

INDONESIA AFTER THE ELECTIONS OF 4TH MAY 1982

Cees van Dijk

On May 4th, 1982, for the fourth time general elections were held in Indonesia. Earlier elections had been held in 1955, 1971 and 1977. The elections under the Suharto regime, that came into power in 1966, are like in other countries with authoritarian governments characterised by restrictions. Only a part of the seats of the representative bodies is allocated through the elections. The number of parties allowed to participate is limited. Moreover, not all Indonesians have the right to vote and the election campaign is restricted with respect to its duration as well as to the subjects the politicians may raise.

364 Members of Parliament were elected, the remaining 96, mostly military men being appointed by the government. These 460 members of Parliament (the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat or DPR) form half of the People's Congress (the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat or MPR) that in total has 920 members. The remaining 460 Members of People's Congress are again appointed military men, regional representatives and members of the political parties appointed in proportion to the election results.

The People's Congress, which in its new composition will reassemble March next year, is constitutionally the most important political body. It elects the president and deputy-president, evaluates the government policy of the past years, and formulates the broad outlines of that policy for the next five years. Its session, normally once in the five years, forms the culmination of Indonesia's formal and informal political life.

The role and function of political parties in Indonesian politics is limited, and they are subject to direct and indirect government control. Officially there are only two political parties in Indonesia: the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) or Unity and Development Party, and the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI). Then, there is the Golkar, a collection of functional group organizations. In the Indonesian terminology the Golkar is not a political party. But in practice it acts as one, participating in the elections and

supporting the government in Parliament and People's Congress.

The PPP and PDI are both relatively recent parties. They were formed in 1973 when the existing parties had to merge to reach, what was called, a simplification of the party system. The parties that had been allowed to exist till that time only partly reflected the choice of the population this situation did not change when the mergers became a fact.

If we return for a moment to the first elections of 1955 we see that of the four parties that had gained the majority of the votes at that time only one, the orthodox Islamic Nahdatul Ulama had survived the elections of 1971 unharmed. Of the other three the communist PKI was banned in 1966 because it was held responsible by the government for the coup d'état of September the previous year. The adherents of a second large party, the reformist Islamic Masyumi, banned as early as 1960, were permitted under the New Order to found a new party, the Parmusi. The conditions set by the government were such, that it only formed a remote reflection of the Masyumi. In the elections of 1971 the Parmusi fared poorly, with only 5 per cent of the votes, just one fourth of what the Masyumi had gained in 1955. The winner of the elections of 1955, the nationalist PNI, the party of Sukarno, that had got over 22 per cent, in 1971 could only muster a poor 7 per cent. This was partly brought about by the fact that after 1965 it had lost its left wing, while one of its main bases in society, the civil service, had changed loyalty to the Golkar.

At the mergers in 1973 four Islamic parties including the Parmusi and Nahdatul Ulama formed the PPP, the other parties, among them the PNI and the Christian Parties Partai Katolik and Parkindo (Protestants) formed the PDI.

These two new parties, and this holds in principle for the Golkar too, have only limited access to the population. They are not allowed to operate in the villages, except for a short period before the elections. At first the government wanted to remove them almost completely from the local scene, allowing no branch boards in the villages. It was only after considerable opposition from the parties that the government came down a bit, and permitted them to assign a representative and a number of assistants in the villages.

Moreover, not everybody can become a member. Certain groups are excluded. This holds in the first place for members of the Armed Forces. Officially this is done to ensure its neutrality and to prevent it becoming divided by politics.

A second group that experiences difficulties in entering a party is that of the civil servants. Depending on their rank they have either to inform their superiors of their intention or need his written permission. In a society where one knows that the government prefers its civil servants not to become a member of the PPP or PDI this forms a serious impediment for a free political development. The more so, when government officials underline that not voting Golkar will be ill received (and might even be considered a treacherous act).

As for the population at large only people able to read and write may become a party member. Here it should be pointed out that the rate of illiteracy is still high in Indonesia: over forty per cent.

