

HISTORICAL REFLECTION ON DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSES IN INDONESIA

Taufik Abdullah

IKHTISAR

Penulis mencoba menelusuri bagaimana konsep demokrasi hidup dan berkembang di Indonesia sejak zaman dahulu. Penulis berpendapat bahwa diskursus tentang demokrasi memang telah ada dan berkembang sejak masa pergerakan kemerdekaan di zaman penjajahan Belanda hingga sekarang, tentu saja dengan kondisi yang berbeda-beda.

If hyper-inflation, the breakdown of elite cohesiveness, international isolation, and the failure of nerve in containing the long suppressed sources of social conflict had destroyed Sukarno's Guided Democracy, then economic rehabilitation and growth, elite consolidation, and the relative success in conflict management were instrumental in helping Suharto's New Order government to sustain its power. The New Order regime was not only the strongest but also to date the longest serving government in post-independent Indonesia. These successes had given the regime reasons to claim itself to be the real master of meaning, the guardian of the purity of national ideology and the only legitimate maker of national symbols. These successes, however, also sheltered for a long time the fundamental flaws of the regime that in the end, when the chips were down, it had to pay the high price. The regime collapsed when a serious monetary crisis stroke a near fatal blow to the economic foundation of the country— that was the time when the so many hidden weaknesses found their affinities. Long suppressed democratic impulses, economic discrepancies and increased

social inequality and a host of other problems all came to the surface and seriously weakened the basis of political legitimacy of the regime. When the restless university students posed their most serious challenge, the regime simply failed to offer adequate response. The "May Tragedy" occurred (May 12-15, 1998) and suddenly the New Order became history and leaving behind it a deeply wounded nation, a shaky government and a state threatened by disintegrative forces.

The narrative history of the fall of Suharto is still to be written. In the meantime we can still reflect on how such a strong authoritarian state finally crumbled. Considering the fact that the New Order regime not only successfully improved social welfare, reduced the number people still living under the poverty line and – with the strong support of the military – managed to make itself as the sole guardian and interpreter of the state ideology, the fall seems so enigmatic. After all the regime was also supported and sanctioned by its mastery of ideology. For almost twenty years – from 1978 to 1998 – the regime made it compulsory for school and university students to follow the course on the so-called "internalization of the values of the Pancasila", the state ideology. Civil servants of all ranks had also to follow similar program, through using different system. No bureaucrat could expect to get promotion without passing the obligatory program. In the two week long program the aspiring bureaucrats were compelled to study and to discuss the state ideology, the Constitution 1945 and the current Outline of the State Guidelines, which was renewed every five years.

Constitutionality could be the main political claim of the New Order regime to install itself on the pedestal of power, but it was the notions of national identity and values that had from the beginning been its ideological core. From this ideological perspective power and politics were culturally interpreted. Within this ideological framework power should not be conceived as an end itself nor it only a means to achieve something. Power and the system of the state should be seen as the genuine expressions of the national ethos.

By maintaining the abstract notions of "nation's identity" and (authentic) "inherited cultural values" (both from the distant past and the revolutionary struggle for independence) as the core arguments the New Order government tried to picture itself as the legitimate torch bearer of

these values. These notions also gave the regime a certain kind of psychological and intellectual solace in the idealized cultural heritage of the past, while at the same time claiming itself to be the agent of modernization. While the dominant theme of the regime's political discourse was centered around the creation of "a just and prosperous society" (*masyarakat adil dan makmur*) it defended its courses of action by using the idealized tradition and mythologized past. Adorned by various types of integrative symbols, rituals, and myths, this political culture was expected to create a certain sphere of congeniality. The elusiveness of this kind of nurtured political culture, however, made it unable to liberate itself from the basically conservative political direction. In this situation, political stability could only mean nothing less than maintaining entrenched authoritarian political posture. In the meantime economic development, technological advancement, and educational expansion – the three most important phenomena that can easily be parts of the globalization processes – with all their closely interrelated sociological and cultural impacts, were beginning to demand proper and more relevant political format. In the process new mode of political discourse became a necessity that could no longer be simply marginalized or, more often, rejected as being "liberal" or "not in accord with our culture".

