfare

The problem of the relationship between democracy and welfare has been one of the most crucial issues in political theory and practice. Once again,

there are two major streams in this debate: one camp believes that democracy is only a means to achieve a prosperous society; if democracy does not deliver, then more authoritarian systems of governance may be better positioned to reach this goal. The other camp, however, proposes that democracy is a goal in itself, regardless of whether it succeeds in making people more prosperous or not. Democracy, they argue, is providing citizens with the freedom to make choices, and is thus the most desirable political system. We believe that both positions are important and well-argued. We are also convinced that they are not mutually exclusive, and we therefore suggest that both paradigms can be combined. But before we touch upon such theoretical issues, we would like to review the performance of Indonesian parties and politicians in creating welfare for the people.

We openly acknowledge that Indonesia is still far away from achieving a prosperous society, and that its political leaders need to shoulder some of the responsibility for this. The number of poor Indonesians is much too high, regardless of whether we use the standard applied by the government (which defines people earning less than 1 USD a day as poor) or that set by the World Bank (which views those making less than 2 USD a day as poor). Significantly, Indonesia lacks behind Thailand and other Asian countries in its public spending on welfare programs. Furthermore, in the UN's Human Development Index, Indonesia is only ranked 107th, while South Korea is 26th, Malaysia 63rd and Thailand 78th. These figures clearly show that Indonesia's politicians – including its political parties – have done not as much as they could in overcoming poverty and increasing people's welfare. This is despite the fact that most political parties claim that people's welfare (*kesejahteraan rakyat*) is one of the core elements in their platforms; yet it seems that Indonesia is not much closer to achieving it than ten years ago, when Soeharto fell.

In identifying the reasons for this failure, we believe that two factors are dominant: first, there is still no comprehensive welfare policy in Indonesia. Much of the welfare programs run by the state are ad hoc in nature, and do not address the structural roots of poverty. The cash payments provided by the government under the BLT scheme, for example, is a welcome form of assistance to families that face financial difficulties as a result of the current economic crisis. But these payments are small compared to the total budget

(only 2-4 percent), and they are not part of a long-term welfare system. In the future, we believe that a National Social Welfare Act is necessary (*UU Jaminan Sosial Nasional*), through which benefits like unemployment payments should be regulated. Second, we think that better coordination should be established between political parties on the one hand, and between political parties and civil society groups on the other hand. In other countries with more successful welfare regimes, such cooperation is much more effective than it is in Indonesia.

At this current time, we are convinced that the problems of public welfare can be addressed and resolved within the framework of our democratic system. Through a more focused and collectively supported approach, the number of Indonesians living in poverty can be gradually reduced. This approach can be designed and implemented by our political parties and their representatives in parliament and the executive, without having to change the democratic system we are practicing today. We do not see how a more autocratic government could handle the problems related to poverty and unemployment better than one that was chosen in a democratic election by the people. However, the many voices that question the ability of democratic systems to properly handle welfare issues should serve as a reminder to us that democratic systems are not perfect, and that they need to constantly improve in order to stay competitive and legitimate. As mentioned above, we do believe that our democracy should facilitate better cooperation between its various components – both within and outside the government – to produce a national welfare system that offers sustainable solutions to poor and unemployed Indonesians.

Based on our trust in the current democratic system, we think that democracy and public welfare are inseparably intertwined. This means, we do not believe that welfare should be achieved with undemocratic instruments if democracy itself fails to deliver prosperity; nor do we accept that democracy is a value or goal in itself that can stand alone without the prosperity of its citizens. Internationally, we see many examples that democracies function better and are more sustainable if their citizens are prosperous. Similarly, most prosperous nations around the globe are democracies. Evidently, there is a close interrelationship between democracy and prosperity, and we intend to

use this linkage effectively to promote both democratic values and welfare in Indonesia. The sceptics of this approach have pointed out that Singapore and China have advanced the prosperity of their peoples without introducing democracy; but even these countries have seen an increase in public demands for democratic reforms, similar to those that forced Soeharto to resign in 1998. Nevertheless, we are more than willing to study those elements of Singapore's and China's economic success that are compatible with our democratic system, and apply them here in Indonesia.

2. "Welfare" as an Instrument in Election Campaigns

There are two ways in which the topic of "welfare" has played a role in election campaigns: first, as a policy issue that is of extreme importance to voters; and second, as a tool for both candidates and voters to exploit the elections as an arena in which to offer and demand material patronage. Both forms of "welfare politics" are highly significant for Indonesia, and we will discuss them here in some detail.