The Campaign

All these restrictions and the fact that only part of the seats of the representative bodies is allocated through elections made people question the purpose of the elections. They opposed in particular the fact that such a small number of Members of the People's Congress (364 out of 920) is directly elected. An additional factor is that the parties that are allowed to function are ridden by internal conflicts, and are not able to pursue a vigorous opposition.

Already since 1971 an admittedly small movement to boycott the elections has existed - supported in its early days by intellectuals and students. Disillusioned with the choice presented at the elections they publicly declared that they would not use their right to vote. Also this year these voices could be heard. Among the people refusing to vote were such well-known persons as the former mayor of Jakarta Ali Sadikin.

By declaring their intention not to vote they come into a direct conflict with the Indonesian government. The latter attaches much value to a high turn-out, which indeed this year has in a number of regions again been about 100 per

cent. Not voting has become an act of opposition. Though there is no compulsory voting, the pressure to vote is high. The number of people casting their vote, or, more precisely, of those not doing so, is seen as an indication of the popularity of the regime. That is why people may state that they will not cast their vote, but will never publicly ask others to follow their example. In fact, the Indonesian government threatens with legal sanctions people who would try to do so.

The elections itself, and all things surrounding it, are tightly supervised. This holds already for the first preparations, the drafting of the lists of candidates. All candidates need the approval of the government and have to meet certain requirements. They have, as all Indonesians, to believe in God, and should be loyal to the ideology of the state, the Pancasila. Further, they may not have been a member of a banned organization. This means that not only former members of the Communist party are prevented from running for Parliament, but also the former leaders of Masyumi. For civil servants there is the additional provision that they should have the written permission of their superior.

The submission of the lists of candidates to the government for approval resulted this time in even more disputes than in the past. In the PPP a sharp struggle for power took place between the leaders of its two main components, the Parmusi and Nahdatul Ulama. Of the two the Nahdatul Ulama is by far the largest; as a result of the 1977 elections its members held 56 of the 99 PPP seats. When, at the end of 1981, the PPP list of candidates had to be drafted, Parmusi politicians demanded a greater share at the expense of the Nahdatul Ulama. A second interrelated problem was that in the eyes of the government and of some of the Parmusi leaders the Nahdatul Ulama Members of Parliament had been too critical of the government and, what may have been worse, had been openly showing it.

The conflict was irresolvable, with the result that both camps submitted their own list. The government from its side refused the Nahdatul Ulama list, accepting that of the Parmusi. Here, many of the Nahdatul Ulama leaders were mentioned on such a low place, that their return to Parliament was almost impossible. The dispute ran so high, that

at a certain moment it appeared that the Nahdatul Ulama would dissociate itself completely from the PPP, but this in the end did not occur. Nevertheless it is almost for certain that the conflict weakened support for the PPP, especially in Nahdatul Ulama strongholds in East Java.

The consequences for the behaviour of Parliament and the People's Congress are even greater. Preventing Prominent Nahdatul Ulama leaders from returning gives credit to the accusations that the representative bodies in Indonesia consist for the major part of 'yes-men', people who always agree with the proposals of the government.

Campaigning itself is limited in time and in scope. It is only allowed for 45 days (in 1971 and 1977 for 60 days) and is followed by a quiet period in which no political activities are allowed. This year the campaign started on March 15th. As at earlier elections a number of topics were taboo. Election addresses should not touch upon such sensitive issues as the place of Islam in society. Orators should not question the official ideology of the state and should refrain from statements that might inspire interethnic, racial or religious hostilities.

In theory religious topics should not be raised at political meetings, and conversely, political subjects should not be discussed at religious gatherings. Still, the government had to allow the PPP to enter the elections of 1977 and 1982 under the symbol of the Ka'bah, the Islamic shrine at Mecca. In both elections the Ka'bah proved to be a potent rallying-point, deviating from the principle of the government that religion should be kept out of the elections.

