

**Creating *Indonesia Baru*:  
The Political Parties and Views of Women in Contemporary Indonesia**

A Paper Presented to the

2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium of Journal ANTROPOLOGI INDONESIA

**Globalization and Local Culture: a Dialectic towards the New Indonesia  
45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Andalas University, Padang, July, 18-21 2001**

for the panel on:

*Identity, community, nationalism and citizenship: the rise of pluralism in the democratic process in  
Indonesia*

by  
Julia Suryakusuma  
and  
Paige Johnson

**Authors' contact information:**

Julia Suryakusuma  
Executive Director  
API Foundation  
Jl. H.A. Wahid 64  
R.T. 08/05 Jatipadang  
Jakarta 12540  
Indonesia  
(021) 7883412-13  
jskusuma@dnnet.net.id

Paige Johnson  
Ph.D. Candidate in Foreign Affairs  
University of Virginia  
62F Barclay Place Court  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901  
United States  
(804) 984-3127  
johnson\_paige@hotmail.com

*\* first presented at the International Conference on Women and Crises in Indonesia:  
Opportunities and Threats, Past and Present, 9-12 December 2000, Leiden - The Netherlands*

**Creating *Indonesia Baru*:  
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A Woman President—No Way!!

–Campaign banners of the United Development Party’s Youth Wing<sup>1</sup>

Truly, in this paternalistic environment, women have been very left behind. We must change many things in order to improve the position of women, because women are more than half of the Indonesian nation.

–National Mandate Party<sup>2</sup>

There is no democracy without women’s representation.

–Women’s Coalition of Indonesia for Justice and Democracy<sup>3</sup>

Since the downfall of President Suharto, Indonesians have been engaged in a mammoth national project, the creation of an *Indonesia Baru*, a new Indonesia. Women played a prominent role in forcing the long-serving leader from power: from repeated demonstrations of mothers, professional women, students, and activists; to the voices of a number of women academics resolutely asking Suharto to step down; to Megawati Sukarnoputri’s position as a symbol of the wrongs of unrestrained executive power. For the first time in over three decades, women—the hardest hit by the economic crisis—took to the streets. Finally, they understood, like the rest of the people, that political power and its abuse have a direct bearing on their lives.

Yet, after Suharto’s resignation, women and women’s issues have been forced into the background of the new Indonesia. In the wake of President B.J. Habibie’s announcement that elections would be held in mid-1999, organization of political parties to contest in the elections rose to national centre stage. The parties, more than 181 created and 48 qualified to contest in the elections, have been heavily dominated by men. One woman who stood out in the sea of male faces during the election and campaign was Megawati Sukarnoputri, head of the Indonesian Democracy Party—Struggle (PDI-P), the top finisher in the June 1999 elections. For PDI-P, though, having a woman as party leader and striving to make her the president of the nation was often seen as *the* party’s agenda on women’s issues.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the content of the political parties’ published statements (from party platforms, leaders’ speeches, and interviews with party representatives published in the *Almanak Parpol Indonesia*<sup>5</sup>) on women’s issues and to consider these attitudes and proposed policies as the “baseline” on women and women’s issues in *Indonesia Baru*.

The paper will consider these positions in historical and comparative perspective, considering the position of women in Indonesia in the past (in traditional culture, Islam, and under the New Order regime) and the position of women in other countries. We will draw on recent opinion poll research to analyse views of women in contemporary Indonesia as well as views held by women about contemporary political issues.

The paper argues that, despite a prominent role in the movement to oust Suharto, women and women’s issues were sidelined over the course of the transition. In part, this is a result of a carryover of attitudes from the past, but there were significant contemporary political issues in play as well. If the issues

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<sup>1</sup> Eric C. Thompson. “Indonesia in Transition: The 1999 Presidential Elections.” *NBR Briefing* [ONLINE] Available from the National Bureau of Asian Research at <http://www.nbr.org/publications/briefing/thompson99/index.html> [accessed January 9, 2000]

<sup>2</sup> “Partai Amanat Nasional.” API, *Almanak Parpol Indonesia*. Jakarta: API Foundation, 1999. P. 146.

<sup>3</sup> Slogan on sticker of *Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi* (Women’s Coalition for Justice and Democracy)

<sup>4</sup> Ani Soetjipto, “The Position of Women in Indonesia,” Presentation to National Democratic Institute of International Affairs Seminar on Women and Politics, Hotel Aryaduta, Jakarta, March 6, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> API, *Almanak Parpol Indonesia* (Jakarta: API, 1999).

blocking consideration of women's issues are not understood and overcome, little hope of advance for a women's agenda can be expected.

First, women's issues came to be sidelined during the transition because the nature of the transition caused attention to focus on "symbolic issues:" who would be the new leader, what would be the basis of the state, what role should be played by Islam, and should Suharto be tried for his abuses while in power? On these issues which became central during the transition, analysis of opinion research conducted during 1999 shows that women were as divided as men, thus, we assert, inhibiting their ability to unite in other areas, such as in a press for consideration of women's issues.<sup>6</sup> Further, the parties tended to define, when pressed on a consideration of women's issues, women's concerns as comingled with the broader struggle for democracy in Indonesia. To oversimplify slightly (but not much), the views of several of the large parties could be seen as offering democracy, along with the attendant concepts of equality before the law and human rights, as the solution to women's problems.

Second, women's issues, specifically as they came to be manifested in the campaign and presidential election, were used to suit other political interests. Many Islamic parties opposed Megawati's presidential bid, often on the grounds that a woman could not be president of an "Islamic" country. The underlying tension, though, was the opposition of those parties to the elevation of someone from the secular-nationalist stream (party tradition) to the presidency. That Megawati was a woman made constructing the political arguments against her all the easier. Abdurrahman Wahid also used the issue of the "unacceptability" of a woman president for the nation's Muslims in order to advance his presidential aspirations over those of his erstwhile friend, Megawati. Using Megawati's gender was part of a complex strategy followed by Abdurrahman to position himself as the most acceptable (or least objectionable) presidential candidate for all. For all of Abdurrahman's good qualities, such as his acceptance of Indonesia's pluralism, his willingness to play politics with Megawati's gender shows that he was not above cultivating the basest instincts in humans in order to achieve his political goals.<sup>7</sup>

Without unity among women and given past attitudes and present politics, women's issues slipped quietly and unnoticed by many into the background of a not particularly new *Indonesia Baru*.

### ***Background: The Role of Women in Indonesia***

Notions of womanhood in Indonesia vary according to ethnicity, class and religion. However, in general, women are expected first and foremost to be mothers and wives, their ability judged in terms of their ability to manage a household successfully. The notion of *kodrat*, meaning nature or destiny, is often invoked to justify the suitability of men and women for different tasks; this provides a biological, reductionist argument to keep women in their place in the home. This view of women is espoused by religion (Islam) as well as by the traditional mores of most Indonesian ethnic groups (For Javanese, women are said to be "from behind").<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, society invariably accords a lower status to the tasks performed by women, a tradition which justifies discrimination not just at home but also in the public sphere.

Traditionally, the domain of decision making for women has been in the domestic sphere<sup>9</sup>, and participation in public life brings women into a different domain. In the New Order (1966-1998), the need for women to participate in the public sphere was recognized through the notion of the *peran-ganda* (dual role) of women, which was for the first time stated officially in the Fourth Five-Year Plan (*Repelita V*, 1984-89). The document stated that women had the same rights, obligations, and

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<sup>6</sup> Steven Wagner. "Survey of the Indonesian Electorate Following the June 1999 Elections." International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). August 1999. [ONLINE] Available on the website of the Indonesian MPR. <http://mpr.wasantara.net.id> [accessed December 16, 1999] The raw data from this survey has been obtained through the goodwill of IFES.

<sup>7</sup> Abdurrahman has gone on to earn further ire from Indonesia's feminists for a comment he made in August 2000 as to why Megawati was not present for the announcement of the new Indonesian cabinet. While it was plain that serious political differences had emerged between the two leaders, Abdurrahman attempted to fob off Megawati's absence, saying she wanted to go home and "take a bath." "You can't stop a woman," Abdurrahman added. Source: "Gus Dur's Remarks on Megawati Were 'Sexist'." *Jakarta Post*. August 25, 2000. [ONLINE]. <http://www.jakartapost.com> [accessed August 25, 2000].

