

Indonesia Briefing

Jakarta/Brussels, 21 February 2001



INDONESIA'S PRESIDENTIAL CRISIS

The Abdurrahman Wahid presidency was dealt a devastating blow by the Indonesian parliament (DPR) on 1 February 2001 when it voted 393 to 4 to begin proceedings that could end with the impeachment of the president.¹ This followed the walk-out of 48 members of Abdurrahman's own National Awakening Party (PKB). Under Indonesia's presidential system, a parliamentary 'no-confidence' motion cannot bring down the government but the recent vote has begun a drawn-out process that could lead to the convening of a Special Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) - the body that has the constitutional authority both to elect the president and withdraw the presidential mandate.

The most fundamental source of the president's political vulnerability arises from the fact that his party, PKB, won only 13 per cent of the votes in the 1999 national election and holds only 51 seats in the 500-member DPR and 58 in the 695-member MPR. The PKB is based on the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), a traditionalist Muslim organisation that had previously been led by Gus Dur, as the president is usually called. Although the NU's membership is estimated at more than 30 million, the PKB's support is drawn mainly from the rural parts of Java, especially East Java, where it was the leading party in the general election.

Gus Dur's election as president occurred in somewhat fortuitous circumstances. The front-runner in the presidential race was Megawati Soekarnoputri, whose secular-nationalist Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) won 34 per cent of the votes in the general election. Megawati had been led to believe that Gus Dur would support her bid for the presidency but she was considered too secular by the Central Axis, a loose grouping of Muslim parties headed by Amien Rais (now Speaker of the MPR), who supported Gus Dur as the lesser evil. When the incumbent president, B. J. Habibie, withdrew, many of his supporters in the Golkar party also transferred their backing to Gus Dur, thus securing his victory. Despite the decades-long rivalry between Gus Dur's traditionalist NU and Amien's modernist Muhammadiyah, Amien seems to have calculated that this was the best strategy to enhance Muslim influence in the government. Meanwhile, despite her sense of being 'betrayed', Megawati accepted the vice presidency.

The vote against the president on 1 February followed a long period of tension between the president and the DPR. Despite the high hopes that accompanied the election of Abdurrahman, his government has not yet laid a firm basis for economic recovery. Corruption in government is still the norm, ethnic and religious conflict has been common, and separatist movements continue to be active in Aceh and Irian Jaya. While the perception that the Abdurrahman government has failed to make progress is

¹ Although Indonesians often use the term 'impeachment', the process does not involve a trial but an evaluation by the MPR that the president has violated the constitution or the 'National Will' embodied in MPR decrees and should, therefore, be dismissed. For a detailed discussion of this process, see pp. 5-6 below.

widespread in political circles, it is also understood that many of the challenges are beyond the powers of any president to resolve quickly. In these circumstances, the growing demand that he resign or be impeached is driven less by policy failures than by the behaviour of Gus Dur himself.

The crisis seems unlikely to be resolved quickly. As long as it continues, the government will not be able to focus fully on the policies and reforms necessary for political stability and economic recovery. Moreover, the struggle between the factions of the political elite in Jakarta is spilling over into the society at large. The danger of physical violence looms larger as both sides mobilise their supporters. The main roads in Jakarta have been regularly clogged since January by pro- and anti-Abdurrahman demonstrators but so far major violence has been avoided. Similar demonstrations have taken place outside the capital and in some places have resulted in destruction of property, especially in East Java where support for the president is particularly strong.

This paper examines the possible consequences and outcomes of the political crisis and the danger of spreading violence. It also notes the need for constitutional reform.