It is also forbidden to evaluate or belittle the policy of the government or its officials. The parties, moreover, are not allowed to make a negative judgement about each other. One may wonder what is left to campaign. As it is formulated in the ballot act the themes raised by the parties should be their own distinct programme for the national development of Indonesia.

At these elections there was the additional provision that the parties (and the Golkar) had to submit to the regional authorities well in advance the leaflets etc. they wanted to use and that they should inform them a week before of the meetings they wanted to hold and the speakers invited.

This was inspired by the wish to prevent meetings of different parties taking place simultaneously within a distance of 5,000 meters of each other, or processions of different organizations crossing each others path.

To be prepared for the worst extensive security measures were taken. In Jakarta alone 42,000 members of the Armed Forces and other security bodies including the civil defence and fire brigade were alerted to safeguard the elections.

The reason why the Indonesian government is so strict is that it fears that the campaign will get out of control and will result in disturbances. In general it fears outbursts of popular violence and has already for years held large exercises for its troops in riot suppression.

The Background

Government officials are aware that the Indonesian society is rather explosive. They hold the view that political activities might form the spark that sets certain regions afire. As a consequence they are of the opinion that the population should be shielded as much as possible from politics. This not only to ensure, as they argue, that people concentrate their energy on their work and on the economic development of the country. Another reason is, as officials are not tired of saying, that in the past ideological and political disputes have brought Indonesia to the verge of disaster and that it was only the Armed Forces that had saved it from falling apart.

Since 1965 it has always been aimed at a demobilization of the population. The government chose for a system of popular representation in which the participation of its citizens is kept down to its absolute minimum. It is in accordance with this strategy that not only the political parties are closely supervised, but also other social organizations. A free labour movement, farmers' association or even a free youth organization does not exist. Those still functioning are closely geared to the government interests.

Through this system one has indeed succeeded in limiting formal opposition, and in securing a population that does not indulge itself in politics. The reverse side of the medal is that an authoritarian structure developed in which it has become almost impossible to voice one's opinion. The chan-

nels through which this might be possible, the bureaucracy, the political parties, and the social organizations, all have silted up.

One of the few possibilities still open for people who feel treated unjustly is to send a delegation to Jakarta and to lodge their complaint directly to Parliament; a practice which has become increasingly used, and which due to coverage in newspapers has been relatively successful.

Such a method can only accommodate a small section of society, and only in circumstances which provide a clear and well defined example of unjust treatment. For the majority of the people it is different. They are not the victims of one specific civil servant, officer or landowner. If their living conditions become worse, they have no organization to turn to to serve their interests.

The result is that the Indonesian government lacks information about the conditions the people live in and about what they think. Under normal circumstances this is already undesirable. For Indonesia it is even worse. It prevents the government from dealing in the right way with the consequences and side-effects of its development policy. All kinds of economic activities which it seems affect society deeply, especially in the fields of agriculture and industry, are undertaken at the moment.

Because of new techniques, unemployment and inequality in the countryside are increasing. The inputs such as new seeds and fertilizers to increase the rice production are more expensive than the old ones, and can be applied only by farmers who are at least a little bit better off, sharpening the economic division in the countryside. In industry, new big factories and cheap imports are too big a competition for local handicraft, and for the small-scale industries. Many of these have to close down.

The dilemma the Indonesian government is confronted with is that with a rapid growing population and with regions that belong to the most densely populated in the world, the economic direction taken is one which tends to decrease employment opportunities. This has its effect not only on life in the countryside but also in the cities. The cities, themselves already suffering from overpopulation, have to accommodate new migrants who have to live in slums and

can only find a very meagre means of subsistence in the service sector or in what nowadays is called the informal sector.

In addition, to understand what has happened and what was at stake during the election campaign, one should consider the role of the Islamic community in Indonesia. Its position has considerably changed over the years. In 1965 the Islamic religious leaders and their followers were full of hope. Communism, which as it does not acknowledge the existence of God was considered by them as their main enemy, was defeated. In establishing their authority, moreover, the new political leaders emphasized religion and the obligation of every Indonesian to adhere to one.