<sup>8</sup> One exception would be the Minangkabau of West Sumatra, who have a matrilineal kinship system whereby traditionally, authority and inheritance is handed down through the mother. Ironically, this custom has been eroded through modernisation.

<sup>9</sup> Studies on women's decision making roles have mostly focused on the allocation of authority between husband and wife.

opportunities as men; however, modernization required a certain role for women as the "nucleus of the family and the carrier of societal norms and values."<sup>10</sup> Government officials pointed out the need for women to participate in various sectors of development. This did not mean, however, that their role as "creator of a happy and healthy family" was diminished.<sup>11</sup> The notion of the dual role of women, while intended to be a new, progressive element in Indonesian society, one recognizing women's role outside of the family, was in fact a tacit acknowledgement of the 'dual burden' of women as there was no dual role for men.

Likewise, the New Order government's interpretation of Islam was put forth as a progressive force for women; yet, still it placed the dual burden on women. Speaking before an Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) gathering in 1997, then-President Suharto said:

Religious teachings clearly stress on equal rights and partnership between men and women. The Prophet Muhammad . . . is a world leader that concretely defended the dignity and honor of women during the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, long before anybody mentioned about it. Also, the Holy *Quran*, for example in the *An-Nisa* verse 32, emphasized that men and women should have their deserved rights. This means the struggle to raise the dignity of women—whether in education, participation in the development process and freedom from backwardness—is basically an effort to continue the tradition pioneered by the Prophet . . . [Women] must have a high education so as to enable them to teach a nation's intelligent and God-fearing generation.

For Suharto, this speech reflected his tolerant and forward-looking interpretation of Islam, as can be seen in his advocacy for the education of women and their participation in the development process (indeed progressive ideas in some parts of the Muslim world); yet, still, Suharto's laudatory goals had to be justified as serving women's biologically inspired function of raising children. They are not worthy goals in and of themselves. And the dual burden remains.

In this social and political environment, women's movements and organizations have traditionally been founded by urban middle- and upper-class women. Furthermore, starting from the Guided Democracy period of the Old Order (1959-1966), women's organizations and wives' associations were harnessed to the government's ends. It was in the New Order that this feature was really developed, making the flourishing of semi-official wives' organizations the main characteristic of that period.

During the New Order, traditional notions of womanhood were appropriated to fit in with the power interests of the state. In the construction of womanhood during the New Order, women were defined officially in the *Panca Dharma Wanita*,<sup>12</sup> as the "accompaniment" of men, as bearers of descendents and teachers of children, as managers of the home, as wage earners, and finally as members of society.<sup>13</sup> This was manifested through the creation of *Dharma Wanita*, the civil servants' wives' association which espoused the above ideals for women as an ideology that Julia Suryakusuma has called "State Ibuism."<sup>14</sup>

Although *Dharma Wanita* was only a member of *KOWANI*<sup>15</sup>, the corporatist organization of the New Order state for women, it dominated the latter organization; and, in this way, it also set the political scene for Indonesian women's organizations in general. The structure of *Dharma Wanita* paralleled that of the husbands' hierarchy in the civil service, thus depriving it of any autonomy whatsoever and also infusing it with the values, such as militarism and unquestioning obedience, of the state hierarchy. Whatever power the women of *Dharma Wanita* had, it was borrowed power. This borrowed power made the dependency of women a New Order ideal.

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<sup>10</sup> *Repelita V* Document, 1983: xiii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Panca Dharma Wanita* (the Five Duties of Women) is the equivalent of the Pancasila state ideology for women, principles which women have to loyally and unquestioningly abide to. *Pancasila* itself is made up of five principles : 1) belief in one God, 2) a just and civilized humanity, 3) national unity, 4) democracy guided by the inner wisdom of deliberations of representatives, 5) social justice.

<sup>13</sup> Julia Suryakusuma, "*Ketika Anarki Bukan Anarki: Kekerasan dan Demokrasi di Indonesia*," API, *Almanak Parpol Indonesia* (Jakarta: API, 1999), 83.

<sup>14</sup> See "State Ibuism: the Social Construction of Womanhood in the Indonesian New Order", MA thesis, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> *KOWANI* (Kongres Wanita Indonesia), the Indonesian Women's Congress, originally a federation of women's organizations, in 1948, which was co-opted to become a state-guided umbrella organization of 55 women's organizations.

While it may be argued that *Dharma Wanita* only affected the wives of civil servants,<sup>16</sup> the state gender ideology was also propagated through PKK<sup>17</sup> (the Family Welfare Movement) which still exists in every village in Indonesia. While the government called PKK a “movement”, it had a hierarchy which stemmed from the President of the Republic of Indonesia, to the wife of the village head. It received state funding, and had the full force of the state apparatus behind it, with male *KORPRI peminas*<sup>18</sup> at each governmental level. Elite women (i.e. wives) were entrusted to run urban-oriented, home economic type programs for lower class rural women which often did not fit in with the realities and felt needs of people’s lives at the village level.<sup>19</sup> The name PKK conjured images of flower-arrangement and cookery classes, when in many instances women were income earners, sometimes primary, and had no time or inclination for such classes.

Politically, then, women in New Order Indonesia were marginalized by the state’s gender ideology as well as by concrete political and economic measures. The ideology had the effect of justifying wage differentials whereby women received between 60 and 70% of men’s wages because they were perceived as dependents of their husbands/fathers, and, therefore, not primary family breadwinners. Further, women’s organizations were brought in to serve the interests of the New Order state and the ruling political party, Golkar.<sup>20</sup> Through the concept of the “floating mass,” most Indonesian women (like the men) were removed from politics entirely, only becoming involved once every five years at election time.<sup>21</sup>

In Indonesia’s past, women have generally been under-represented in decision making bodies. Indonesia’s only democratic elections prior to 1999 were held in 1955 during Indonesia’s brief period of parliamentary democracy (1949-1958). In the elections for the parliament that year, women represented only 2.9% (161) of 5,475 candidates. In the elections for the Constituent Assembly (*Konstituante*) also held in 1955, women represented 3.3% (238) of 7,127 candidates.<sup>22</sup> This was, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, about average for women’s representation globally during the 1950s.<sup>23</sup>

With the 1971 elections, the first of the New Order (and also the first since 1955), we see again low levels of female participation as election candidates. Overall, women were 4% (121) of the 3,021 candidates standing for parliamentary election that year. Further information about the 1971 elections tells us that certain parties, particularly the nationalist and Christian parties, put up more female candidates than other, primarily Islamic parties.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the fact that in the New Order women were defined as mothers and wives in an attempt to harness the growth of a women’s movement, developments in the 1980s and 1990s provided the material basis for the genesis of an autonomous women’s movement.<sup>25</sup> This movement was characterized by 1) a shift from apolitical to political, 2) a social basis which brought the movement closer to the problems of poor and working class women, 3) the creation of a greater political space by building coalitions and networks in an attempt to gain strength and access to the public sphere, and 4) a shift in political stance as regards the state, from collaborative to critical.<sup>26</sup> In this way, the gender politics of the New Order, which attempted to ‘emasculate’ the women’s movement, was only partially successful.

However, it was developments in the late 1990s, which catapulted women as political actors into the (political) arena. Considering that for 32 years Suharto’s New Order government had systematically

<sup>16</sup> Besides *Dharma Wanita*, there was also *Dharma Pertiwi*, the military wives’ organisation.

<sup>17</sup> *PKK* (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga), Family Welfare Movement

<sup>18</sup> *KORPRI* (Korps Pegawai Republik Indonesia), Corps of the Civil Servants of Indonesia

<sup>19</sup> The **Ten Programs of PKK** are : 1) the comprehension and practical application of the national ideology of Pancasila, 2) mutual self-help, 3) nutrition, 4) clothing, 5) housing and home-economics, 6) education and skills, 7) primary health care, 8) promotion of cooperatives, 9) protection and conservation of the environment, 10) appropriate domestic planning. See JI. Suryakusuma, “State Ibuisism...”, MA thesis, 1987

<sup>20</sup> Other corporatist organizations—for youth, peasants, workers, the press, etc.—were created as a means of state control over society.

<sup>21</sup> Indrawati McCormick, “Indonesian Women as Political Actors at the End of the New Order,” 1998, p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> *Mengugat Pemilihan Umum Orde Baru*, 29-30. Biro Humas KPU. *Pemilu Indonesia Dalam Angka dan Fakta Tahun 1955-1999*. Jakarta: KPU, 2000. P. 14.