As indicated above, providing welfare to citizens is essential for any democracy. Citizens who feel that the current political system is incapable of guaranteeing their basic social welfare might feel tempted to call for an alternative, more autocratic regime. Accordingly, welfare has been a central issue in Indonesian election campaigns – both in the "staged" elections under the New Order and the fully competitive ballots since 1998. All parties and candidates, whether they run for office at the national or local level, need to address the welfare issue and offer concepts to achieve prosperity for the voters in their electoral areas. If they don't, they stand little chance of being successful. But few parties and nominees have gone beyond campaign rhetoric when using welfare and prosperity as topics to mobilize support. We acknowledge that political parties must do more to develop sophisticated platforms that provide concrete solutions to the welfare problem, and that allow for a productive exchange of ideas during electoral campaigns. Only through open and democratic competition over the best policy proposals and blueprints can Indonesia achieve the progress it needs to overcome poverty and backwardness.

However, in most election campaigns, the issue of welfare has taken a much more “material” form than the rivalry between opposing concepts and ideas. Instead of explaining what kind of structural reforms they would introduce in order to create a system that provides welfare to all citizens, parties and candidates often offer concrete material and financial compensation in order to attract votes from particular constituencies. They regularly give donations to build or repair mosques, hand out cash to important religious leaders, distribute food to the poor, pay for motorcycles and petrol, and offer money to those who attend their rallies. In addition, they promise that if elected, they will build or improve the village road, repair the local school or health centre, and ensure that crucial public services will be free of charge. Again, while such offers may be useful to temporarily improve the lives of poor Indonesians, they do little to build a welfare system from which all citizens could benefit. In other words, welfare has become an electoral commodity that is traded for votes, and not a policy issue over which politicians debate in structural terms.

Most importantly, however, the misuse of welfare as an instrument of patronage and money politics has increased the costs of elections to such an extent that only wealthy candidates can afford to run for office. With candidates forced to offer material goods to literally buy votes, not-so-rich candidates who may have good policy concepts to overcome poverty are disadvantaged. Ironically, by supporting candidates who provide money and other hand-outs, some voters allow their temporary benefits to stand in the way of long-term solutions to problems such as poverty, unemployment and public welfare services. While we concede that many voters may see no other choice but to accept such offers because they face acute financial shortages, we would like to call on both candidates and voters to prioritize policy solutions over charity during elections. Admittedly, many of our candidates and supporters have engaged in patronage politics, but we believe that in the future, election campaigns should no longer be driven by such factors.

Some of the participants in our discussion group have in fact claimed that the phenomenon described above has made it impossible for their parties to compete in certain electoral areas. One representative of a party explained that its candidates always failed in poorer areas because its strict

anti-corruption and anti-money-politics stance was unpopular among citizens who expected to be paid for their votes. Lacking the resources and the political pragmatism to offer gifts to the electorate, candidates of this party regularly find themselves on the losing side. By contrast, other parties well known for their patronage and development approach do particularly well in areas with a high percentage of poor voters. These parties are pragmatic enough and possess the necessary funds to fulfil the demands of voters for material compensation for their support. While we do not make moral judgments on either approach, we believe that parties should not be disadvantaged because of their refusal to play money politics. Poorer voters should thus remember that only comprehensive policies can lift them out of poverty, not acts of vote-buying.

3. Disbanding Political Parties?

One of the most frequent responses to the alleged failure of our political parties to reduce poverty has been the suggestion to disband them. Not only ordinary citizens, but also influential civil society groups have advanced this proposal. They argue that if parties do not fulfil their most important task – that is, the welfare and prosperity of the people that voted for them – then there is no justification for their further existence. Especially NGOs have often claimed that they possess a higher level of popular legitimacy than parties because they allegedly are non-partisan and closer to the interests of the citizens at the grassroots. As an alternative, NGOs frequently offer themselves as representatives of the people, proclaiming to know exactly what they want and how to realize these goals.