In all, the Islamic leaders were confident that in the New Order they would play a leading role in political and economic life. Reality was different. In the political field they did not get the prominent position they hoped for, instead they more and more felt that they were loosing ground. Economically, they did not profit from the new investments and the contacts with the Western world as did other groups. They did not succeed in becoming part of the 'inner circle' which gained most from the economic upswing. Most serious for them is probably that in the religious field, too, they feel attacked, discerning a moving away from Islam as they perceive it.

One can say that one misjudged, and not only in Indonesia, the group that rose to power after 1965 and that still rules up to this very moment. Of course, there are frictions in this group, and not all fit the picture, but one can, I think, give a general description of the outlooks and background of its members. They are of the Islamic faith, but suspicious of some of their fellow Muslims, an attitude that has become mutual. Not a few originate from Central and East Java and adhere to the special form of Islam which has developed there, and which has been strongly influenced by Hinduistic and animistic beliefs.

Between the two groups of Muslims, those influenced by Hinduism and the more rigorous ones, there exists a certain animosity, suspicious as they are of each others intentions. The 'Javanese' Muslims, if we may call them so, afraid that they might have to give up century old habits, do not like the religious zeal of their more rigorous fellow Muslims.

From their side, the rigorous Muslims are afraid that if they do not beware the 'Javanese' Muslims will not only hold to un-Islamic beliefs and practices, but might even attempt to free themselves from the supervision of the Islamic religious leaders and try to establish a religion of their own. At present they indeed discern this latter trend in a number of activities of the Indonesian government.

The feeling among Muslims that the Indonesian government is indeed acting against the interests of Islam, an accusation that, by the way, is denied by the government, is, I believe, rather wide-spread. There are three ways in which people react. One group of rigorous Muslims still co-operates with the government, though sometime reluctantly and occasionally coming into conflict with it. Their representatives can be found in the political parties, also in the Golkar, and in the institutions deliberately set up for communication between the government and the Islamic community.

A second group rejects such a co-operation, and, in general, is more outspoken in its evaluation of the government. In sermons and leaflets they persistently attack it, not only for its attitude towards Islam, but also for the undemocratic structure of society and for the consequences of the economic development as pursued by the government. According to them the Indonesian government does not lead the nation to a more egalitarian society, but to exactly the reverse. This group has, it appears, quite a large following at the universities. This is due to its Islamic appeal and to the concepts of political and economic development put forward by its members. Among their exponents one can mention former leaders of Masyumi, and a number of retired officers.

A third group does not only reject co-operation but resorts to violence; not only against the government but also against leaders of the first group, and in general against anybody who in their eyes does not live up to Islamic standards. In a way they continue the tradition of armed Islamic uprisings in Indonesia, in another way they are strongly influenced by what is generally described as an Islamic revival.

Armed Islamic groups, out for the establishment of an Islamic state, that had disappeared in Indonesia just before

1965, have in recent years come up again, although still forming small and isolated groups. There is, however, one great difference with the 1950s and early 1960s. In those years the Islamic rebellion that afflicted many parts of Indonesia was by and large a rural affair. Now, it is also a phenomenon of the cities, in particular of Bandung and Jakarta, where it attracts especially students and other youths.

In the cities it can combine force with the disillusionment of the urban masses. Occasionally it comes to outbursts in the form of riots. These are directed against the government and its representatives and buildings, and the Chinese community. Usually they are triggered off by a political event in which certain groups intensify their criticism of the government. This latter fact leads to the often heard accusation that the riots are not spontaneous, but are manipulated by people contending for power.

The Election Results

The two factors mentioned above, the rural but especially the urban unrest, and the disappointment in Islamic circles may explain some of the violence during the campaign period. If one compares the reports on the campaign period and the election results one may detect a contradiction. During the campaign many violent incidents took place in which the masses clearly spoke out for the Islamic PPP and against the Golkar and the government. The election results itself show a massive support for the Golkar, even more than in earlier elections.