THE ABDURRAHMAN PRESIDENCY

The election of Abdurrahman on 20 October 1999, in Indonesia's first competitive presidential election, was widely welcomed as the opening of a new democratic era. The president, despite some inconsistency, has promoted the democratisation of Indonesia's official political culture. He engages in public debate and regularly emphasises that differences of opinion are normal. He often reiterates his philosophy of religious tolerance and is a determined foe of narrow Islamic orthodoxy. He has adopted an accommodating approach to separatist movements in Aceh and Irian Jaya and quickly established a friendly relationship with East Timor. He has moved to end official discrimination against Indonesians of Chinese descent and against those previously associated with the banned Communist Party. He succeeded, more quickly than most people had expected, in drastically reducing the military's political role, although that institution continues to undermine his approach in Aceh and Irian Jaya and was alienated by his apology to the people of East Timor.

While Abdurrahman has in some respects been an inspiring leader, he has shown himself to be bereft of the managerial skills needed to run a modern state. His approach to policy is ad hoc, and he seems to have no overall long-term plans to deal with the multiple crises that Indonesia faces. Unable to read, the blind president now relies heavily for information on what his friends and others tell him - which is not always accurate. He is generally uninterested in the details of policy and is famous for falling asleep during cabinet meetings and even during meetings with foreign dignitaries. His knowledge of the way in which economies work, how states manage their relations with each other, the procedures of the legal process, and strategic and defence issues is clearly inadequate and from time to time revealed embarrassingly in his spontaneous public statements.

Although Gus Dur lacks administrative skill and policy depth, he has - at least until recently - successfully outmanoeuvred his political opponents through a combination of charismatic appeal and mastery of the art of politics. The latter is demonstrated by his ability to survive during the Soeharto era, stitch together a coalition to win the presidency from a base of only 13 per cent of the popular vote, and hold together that

very heterogeneous coalition. Gus Dur always gives the impression that he is supremely confident that his presidency will not only survive until his present term ends but that he will win the next election in 2004. His assessments of some of his political opponents - and indeed his political allies - are often very cynical (not to say slanderous!), and he is adept at exploiting the human weaknesses of others to make sure that they stay loyal to him. On several occasions when the tide seemed to be moving against him in the DPR, he has resorted to what Indonesians observers call the KISS strategy. KISS stands for *ke istana sendiri-sendiri* (to the palace one-by-one) and implies that the president does deals with individuals behind the backs of their party colleagues.

But the Abdurrahman government has disappointed those who hoped that democratic reform would be accompanied by reform in other fields. The government's achievements have fallen well short of its promise.

Although economic growth of 4.8% was achieved during 2000, GDP remains far below the level it had reached before the Asian financial crisis in mid-1997, and poverty is widespread. The government has made little progress toward resuscitating the banking system and dealing with a huge national debt.² It has been unable to attract the new investment needed for long-term recovery because of political uncertainties and poor security conditions.

Despite government rhetoric, little has been done to combat the corruption that permeated the Soeharto regime. Although former President Soeharto was charged, his trial has not taken place. All but one of his 'cronies' have avoided legal proceedings, and his son, Tommy, although convicted, managed to escape. The main centres of official corruption under the old regime remain intact while the introduction of competitive party politics has stimulated new forms of corruption as rival groupings race to acquire funds for the next election.

The government has also failed to guarantee security. Ethnic and religious violence is common, and a virtual civil war continues sporadically in Maluku.³ A corrupt and ineffective police force seems incapable of preventing violence, while local vigilante groups often kill petty criminals without police interference.⁴ Security conditions in many regions outside the main cities are so bad that investors - both foreign and domestic - are reluctant to open new enterprises for fear of looting and intimidation.

Although the president often points to his success in holding the country together, separatist movements have gained strength in Aceh and Irian Jaya. Gus Dur has adopted an accommodating approach but many Indonesians support the military's view that his leniency has only encouraged the separatists.

Most of the attention of the DPR, however, is focussed not so much on policy failures as on Gus Dur's impulsive and erratic style of leadership. Abdurrahman's presidency has become famous for what are called 'controversial statements' that are contradictory, erratic and sometimes based on wrong information. Although uttered casually and rarely

² See the forthcoming ICG report on this question.

³ See *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku*, ICG Asia Report No. 10, 19 December 2000.