While we do not deny our deficiencies and mistakes in trying to create a stable welfare system for all Indonesians, we think that the problems are much more complex than suggested by some of our critics. Some of the structural problems of Indonesia's economy and society reach back many centuries, having their roots in Dutch colonial rule and even pre-colonial forms of governance. Several different regimes since 1945 – whether it was liberal democracy in the 1950s, Sukarno's Guided Democracy in the 1960s and Soeharto's New Order until the late 1990s – have launched efforts to

significantly reduce poverty. None of them has really reached a breakthrough, however, with even Soeharto's government ending in the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. Consequently, the attempt to blame the political parties for the continuing difficulties is not only historically wrong, but politically unfair. The issue of poverty and welfare needs to be handled by a large coalition of all actors in our democratic system – parties, the government, the legislature, NGOs, the media and ordinary citizens. Pointing fingers at one of these elements will not be helpful.

We also would like to remind our critics that a democratic system without political parties is simply not sustainable. Political parties are the main pillar of representative democracy, and damaging them means damaging democracy as a whole. In a complex society such as Indonesia's - with 240 million people and hundreds of cultures, languages and races - political representation through competitive and fair elections is the only possible form of democratic governance. Unless the critics of political parties really want an undemocratic, authoritarian government to replace our current system, we suggest that they focus on ideas and proposals on how to improve the parties rather than to demand their abolition. We as leaders of political parties have repeatedly stated our preparedness to have public debates about ways to develop a comprehensive public welfare regime, as well as about increased participation by the NGO sector in implementing it. We believe that such an approach is much more likely to work than radical proposals for doing away with political parties, which have been elected by dozens of millions of Indonesians to represent them.

4. Recommendations

The discussion above leads to several important recommendations. First, our efforts so far to fight against poverty and unemployment have been insufficient. Many of our programs have been short-term projects providing temporary relief to underprivileged Indonesians, but have not addressed the structural roots of economic backwardness. Therefore, we propose to rethink the national welfare approach and develop a comprehensive policy that can be presented in a single National Social Welfare Act. This Act should guide

all government programs in the field of social welfare, and thus overcome the current lack of direction and coordination. In addition, we suggest that a national roundtable on welfare and prosperity be convened, in which political parties, NGOs and other non-state actors can participate. This will help to come up with an anti-poverty strategy that all components of our nation can agree to, regardless of whether they are currently represented in government and the legislature or are active as civil society groups.

Furthermore, we recommend to both politicians and the electorate to reduce the misuse of welfare as a political commodity in election campaigns. The hand-out of material goods to voters has often served as a substitute for a comprehensive welfare policy, with many citizens not only expecting but demanding rewards for their electoral support. Voters need to understand that those politicians most likely to present them with money or other forms of compensation are also the ones least likely to develop effective anti-poverty programs once they are in office. Instead, they need to recoup the money they spent during the campaign, driving up corruption and collusion. Finally, we also call on the critics of political parties to reconsider their suggestion that parties need to be suspended because of their failure to improve public welfare. As we have argued in this discussion, prosperity and democracy are inseparably interlinked; democracy will not work without prosperous citizens, and prosperity rarely comes to non-democratic states. And whether we like it or not, political parties are the foundation of every democratic system, and thus need to be part of the search for a solution to the problems of underdevelopment and poverty.

VI

THE WEAKENING OF POLITICAL VOLUNTEERISM

In our daily work as leaders and functionaries of political parties, we face many difficulties. These include complex policy issues, organizational problems and questions of mobilizing support for our candidates and positions. But few challenges are as daunting as the decline in political volunteerism in our society. Most citizens these days demand material incentives to engage in politics or social activism, when in the past they felt obliged to contribute to the community without compensation. Apparently, many Indonesians no longer believe that participating in political or social work is a fulfilling assignment in itself; instead, they prefer to pursue their professions for profit. In the few instances that they engage themselves in politics or community service, they expect payment. This trend has made running and organizing political parties very difficult. Without conviction and militancy, party members are poorly motivated and can't convince other citizens of the party's cause. In this section, we discuss the phenomenon of declining volunteerism in politics in three steps. First, we trace the historical roots of this problem. Second, we evaluate some of its implications for our daily political activity. Third, we provide suggestions on how to overcome this crisis.

1. The Loss of Political Volunteerism: Historical Background

In order to fully understand the significance of the decline in political volunteerism in Indonesia, it is important to remember the great commitment that Indonesians have shown to political, social and ideological causes in previous decades. For instance, during the 1955 elections, some political parties charged their supporters to participate in rallies. Tickets were sold to

interested citizens who wanted to hear the party's leaders speak, and the raised money was subsequently used to finance other campaign activities. Obviously, many Indonesians were so energized by the electoral competition between ideas and ideological positions that they were prepared to spend some of their small income to help their favourite parties. In the 1960s, under Sukarno's Guided Democracy, people were still very much interested and engaged in political debates, although political freedom was limited and elections no longer took place. But there was still a sense that people engaged in politics and social activism because they believed in their cause, not because they were offered money or other rewards.