This is not as contradictory as it seems. Islam and the PPP have become a symbol for the masses for their protests against the government. The elections themselves are much more orchestrated by the government, leading to the results it desires. One should, moreover, not forget that the people participating in the riots come from specific groups in society: the urban poor and youths.

This year the election campaign period was a very violent one indeed. In the first elections in Indonesia, in 1955, there were hardly any incidents. In 1971 and 1977 this was already different, but still the campaigns were not as violent as this year when tens of people were killed and hundreds were wounded.

It began already on the third day of the campaign period, when, on March 18th, a mass meeting of the Golkar resulted in riots. It was planned that one of the most powerful men in Indonesia, the Minister of Information, Ali Murtopo, would speak. Even before he arrived the situation got out of control. The meeting developed into the beating-up of people who could be identified with the Golkar, for instance because one wore a shirt with the Golkar symbol printed on it. The crowd also marched into town, setting busses afire and stopping cars. If the driver made the V sign (2 is the list number of the Golkar) his car was set afire, if he put up one finger (1 is the list number of the PPP) no harm was done. Also Indonesian flags were burned and government buildings and shops owned by Chinese damaged. According to government spokesmen no one was killed, but other sources mention between eight and ten deaths.

In other places in Indonesia, too, serious incidents took place, for instance in Yogyakarta at the end of March where a number of people were killed and the army had to take the streets. Here it was members of the PPP who fell victim.

People were also killed in North Sulawesi and in Bandung, where at a PPP meeting a member of the civil defence corps was beaten to death.

The campaign period ended as it started: with riots in Jakarta on April 25th following a Golkar campaign parade. This time the government admitted that six people had been shot by security troops, but the actual number of deaths is probably higher. The incident occasioned the head of the security command Sudomo to issue the instruction that from April 27th rioters could be shot on the spot.

The election results itself do not form a great surprise. They are as could be expected. Still there are a few remarkable things. The first is that the Golkar got about 64 per cent of the votes. This is more than in 1977 and more than compensates for the loss in that year when it had gone down from 62.80 to 62.11 per cent. Both the PPP and PDI did lose a little; the PPP going from 29.29 to 27.99 per cent, the PDI from 8.60 to 7.94 per cent.

The second is that the Golkar did win in Jakarta, where in 1977 the PPP was the largest party. Jakarta is considered

by observers the place where the elections are most fair and where the possibilities of manipulating are smallest, as it is the city where the elections can relatively easily be observed by outsiders.

The Golkar did further gain in Central Java. Striking for this province is that while also the PPP did a little better than in 1977 the PDI lost considerably. That the PDI would suffer an over-all loss was to be expected, since during the last years the party has been heard of almost only because of its many internal conflicts. That its support declined in Central Java from 19.09 to 11.73 per cent of the votes came as a big surprise. Especially so because at these elections the PDI was for the first time permitted to use what looks like a powerful symbol. In their campaigns PDI leaders called into mind the late president Sukarno and his achievements. This did not prevent the PDI from losing ground: not only in Indonesia as a whole, but in particular in Central Java where Sukarno was and is a very popular figure. Still the PDI remains of some importance as an alternative for people who refuse to vote for the Islamic PPP or the Golkar.

There were also provinces where the Golkar lost. It did so in Aceh, a very Islamic region, and in West and East Java. In East Java, of interest because of the conflicts with the Nahdatul Ulama leaders, the results of the PPP were almost equal to that of 1977. Here it was the PDI that showed an increase in votes. Also in West Java the PDI and not the PPP profitted from the losses of the Golkar.

As in earlier elections there were the familiar protests by the PDI and PPP. These concerned for instance that fact that among others in Jakarta people had cast their vote twice and that people of whom it was known that they were supporters of a political party had not received a ballot ticket.

The Prospects

Judging from the election results one can conclude that from the formal point of view the Indonesian government still has a firm seat. In Parliament and People's Congress the groups supporting the government have the vast majority. This, however, does not yet say much about the stability of the regime. Its fate is only indirectly dependent on

its support in the representative bodies. Of much more importance are other factors such as the appearance of riots and the continued operation of armed bands, Islamic inspired or not. Both phenomena are difficult to check, as they develop outside the sphere of influence of the government and the established Islamic institutions. The elections have shown how explosive the situation is, and, if anything, this factor will become of more importance in the future.