<sup>23</sup> “They’ve Come a Long Way, But . . .” *Washington Post*, June 10, 2000, A16.

<sup>24</sup> Masashi Nishihari, *Golkar and the Indonesian Elections of 1971*. Monograph Series, No. 56. Cornell: Ithaca, 1972, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Darmiyanti Muchtar, “The Rise of the Indonesian’s Women’s Movement in the New Order State,” 1999, i.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 153-156.

reduced the opportunities for women in politics, the re-emergence of women politically was very striking.

While the common perception is that it was the students who were instrumental in bringing Suharto down in May 1998, in fact, it was women who staged the first protest in February 1998, before the students started their demonstrations. Outside party politics, the economic and political crisis of 1997-98 provided the impetus for politically motivated movements of which women were a part. The Voice of Concerned Mothers (SIP), *Suara Ibu Peduli*, a spontaneous grouping of scholars, academics, activists, and students, sparked the movement. This was followed later by the formation of the Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy (*KPIKD*<sup>27</sup>), which was more overtly political. The Coalition regularly issued political statements, including calls for President Suharto, and then later on, for President Habibie, to step down. What was interesting in the case of SIP was the way it turned the New Order's discourse on its head by using women's state-sanctioned roles as mothers to stage protest against the regime.

Ironically, the May riots in 1998, in particular the organized rapes of Chinese women, added to the momentum of women's political activism. This pushed women's groups to press for accountability by the state and the military, not only for violence and crimes against women but also for wider societal injustices as well. They have attempted to create wider political space by building coalitions and networks in attempting to gain strength and access to the public sphere.<sup>28</sup> These developments have given the women's movement an undeniable political character, making them an inseparable part of pro-democracy movement.<sup>29</sup>

With this beginning, the post-Suharto era might have seen a flourishing of women's political activism—groups like the Women's Coalition (*Koalisi Perempuan*) remained to challenge many of the "colonial" concepts being asserted by the new political parties (of that more below).<sup>30</sup> Still, once Suharto was gone, new divisions emerged in the population. Conflicts between status quo and reform forces predominated, but there were conflicts between reformist forces as well. From May 1998, at least 181 new political parties were formed. Among these was the *Partai Perempuan Indonesia*, the Indonesian Women's Party. In the cacophonous dialogue of the transition, though, the party failed to attract notice and did not qualify to participate in the nation's June 1999 elections. As happens often in transitions from authoritarian rule in other countries, Indonesia's post-Suharto era came to be dominated by consideration of symbolic issues—how should Indonesia deal with the past? What will the new Indonesia be?

### ***The Parties and Party Views of Women***

From Indonesia's June 1999 national elections, seven parties emerged as the country's largest, earning fully 89% of the national vote between them. Our analysis will focus on the views of these seven parties as they are the most influential in politics and government today. However, as one of the purposes of the paper is to set a "baseline" on views of women and women's issues from the transition period, the views of the other forty-one parties will be considered as well because all the parties played a role in creating the "dialogue" of Indonesia's first post-Suharto election campaign.

A table (Table Appendix), highlighting the views of the big seven political parties, is included as an appendix to this paper. The table attempts to be true to the actual words expressed by party representatives to interviewers from Indonesia's API Foundation,<sup>31</sup> as the parties were questioned about their views on important women's issues and other pressing political and economic issues. For this paper, we have chosen to focus on a selection of issues, including the party's views of women's role in politics, quotas for female representation in parliament, responses to discrimination in the

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<sup>27</sup> *KPIKD* (*Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi*), Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy, founded on May 18, 1999. It is often referred to simply as *KPI* or *Koalisi Perempuan*.

<sup>28</sup> Darmiyanti Muchtar, "The Rise of the Indonesian Women's Movement in the Indonesian New Order", 1999, p. 155

<sup>29</sup> Even so, the women's movement continues to be marginalised by the pro-democracy movement by highlighting women's domestic roles, such as providing food and medical supplies for demonstrators, or other "humanitarian" activities.

<sup>30</sup> "Kongres I Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia," *Suara Pembaruan*, December 12, 1998. [ONLINE]. <http://suarapembaruan.com/News/1998/12/121298/Lainlain/1113/1113.htm> [accessed May 13, 2000]

<sup>31</sup> Julia Suryakusuma is Executive Director of the API Foundation.

workplace, dealing with cases of violence against women, female overseas labor, the existence of a special ministry for women's affairs, and whether a woman can serve as the nation's president.<sup>32</sup>

An examination of the parties' views of women will show that even among those parties claiming to be friendly to women and women's concerns, often these concerns were seen as merely a subplot of the nation's broader struggle for democracy. Somewhat naively, several parties put forth the idea of democracy as a panacea for women's concerns. The basic view expressed was: if the nation is a democracy, then everyone will be equal. Therefore, women will be equal, and there will be no more "women's issues." Women's problems will be solved. There is a certain power to the argument, but the position of women in even the advanced industrial democracies belies the direct linkage.

Also striking from an examination of the parties' views is a carryover of traditional attitudes toward women. Men are seen as natural leaders, women reserved to the position "from behind." Even where these attitudes were recognized as regressive (as by the National Awakening Party—PKB), there was little attention to changing culture or overcoming these perceptions except by the most gradual processes of change. Often traditional views of women were buttressed by claims stemming from Islam, as a woman's abilities were seen to be determined by her *kodrat* (inherent nature as a woman). *Golkar* legislator Aisyah Hamid Baidlowi recognizes the tendency of Indonesian leaders to use the concept of *kodrat* in a specific way. According to Aisyah:

Sometimes we treat the words *kodrat* (biological characteristics) and obligations as the same thing, when they are two different things. *Kodrat* are those characteristics peculiar to women, like menstruation, pregnancy, and breast feeding. Our society and religious experts have depicted obligation as the woman's *kodrat*.<sup>33</sup>

As, we will show, many of the nation's politicians have viewed *kodrat* as obligation as well.

Finally, even where women's issues are given attention in a party's platform or statements, pronouncements are generally vague; in this respect, women's issues were like other campaign issues. Vagueness was a hallmark of the 1999 elections.

### The Role of Women in Politics

*Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN—the National Mandate Party) was among the most progressive of the large parties in asserting its commitment to equal rights for women in the social, economic, and political fields.<sup>34</sup> As quoted at the outset of this paper, PAN recognized the long reach of Indonesia's paternalistic culture in leaving women behind.<sup>35</sup> According to PAN, because women form more than half of Indonesia's population, women's being left behind had retarded the whole country's development. Alone among the parties, PAN said it had an "agenda" to address women's issues.

The modernist Muslim *Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB—Crescent Star Party), when asked its position on women's roles in politics, stressed the importance of keeping in mind women's nature, her *kodrat*. According to PBB, women need "a certain capacity, expertise," and must be brave enough to advocate for their aspirations. PBB's comments imply that the requisite capacity and expertise have not yet been achieved.

The election-winning *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia—Perjuangan* (PDI-P Indonesian Democracy Party—Struggle) was led by a woman, Megawati Sukarnoputri, and vowed to make her the nation's next president (the party eventually had to settle for vice president). Despite its advocacy of a woman president, PDI-P did not have a woman's agenda as such in the campaign. When pressed on women's role in politics, PDI-P's Haryanto Taslam responded to API that protection of all citizens by the law should be clear and concrete. According to Haryanto, it is not a question of man or woman. The central issue is equality before the law. PDI-P acknowledged that there was a dearth of women in

<sup>32</sup> API's *Almanak Parpol Indonesia* is the main source of information for the table and the discussion which follows, however, data from the *Almanak* have been supplemented by other party statements where available.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Devi Asmarani, "Aisyah Ponders New Gender Awareness in Islam," *Jakarta Post*. April 23, 2000. [ONLINE]. <http://www.jakartapost.com>. [accessed April 23, 2000].

<sup>34</sup> Above PAN positions taken from PAN. "Party Platform." Undated. <http://www.pantai.com/pan/english.htm> [accessed September 9, 1999]. Amien Rais. "Pidato Politik" (In Indonesian). Political Speech. August 23, 1998. <http://www.pantai.com/pan/pidato.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> API, 146.

positions of political influence in Indonesia, but the party representative stated that this was due at least in part to women's own reticence in "being like men."