⁴ See forthcoming ICG report on police reform.

followed by action, these statements have often caused much confusion about the government's intentions.⁵

More seriously, Gus Dur's ad hoc approach extends to financial matters, and he has been accused of obtaining donations from wealthy businessmen facing legal problems. For example, while visiting South Korea, he casually informed journalists that he had ordered the Attorney General to delay prosecution of three prominent businessmen on the grounds that they headed groups that 'are major exporters who can contribute greatly to the economic recovery process.'⁶ Gus Dur's explanations have not been convincing, and his critics claim that funds may have been made available for the president's political purposes. In another extraordinary incident he met Tommy Soeharto after the latter had appealed for pardon following his conviction for corruption. Previously, Gus Dur had attempted to negotiate with the Soeharto family for the 'return' of wealth that the former president had 'stolen' from the nation, and it seemed that he may have been prepared to do some sort of deal with Tommy in exchange for leniency.⁷ Public suspicions were aggravated when Tommy suddenly absconded to avoid his jail sentence.

It was a financial matter that brought the current crisis to a head in early 2001. As leader of the NU, Gus Dur had for years been raising funds for mosques and religious schools from political leaders and big businessmen in exchange for political support. On becoming president, the only difference was that the sources of such funds were more numerous, the amounts much larger and the favours requested more damaging to the nation. Gus Dur knew that the Soeharto regime had routinely plundered state corporations, state banks and government departments as sources of funds for various political and private purposes. Among the most important agencies controlling such funds was Bulog, the state agency responsible for maintaining price stability for essential consumer items like rice, flour and sugar.

One of the most pressing issues faced by Gus Dur after winning the presidency was the growing demand for independence in Aceh - encouraged in part by his own contradictory statements.⁸ In need of funds to support his strategy of winning over religious leaders in Aceh, Gus Dur apparently wanted to tap Bulog's resources to support religious schools and institutions there. When he failed to get access to Bulog money without issuing a formal presidential decision, Gus Dur turned to the Sultan of Brunei who gave him a gift of \$US 2 million, which was channelled through one of Gus Dur's close friends.

⁵ For example, in November 1999 the president made a series of contradictory statements about holding a referendum in Aceh which caused much confusion. In March 2000, he claimed that unidentified military commanders were mobilizing their forces against him. In July 2000, he ordered the police to arrest a member of the MPR whom he claimed was the 'mastermind' behind recent religious conflict, and in September he ordered the police to arrest Tommy Soeharto after a bomb explosion at the Jakarta Stock Exchange. No evidence was ever produced for these claims but the national police chief was sacked for failing to arrest Tommy Soeharto. His public comments also complicated the work of Indonesia's diplomats. Relations with Singapore were soured when he urged Malaysia's prime minister to 'control the water supply of Singapore'. Earlier, on hearing that Singapore was acquiring new submarines, he ordered the Indonesian navy to take action if they entered Indonesia's territorial waters. And he offended Malaysia when he joked that in order to meet a Malaysian minister it was necessary to go to a golf course.

⁶ Jakarta Post, 20 October 2000.

⁷ Tempo, 22 October, 3 December 2000.

⁸ Referring to the referendum in East Timor, Gus Dur asked, 'If we can do that in East Timor, why can't we do that in Aceh?'. Straits Times, 5 November 1999.

The next part of the story is less clear and subject not only to much speculation but also judicial proceedings. According to the president's supporters, Gus Dur's occasional masseur approached a Bulog official who then released a loan of Rp.35 billion (\$US 5 million) apparently on the understanding that the masseur was acting on the president's behalf. Investigations showed that the money had not gone to Aceh but to several people who had business links with the masseur and, in at least one case, close personal ties with the president. Similarly, there was no clear accounting of how the Sultan of Brunei's gift had been used.

It was DPR's inquiry into the so-called 'Bulog-gate' and 'Brunei-gate' affairs that, as explained below, led to the DPR's decision to begin the proceedings that could result in the impeachment of the president.