In this political world, constructed and nurtured by the official *literati* and ideologues, the national community was perceived as the extension of the family and the state was conceived to be a normative organization of power. It was an ethical and personalized political world where every aspects of its existence were supposed to have integrated harmoniously. Secular rituals, pomp and ceremonies, however simple and inexpensive they might be, had by necessity become inseparable parts of national political life. The introduction of the officially recognized "national heroes", for example, had always been part of the game. After all, heroes can be taken as to represent ethnic portraits in the "national family album". In this politically controlled cultural sphere it is not difficult to imagine how symbols could be reified and myths historicized.

Hegemonic discourses on the so-called *jati diri bangsa* (nation's identity) and the technocratic developmentalist concept of "*pembangunan*" (development) could indeed be used as the justification for both political stability and the need to have one's own system of governance, which was

coveniently called "the Pancasila democracy". These ideological pairs, however, were at the same time also used to rationalize the centralization of power, the rejection of the separation of executive, legislative, and judicature powers, and most importantly to ignore the conceptual boundaries between the state – as the realm of power and constitution – and the society – as the realm of values and norms. In the end the concepts of *jati diri bangsa* not only became the foundation of cultural relativism – as if Indonesia, as a nation, is unique– and that of cultural determinism – as if the inherited culture has made the Indonesian nation as what it is. Indonesia is then both basically unique and fundamentally unchangeable. Who would then be surprised that alleged "Indonesian basic cultural traits", such as "unwilling to criticize their leadres", "follow the examples of the leaders", and the whole barrage of conservative and feudalistic notions, were taught as if they represented social and cultural realities? The notion of political stability as a prerequisite of *pembangunan* in the last analysis only strengthened authoritarian tendencies, despite the democratic claims of the regime.

Be that as it may, whatever form the tradition of political discourse may take and whatever ideological messages the national symbols may offer their capacities would finally be determined by their affinities with changing social and economic realities. The impeccable concept of "nation's identity and values" as it was interpreted by the official *literati* and ideologues might temporarily be able to counter the growing intellectual restlessness. And, who would deny the fact that economic gains could be so tempting, political pressures could be too threatening. A major ideological problem, however, cannot be ignored. The kind of political system and culture that were defended by the whole barrage of indoctrination and political education are in effect the denials of the historical and ideological origins of the new nation and the state itself.

If nowadays, after the "May Tragedy" – "the four days that shook the country" (1998 – to paraphrase a famous book on the Russian Revolution) – Indonesia is still finding its ways in one of the darkest tunnels of its post-independent history, it is not merely due to the devastating impact of the monetary and economic crises, nor it simply because of the fall of Suharto was so sudden that it left a weakened government and a tainted army behind. The crisis has forced the nation to reflect deeply on its past

mistakes and to rethink its course for the future. In the meantime there were already too many social and political wounds to heal. Indonesia has to re-start building both the state and the nation.

II

There was a time when Indonesia was a battleground of ideologies. Already in 1926 Soekarno appealed for the unity of struggle of the three major ideological mainstreams in pre-independent Indonesia, namely nationalism, Marxism, and Islamism. He might have simplified the ideological map, because he only set his eyes on the anti-colonial nationalist movements, the so-called *kaum pergerakan*, at the time. But the point is that there were already several ideological options offered to the nation that was still in the early stage of its formation. Perhaps, also in a rather simplified category that Feith and Castles, in their important publication on Indonesian political thinking (1970), identify four "streams of thought" (radical nationalism, Javanese Traditionalism, Islam, Democratic Socialism). These "streams of thought", as they point out, manifested themselves in various areas of political and ideological controversies.