This all changed after the New Order took power in the late 1960s. Under Soeharto, the government introduced a strict de-ideologization program, arguing that the ideological divisions of the 1950s and 1960s had led Indonesia into political and economic disaster. Instead, economic development was now presented as the only acceptable political goal, to which all other aspirations had to take a backseat. Although Soeharto's approach certainly stabilized the political system and increased the country's economic prosperity, we believe that his policies also contributed to the erosion of political volunteerism and activism in Indonesia. As citizens were told that all that counted was an increase in their income, their ability to purchase electronic goods or send their children to a good school whereas their political convictions, beliefs and positions no longer mattered. In fact, the state actively discouraged its citizens from expressing any opinion that contradicted the government. As a result, pragmatism became the leading principle for most citizens, both in their private relations and in their interaction with the state.

One of the features of the New Order that accelerated the decline of political volunteerism was its way of conducting elections. Cabinet ministers belonging to the government party travelled the regions and handed out gifts to voters. They also promised that if their party won the elections, the government would reward the electorate in the area concerned with more gifts and development projects. It was at that time that citizens became used to the idea that elections were about receiving monetary incentives from politicians, and not about a competition between political concepts and paradigms. The other element that strengthened this trend was the threat of sanctions if people

became politically active. Several political activists ended up in prison because they stood up for their beliefs

After Soeharto's fall, this attitude was still so deeply engrained in the minds of Indonesians that the free elections of 1999 did not succeed in reviving the volunteerism so prevalent in 1955, but instead saw a partial continuation of New Order political culture. In many of our campaign events, we observe that participants demand "transportation money", food or clothes in exchange for their participation. Similarly, many of our campaign staff are now paid consultants rather than committed party supporters who sacrifice their time and work simply because they would like to see their favourite party win. Pollsters and public relations consultants are now often doing the work that previously was carried out by inexperienced but highly motivated cadres. As outlined in chapter III of this booklet, some functionaries of political parties fear that this development might undermine the effectiveness of party machineries.

While Indonesia has been particularly affected by the decline in political volunteerism, we would like to emphasize that this has in fact been a global trend. In Western Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, most political parties were mass-based organizations, which were funded through the membership fees of their supporters. Their election campaigns were run by volunteers who did secretarial work in their spare time or organized rallies on the weekends. The mass-based parties began to decline in the 1970s, however, and were replaced by professionally run electoral parties. Like in Indonesia, most parties in the Western world can no longer survive on membership fees, and their campaigns are conducted by paid professionals rather than volunteers. Membership numbers have been in constant decline, as have been participation rates in elections. At the same time, people are less and less prepared to engage in community work without pay. Thus Indonesia's trend towards political and economic pragmatism has not been an exception; it can be observed all around the world, with significant consequences for our political parties.

2. The Consequences of Declining Volunteerism

In the previous section of this booklet, we have already pointed to the dangers involved in the political misuse of the “welfare” issue. Many voters are determined to advance their own personal welfare during elections by “milking” candidates for financial rewards and gifts. This tendency has been one of the main consequences of the decline in political volunteerism; attendees of electoral rallies are no longer asked by their neighbours and friends “What did the speaker say?”, but mostly have to answer the question “How much did you get?”. There have been many cases in which voters disregarded the electoral advice given by their political, cultural or religious leaders because they preferred to trade their votes for money offered by someone else. This widespread expectation that payment be provided for electoral support has led to an escalation in costs for our parties; candidates who do not hand-out cash or other incentives and instead only talk about their political platform have little chance of winning. As a result, they have to borrow money from external sponsors, who then expect to be rewarded if “their” candidate wins in the election. Ultimately, the loss of political volunteerism therefore leads to more collusion and corruption in our legislative and executive institutions.