**Golkar**, the long-time election vehicle of the Suharto regime, survived into the transition era and managed to finish second in the June 1999 national elections. In its stated positions, **Golkar** maintained a steadfast commitment to gender equality, though this did not extend to pro-active steps to improve the position of women. The party said that people should be valued based on their "ideas," not their gender. While acknowledging that there were few avenues for women in politics, the party stressed that there were already a lot of women in parliament and even two female mayors and one female regent (sub-province head).<sup>36</sup>

The National Awakening Party (PKB—**Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa**), perhaps surprisingly for a party based on Indonesia's largest traditionalist Islamic grouping, **Nahdlatul Ulama** (the Rise of the Islamic Scholars), also included the struggle for equality and gender justice in the party's "Struggle Line."<sup>37</sup> The party stated that the ideal is for men and women to have equal rights. "In the future," PKB said, "women will have to be partners of men."<sup>38</sup> Still, the party acknowledged that women's traditional position in Java as being "from behind" was a reality in Indonesian politics.

The United Development Party (PPP—**Partai Persatuan Pembangunan**) admitted in its statements that women were second-class citizens in Indonesia. The party's political program showed no interest in remedying this situation, though the party expressed a hope that there would be more opportunities for women in politics in the future.<sup>39</sup> As a party based on Islam, PPP's interests in the social field, for example, leaned more toward mandating moral education and the study of Arabic in schools as well as reducing sex and violence in films, rather than toward the advancement of a woman's agenda.<sup>40</sup>

The final of the Big Seven parties was the PK (**Partai Keadilan**—Justice Party). PK was notable in the election for the strong role of self-consciously modernist Muslim women in its organization and among its supporters. Even given this constituency, though, PK tended, like other big parties, to put off the women's struggle as one of a broader fight against "dictatorship" in the country. According to PK, preventing the return of dictatorship was the central political struggle of the transition period. Interestingly, PK's constituency does not guarantee a progressive view of women's issues. According to PK, the state has a role in setting policy toward women that gives women a social role and also a role in "raising the nation's children" (*kodrat* as obligation and the dual role of women).

A selection of views from the smaller parties reinforces a number of the views presented above. The Catholic Democrats (PKD—**Partai Katolik Demokrat**), when asked whether laws reflect women's aspirations, responded with an honest, "[w]e don't think about that too much." PKD accepts that Indonesia's cultural values "do not yet [support] the proper place for women. But, culture is habit and is not an issue of good and bad." So, while acknowledging that women have not achieved a "proper" place, the party asserts that the issue of gender should not be politicized and implicitly that culture will not change easily, if at all.<sup>41</sup>

The MKGR<sup>42</sup> party puts forth a view that subsumes women's issues under the broader issues of democracy. The party asserts that its fundamental principle is democracy. Everything that is not in accordance with democracy should be changed, and that includes issues of gender and discrimination against women. Like MKGR, the National Workers Party (PBN—**Partai Buruh Nasional**) says that women have been kept down in the past, along with all the other parts of society.<sup>43</sup> **Partai Bhineka Tunggal Ika** (PBI—the Unity in Diversity Party) made one of the stronger statements on women's issues among the small parties. The party linked women's rights to the broader issue of human rights

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<sup>36</sup> The party cited this as a plus, however, given the number of regents and mayors in Indonesia, three females is hardly approaching any sort of gender parity.

<sup>37</sup> PKB. "Garis Perjuangan PKB." Undated. [ONLINE]. <http://www.pkb.org> [accessed October 10, 1999].

<sup>38</sup> If not otherwise cited, quotations in these sections come from API.

<sup>39</sup> PPP. "Pernyataan Politik Partai Persatuan Pembangunan Hasil Rapat Pimpinan Nasional I di Jakarta." April 1999. <http://www.ppp.or.id/pernyata3.htm>. Also, API.

<sup>40</sup> PPP. "Pernyataan Politik Muktamar IV Partai Persatuan Pembangunan." December 1, 1998. <http://www.ppp.or.id/pernyata1.htm>.

<sup>41</sup> API, 261.

<sup>42</sup> *Musyawarah Keluarga Gotong Royong*. Self-Help Family Association.

<sup>43</sup> API, 175.



and stated its resolve to attend to women's issues.<sup>44</sup> Because PBI achieved only one seat in the June 1999 elections, its ability to influence the national dialogue is extremely limited.

Like the Crescent Star Party (PBB), which stressed women's natural reticence to participate in politics by virtue of their "nature," the *Partai Nahdlatul Umat* (PNU—Rise of the Community of Believers) said that women did not understand their political rights or were shy in expressing themselves.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the Unity Party (PP—*Partai Persatuan*) said "If women want to be valued, they must show their ability."<sup>46</sup> The Democratic National Party (PND—*Partai Nasional Demokrat*) said that women's rights have long been the same as those of men. What remains is the desire and the ability of women to take advantage of these rights.<sup>47</sup>

### Quotas for Female Representation in the Legislature

When party leaders were asked about quotas, these rarely received a favourable reception. The National Mandate Party (PAN) representative began by responding that quotas were unjust. He concluded by saying that perhaps quotas could be considered to make up for past discrimination, though he was unsure how this could be effected. *Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB) saw quotas as just another form of discrimination. The party returned the interviewers' question with a question of its own. "Women aren't picking women [in elections]. Why not?"

Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI-P also was not in favour of quotas, though the party maintained that its internal training was designed to increase female representation in politics. The National Awakening Party (PKB) believed that getting women into politics "doesn't have to be that way" (through the coercive use of quotas), while *Golkar* maintained that decisions should be based on "truth" and "justice," rather than group identification. The United Development Party (PPP) said that quotas were not needed because they would have to be forced. According to PPP, women's political role should be left to evolve on its own, according to women's ability and nature. PK (a party heavily supported by women) said that its vision was not that men and women had to be the same in all things.

The smaller parties tended to echo the views above. Interestingly, almost alone the Democratic Islamic Party (PID—*Partai Islam Demokrat*) was willing to consider quotas. PADI (*Partai Aliansi Demokrat Indonesia*—the Indonesian Democratic Alliance Party) maintained that quotas imply that women need to be protected. According to PADI, women do not need protection because they are becoming more established everyday. Quotas just reinforce the perception of women's weakness.<sup>48</sup>

### Discrimination in the Workplace

PAN (the National Mandate Party) maintains that the party does not discriminate based on gender and that wage discrimination cannot be allowed. The party allows for the possibility, though, that because of their nature, women may not be suited for all jobs. To overcome discrimination, the party suggests opening the "widest avenues" for women to develop their role. PK agrees with PAN that women may not be suited for all jobs, and "that's not discrimination."

According to the Crescent Star Party (PBB), there is no discrimination in the nation's Constitution or laws. "As I see it, the ones discriminating are women themselves because they feel inferior." According to PBB, the country's open avenues to success can be seen in the number of women running companies. Haryanto Taslam of the PDI-P says that he still sees a lot of discrimination in Indonesia. In fact, in his response to a question on the issue of discrimination, Haryanto demonstrates some of the attitudes women face. According to Haryanto, speaking for the PDI-P, women are held back because of their nature to beautify. For this reason, women are not like men, who can just get up, get dressed, and be ready to handle any situation. Women's urge to beautify thus slows their crisis response time, according to PDI-P! *Golkar* asserted that women's rights were protected under a legislative resolution. However, the party said that the reality is that because women are usually just "supplementing" the family income (because they do not serve as head of household), their wages are lower.

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<sup>44</sup> API, 159.

<sup>45</sup> API, 369.

<sup>46</sup> API, 439.

<sup>47</sup> API, 379.

<sup>48</sup> API, 131.

Making the strongest connection between the idea that women's issues are tied wholesale into the broader issue of democratisation in Indonesia, PKB asserts that its plan to overcome discrimination involves changing the political system to "a democratic one. In democracy, there is no discrimination. Women and men have the same rights." PKB rejects discrimination but acknowledges that religion discriminates. That attitude, says the party, will not change quickly.<sup>49</sup>

From the small parties, a wide range of opinion could be seen. Socialist/worker-oriented parties, like *Murba*,<sup>50</sup> believe that rights at work between men and women must be the same. The party, therefore, points out that men are discriminated against in textile factories because women are the preferred workers. According to the Justice and Unity Party (PKP—*Partai Keadilan dan Persatuan*), women have the same abilities as men. "In many things, [women are] better than men." This military-backed party did not believe that women were ready for combat, however.