The comprehensiveness or even the validity of the category of these "streams of thought" may be argued. The existence of "streams of thought", nonetheless, are not only interesting but also important. In spite of their differences—some are even highly incompatible with each other—they share several similar key jargons that have their origins in the early history of people's movement. Concern for people's backwardness had since the early 1900s been a motivating factor that lead to desire for *kemajuan* (progress). And the awareness of racial and social inequality had given birth to the desire for having social equality, which was aptly phrased by one of the earliest Indonesian socialists, Mas Marco, as *sama rata, sama rasa*. These words not only indicate the early concerns of the *bazaar* sphere of the colonial towns, where people from all over intermingled, but also reflect the higher stage of colonial relationship. These two notions — "progress" and "equality" — have from the beginning been the cornerstones of all "streams of thought", whatever meanings the people might have attach to these

words. It was on the bases of these ideological cornerstones that other emancipatory notions made their appearances. Of all the new notions that came to the fore in the early period of Indonesian people's movement none were more influential and attractive than the ideas of "democracy" and "social justice". These ideas were later taken as the pillars of the newly conceived nation. They were also thought to be in accord with the ideal society that was blessed by God – as the Islamic political leaders would claim.

Already in 1906, for example, a certain adat-leader, who came from the heartland of Minangkabau, staged of what a contemporary Dutch observer called as the "adat revolution" in the coastal town of Padang, in West Sumatra. For the sake of *kemajuan*, he said in his press campaigns, Padang should be returned to the fold of the Minangkabau world. It had to liberate itself from the Acehnese aristocratic *adat* (local custom) and social system. The modern world or *dunia maju* was chiefly characterized by its democratic social order. And, unlike coastal social system, he argued, the genuine Minangkabau *adat* was the very expressions of these modern democratic principles. It was an *adat* that recognized no aristocratic establishment. It was a political tradition that was based on consultation of the members of the society.

The case of Padang may well be the first instance where the word "democracy" was used as the banner of protest to the existing system of social arrangement and traditional indigenous power structure. Its significance cannot be emphasized, however. It was only a local affair which had hardly any influence in other localities. But it is an illustration of a cultural dilemma in a situation of change. The *adat* leader was to find later to his utter dismay that he had in fact unleashed the democratic demons that even seriously questioned his (and the other ascribed *adat*-leaders') legitimacy as the holders of the monopoly of meanings. The Western educated *perantau*, wandering youth had begun to visualize a social sphere beyond the cultural boundaries of the Minangkabau world.

In the early 1910s the conceptualization of this new social sphere began to capture the imagination of the small, yet increasingly important urban youth. By 1920s most of the key ideological words and jargons that centered around the notions of *kemajuan*, social and economic equality, and democracy, had found their ways into the vocabulary of intellectual and

political discourses. It is not an exaggeration to state that the 1920s and 1930s was a "decade of ideologies" in Indonesian history. Only the controversies over the proper strategy in dealing with the colonial power in the 1930s and later, during the revolutionary struggle, in the 1940s that were able to cut across the existing ideological boundaries. The ideological climate of the 1920s was revived in the 1950s, during the short period of "parliamentary democracy" in Indonesian political history. Only this time the problems of the distribution of power became part of the game. So heated was the ideological debates and political competitions that in 1956 Soekarno stated in one of his controversial speeches, that he had a dream all political parties willingly bury themselves. In the mid 1970s Suharto's New Order made the dream into reality. By that time Indonesia had not only territorially been integrated but it also ideologically, albeit imposed, united. The story, however, needs to be recounted.

In 1938 for the first time the birthday of Budi Utomo (May 20) was celebrated as "the national awakening day". By that time the organization of the Javanese *priyayi*, bureaucratic-aristocrats, had already dissolved itself and together with the other moderate nationalist parties, such as the *Persatoean Bangsa Indonesia*, under the leadership of the well respected Dr. Soetomo, *Sarekat Sumatra*, and *Koem Betawi*, formed (in 1935) a new political party, the *Partai Indonesia Raya*. That was the period when the politics of *rust en orde* was consistently imposed by the colonial government. In 1948 this "national awakening day" was for the first time nationally celebrated. It was the time when the fledging, young Republic of Indonesia was confronting the most dangerous situation of its existence. By nationally celebrating it annually, historic event of the birth of the first modern organization was gradually transformed into a national symbol. Along with it the penetration of myth into history has become a routine affair.