IMPEACHMENT: THE PROCESS

The Indonesian constitution is presidential in character but it contains a strong parliamentary element. The president is responsible to the MPR and cannot be deposed by the DPR. However, the system is unusual in that the majority of the members of the MPR are also members of the DPR. While the latter cannot, in their capacity as members of the DPR, vote the president out of office, their votes, in their capacity as members of the MPR, would be decisive if an attempt were made to impeach him.

The president is elected in a two-step process. First, a general election is held every five years to elect members of the 500-strong DPR. (The number of elected members in the present DPR, however, is only 462 because 38 appointed military and police members retain their seats until the next election in 2004.) In the second stage, the president and vice president are elected separately by the MPR, which consists of the 500 members of the DPR plus 200 representatives of the provinces and special groups in society.⁹

The constitution provides that the vice president will automatically succeed the president for the rest of his/her term in the event that 'the president dies, stops or cannot carry out his/her duties'¹⁰ but it does not deal explicitly with the possibility of dismissal or impeachment. Impeachment is regulated by an MPR decree adopted in 1978. This decree allows the MPR to dismiss the president before the expiry of his/her term in the event that the president 'truly violates the National Will [*Haluan Negara*]'.¹¹ The impeachment process begins with the adoption by the DPR of a memorandum warning the president of the alleged violations. If, after three months, the president does not respond satisfactorily to the memorandum, a second memorandum can be sent. If, after a further month, there is still no satisfactory response, the DPR can request the MPR to hold a special session to request the president to explain the issues raised in the memorandum. If the MPR is satisfied that the president 'truly violated the National Will', he/she can then be dismissed by the MPR.¹² In 1999 the MPR varied the grounds of

⁹ According to the law, the MPR has 700 members, although in practice it has 695 following the withdrawal of East Timor from the republic.

¹⁰ Article 8 of the constitution.

¹¹ The Indonesian term '*Haluan Negara*' is difficult to translate. Literally meaning the 'National Direction' or 'National Course', its sense is closer to 'National Will' or 'National Purpose'. At each of its sessions the MPR adopts a statement entitled 'Broad Guidelines of the National Will'.

¹² MPR Decree III/1978, articles 4 and 7.

dismissal, which now apply if the president 'truly violates the broad guidelines of the national will and/or the Constitution'.¹³

Although the president cannot be deposed by the DPR, in practice he/she cannot afford to lose its support because its members constitute such a large part of the MPR. If the constitution is followed strictly, the president cannot be deposed merely because of loss of political support, but only for a serious violation of the 'National Will' or the constitution. Ultimately, however, it is up to the MPR itself to decide what constitutes a 'truly serious' violation.

GUS DUR'S DECLINING SUPPORT IN THE DPR

Gus Dur, whose own party holds only 10 per cent of the seats in the DPR, needed allies to form an effective coalition government. After tying the leading party, the PDI-P, to his government by offering the vice presidency to Megawati, his initial solution was to form a 'rainbow' cabinet which included members of the seven leading parties as well as six military officers. But the president showed little awareness of the threat posed by his lack of a strong base of support in the DPR or, perhaps more likely, he had great confidence that he could exploit divisions within the parties to ensure continuing support. On several occasions he behaved in ways that suggested that he did not especially care what the members of the DPR thought.

The president's relations with the DPR deteriorated sharply. His first major confrontation followed his dismissal in April 2000 of two ministers - one from the PDI-P and the other from Golkar, the two largest parties in the DPR. It was not so much the dismissal as such that angered the DPR but Gus Dur's claim, put forward in his usual casual way, that the two ministers were involved in KKN - the Indonesian initials for corruption, collusion and nepotism - and his failure to provide convincing evidence of his allegations.