According to *Partai Abul Yatama* (PAY), an Islamic-oriented party springing from Aceh-based welfare groups, the whole idea that women must work outside the home should be challenged. According to PAY, "a woman's place is in the home." She can work there by "opening a small *warung* (eating establishment), just as long as she stays close to the children. It is the function of the man to go out and earn a living."<sup>51</sup>

### Dealing with Cases of Violence Against Women

The importance of Islam in determining views of women showed often on the issue of how best to deal with cases of violence against women. The Justice Party (PK), again, the party overwhelmingly staffed and supported by young women, said that according to Islam, a woman must take preventative steps herself to protect against violence. "When a woman goes out of the home, there are requirements and limits," was PK's view.<sup>52</sup> *Partai Bulan Bintang* (PBB) made its point with a story about a woman in a bank, a woman "dressed in a striking manner." If the woman is then bothered by a man, the party asks, "who is to be despised?" The implication is that the woman, by her dress, has invited the unwanted attention or assault. PBB does take a stand against domestic violence, saying that this is not legitimate. PBB's views were echoed by some of the smaller parties. The PNU said, "If a woman wears a stimulating outfit, she is asking to be violated. So, women must also take part in protecting themselves by dressing ethically, behaving ethically, and speaking ethically."<sup>53</sup>

Outside of these Islamic-inspired views, other parties tended toward the idea that democracy and the rule of law would be sufficient to overcome cases of violence against women. According to PAN, cases involving violence against women are the same as those involving violence against men. They should be solved in accordance with the law. The party said that it could not yet do much to have effect here, but that it would after the elections. PDI-P had a similar view—that these cases should be settled in accordance with the law. "Supremacy of the law is the most important thing," according to PDI-P. *Golkar*, too, advocated reliance upon the legal system. "Go after the individuals responsible." The idea of going after "the individuals responsible," of course, denies that there are systemic factors at work behind cases of violence against women in Indonesia. PKB's views on this issue were unclear, but PPP, an Islamic party, came down in favour of reliance upon the legal system, seeing dealing with cases of violence against women as part and parcel of protecting women's human rights.

### The Export of Female Laborers

Responses to questions on the issue of overseas female labor were not particularly rich for an evaluation of party views of women. Most parties came down in favour of developing legal protections for these overseas workers, though answers were vague. *Golkar* promised that it was going to work in this area. The United Development Party (PPP) suggested bringing Indonesia's diplomatic machinery to bear in protecting overseas workers. The National Awakening Party recognized that overseas labor was an important foreign exchange earner. This is tough for some nationalist parties to take, however.

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<sup>49</sup> PKB. "Garis Perjuangan PKB." Undated. [ONLINE]. <http://www.pkb.org> [accessed October 10, 1999].

<sup>50</sup> *Musyawarah Rakyat Banyak*

<sup>51</sup> API, 121.

<sup>52</sup> API, 265-270.

<sup>53</sup> API, 370.

PADI (the Indonesian Democratic Alliance Party) says that sending women overseas as domestic helpers makes the country look like a “a nation of maids.”<sup>54</sup>

### **The Existence of the Ministry for the Empowerment of Women**

Views on the Ministry for the Empowerment of Women were similarly brief. PAN, PBB, and PDI-P (the three of which rarely agreed on anything during the campaign) all maintained that the ministry should be kept. According to PBB, not only should the ministry be kept, but its role should be “maximized.” The National Awakening Party said the ministry could be kept or not, as needed. “If it really helps women, why not?”

PPP was more ambivalent about the ministry, saying that it was not necessary for every single issue to have a “women’s empowerment” element. The ministry should be confined to certain areas of work only. PK saw the ministry as part of the New Order power structure. If needed, the duties of the ministry could be better assumed by a non-governmental organization, according to the Justice Party. Another Islamic party, the Community of Believers Awakening Party (PKU—*Partai Kebangkitan Umat*), saw no need for a ministry of women’s affairs, as women are the “same as men.”<sup>55</sup> Opposition to the ministry was not confined to parties coming out of the Islamic tradition, however. The nationalist-oriented Independence of the Nation Party (PKM—*Partai Kebangsaan Merdeka*) saw, like PKU, that men and women are the same. Therefore, the existence of a ministry of women’s affairs merely legitimates and reinforces women’s weak position.<sup>56</sup>

### **The Debate Over a Woman President**

As quoted at the outset of the paper, the 1999 election campaign saw the United Development Party’s youth wing put up banners saying “A Woman President—No Way!”<sup>57</sup> During the campaign, these banners were aimed specifically at Megawati Sukarnoputri, leader of the party expected to dominate the elections, the secular-nationalist PDI-P. Later, during the October 1999 MPR<sup>58</sup> session set to elect Indonesia’s next president, PPP head Hamzah Haz said that his party was under a *fatwa* (statement of Islamic law issued by leading clerics) not to support a woman’s presidential candidacy. Hamzah hedged, though, saying that, absent that *fatwa*, the party would have no problem with a female presidential candidate.<sup>59</sup> PPP *ulama* (religious scholars) took the position that the family was a small government. Therefore, male family leadership could be translated outward to justify the impossibility of a woman serving as the head of the nation.<sup>60</sup>

Other Islamic parties were blunt in their opposition to the idea of a woman president. Citing the authority of God, *Partai KAMI*<sup>61</sup>, said that “[a]s set by God, males are the leaders of females.” Therefore, according to KAMI, it is okay for women to play a role in politics as long as “they don’t seek to occupy important positions.” So, it is okay for women to play be represented in the country’s legislative institutions, but it is not okay for a woman to serve as Speaker of the House. It is similarly impossible for a woman to serve as the country’s president. When asked why, the party responded that it was because women were given seven days off a month by God (*kodrat* as limitation).

The *Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia 1905*<sup>62</sup> concurs about women in leadership positions, justifying its position in both history and religion. “A political role [for women] . . . is not prohibited. But what we must question is about [women] becoming leaders. Because the history of the Indonesian people’s struggle shows that all leaders were male. The first president, male, Sukarno. The second president,

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<sup>54</sup> API, 133.

<sup>55</sup> API, 295.

<sup>56</sup> API, 303.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson.

<sup>58</sup> *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*. People’s Consultative Assembly. This is Indonesia’s highest legislative body. It elects the president and vice president and sets the broad outlines of state policy.

<sup>59</sup> Hamzah Haz, “Jika Ulama Mengizinkan, PPP Dukun Capres Wanita,” October 18, 1999. [ONLINE]. <http://www.beritabuana.co.id> [accessed October 18, 1999].

<sup>60</sup> Bernhard Plattdasch, “Islamic Reaction to a Female President,” Chris Manning and Peter Van Diermen, eds. *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2000), 345.

<sup>61</sup> *Partai Kebangkitan Muslim Indonesia*. Indonesian Muslim Awakening Party.

<sup>62</sup> Indonesian Islamic Association Party 1905.

Syarifuddin Prawiranegara, male also, Suharto male, Habibie male. And in Islam . . . all prophets are male. If there were more women, it would probably be negative.”<sup>63</sup>

PDI-P, championing the presidential aspirations of Megawati Sukarnoputri, obviously favoured a female presidential candidate. According to the party, attacks from other parties which said that a woman could not be the nation’s president were against the Constitution.<sup>64</sup> During interviews with API, PDI-P representatives said that a woman has the ability to become the head of any of a number of major state institutions. “With women’s potential, they need to be given opportunities, not obstructed,” according to the party.<sup>65</sup> Other parties also supported a woman’s right to be president. According to *Golkar*, if a woman can lead like Margaret Thatcher, why not? PKB also asked “if a woman is suitable, why not?”

But, while a woman presidential candidate had the institutional support of the PKB, the issue almost tore the party apart in the run-up to the October presidential elections, given the desire of Abdurrahman Wahid, then leader of the *Nahdlatul Ulama*, the mass organization out of which PKB arises, to become president. PKB head Matori Abdul Djilil attempted to keep the party on course for maintaining its institutional commitment to support “the party that won the most votes in the election,” the PDI-P, in the presidential contest. Matori’s desire to maintain the party’s institutional commitment to Megawati ran head first into Abdurrahman Wahid’s desire to be president. Abdurrahman, though, showed his desire to come to the presidency, even if that meant relying on other parties, not his own, to do so. During the campaign, Abdurrahman undermined Megawati at critical junctures, specifically raising the issue of Megawati’s gender several times and implying that it might not be possible to get Indonesia’s Islamic leaders or the community of Muslims behind the idea of supporting a woman presidential candidate. In the end, Abdurrahman Wahid came to power on the strength of the votes of the Islamic parties (the Central Axis), Golkar, and, in the end, his own PKB (which Matori had promised would support Megawati “*sampai final*,” to the end). PKB melted away from support of Megawati in the face of Abdurrahman’s ambition.