Although symbolically less significant, the first congress of Budi Utomo (Yogyakarta, October 1908) is historically more important. The congress rejected a proposal put forward by Tjipto Mangunkusumo to change the newly established organization into a political party, or to put it differently -- since there was still a law at that time that forbade the establishment of political party -- to be active politics and to promote the still vague notion of "*Indisch nationalisme*". The congress, however,

decided that Budi Utomo should remain an organization of the Javanese noblemen, whose main program was to elevate the Javanese people from backwardness and poverty. Tjipto, the "genuine democrat", as his biographer calls him, withdrew from the organization.

The historic significance of this event is that since that time there were two different orientations of the so-called "modern" organizations. While actively engaged politics the groups that adhered to the first orientation searched for a new concept of political community. In other words they wanted to create a new future. The second orientation preferred to concentrate their activities within the framework of social and cultural affairs. This second orientation could satisfy themselves with their respective boundaries of traditional community. Only the imposing presence of colonial power that finally drove this second orientation into the world of politics. And only the strong persuasive capacity of Soekarno that occasionally brought the two orientations together in the loosely structured federations.

Budi Utomo was not alone in limiting its interest to actual social and cultural problems that plagued its familiar and intimate social world. The *Sarekat Adat Alam Minangkabau*, the organization of the Minangkabau *adat* leaders, in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and the Sundanese *Paguyuban Pasundan* may be considered as the counterparts to the Javanese Budi Utomo. It was among the Budi Utomo leaders, however, the need to formulate a clearly defined cultural ideology was the strongest. It was also among them one can find the most articulate defenders of the inherited cultural foundation. They saw themselves as the educated *priyayi* (bureaucratic aristocrats), whose moral duties were to lead the less developed people, and as the guardians of the high and refined civilization. They defined themselves as the defenders of the inherited cultural traditions against the assaults of Western influences and most notably against the attacks of the people whom they thought to have lost confidence in the inherent greatness of their cultural legacy. In their deep involvement in the intellectual discourses they can indeed be seen as the formulators of Javanese cultural nationalism.

The role of the leaders, the meaning of democracy, cultural continuity, education (*opvoeding*) and no less important, the boundaries of "national community" were some the major concerns of the proponents of

Javanese cultural nationalism. In order to defend their positions on these hotly debated issues they formed the Committee for the Congress of Javanese Culture and published journals. In these efforts they had to counter the *Jawa Dipa* movement, which aimed at eliminating Javanese speech levels and urged the people only to use the *ngoko*, the lowest speech level. They had to deal with a radical proposal to replace Javanese with Dutch, which argued that it was through this modern language the modernization of the Javanese people could be undertaken. The cultural nationalists had to face a host of other cultural issues, which squarely questioned the continuing validity of the inherited wisdom and the legitimacy of the prevailing status system.

It is understandable if one of the most articulate defenders of Javanese nationalism, Soetatmo, called the time he lived in as the "the age of madness" – the age when the boundaries of cultural proprieties had been transgressed. He harshly criticized the appeal of the political nationalists, the *kaum pergerakan*, for democracy. "What is "democracy"?", he cynically asked. Democracy was an invitation to chaos, where "struggle breaks everywhere: nobility against non-nobility, *kromo* against *ngoko*, capital against labor, rulers against ruled, government against the people; the society is upside down and is totally out of joint. It is wisdom or *kebijaksanaan* (wisdom) that can secure the unity of "*kawula lan gusti*" (the servants and the master)." Democracy would have any meaning only if it was accompanied by *kebijaksanaan* or wisdom. Democracy without *kebijaksanaan* would bring nothing but catastrophe.