The declining number of people who have a passion for politics also undermines the sustainability of political parties. Parties should not be isolated organizations that interact with people only through election campaigns. Instead, they need to be run by interested citizens who want to advance the common good. “Normal” representatives of society should feel encouraged to get engaged in political parties, connecting them to real-life issues that concern all Indonesians. If ordinary citizens stay away from political parties, the latter will become dominated by certain professions only: lawyers, entrepreneurs, administrators and professional politicians. In fact, by not joining political parties, many Indonesians aggravate the situation that they are complaining about. The current isolation of political parties from society is a direct result of the passive attitude of citizens towards their parties; if they participated in them, engaged in their activities, ran for leadership positions or represented them in elections, this isolation could be overcome.

The current political apathy also threatens our democratic political system as a whole. In the long term, democracy needs engaged and committed

citizens—citizens who come to its defense if need be. Clearly, people who only participate in election campaigns because they get a free meal or other gifts are not the kind of citizens who would defend democracy against possible threats from authoritarianism or sectarianism. In the same vein, politicians who only enter politics because it makes them richer are not the sort of statesmen Indonesia needs in order to sustain our democratic system. While we believe that democracy is not acutely under threat at this time, we are nevertheless concerned that a sudden political or economic downturn could irreparably damage our system of governance if its citizens are not interested in defending it. Therefore, we have to find ways to revive the spirit of political activism in our society, both among ordinary people and in the elite. We know that this will be a difficult task, and we are also aware that we as political leaders are particularly called upon to change our behaviour and to inspire others to once again become fascinated in politics. In the following, we list some of the measures that could be undertaken in order to achieve this goal.

3. Recommendations

One of the possible ways of trying to overcome the severe lack of political volunteerism in Indonesian society is to reverse the depoliticization and deideologization programs introduced by the New Order. While we are not in favour of reviving the ideological debates and controversies of the 1950s and 1960s, we think that debates about substantive platforms, concepts and beliefs should not only be allowed, but encouraged. Only if people strongly believe in a political or social cause will they return to the kind of volunteerism and activism we have seen in previous periods of Indonesian history – including the colonial period, when our nationalist leaders risked their lives for what they believed in. We are convinced that such a reenergizing of the political debate can be achieved in a productive and non-divisive way; an open exchange of ideas within the framework of our democratic state can and will strengthen the common bonds among Indonesians, and not weaken them. Of course, we need to make sure that certain groups do not misuse such a discourse to spread intolerant and violent ideologies, as has happened in the past.

Second, we acknowledge that the negative image of party politics has contributed to the apathy and cynicism of many Indonesians towards political and social activism. Accordingly, we need to change the way we have engaged the society so far, and have to present a much more inclusive, responsive and transparent picture of political parties in our society. We need to take more time to talk to our constituents about their hopes and expectations of us as their representatives in parliament and government, and we have to try much harder to explain to them what exactly it is that we do for them in these institutions. There are many Indonesians who are prepared not to request financial rewards and gifts from their parliamentarians if they are confident that these politicians are sincere in helping them with concrete policies that improve their daily lives. In other words, we need to rebuild the public trust in our ability to make a significant impact on people's lives; if we don't succeed in doing that, it will be difficult to convince ordinary citizens that political volunteerism and activism are laudable and worthy efforts.

Third, we would like to call on civil society groups, religious organizations and other non-governmental associations to send their best and brightest cadres to serve in our political parties. We know that many of these activists are still suspicious of political parties, and have thus chosen to keep a distance to them. But it is precisely this distance that has damaged our efforts to develop political parties as respected parts of society. Therefore, we want to encourage as many social activists as possible to join our parties and try to reform them from within. There are many examples that this can lead to remarkable change in party politics; in the 2009 elections, for example, many NGO activists have registered as parliamentary candidates for political parties, sidelining experienced party functionaries in the process. Developments like these will accelerate the ongoing generational change in our parties, and will open the door for civil society activists to not only run small-scale programs in communities, but to create policies that will help Indonesia as a whole to become more prosperous and democratic. If such a transformation of social activists into party leaders can be achieved, we are convinced that political volunteerism will once again take roots in Indonesian society.

VII

BUSINESS, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POLITICAL PARTIES

In almost all sections of this booklet, the increasing dominance of money in party politics has been the dominating theme. Whether it concerns the recruitment of parliamentary candidates, the exploding costs of media advertisements and opinion polls, or the expectation of voters to be compensated for their support - capital has grown into a necessary condition for any political activity. Obviously, this trend has had a significant impact on our parties. Entrepreneurs have become more and more active in party organization – as donors, functionaries, candidates or, in some cases, even chairpersons. In the following, we will analyze the problem of the influence of capital on political parties from several angles. First, we discuss some of the reasons for the increasing power of businesses and money in party politics. Second, we introduce the concept of social capital as a way of counterbalancing this power in state and society. And third, we advance several proposals on how to handle the influence of entrepreneurs on political parties, and how to create space for non-monetary interests in our organizations.