As time passed, both PAN and PBB came to strongly oppose Megawati’s presidential candidacy (they would form an important part of the Central Axis of Muslim parties that would support Abdurrahman Wahid’s presidential candidacy). In the main, though, these parties’ attacks focused on Megawati’s abilities, intelligence, and reform credentials (legitimate political issues), rather than her gender.

From the above description of the parties’ expressed views on women and women’s issues, a number of points stand out. First, traditional and Islamic views are still strongly influential in setting the course of dialogue about women’s role in politics and in society. In certain senses, the lifting of the authoritarian regime frees traditional attitudes to receive an open airing. Even those individuals strongly in the democracy camp, like PDI-P’s Haryanto Taslam, are not immune from the society and politics in which they were raised.

Islam was also an oft-cited authority in matters of public policy. *Kodrat* was used not only to describe a woman’s nature (that which makes men and women different from one another) but also as her political and social obligations and limitations. In this line of thought, women are not natural leaders and, in extreme views, should be confined close to the home to carry out her duty to raise the nation’s children.

Second, for those parties which proclaim an interest in women’s advance in politics there is an overwhelming faith in democracy as a panacea for Indonesia’s social and political ills (this goes far beyond women’s issues but is extremely germane here). With democracy and with the rule of law, these parties assert, women will be guaranteed a position of equality with men. In the laudable but naïve view of PKB, “[in] democracy, there is no discrimination.”

Third, women’s issues were treated like other issues in the campaign in that few specific policy proposals were advanced. Grand statements of principle—whether those principles related to the necessity of ensuring women’s equality or whether they related to proclaiming the necessary

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<sup>63</sup> API, 547. A commonly cited *hadith* (tradition associated with the Prophet Muhammad) says —“it is not promising happiness if a nation entrusts women to manage its affairs.”

<sup>64</sup> DPD DKI Jakarta. PDI-P. “PDI Perjuangan Menjawab.” Mustalib A.R. and G. Yudarso Basumin. *Profil dan Visi 100 Partai di Era Reformasi*. Jakarta: PT Kipas Putih Aksara, 1999. P. 2.

<sup>65</sup> API, 191.

differences between men and women as stemming from religion—dominated the dialogue. Specific policy recommendations were non-existent. Lack of specifics is a recipe for non-action, absent a concerted press by women themselves.

### ***The Position of Women in the Parties and in the Legislature***

Megawati Sukarnoputri was not alone as a female party leader. There were others, though Megawati was the nation's most popular leader.<sup>66</sup> There was another nationalist party, a legacy of Sukarno's *Partai Nasional Indonesia*, led by Supeni. There was also Mien Sughandi, head of the MKGR party, and Clara Sitompul, head of *Krisna* (the National Christian Party). Oftentimes, those women who were in leadership positions in the political parties found themselves there by virtue of past associations with prominent political leaders. Megawati Sukarnoputri is the daughter of Indonesia's charismatic first president Sukarno. Supeni claimed, too, to be a disciple of Sukarno's teachings. Mien Sughandi was the widow of General Sughandi, founder of the MKGR mass organization, the leadership of which she inherited after her husband's death. With Suharto's fall, Mien Sughandi then turned MKGR's nationwide network into a political party. Clara Sitompul was a leader of the pre-New Order *Parkindo*, Indonesian Christian Party, and was prominent in the New Order's Indonesian Democracy Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*) as well. Of these parties, only Megawati's PDI-P passed the prescribed threshold of two percent of the seats in the legislature that will guarantee participation in future elections.

Further research needs to be carried out into the role of women in the parties. As will be discussed below, for women's issues to come under consideration, women themselves must play a greater role in both the parties and the parliament. An interesting window into the issue of the position of women in the parties is provided by the role of women in the *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN), which as stated above, was among the most progressive in the campaign in its approach to women's affairs. Still, informants in PAN tell us that women are "caged" in the party's Department of Women's Empowerment. Outside of this area, only one woman serves as head of a party department. On the PAN party board, only two women are represented, in contrast to 26 men. Among the party's parliamentary delegation, there is only one woman, serving alongside 33 male PAN colleagues.<sup>67</sup> And this in the party that painted itself in the campaign as the most progressive on women's issues!

As is the case for the PAN delegation in parliament, so is the situation for the parliament as a whole. The overall share of women in the Indonesian parliament in the wake of the June 1999 elections is eight percent, as demonstrated in Table 1, below.

**Table 1. Share of Female Representation in the Lower House, 2000 (in percent)\***

Botswana	17.0	Republic of China (Taiwan)	25.0
Canada	19.9	Russia	7.7
Egypt	2.0	Singapore	4.3
Finland	36.5	South Africa	29.8
France	10.9	Sweden	42.7
Germany	30.9	Thailand	4.8
India	9.0	United Kingdom	18.4
<b>INDONESIA</b>	<b>8.0</b>	United States	12.9
Japan	7.3	Uruguay	12.1
Malaysia	10.4	Venezuela	28.6
Mexico	18.2		
Mozambique	30.0	<b>Average for Asia</b>	<b>14.0</b>
People's Republic of China	21.8		
Philippines	11.3	<b>Average for World</b>	<b>13.9</b>
Poland	13.0		

\*Note: This table is not meant to be comprehensive. It is meant to illustrate representation of women in selected countries. Countries from the advanced industrial democracies were chosen as were developing countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Sources: Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments: World Classification," July 15, 2000, [ONLINE], <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>. [accessed August 11, 2000]. Scott Simon, "Taiwan's Lavender Revolution," *China Online*, April 20, 2000, [ONLINE]. <http://www.chinaonline.com>. [accessed June 13, 2000]

Indonesia's eight percent is significantly below the world average of 13.9% and the Asian average of 14%. Of members of parliament, a greater share is female in Indonesia than is the case in neighbouring Singapore, where women's representation stands at 4.3%. Still, the share is smaller than in culturally similar Malaysia, where the share of women in parliament is 10.4%.

There was no attempt in Indonesia's new (January 1999) election law to attain balanced gender representation in parliament. Parties were free to list candidates at their discretion. With Indonesia's party list system, mechanically, gender equality would have been easy to foster (though this would have been made slightly more difficult by the tying of candidates to the particular regencies in which individual candidates scored best). Politically and culturally, though, as we saw above with the sample of party views on quotas for females in parliament, there was little to no support for the idea of positive discrimination in favour of women.

With the current paucity of women represented in Indonesia's national parliament, we can surmise that policy will be made to reflect the interests of the dominant, that is male, group. This is problematic for the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia and for the prospect of the whole of the Indonesian citizenry holding its parliamentarians accountable. Successive studies have shown that more females in the legislature lead to more women-friendly and child-friendly policies.<sup>68</sup>

### ***Popular Views of Women and Women's Views of the Issues***

Having examined the parties' views of women and, cursorily, the position of women in the parties and the parliament, it is helpful to look at opinion polls to see how party views and the position of women in Indonesia's democratic institutions reflect the views of the population at large. Though opinion polling in developing countries is problematic on a number of levels, in the run-up to Indonesia's 1999 elections, a number of methodologically sound polls were conducted on a national basis, as well as several high quality urban polls. These provide the only scientific lens to consider perceptions of women in Indonesia today.

First, urban polling shows a clear majority favouring equality of opportunity for men and women. The Pariba poll, conducted in the greater Jakarta area from December 1998 to March 1999, showed a clear majority in favour of equality of opportunity in work for men and women. Of respondents, 86.3% believed equal opportunity was needed or strongly needed, with a large, 48.5% answering that equal opportunity was strongly needed.<sup>69</sup>

National views might be expected to be less progressive than views expressed in the Jakarta area, where education and income levels are often higher than in other parts of the nation. Still, national polling conducted by the Polling Center in June 1999, found that 83.9% of respondents felt that both males and females could serve equally well as members of parliament. On the question of a female president, attitudes were somewhat less progressive, with 30% answering that the ideal president should be a man. Still, sixty-three percent of Indonesians answered that either a man or a woman could serve as an effective president.<sup>70</sup> These results were echoed almost exactly by the August 1999 International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) poll in which it was found that 30% felt only a

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<sup>68</sup> Andrew Reynolds, "Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World: Knocking at the Highest Glass Ceiling," *World Politics*. 51, 4 (1999): 547-572.