The nationalist educator Ki Hajar Dewantara, who, as a young intellectual, with the name Suwardi Suryaningrat, questioned the moral legitimacy of Dutch colonialism in his classic article, *Als ik eens Nederlander was*", continued Soetatmo's line of reasoning, after his return from the Netherlands, his place of exile. To him democracy, as a proper basis of a modern social and political system, could only be accepted only if it was accompanied by the recognition of the importance of leadership. Looking reality from cultural perspective, Ki Hadjar, also perceived colonial relationship as basically a cultural conflict between the East and the West. On the basis of this assumption he established the Taman Siswa school system, which he saw as an indigenous cultural response to Western educational ideas. The school should not be simply conceived as an

institution where children could learn something from their teachers, but a rather a "home" where the intellectual parents, the teachers, shared their knowledge, wisdom, and ethics with their children, the pupils. Along this reasoning, society, like the educational institution, was construed as being a big family, guided by similar sense of responsibility and familial piety.

This is the idea that was later, in 1930s, taken over by the National Congress of Education, in which Ki Hadjar himself played an important role. The ultimate objective of the national education was to create a society that could defend itself against the temptations of Western individualism and materialism. In the opinion of the Congress an ideal society was one that remained basically true to its basic foundation while outwardly may take anything advantageous offered by the Western world. It was also society that was free of conflict and competition. The aim of education was to establish Consensual and harmonious world that was blessed by mutual respects, morality, and piety.

Looking back at history we can understand why the legacies of the idealized past could be culturally attractive. These legacies could give psychological solace in time of political impotence and offered self confidence in facing the strange and hostile cosmopolitan world. The cultivated wisdom inherited from the past might provide a solid foundation on which one would be able to stand the challenge of the future. History of some Asian countries can give illustrations of how traditionalism could become an ideological foundation of social reform. The pre-independent Indonesian cultural nationalists could have also argued – and they did argue – of how "rationalism, individualism, and materialism" had not only turned Western countries into capitalist and imperialist powers but also transformed themselves into the destructive forces that threatened the very existence of other nations and societies. Exploitation, war, and destruction were the direct consequences of those ideas. The cultural nationalists, however, failed to provide adequate answers to a number of intellectual and sociological challenges posed by the political nationalist, who aspired to build a new nation.

Firstly, how could a cynical question about the failure of the inherited tradition to deal with a certain empirical facts be answered? If the past had really produced a noble and refine culture how come "our nation" be ruled by a foreign nation? This harsh question was bluntly asked by

Tjipto Mangunkusumo. And he answered it with harsher bluntness. Secondly, the stand of the cultural nationalists could not cope properly with the challenge posed by the *bazaar* sphere of colonial towns, which had broken the veils of ignorance that once sheltered the mutually isolated communities of strangers. Now the once strangers had gradually managed to establish their distinctive urban cultural symbols that cut across the ethnic boundaries. Facilitated by print-culture, schools, markets, and other means a new type of community was emerging. Thirdly, colonial administration and bureaucracy might have assembled the fragmented ethnic groups into one relatively integrated historical world, its system of exploitation had directly incited the recollections of the separate local communities. They could easily find in their respective collective memories the long lasting cultural networks that were still operative. In short, other forces, which in time of shared destiny was already felt, could be more powerful than the attraction to one's own inherited idealized past, were also at work.

The historic importance of Tjipto's withdrawal from Budi Utomo cannot be exaggerated. His withdrawal was symptomatic, nonetheless. It indicates the crisis of the old concept of community, that were based on commonly shared cultural traits -- language, tradition, history, and others. The old community was no longer able to answer presently felt social and political problems. Tjipto's action is also a symptom of the growing desire to acquire a new community. Politically motivated the desire was a reaction to subordinate colonial relationship.