1. The Rise of Capital in Political Parties

The increasing dependence of parties on capital is directly related to the escalating costs of political activities, particularly since 1998. Elections are extremely expensive, with political consultants pocketing billions of Rupiah and the media charging equally high amounts for advertisements. In order to cover these costs, parties have often turned to entrepreneurs for donations. It goes without saying that these business people expect something in return for

their contributions. Some only demand that their interests be looked after by the party's representatives in parliament and government; others have asked that their proxies be appointed to key positions in the party; but in some cases, tycoons have in fact requested leadership positions in the party for themselves. As a result, capital has assumed a powerful position in our parties, not only influencing policies, but also determining managerial and logistical issues.

One of the problems that have contributed to this development is the reduction in state subsidies for political parties in 2005. As we explained in some length in the previous booklet, the government reduced public funding for political parties by almost 90% in 2005. This move had a serious impact on our financial situation, and has increased the opportunity for entrepreneurs to exercise influence on political parties by offering donations. We are aware that many Indonesian civil society groups, the media and the general public are heavily opposed to state funding for parties, citing their fear that the money may get corrupted. But we would like to remind our critics again that the alternative to very low public funding for political parties is excessive influence by capital and its multiple interests. We have previously stated that we would like to limit the percentage of external donations to our treasuries, but we suspect that this will be very difficult if no other sources of income can be found. As explained in the chapter on the decline of political volunteerism, ordinary citizens are reluctant to join parties and pay membership fees; the increase of state subsidies thus appears as an effective solution.

It is important to note, however, that Indonesia is by no means the only country that faces the problem of "capitalist" penetration of political parties. Particularly in post-authoritarian states, this appears to be a common phenomenon. In Latin America, for example, entrepreneurs were the main beneficiaries of the collapse of military rule in the 1980s. This was the case because after years of suffering under repressive governments, voters expected from their new democratic regimes some kind of compensation, mostly in form of material rewards. This trend forced parties to raise large sums of money to compete in elections and fulfil the demands of their constituents. Ultimately, these parties had to ask businesses and their leaders for money to pay for their campaigns, opening the door for capital to infiltrate and dominate the new

democratic state. Obviously, Indonesia went through a very similar process after 1998. The downfall of the New Order state was followed by democratic elections in which voters demanded that the new government provide them with material security – something that Soeharto had no longer been able to do. Consequently, parties and candidates running for office in the post-Soeharto state had to hand out huge amounts of money to the electorate. Of course rich businessmen often picked up the bills for these costs, leading to the consequences we described above.

2. Social Capital as a Counterbalance to Money Politics?

While capital has become a very strong influence in Indonesian party politics, there are still encouraging exceptions. There have been party politicians and candidates in elections who have reached high office without paying money to constituents or becoming financially dependent on external sponsors. This is because these individuals have strong roots in certain sections of society, whether among peasants, workers, urban poor, religious groups or other socially or politically important constituencies. In other words, these political leaders possess significant amounts of “social capital”, which serves as a substitute for money and other forms of patronage. Voters put trust into such candidates because of their proven commitment to fighting for the interests of their supporters, or because they have a socially privileged position in a certain community. Figures with social capital include labour activists who have gained the trust of fellow workers by negotiating higher salaries with factory owners; peasant leaders who have advanced the interests of farmers by interacting with government officials over more subsidies and better prices for commodities; or religious figures like *kiai*, who are respected moral authorities in their communities. If any of these persons decides to run for office, they have a good chance that their social capital triumphs over the money distributed by their competitors.

These examples show that politicians have an opportunity to make a career in politics by building social capital instead of engaging in money-driven patronage relationships. In fact, politicians with social capital may have a bigger chance of gaining office than those who exclusively focus on

paying bribes to the electorate. Many candidates possess money, and handing out funds to voters is not a very difficult task. But gaining the trust of people and establish close relationships with them is much more challenging, and can give candidates an essential competitive advantage over their opponents. We have often observed in local elections that candidates who have developed ties with social groups over a long period of time by regularly attending family events or religious ceremonies have defeated those nominees who based their campaigns solely on money politics. There have also been elections in which NGO activists have beaten wealthy bureaucrats, highlighting the fact that voters are willing to reward good and clean track records. Consequently, we argue that politicians – especially the younger ones – should learn from these experiences and plan their political careers not as a competition for money, but as an effort to build social capital and use it effectively during elections.