At the annual session of the MPR in August, Gus Dur became the target of sharp criticism with some members already talking of impeachment. In the end pressure from the main parties compelled the president 'to delegate to the vice president the tasks of carrying out the day-to-day technical details of running the government, preparing the cabinet's working agenda and determining the focus and priority of the government'. But Gus Dur soon showed that he intended to remain in charge by adding that 'the vice president will report to me periodically, or whenever it is necessary'.¹⁴ Later he emphasised that it was only 'tasks', not 'authority', that were being transferred.¹⁵

That Gus Dur intended to keep power in his own hands was obvious when the new cabinet was announced on 23 August.¹⁶ It had been widely expected - not least by the leading parties themselves - that the president would try to establish a firm base of support in the MPR and DPR by forming a cabinet largely from the PDI-P, Golkar and his own PKB. Nevertheless, the new cabinet did not include any Golkar representatives (although Marzuki Darusman of Golkar was retained as attorney general outside the cabinet) and no senior PDI-P leaders. Clearly Megawati had not had much influence in the formation of the cabinet, and she conspicuously absented herself when it was

¹³ MPR Decree II/1999, article 7.e.

¹⁴ Jakarta Post, 10 August 2000.

¹⁵ Kompas, 12 August 2000.

¹⁶ Kompas, 24 August 2000.

announced. After the formation of the new government, cabinet meetings were led by Megawati but Gus Dur continued to attend and often took major decisions.

Despite the president's refusal to implement the agreement forced on him by the MPR, Megawati seemed resigned and reluctant to demand the control that had been promised to her. Although many in her party were angered by Gus Dur's behaviour, they were unwilling to make any moves against him without Megawati's blessings but she, as usual, remained silent.

The week after the announcement of the new cabinet, the DPR, sensing that the president may have been more involved in the Bulog case than he had admitted, returned to the offensive. It voted 356 to 4 (with 45 abstentions) to establish a Special Inquiry (Pansus) into the so-called Bulog-gate and Brunei-gate scandals.¹⁷ During the next few months, the Pansus hearings dominated news headlines as indications appeared that Gus Dur might be implicated. The key testimony was given by former national police chief, Lt. Gen. Rusdihardjo, who claimed that Gus Dur had admitted giving one of the Bulog cheques - worth Rp. 5 billion (\$US 500,000) to a young businesswoman in Semarang who was the daughter of a local NU leader.¹⁸ The president, however, claimed that the inquiry was illegal and that it was only a move by his political enemies to depose him. Although he eventually agreed to appear as a witness before the inquiry, he abruptly walked out of the proceedings before the questioning was completed. For many members of the Pansus, his refusal to answer the allegations against him only confirmed their suspicions of his involvement.

In its report presented to a plenary session of the DPR at the end of January, the Pansus concluded that it was 'reasonable to suspect' [*patut diduga*] that the president had been involved in the Bulog affair. It also noted that the contradictions between his various explanations of what happened to the Sultan of Brunei's gift indicated that not all were true.¹⁹ With the support of eight of the ten groupings in the DPR - including all the major parties except the PKB - the DPR accepted the report on 1 February. The DPR concluded that the president had 'truly violated the constitution and the National Will' in two respects. Firstly, he had violated his oath of office 'to hold firmly to the Constitution and fully implement all Laws and Regulations', and secondly, he had failed to implement MPR Decree XI/1998 on clean government, free of corruption, collusion and nepotism. The DPR also recommended that suspected violations of the law should be legally investigated.²⁰

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Gus Dur's future hangs on the positions taken by the five major blocs in the DPR and MPR. His own party, the PKB, can be relied on to support him to the end. The loose alliance of Muslim parties, the Central Axis, will continue to take the lead in calling for his dismissal. The votes of the PDI-P and Golkar, together a majority in both assemblies, will

¹⁷ Suara Pembaruan, 29 August 2000.

¹⁸ Tempo, 10 December 2000.

¹⁹ Kompas, 11 February 2000.

²⁰ Kompas, 2 February 2000.