Several attempts were made in order to acquire such a new community -- ranging from the notion of "*bangsa Islam*", (Islamic nation), *Insulinde* (a term introduced by the novelist, Multatuli) "*bangsa Hindia*" or the "*Indies*" or *Indisch*. As suggested by the leaders of the *Indische Partij*, "*Indisch*" were the *blijvers* ("settlers") of the then still called "*Indie*", in opposition to the *trekkers* ("sojourners"). Or, the attempts of the educated youths, who first sought the new sense of community in insular solidarity. Whatever the case the attempts to conceptualize a new and more suitable social sphere in which the used to be communities of strangers could feel at home and familiar with each others were seriously conducted and intensely debated. Whatever the initial solutions that were offered these attempts indicate time in motion. It was a time that opened up many possibilities. If

finally on October 28, 1928 the educated youths, who came from many ethnic backgrounds, issued a statement that they belonged to "one fatherland and one nation" -- that is Indonesia -- and that they recognized "one national language" -- that is *bahasa Indonesia*, the process of searching had symbolically ended. This statement is to be known as the *Sumpah Pemuda*, the Youth Oath. A sacralization of a historic event had taken place and the ideological formation of a new national community had been formalized.

The fact that "Indonesia", a word of Greek origin and coined by foreign scholars, was chosen as the name of the new nation emphasizes an historical that the nation was a creation of an idea. Therefore its birth and existence ought to be culturally and historically accounted for. National symbols and myths were invented and cultivated. The process of remembering something and forgetting other things set in. Local heritage and heroes began to be included into the national store of memory. In short, though historically can be accounted for, the new nation was an answer to the predicament of the present and the call of the future. S. Takdir Alisyahbana might have exaggerated his case in attacking the participants of the National Congress of Education, mentioned above, for being too conservative and inward looking but he put the question on a new perspective by stating that "the period of pre-Indonesia has died a thousand deaths" (*telah mati semati-matinya*). He was, of course, writing metaphorically.

Unlike the cultural nationalists, who thought to have inherited the noble and refine cultural heritage and the workable social arrangement, the political nationalists had to visualize the structure and cultural ethos of the newly found political community, what they called "the Indonesian nation". If this newly created national society was not aimed at eliminating the old ethnic societies -- the ones that were lovingly defended and cherished by the cultural nationalists and their local *literati* -- how the relationship of the two spheres be conceptualized? What kind of social arrangement that best suited for this integrative and modern community? A nation, however, could have any meaning only if it could free itself from colonial yoke. If that was case what sort national state should be established? Should it be based on Islam, the religion of the majority. Should it merely founded itself on the desire to have a nation-state? The 1920s and 1930s was indeed a "decade of ideologies". Among the most prominent members of the *pergerakan* one

thing was clear. They wanted to establish a democratic social order. "Our nationalism", Sukarno said, "is not a *ningrat* (aristocratic) nationalism". The period of the social formation and ethos of *daulat tuanku* (royal sovereignty), Hatta and Sjahrir said, should definitively be replaced by that of *daulat rakyat* (people's sovereignty). The unity of Indonesia and the idea of democracy, nonetheless, were seen as the two common denominators by the political nationalist leaders that could really bind the multi-ethnic and multi-historic nation together.

The debates and controversies might continue over many other political and cultural issues, but either through voluntary associations, schools, newspapers, books, and magazines, or public meetings, the gradual spread of the influence of political nationalism could not be stopped. Prisons and exiles were prices the people of the *pergerakan* had to pay for their deep commitment to this newly conceived nation. When finally the chips were down, soon after the end of the Second World War, Indonesia gallantly entered the four and half years long of revolutionary struggle. Heroes' cemeteries scattered all over the country. They died for a dream -- that was the dream that is beautifully and elegantly summarized in the Preamble of the Constitution. It was not a nostalgia of the past, but a noble hope for an independent, united, sovereign, democratic, prosperous and just society, that drove the freedom fighters into actions. The proclamation of the Indonesian independence can in some ways be seen as the confirmation of the victory of political nationalism in its controversy with cultural nationalism.