The main problem with this concept of social capital as a counterweight to the increasing influence of monetary interests in party politics is the disorganized state of groups and individuals with extensive grassroots connections. Too few people with community leadership experience have joined political parties, and there has been very little coordination between them. Labour groups and leaders, for example, have been effective at the local level, but they have not succeeded in building regional or national networks. As a result, their social capital has been confined to very narrow contexts in certain localities. In the same vein, there has been only minimal cooperation between society leaders across their respective specializations. For instance, labour leaders have only rarely interacted with peasant activists, preventing them from combining and maximizing their social capital for political purposes. If such cooperation can be achieved in the future, and more society figures who command the trust of their communities are prepared to enter party politics, the influence of money in our parties can be gradually reduced. Monetary interests typically penetrate political parties if there is no resistance from other elements in the party; if figures with social capital take a more prominent place in our parties, money politics will find it much more difficult to expand.

3. Recommendations

We believe that the dominance of capital over party politics can be countered by a number of comprehensive measures. First, as we have indicated previously, we think that our party financing system needs to be overhauled. In the absence of significant contributions through membership fees and state subsidies, political parties are literally forced to accept money from big businesses and other entrepreneurs with clearly defined commercial interests. For that reason, we propose to reintroduce some form of public funding for political parties, which would allow them to act more independently from external donors. A first step in this direction has been taken by the revision of the law on political parties in 2007. According to the revised law, parties will once again receive state subsidies that reflect the number of votes they have obtained in the general elections, and no longer based on the number of seats in parliament as under the previous law. However, the government has not yet issued a regulation to determine the amount of money parties will get for each vote. We call on the government to issue this regulation soon, and we ask that a minimum of 1,000 Rupiah per vote be paid, as was once the case under a previous regulation before it was annulled in 2005. We believe that such a system of payment would help parties to significantly reduce their dependence on capitalist interests.

Second, we recommend that the role of social capital in political parties be increased. This proposal addresses both sides of the equation: on the one hand, we are calling on the senior leaderships of political parties to provide more opportunities to personalities with social capital. This means offering more key positions and candidacies for parliament and the executive to non-governmental society leaders. But on the other hand, it also means that such influential society figures have to increase their cooperation among each other, and overcome their reluctance to engage in party politics. We believe that the expansion of social capital in political parties is an effective answer to the negative repercussions of money politics, but the “owners” of social capital must be prepared to participate in party affairs in order for this concept to work. If society leaders continue to isolate themselves from the

organization of political parties, nothing will stop financial interests from further increasing their hegemony in party politics.

Third, we also appeal to the electorate to gradually reduce their material demands vis-à-vis candidates in election campaigns. Voters need to be aware that much of the money that candidates use to satisfy the financial requests of their constituents in election campaigns has been borrowed by external sponsors. Thus the more material favours voters expect from candidates, the more money these nominees need to borrow from their donors. And the more money politicians need to borrow, the greater the influence of capital in party politics and political decision-making processes becomes. Paradoxically, by squeezing material concessions out of nominees for public office, ordinary citizens do not gain an advantage, but in fact ensure that conglomerates and tycoons have a much bigger say in law-making and the allocation of state funds. Voters have to understand that this runs counter to their personal and political interests; businesses not always have the interests of the larger community in mind, but instead focus on maximizing their own profits.

Fourth, we acknowledge that many entrepreneurs play constructive roles in our political parties. They bring necessary knowledge on economic matters into our internal policy discussions, and they provide the necessary funds for the party's daily operations as well as events such as congresses. But we would like to remind the businesspeople active in our parties that there are widespread suspicions in society about the role of capital in politics, and that they therefore have to demonstrate especially high levels of responsibility when pursuing political careers and interests. This means refraining from getting involved in policy-making on issues that directly affect the interests of their own companies. Instead, they should concentrate their political activism on macroeconomic problems that are of interest to the state as a whole. By reducing the dominance of capital on the one hand, and creating a more positive image of entrepreneurs in politics, we believe that the tensions between capital and society can be effectively mitigated.