<sup>69</sup> Rahmat Yananda, ed. *Aspirasi Rakyat Terhadap Partai Politik* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pariba, 1999) 58.

<sup>70</sup> "Voice of the People" Poll, July 1999, Conducted by the Polling Center as part of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs' Political Party Workshop on Ethical Governance and Parliament, Jakarta, July 19-23, 1999.

man could be an effective president, while 64% answered that either a man or a woman could make an effective president.<sup>71</sup>

Opinion poll questions were not heavily focused on gender. Like Indonesia's party politicians, pollsters tended to focus on the symbolic issues of the transition—the fate of Suharto, reformist intentions, the role of the military—in their polling. What data we have do suggest, though, that, absent a hardcore 30% unwilling to consider a female president, broader attitudes are supportive of equality. In these areas, Indonesia's population seems to be far ahead of many of her politicians.

How did the population view other elements of the transition? Breaking down the results of IFES' August 1999 post-election poll<sup>72</sup> by gender, we can see that on many of the important issues of the transition, women were as divided as men, thus inhibiting their ability to work together in a consolidated push on women's issues. Further, women were decidedly more likely than men to be uninterested in politics—confirming the inability to effect political change.

The IFES poll asked respondents for which party they voted in the June 1999 national elections.

**Table 2. Party Vote in June 1999 Election Broken Down by Gender as Reported in IFES Poll**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Share of Vote Male</b>	<b>Share of Vote Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P)</b> Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle	50.3	49.7	100.0
<b>Golkar</b>	42.7	57.3	100.0
<b>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB)</b> National Awakening Party	51.6	48.4	100.0
<b>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (P-3)</b> United Development Party	48.8	51.2	100.0
<b>Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN)</b> National Mandate Party	46.8	53.2	100.0
<b>Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB)</b> Crescent Star Party	67.7	32.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Generally, the gender breakdown of the parties' voters is fairly evenly balanced, with the exception of PBB, which is heavily male, and Golkar, which is heavily female.<sup>73</sup>

Table 3, below, shows respondents' views on the degree to which the government should be involved in the economy.

<sup>71</sup> Steven Wagner, "Survey of the Indonesian Electorate Following the June 1999 Elections," International Foundation for Election Systems. August 1999. [ONLINE]. Available on the website of the Indonesian MPR. <http://mpr.wasantara.net.id> [accessed December 16, 1999].

<sup>72</sup> The poll surveyed 1,521 persons nationally. Respondents were almost evenly balanced between men and women (49.1% male, 50.9% female).

<sup>73</sup> PBB's male bias may be a result of the small number of self-declared PBB voters in the sample. Golkar voters, however, were well represented in the sample.

**Table 3. Market Trade Preference**

Market Preference	Trade	Share of Males Responding	Share of Females Responding	Total
Economy with Little Government Involvement		63.4	59.7	<b>61.5</b>
Economy Controlled by Government	Basically	30.0	29.3	<b>29.7</b>
Don't Know/No Response		6.6	11.0	<b>8.8</b>
Total		100.0	100.0	<b>100.0</b>

Despite Indonesia's economic crisis and the heavily state-centred/nationalistic development rhetoric of the past, support for a market economy was a strong 61.5 percent. Women's views were generally on par with those of men, though women were more likely than men to answer that they did not know how to answer the pollster's question or to offer no response.

But, we should ask: how good is the previous question in ascertaining views on market versus government roles in the economy? Illustrative is Table 4 below. When asked whether the government should set prices, support for market mechanisms drops off dramatically.

**Table 4. Government Price Setting**

Government Setting	Price	Share of Males Responding	Share of Females Responding	Total
Government Sets Prices		76.3	77.6	77.0
Negotiate Prices		21.8	20.4	21.1
Don't Know/No Response		1.9	1.9	1.9
Total		100.0	99.9	100.0

Despite the difference in levels of support for the market demonstrated between responses as shown in tables three and four, for our purposes what is most striking is the way male and female views move together across the two questions. Support for government intervention in the economy goes from 30% to 77% when the question is changed from a general philosophical one of the desirability of reliance on the market to a more practical question (especially pertinent given Indonesia's experience with extreme inflation in 1998) about government control over prices. Men and women offer broadly similar answers across the two questions.

Moving from the economy to politics, the IFES poll asked Indonesians about their satisfaction with their government. The results are presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Satisfaction with Government**

Government Carrying Out Responsibilities	Share Of Males Responding	Share Of Females Responding	Total
Completely Satisfied	4.6	4.3	4.4
Somewhat Satisfied	51.8	59.1	55.5
Somewhat Dissatisfied	36.6	30.5	33.5
Completely Dissatisfied	6.3	4.9	5.6
Don't Know/No Response	.7	1.2	.9
Total	49.1	50.9	99.9

Level of satisfaction expressed with the government was high for a country supposedly engaged in a fever of *reformasi*. It is unclear whether the question was interpreted as the level of satisfaction with the current administration or as the level of satisfaction with the changes currently underway. At the time the question was asked, Habibie was president but the elections had been held and there was a promise of governmental change in the October 1999 MPR session which elected Indonesia's new



president. Regardless of how the question was interpreted, women were more likely to express that they were satisfied (63.4%) than men were (56.4%). What may be interpreted as social conditioning, complacency, or lack of interest will be echoed as we continue our discussion.

As an indicator of respondents' views on the desirability of reform, the IFES poll asked whether governors and regents (*bupatis*) elected under the old regime should be forced to resign from their positions so that new officials, who would be chosen by the new democratically elected legislatures, might come to power. On this question, views were (surprisingly?) conservative. See Table 6 below.

**Table 6. Reform Indicator**

<b>Should <i>Bupatis</i> And Governors Resign?</b>	<b>Share Of Males Responding</b>	<b>Share Of Females Responding</b>	<b>Total</b>
Finish Out Terms	61.2	62.0	61.8
Resign	30.9	23.8	27.3
Don't Know/No Response	7.9	14.2	11.1
Total	100	100	100.2

Men and women were in broad agreement (about 62% of respondents of each gender) that the governors and *bupatis* should be allowed to finish out their terms. As an indicator of reform, this suggests that the majority of the population was uninterested in a radical reform that would see wholesale personnel changes. Again, in this question like others, women were more likely than men to answer "don't know/no response."

Conservatism, complacency, and lack of interest, especially among women, is best shown with the following table. IFES asked respondents how interested they were in the political process. The results are presented below in Table 7.

**Table 7. Interest in Politics**

<b>Interest In Politics And Government</b>	<b>Share Of Males Responding</b>	<b>Share Of Females Responding</b>	<b>Total</b>
Very Interested	3.9	2.6	3.2
Somewhat Interested	38.2	27.0	32.5
Not Too Interested	50.8	54.1	52.5
Not Interested at All	6.2	13.7	10.0
Don't Know/No Response	.9	2.7	1.8
Total	49.0	51.0	100

Important differences between men and women emerge with this question. Women do not self-identify as interested in politics to the same degree that men do. Almost 68% of female respondents said they were not too interested or not at all interested in politics; this is in comparison to only 57% of men. So, while there is a great degree of lack of interest (that should concern many pro-*reformasi* Indonesians), the level of disinterest is even higher among Indonesian women.

One final table on views of women leaders helps to flesh out the conundrum faced by Indonesian women activists.

**Table 8. Views of Women Leaders**

<b>Gender of Next President</b>	<b>Share Of Males Responding</b>	<b>Share Of Females Responding</b>	<b>Total</b>
Possible Woman	63.7	63.8	63.8
Definitely a Man	31.5	29.1	30.3
Don't Know/No Response	4.8	7.1	6.0
Total	49.1	50.9	100.1

At the outset of this section, we discussed a hardcore thirty percent of the population that was unwilling to consider the possibility of a woman president. Here, with a gender breakdown of responses to that question, we see that almost thirty percent of female respondents shares the view that the next president should be a man. Analyzing these responses is difficult as the question was no doubt coloured by respondents' views of Megawati Sukarnoputri, then the only female in the running for the nation's top job. Still, the similarity across male and female views must strike anyone reviewing these numbers. Is the situation as PBB expressed? Why don't women even vote for women?