Revolution can mean anything to its supporters and participants. It may well be only a suspension of normal order or a sphere where the process of *Umwertung aller Werte* may take place. It can also be viewed as the time when the mass became the full participants on the political processes. In historical hindsight, however, revolution can also be seen as the summary of the whole noble ideas that are worth fighting for. The Indonesian revolutionary struggle nurtured a generation that looked at their struggle as the culmination of the long process of nation-formation. Who can blame them if the proponents of this winning generation would like to preserve and inherit the "1945 values", to call the successive generations as nothing more than the "*generasi penerus*" (the succeeding torch carriers)

and to idealize the future as the gradual unfolding of the historical potentialities of their past struggles?

III

The story is, of course, very familiar to those who know something about Indonesian history. It was the spirit of political nationalism that finally proclaimed the independence of Indonesia. It was also the democratic principle that largely determined the course of the revolutionary struggle. Young and inexperienced, but full of idealism, the political nationalists did occasionally fail to solve satisfactorily the discrepancies between the demands of their political idealism and the attractions of power. Despite the almost insurmountable challenges their commitments to democratic ideals remained for a while unchanged.

The 1950s began as an era of hope. Now that independence had been won and the sovereignty of the nation-state had been internationally recognized, all historical deviations that had been imposed by the incoming colonial power had to be abolished. The Republic of the United States of Indonesia was abolished and the unitary state reinstated. But the economy of the young Republic was still dominated by the Dutch companies and Irian Barat was still occupied by the Dutch. In the meantime colonial time bombs kept exploding here and there. These numerous challenges created divergent types of responses that made the young Republic, with its parliamentary political system, failed to maintain a stable government. The first general election inadvertently only re-introduced cultural interpretations of politics. Power was again – like in the past – seen from cultural perspectives. In their desire to get a proper share on the distribution of power, political parties were trapped and lured into manipulating deep seated divergent cultural assumptions about politics and the state.

Change was indeed in the air. "The democracy we have been using", Soekarno said, while offering his epoch-making *konsepsi* – that is his proposal to change Indonesian political format – in 1957, "is a democracy which is not in harmony with the soul of the Indonesian nation ..., not in harmony with our personality ... The idea of opposition ... is not in accord

with the Indonesian spirit". Two years later in July, 1959, with the pretext that the Constituent Assembly had failed in its mission to draw a new constitution, accepting the army's suggestion, the President decreed that Indonesia had to "return to the 1945 Constitution". With the change of the constitution the President became the head of both the state and the government. The awkward political situation, whereby the most influential leader and the most powerful figure, President Sukarno, was constitutionally without power, had ended. Both the Constituent Assembly and the elected parliament were dissolved. In place of the elected parliament the Mutual Help or *Gotong Royong* parliament was instituted. The era of Guided Democracy had begun.

In accordance with the genuine *kepribadian bangsa* (national individuality), as the newly installed regime stated, all political decisions should be made through the process of "deliberation and consensus" (*musyawarah dan mufakat*). Any logical discrepancies that might be countered between the idea of "*musyawarah and mufakat*" with the strong executive bias of the Guided Democracy government, could be simply explained as the demand of the dynamic of "the law of the revolution". Hatta, the constitutionalist, who had resigned as the Vice President, could only label his friend's regime as nothing but a "dictatorial system". It is an iron law of history, he says in his now classic booklet (originally published as an article of a journal), *Demokrasi Kita*, that democracy could be temporarily be suspended, but it would reappear again, "wiser". Hatta could only lament the fact that he actually had won a pyrrhic victory, when his argument for limiting the power of the state, was finally accepted by the BPUPKI (July, 1945) in the promulgation of the provisional constitution of the to be established independent nation state. Now with the "return to the 1945 Constitution" movement launched by Sukarno, the *Machistaat*, so much feared by Hatta had emerged in political reality.

Indonesia was entering Sukarno's multi-complex revolution - "a summing up of many revolutions in one generation". In the sphere of this conceptualized revolution, the world was seen as consisted of two opposing camps, the NEFOS and the OLDEFOS. Internally the people could also be divided between the revolutionaries and the reactionaries, between those who were committed to the maintenance of *kepribadian bangsa* and those who were unable to liberate themselves from the temptations of Western

liberal ideas. The USDEK was the credo of the regime and the ideological boundaries of the two camps. A process of exclusion and marginalization of unwanted elements was undertaken.