VIII

CONCLUSION

In this booklet, we have discussed a number of important trends in party politics eleven years after the downfall after the New Order regime. While these trends are diverse and complex, several large themes have emerged from our deliberations. In the following, we highlight key points of these themes, which we hope will trigger further debates in Indonesian society about the right role and place of political parties in our democratic system.

First, we believe that it is absolutely crucial to emphasize the importance of societal participation in politics in general and political parties in particular. We have noted the decline of public confidence in political parties; the increasing frequency of non-voting in elections; the erosion of volunteerism in politics and society; and the unwillingness of figures with social capital to engage in party affairs. We are convinced that the right answer to these trends is not political apathy or cynicism, nor is continued condemnation of parties a good way of addressing such ongoing problems. The best approach in this context is increased participation of social groups and individuals in political affairs, and particularly in party politics. Only by entering this arena and trying to change it from within can civil society leaders bring about real change to elite politics. Similarly, only by taking part in elections and voting for reformist candidates and parties can the electorate make a real difference; nothing is gained by staying away from the ballot box or criticising the political elite from the margins without challenging it from within.

Second, we acknowledge that political parties have to improve their performance considerably if they want to regain the trust of society. This includes interacting more with grassroots activists, ordinary citizens and

religious authorities, rather than concentrating only on elite politics in Jakarta. We are aware that our reputation has suffered because many Indonesians believe we are too busy with politicking and self-enrichment, and have forgotten the daily needs of the citizenry. We need to work hard to overcome this perception, among others by increasing the quality of our cadres and candidates for public office. In addition, we have to demonstrate our ability to advance the prosperity of Indonesian society, which most voters view as the most important challenge to our nation in years to come. We also must increase the involvement of women in our party leaderships and make sure that women voters feel better represented. Finally, parties must offer better information services to the media, which serve as an important link between politicians and the electorate. Without a better relationship between parties and the media, the image of the political elite can't be improved.

Third, we emphasize the need for further structural reform of our political system. For example, we are concerned that some voters might have been disenfranchised in previous elections because of the poor quality of the voters' lists compiled by the KPU. Similarly, a number of citizens may have opted not to participate in the elections because they were frustrated with its chaotic management. We therefore propose to revamp the system through which voters are registered, and call on the KPU to make sure that voters are no longer excluded. Furthermore, we suggest a reduction in the frequency of elections in order to reduce voter fatigue. In another structural reform initiative, we once again wish to highlight the need to address the deficiencies in the party financing system. Many of our discussions here have shown that the increasing dependence of parties on capitalist interests has had negative implications for the ability of party cadres and leaders to fulfil their functions properly. It is thus of utmost importance that public subsidies to political parties be reinstated, despite the unpopularity of such a policy. We believe that significant levels of public party funding are not ideal, but they offer the only practical solution to the financial problems of our parties. In Europe and other Western countries with more consolidated democracies, such funding is widely practiced and socially accepted.

Fourth, we aim to reduce the role of money and material interests in elections. However, this does not only require politicians to change their

orientation, but the electorate must rethink its demands and expectations as well. Voters should not request monetary compensation from candidates in exchange for their electoral support, and nominees should not offer such incentives. Instead, personal convictions and attraction to political platforms should play a much larger role. While we do not intend to reintroduce ideology to the political competition, we are convinced that elections should once more become a contest between ideas, paradigms, beliefs and values. The differences among us as electoral contestants should be made clearer to the electorate, without leading to hostility among us. But we believe that only a re-energized debate about important political and paradigmatic issues can lead voters to support the candidate who represents them most effectively, and not the nominee who offers them the best “deal”.

Fifth, we wish to underline the importance of political parties in every democratic society, despite many obvious problems. We are aware that some of our critics propose the disbandment of political parties in Indonesia, citing their alleged corruption and their failure to channel the aspirations of the people. However, these critics have not come up with a viable alternative to the party system. Instead, they offer their own civil society groups as the “real” representatives of the people. But democracies without political parties can’t function; they turn into autocracies or anarchies, none of which can serve the people well. Therefore, we call on the Indonesian people to work with us towards improving the quality of our political parties. The most appropriate response to the many weaknesses of our parties is not “burying” them, like it was proposed and ultimately done in the late 1950s. The best solution to our current crisis of public confidence is a common effort by the parties, society leaders and all citizens to turn political parties from the elite organizations that they are today into truly representative vehicles for the people’s aspirations.

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