The opposition against Suharto, which can not be expressed through the official political channels, usually reaches its peak in the months before People's Congress assemblies. If the pattern of the past years is repeated voices protesting a new term of office of Suharto will gain momentum again in October, after a temporary lull following the elections to reach a climax early next year.

Protests will come from students, the Islamic opposition and shelved former prominent political and military leaders. Some of them were already active before the elections in statements rejecting the political system or, as was done by students in Yogyakarta, suggesting that Suharto should be replaced by Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX of Yogyakarta. There will be, that is for sure, an increase in illegal leaflets and pamphlets attacking Suharto and other leaders. Whether this is likely to be accompanied by riots, or, as was the case five years ago, by bombing attempts is difficult to predict. The same holds for the involvement of various groups contesting for power, who may try to use the situation for their own particular ends.

On a longer term one should also take into consideration the direction into which the Indonesian economy will develop. About the economy of Indonesia there are good and there are bad things to say. In the short run one can be optimistic, but on the long term the situation is bleaker.

There are some notable achievements of the New Order, which from the beginning stressed economic development and recovery of an economy that in 1965 was on the verge of collapsing. Inflation has been brought down, and ranges now between 7 and 17 per cent. There is a reasonable foreign exchange reserve of US\$ 11 billion, but also a huge foreign debt, while the balance of payment has deteriorated in the fiscal year 1981/1982 from a surplus of US\$ 2.5 billion to a deficit of the same amount. Food production has

increased in the last years, and according to some Indonesia may even become self-supporting in the production of rice, but in the past large and expensive rice imports have still been necessary.

The problem is that the Indonesian economy is an unbalanced one, showing the characteristics of a dual economy. There is an expanding modern sector that to a high degree is responsible for the growth of Indonesia's economy. The sectors to which this can be mainly attributed are mining, forestry, the construction industry and trade, banking, and finance. This implies that growth is not only concentrated in certain sectors of the economy, but also in certain regions, of which in the first place Jakarta should be mentioned. Besides that there is a large traditional sector that is lagging behind and in some instances is even hurt by the modern sector.

The economy is still very one-sided and sensitive to changes in the world economy. For its income the Indonesian government is almost completely dependent on the exploitation of its oil and natural gas resources and on foreign aid. In the past Indonesia has profited from the oil boom, but as it is well known the oil market is slacking off. Decreasing income from the oil sector does not only affect the development activities that can be undertaken by the Indonesian government. It has a much more directly felt impact on society.

In recent years it has become apparent that the government is unable to maintain its subsidies on oil products in the domestic market. As a consequence the prices of fuels have gone up a number of times with increases ranging from 40 to 60 per cent, adding to the feelings of disappointment in society. On the top of it the government this year announced that there will be no annual increase in the salaries of civil servants.

In the future the situation in this respect will not improve, even if the oil market picks up again. Indonesia will have to use an increasingly large share of its oil resources for domestic use. Some even predict that the Indonesian oil resources will be exhausted around the turn of the century.

What this means becomes evident if one looks at the state budget. About 60 per cent of the state revenue comes from

oil corporate tax. Income tax only accounts for 1.5 per cent, and corporate tax for 4 per cent of the government income.

This may leave a pessimistic impression about the economic future of Indonesia. One could as well end on an optimistic note: In a recent report of the World Bank the Indonesian economic performance in 1981 was praised and it was announced that Indonesia now has entered the group of middle income-countries with a per capita income of US\$ 520 p.a. And if, in the political field, Indonesia is still far away from the ideals of Western democracy, it should also be mentioned that the present system contains some democratic features that are not used in the West: The importance the Indonesian government attaches to unanimous decisions gives the political parties some extra bargaining power, enabling them to have at least some of their demands met.