But let the constitutional experts have their arguments on whether or not Soekarno, who together with eight other pergerakan leaders drafted the Preamble of the Constitution (June 1945), had finally been subdued by the temptations of power promised by the so-called "integralistic" interpretation of the 1945 Constitution. One thing is clear, Sukarno, the radical political nationalist, had finally been converted to the very ideas that were once elegantly formulated by the *literati* of pre-independent Javanese cultural nationalism, except for the fact that he perceived the world as consisting of antagonistic camps and that he saw himself as living in the turmoil of history. And, not less important is the fact that he projected his concept of *kepribadian bangsa* into the *Bhineka tunggal ika* world of Indonesia. But who would determine the differences between the genuine *kepribadian* and the demands of power, but the Great Leader of the Revolution himself? The mythologized past had become a strategic weapon to be used for the sake of present political demands and expediencies.

A thorough examination on the political failures of the Guided Democracy is still needed, but when the system finally exhausted itself, the pillars of its structure tumbled to each others. A dramatic national tragedy of enormous significance took place. Who could give the exact figure on how many had perished in the turmoil of events? A new regime was born. With the determination to correct the Guided Democracy's constitutional deviations and to fulfill the promises of the Indonesian Proclamation of independence, the New Order was established. The generation that had fought for independence by their blood and tears had now come to power. They replaced the older generation, magnificently represented by Sukarno, in order to renew the commitment to the promises of the Proclamation of Independence. An almost total overhaul of the vocabulary of national symbols and political jargons ensued. Revolution was out, development was in. Ideology, out; program, in. And so on. A new paradigm was introduced. The paradigm of conflict had already exhausted itself. Pancasila, "developmental trilogy (stability, growth, and equality), "eight lanes of equality", and so forth became the pillars of new paradigm. A world of

consensus was in the making. It was, however, a hegemonic "consensual world".

The old cultural trap re-appeared. Cultural suitability would again be determined by the degree of success of power management. The 1945 Generation, the generation who fought for a hope in the future, had now also made themselves as the carriers of the banner of the elusive concept of both values of the revolution and the inherited legacies of the nation. These were the legacies that magnificently blurred the boundaries between "democracy" – that is the sovereignty of the people – and father's wishes in the "national family".

Tjipto's withdrawal from the culture-bound Budi Utomo is not wasted. He might have been wondering, however, whether his deep commitment to the universal concept of democracy is really out of tune with the political aspirations of his nation.

IV

The above sketch knowingly simplifies the history of political discourses in modern Indonesia. It does not take into account the several attempts that had been made to synthesize the notion of democracy with the different types of "streams of thought". Nor it discusses the varieties of nationalist orientations. It neither pays proper attention to the ways of how political thought and discourses could manifest themselves in the formulation of policies and in the promulgation of law nor to the discourses that were translated into certain kind of political system.

The fall of Suharto and the still contested Habibie Presidency show the democratic system, once visualized by the political nationalists, has re-emerged. The debates over the meaning of democracy, however, has already begun long before the New Order regime felt the end was near. Never in the history of the debates between the two trends – cultural and political nationalism, with their respective political and cultural orientations – took so many issues and problems as the foci of their debates. In the meantime power and the future orientation of the state are also very much at stake. The so-called "era of reformation", as the present transitional government

likes to call its time, is indeed a period to re-examine all things that used to be taken for granted and to reflect on the ideals and dreams that were once fought for. It is also the time to reformulate the dream about the future.

In the meantime the voices of local frustrations and even resentment have begun to ask the long suppressed questions and to demand the re-examination of the very meaning of the concept of national integration and unity. Local realities have been seriously questioning the legitimacy of the strong center and the centralization of power. Would greater autonomy be the appropriate answer or should the total transformation of the unitary state be the only feasible solution?