²¹ Jakarta Post, 20 October 2000.

be decisive. In a close contest, it is also possible that the 38 votes of the appointed military group might determine the president's fate.²²

The position of Golkar, with 120 seats in the DPR and 182 in the MPR, is ambivalent. As the electoral vehicle of the Soeharto regime, Golkar is still seen by many as a hangover from the discredited past. Although there is no lack of individual Golkar members who would willingly accept ministerial and other appointments under Gus Dur, the leadership is conscious of the burden imposed by the party's identification with Soeharto's 32-year authoritarian rule. Some believe that the best way to improve Golkar's vote in the 2004 election is to keep out of government. Led by the Speaker of the DPR, Akbar Tanjung, Golkar has not been in the forefront of attacks on Gus Dur. It seems to be adopting a 'wait-and-see' approach, although individual members are prominent among those demanding the president's dismissal.

The crucial party is the PDI-P, whose leader, Megawati, would automatically succeed to the presidency if Gus Dur were impeached. By early 2001, it was clear that many of the PDI-P's 153 parliamentarians (and its 185 members in the MPR) resented the president's dismissive treatment of the vice president and failure to include major PDI-P leaders in his cabinet. But the party was deeply divided over its strategy for bringing Megawati to power. So far, Megawati, who has little taste for the backstabbing that would inevitably accompany a final onslaught on Gus Dur, has preferred to wait until the 2004 election when she is confident her party will improve its performance and thus carry her to the presidency. She is also acutely aware of the danger of establishing a precedent that could be used against her. She realises that a successful move against Gus Dur would make her dependent on the parties that backed impeachment, and she does not relish relying on the goodwill of Golkar and the Muslim parties of the Central Axis led by Amien Rais. If Gus Dur is to fall, Megawati hopes that he will eventually be persuaded to resign or transfer full executive power rather than face the ignominy of dismissal. But if he stands firm and refuses to make fundamental concessions, would the PDI-P, which voted unanimously to initiate impeachment, remain committed to bringing the process to conclusion by dismissing the president?

The decision of the previously neutral military to support the DPR resolution to issue a memorandum was a further ominous signal for Gus Dur. Although the military's tone in the debate was very moderate, it seems certain not to stand in the way if PDI-P and Golkar vote for the president's dismissal.

The most likely scenarios are the following:

According to the first scenario, the DPR will reject the president's responses to the first and second memoranda, and a Special Session of the MPR will be held in about August. If the line-up of political forces in the DPR on 1 February remains unchanged, President Abdurrahman will be dismissed and automatically replaced by the vice president, Megawati Soekarnoputri. The risk is that the dismissal of Gus Dur will provoke extra-parliamentary clashes between his supporters and those they blame for his fall. It is Megawati's hope that in anticipation of this outcome, Gus Dur will resign and enable a

²² DPR and MPR decisions at each stage of the impeachment process are formally by simple majority vote. There is a strong cultural presumption in Indonesia, however, for taking important decisions by consensus, or near consensus. In the event that a vote at a key stage of the impeachment process was projected to be very close, this cultural presumption might operate to increase pressure upon political leaders to find a more broadly acceptable compromise.

smooth transition without conflict in the streets. However, Gus Dur is famous for his stubbornness, and those who know him well believe that he is unlikely to follow this course.

A second scenario was proposed by the Supreme Advisory Council (a body of 'elder statesmen'), which suggested two alternatives. The first envisaged appointment of the vice president as head of government while leaving the president as head of state. In contrast to Gus Dur's transfer of executive tasks to the vice president last August, this arrangement would be formalised in an MPR decree. The second variant envisages Gus Dur declaring himself non-active on grounds of ill-health and handing authority both as head of state and head of government to the vice president, again reinforced by an MPR decree.²³ It is very unlikely that Gus Dur would accept either alternative at present but he may find one or the other more attractive if his position becomes more desperate during the next months.