Summing up this section on popular views of women, we can draw a number of conclusions. First, in contrast to many of the expressed views of the parties as described above, Indonesian popular opinion is broadly supportive of equality for men and women as well as women's capacity to serve in political roles, as members of parliament, for example. Second, on many important post-Suharto political issues, women were as divided as men. As to a woman's ability to serve as the nation's president, while about 63% believes that a woman can serve as president, a hardcore of about 30% believes that the president should definitely be a man; this applies equally to male and female respondents. In other areas, such as whether the economy should be primarily market- or government-directed and whether reform should be carried out thoroughly with a clean sweep of New Order-era officials (the governors and *bupatis*), we saw also broad similarities in male and female perceptions. On the important symbolic issues of the transition, women were as divided as men. We would anticipate that this would make creating a coalition in support of women's interests all the more difficult. Third, where differences did exist, these suggested a female citizenry less engaged than its male counterparts in the country's politics. Women were to a significant degree more likely to self-identify as uninterested in politics. They were also more likely to be complacent or satisfied with existing political arrangements. These are troubling trends for Indonesian women political activists.

#### ***Not Women's Issues, The Politics of the "Woman" Issue—Megawati Sukarnoputri***

Indonesia's politics have long been organized into "streams" (*aliran*) of political parties representing the country's historical schisms. The issue of women in politics, specifically the issue of one woman, Megawati Sukarnoputri, in politics, came to symbolize the historical tussle between secular-nationalist and Islamic political parties during the 1999 campaign. In this long-running battle for control of Indonesia, the issue of women's role in politics became entangled.

Why do pious Muslims hate Megawati so much? That the issue is larger than Megawati can be seen in many of the complaints launched against her and her secular-nationalist party, PDI-P, by representatives of the Muslim parties during the course of the long campaign. First, for many pious Muslims, members of PDI-P are considered insufficiently Muslim. The party itself is seen to be permeated by Christians and nominal Muslims and to be "Islam-ophobic."<sup>74</sup> PDI-P's parliamentary delegation, only 63% Muslim, was seen as evidence of the party's lack of commitment to Islam, this in a country where the overall population is 87% Muslim.<sup>75</sup> Further, Megawati herself was seen to symbolize this "insufficient Islam." For attending a religious ceremony in Bali, Megawati was branded a "Hindu."<sup>76</sup> She also does not regularly wear the Islamic headscarf, which is often taken as an outward symbol of inward piety. On policy grounds, PDI-P was accused by representatives of the Islamic camp of intending to establish diplomatic relations with Israel as well as intending to abolish the powerful Ministry of Religious Affairs, if it were allowed to take power.<sup>77</sup> In the week before the elections, the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic Scholars Assembly) instructed Muslims to vote only for Muslim parties and Muslim candidates.

It was into this heated secular-religious battle that the issue of Megawati's gender was engaged. From the list of complaints against, PDI-P, above, it can be seen that many of these interests (money from the Department of Religious Affairs as well as the role of Islam in the state) were likely to have been more important than Megawati's gender in determining other parties' views of her capacity to serve as the nation's leader. Given the traditional position of women in Indonesia and in Islam, attacking Megawati's gender was likely the most expeditious political choice.

<sup>74</sup> Fadli Zon, "Pemilu 1999: Kemenangan Status Quo Baru?" Gouzali Saydam, ed. *Dari Bilik Suara ke Masa Depan Indonesia: Potret Konflik Politik Pasca Pemilu dan Nasib Reformasi*. (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 1999), 69-71.

<sup>75</sup> "Megawati's Opposition: Deep-seated Roots." *Van Zorge Report on Indonesia*. Issue XXV. October 23, 1999. <http://www.vanzorgereport.com/scripts/candidates2.cfm>.

<sup>76</sup> This was PPP Minister in the Habibie government, A.E. Saefuddin.

<sup>77</sup> Asyuardi Azra, "The Islamic Factor in Post-Soeharto Politics," Manning and Van Diermen, 315.

The expeditious choice was even made by Megawati's friend, Abdurrahman Wahid, in his drive for the presidency. Throughout the campaign, Abdurrahman had denigrated more extreme Islamic parties (such as the PPP and PBB) as carrying the nation down a dangerous path, using Islam in politics and creating division. Indonesia was a plural country, Abdurrahman asserted. That fact had to be recognized in order for the nation to move forward. Still, in his ambition to attain the presidency, it was with these same parties that Abdurrahman would work in order to circumvent the superior vote tally attained by Megawati's PDI-P. Abdurrahman wanted the presidency for himself, and he was willing to bring into question the acceptability of a woman to serve as president to achieve his goal. In a speech in Singapore in March 1999, Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid is popularly called Gus Dur) implied that he was not sure whether Indonesia's religious scholars could be persuaded to accept a woman president. He made this statement, knowing that only the month before religious scholars from his own *Nahdlatul Ulama* (Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, the organization out of which Gus Dur's PKB sprang) had already developed a draft of the religious reasoning that would allow acceptance of Megawati as the nation's president.<sup>78</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The paper set itself the task of finding out how new is the "new Indonesia" as far as women and women's issues are concerned. We have laid out a "baseline" of attitudes on women and women's issues in the post-Suharto period. We have further considered those views in historical perspective. We see that attitudes in the newly free environment of the transition from authoritarian rule are still heavily influenced by Indonesia's male-dominated political culture and the religious tradition of Islam. Women are often defined by their *kodrat* to bear special obligations to the nation, obligations not borne by men. Of the several parties that advocated a more progressive view of women's issues, there was often a naïve faith in democracy's ability to serve as a panacea for women's problems. According to the PKB, "[t]o overcome [discrimination], the system must be changed to a democratic one. In democracy, there is no discrimination. Women and men have the same rights." As the position of women in even the most advanced industrial countries suggests, democracy provides no automatic solutions to women's problems. Certainly, it can offer equality before the law as principle, but women must still battle to change attitudes and make the law foster a reality of equality.

The paper has argued that, despite a prominent role in the movement to oust Suharto, women and women's issues were sidelined over the course of the transition. In part, this was a result of a carryover of attitudes from the past, but it was also a result of contemporary political developments.

During the transition, symbolic issues came to the fore. Would Indonesia become an Islamic state? Would a federal system replace the tightly centralized state of the later Sukarno and Suharto years? Would the economy rely on the market or on government guidance? Would the military be removed from its dominant political position? Who would triumph, the forces of *reformasi* or the status quo? From a sample of these symbolic issues, we have seen that women were as divided as men. Even on the issue of a woman president, a similar share of women as men believed that, no, it was not possible to for a woman to be Indonesia's president. We suggest that this division among women could be responsible for making a unified push on women's issues impossible. This possibility is reinforced by women's expressed lack of interest in politics and their greater propensity to be complacent with existing political arrangements. This certainly suggests areas of work for Indonesia's women activists.

Further, women's issues, specifically as they came to be manifested in the campaign and the presidential election, were used to suit other political interests. Many Islamic parties opposed Megawati's presidential bid, often on the grounds that a woman could not be president of an "Islamic" country. The underlying tension, though, was the opposition of those parties to the elevation of someone from the secular-nationalist stream to the presidency. The Islamic parties saw the position of Islam in the state as threatened by a PDI-P, secular-nationalist government. That Megawati was a woman merely made constructing the political arguments against her easier, given Indonesia's social, cultural, and religious background. Further, Abdurrahman Wahid showed himself willing to use the issue of Megawati's gender to promote his presidential aspirations, despite the plurality of the vote achieved by Megawati's PDI-P in the June 1999 national elections. The issue of a woman president

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<sup>78</sup> Marcus Mietzner, "The 1999 General Session: Wahid, Megawati and the Fight for the Presidency." Chris Manning and Peter Van Diemen, ed. *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis*. London: Zed, 2000. p. 41.

was wholly entangled in a debate which really had practical politics at its core. The Islamic parties wanted to beat PDI-P. Abdurrahman Wahid wanted to beat Megawati to the presidency.

Indonesian women must recognize how women's issues can be caught up and manipulated by other political actors for their own ends. They must strive to overcome the "interest" barrier by conducting education of women to the effect that politics does matter for their everyday lives and broad social interests. Women's disparate views on the symbolic issues of the transition must be pushed to the side to construct an agenda that can be widely agreed upon in order for women to advance. Without these steps, it is unlikely that Indonesia's male-dominated legislature (or its calculating President) will deliver political change to women on a silver platter.

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