A third scenario is one in which Gus Dur attempts to win over members of the DPR during the next three months. This would involve the formation of a new cabinet in which the PDI-P would be a major component. But an alliance between Gus Dur's PKB and the PDI-P, even with military support, would still fall short of a majority in the DPR and MPR. A new government would need the participation of another major party. The obvious choice would be Golkar but it is also possible that Gus Dur might try to entice the largest of the Central Axis parties, the United Development Party (PPP), to join the cabinet. However, even if such a cabinet were formed, it is not certain that the component parties could guarantee that all their members would back it. Megawati's support, or at least acquiescence, would be crucial for the success of this scheme. If she could be mollified, a large number of her party members would follow her lead. In the final analysis, Gus Dur hopes that Megawati will still be unwilling to go through the rigours of a full-scale challenge to his presidency. However it is most unlikely that Megawati and her party would accept an arrangement that left Gus Dur in full control of the government.

The greatest fear is that the sort of street conflict seen in East Java in early February might spread to other regions. Political rivalries in Jakarta have an impact on party supporters throughout the country. Since January, big demonstrations, both pro- and anti-Gus Dur, have been held in Jakarta while smaller ones have occurred in provincial centres. So far major outbreaks of violence have been avoided except in East Java where the PKB's main base of support lies. Following the DPR's vote in favour of the memorandum, members of NU-affiliated youth organisations were mobilised, and in several places, including the provincial capital, Surabaya, Golkar offices have been burnt down. Attacks were also launched on schools and buildings linked to the modernist Muslim organisation, Muhammadiyah, which was previously led by Amien Rais. All the main parties have para-military youth organisations that are intended to keep order during political rallies but can easily turn to violence in crises such as the present one. PKB and NU leaders assert that they have done their best to prevent violence but they are not always able to control their emotional supporters.

If the situation deteriorated badly, a fourth scenario could be envisaged in which the constitutional steps might be abandoned and an unconstitutional "Philippine" (Estrada-

²³ Kompas, 9 February 2001. The Supreme Advisory Council is established by the constitution and consists of prominent Indonesians appointed to provide advice to the president.

Arroyo) solution could be repeated in Jakarta. Although the armed forces are not in a position to carry out a coup, they would play an important role in such a scenario.²⁴

IMPLICATIONS OF THE IMPEACHMENT PROCESS

Succession always imposes a test for the political institutions of any country threatened with political turmoil. Indonesia is fortunate that it already possesses established procedures for coping by constitutional means with challenges to the national leadership. At least so far, the political debate has been conducted within the framework of those constitutional procedures. But will constitutional means be accepted by all sides to the conflict if the result fails to meet their expectations? It is, of course, impossible to make firm predictions although the dangers are widely recognised.

It is not difficult to imagine 'horror' scenarios arising from renewed violence. Growing disorder could be exacerbated by economic deterioration leading, for example, to withdrawals of foreign investors or a further collapse in the rupiah. The planned IMF-imposed increase in fuel prices in April could be another spark for renewed violence. Desperate measures by the president himself, along the lines of his abortive attempt to dissolve the DPR,²⁵ could also aggravate these trends. Meanwhile, chaotic conditions in the centre might encourage separatists and other dissidents in the regions. It needs to be emphasised, however, that the prospect of spreading physical conflict between supporters and opponents of the president is one that worries many party leaders in Jakarta and has persuaded some, including those in the major parties, to seek a compromise resolution of the presidential issue.

Gus Dur's survival with his presidential powers intact is unlikely. Even were this to happen, he could probably not restore his moral and political authority. Based on past experience, there is little reason to expect that a new Gus Dur government would be more cohesive and effective than the old one. The best that could probably be hoped is that the president would be less interventionist in areas outside his own areas of competence and more willing to allow his ministers to get on with the business of running the government. There is, however, every possibility that new issues would arise to trigger more popular opposition in the streets and more political uncertainty that would delay economic recovery and increase the danger of violence.

Whether Gus Dur survives or is replaced by Megawati, structural problems will continue to undermine the effectiveness of the Indonesian government, which will still be made up of coalitions between mutually antagonistic parties and be unable to rely on firm majority support in the politically fragmented DPR and MPR. There are few indications that a Megawati government would be capable of putting the reform process back on track. She herself has never provided a clear exposition of her policies, while her party

²⁴ There is no suggestion that the military is considering a coup. The reasons outlined in *Indonesia: Keeping the Military Under Control*, ICG Asia Report No.9, 5 September 2000, p.1, remain valid. Also, while there are superficial similarities (both female vice presidents who found themselves in "opposition" to the president), there are very significant differences in the personalities and political situations of Megawati and Arroyo.

²⁵ On 28 January the president proposed that an emergency be declared to enable him to dissolve the DPR but this was rejected by the military leaders. See interview with the Minister of Defence, Mahfud M.D., in Forum Keadilan, 18 February 2001.

is famous for its susceptibility to money politics.²⁶ It is expected that Megawati would cultivate military support and give the army a free hand in Aceh and Irian Jaya but it is premature to predict the likely form of her government. Much would depend on the way the present crisis was resolved. If Megawati were to take office by deposing Gus Dur, she might soon find herself undermined by the parties that brought about his downfall. Indonesia would then face a new round of political and social upheaval and a further weakening of confidence in democratic institutions. It is for reasons such as these that, despite the huge drop in support for Gus Dur, efforts are still being made to find a compromise

The presidential crisis strengthens the case of those who are calling for constitutional reform. The current constitution was drawn up hurriedly immediately before Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945 and was treated as a virtually sacred document by both the Soekarno and Soeharto regimes. Since the fall of Soeharto it has been amended twice but many call for a thorough overhaul. Although the most popular proposals, including the direct election of the president and an electoral system based on single-member constituencies, cannot guarantee the entrenchment of effective democratic government, they indicate growing public disillusion with the way the political system is working at present.

Jakarta/Brussels, 21 February 2001

²⁶ In many districts PDI-P candidates have failed to be elected as the district head despite the PDI-P being the largest party in the district assembly. In these cases, the votes for the PDI-P candidate have often been far less than the number of PDI-P members in the assembly. The inescapable conclusion is that many votes were bought.

Party Representation in the DPR and MPR

Number of seats and percentages and percentage of votes in 1999 election

	DPR		MPR		General Election
	Seats	per cent	Seats	per cent	per cent of votes
PDI-P	153	30.6	185	26.6	33.8
Golkar	120	24.0	182	26.2	22.5
PKB	51	10.2	57	8.2	12.6
Central Axis					
<i>PPP</i>	58	11.6	70	10.1	10.7
<i>Reformasi</i>	41	8.2	48	6.9	8.5
<i>PBB</i>	13	2.6	14	2.0	1.9
KKI	12	2.4	14	2.0	+
PDU	9	1.8	9	1.3	+
PDKB	5	1.0	5	0.7	0.9
Military/Police	38	7.6	38	5.6	appointed
Special groups			73	10.5	appointed
TOTAL	500		695		

Source: Kompas, 10 August 2000

The Reformasi group consists of PAN and Partai Keadilan.

The KKI group consists of seven nationalist-oriented parties, of which the PKP won 1 per cent of the votes and the other six less than 1 per cent each.

The PDU consists of five Muslim parties, none of which won more than 1 per cent of the votes.

The Special Groups consist of 65 appointed members and 8 non-party regional representatives. The other 122 regional representatives joined party groups in the MPR.

According to law, the MPR has 700 members but the number was reduced by five when East Timor withdrew from the Republic of Indonesia.

GLOSSARY

DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat: Parliament
Golkar	Golongan Karya: Functional Group party
MPR	Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat: People's Consultative Assembly
Muhammadiyah	Modernist Muslim Organisation
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama: traditionalist Muslim organisation
KKI	Kesatuan Kebangsaan Indonesia: Indonesian National Unity:
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional: National Mandate Party
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang: Crescent and Star Party
PDU	Perserikatan Daulatul Ummah: Association of Muslim Peoples' Sovereignty
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia - Perjuangan: Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle
PKB Party	Partai Demokrasi Kasih Bangsa: National Love Democracy
PK	Partai Keadilan: Justice Party
PKP	Partai Kesatuan Persatuan: Unity and United Party
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa: National Awakening Party
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan: United Development Party
Reformasi	Reform group