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DIVIDED AGAINST SUHARTO Muslim Groups and the 1998 Regime Change

One of the main arguments of this book is that developments within the civilian political realm are as crucial for the shape of transitional military politics as the internal dynamics within the armed forces themselves. More specifically, I submit that the level of military participation in political affairs tends to rise and fall proportionately to the intensity of intra-civilian conflict. Accordingly, after the previous chapter discussed the role of leading military officers in negotiating a regime change that left the fundamental infrastructure of the New Order state intact, it is now necessary to examine the extent to which disagreements between civilian groups contributed to this intra-systemic transfer of power in 1998. Using the analysis of Muslim affairs as a case study in order to emphasize general patterns of civilian politics during the events leading to Suharto's fall, the following chapter argues that divisions between key civilian leaders and constituencies impacted significantly on the nature of the 1998 regime change and the format of Indonesia's post-authoritarian civil-military relations.

The intra-civilian fragmentation during the political upheaval in 1997 and 1998 had two important consequences for the democratic transition and the character of the post-New Order polity. To begin with, the inability of oppositional civilian forces to unite and form a powerful coalition against the weakening regime led to their exclusion from the first post-Suharto government. Stepan (1993, p. 67) asserted that "a crucial task for the active opposition is to integrate as many anti-authoritarian movements as possible



into the institutions of the emerging democratic majority.” Indonesia’s “active opposition”, if there was a movement worthy of that name, did not achieve this goal. Consequently, groups opposed to Suharto gained almost no executive and legislative positions in the early post-authoritarian state, leaving most decisions of structural reform to politicians (and military officers) associated with the New Order. The second crucial impact of the civilian infighting during the crisis related to the ability of military officers to exploit the weakness of their civilian counterparts and engineer a transition that protected their interests. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (1996, p. xxiv) suggested that “unity of democratic purpose among civilian political elites” is crucial to ending military intervention in politics and creating democratic civil-military relations in political transitions. If civilians do not succeed in establishing such unity, on the other hand, the armed forces typically are quick to regain the political initiative. For example, “the failure of civilian politicians and parties in Nigeria to unite against the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election allowed the military to terminate the democratic transition” (Diamond and Plattner 1996, p. xxiv). Similarly, Indonesia’s leading non-regime politicians did not manage to build an alliance to remove Suharto from office and install a transitional government; instead, the student movement and societal unrest damaged the president to an extent that encouraged the armed forces to negotiate his political exit and secure a controlled transfer of authority to his deputy.

In order to illustrate the repercussions of intra-civilian divisions for Indonesia’s regime change, this chapter discusses the political interaction between Muslim organizations and other key non-regime groups in the crisis that led to Suharto’s resignation. Influential authors on Indonesian Islam have provided largely favourable accounts of the role that moderate Muslim leaders played in the democratic transition. Robert Hefner (2000, p. 200), for example, suggested that “Soeharto galvanized moderate Muslim opposition to his rule.” He claimed that this oppositional campaign “aligned Wahid with Amien Rais”, and that “the two leaders coordinated their actions sufficiently that each reinforced the other” (Hefner 2000, pp. 199–200). Wahid, according to Hefner, was “at the forefront of those demanding reforms”, and joined in the “call for Soeharto to step down” (Hefner 2000, p. 199). In Greg Barton’s view (2002, p. 228), the Wahid of 1997 “was calling for reform and was one of the first major public figures to speak out about the need for Soeharto to resign”. The following discussion will dispute such interpretations and argue that many Muslim leaders were reluctant to openly align with oppositional forces and demand Suharto’s resignation; instead, they were at various stages prepared to help stabilize the regime in exchange



for political concessions. The chapter focuses in particular on the political behaviour of the senior leadership of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and ICMI during the crisis, and also touches on their relationship with the secular-nationalist constituency led by Megawati Sukarnoputri. Driven by their decades-old competition over religio-political hegemony, it was the unwillingness of these groups to cooperate with each other that ultimately allowed officers around Wiranto to arrange Suharto's departure in a way that carried the least political risk for the armed forces.

STABILITY FIRST: NAHDLATUL ULAMA AND THE CRISIS

As the largest organization of traditionalist Islam in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama was certain to play an important role in deciding the fate of Suharto's regime in times of economic and political crisis. NU had in the past helped to establish and stabilize authoritarian regimes, but had also demonstrated in 1965 that it could be a decisive factor for regime change when it chose to withdraw its support for the incumbent government. For much of the New Order, however, the regime was sufficiently stable, and NU needed the regime more to secure its interests than the regime needed NU to consolidate its rule. Since 1984, Abdurrahman Wahid (who was popularly known as "Gus Dur") had navigated NU through the political minefield of the New Order, oscillating between strategies of accommodation and confrontation towards Suharto and his government. Using his lineage as the grandson of NU's founder Hasyim Asy'ari to legitimize his control over the organization, he promoted doctrinal and social reforms within the traditionalist community. Many of the *kiai* questioned Wahid's adaptation of secular ideas and were concerned about his close relationship with non-Muslim and pro-democracy groups, but they revered him for his deep knowledge of traditionalist culture and unrivalled political skills (Muhammad 1998). While Wahid's erratic and idiosyncratic leadership style had been subjected to regular criticism at NU conferences, his political longevity and frequent involvement in elite negotiations appeared to confirm the accuracy of his instincts.

The mounting problems confronting the government after 1996 and the widespread impression that the New Order had entered its political twilight presented NU once again with the choice of either backing or helping to unseat a faltering regime. In the 1997 elections, viewed as highly manipulated even by New Order standards, Nahdlatul Ulama faced two alternatives: first, the organization could try to establish itself as a moderate voice of protest



against the anachronistic inflexibility of the Suharto government. This option would have led NU back to confrontation with the regime, with political cooperation and material support most likely cut off by a bureaucracy determined to secure another Golkar victory. The second alternative, namely extending its course of reconciliation with the regime pursued since late 1996, guaranteed NU a stable political environment and continued financial support for the *pesantren*, but put its claim to democratic credentials at risk. Confronted with this strategic dilemma, Wahid clearly chose to support the troubled regime. Even before the election campaign began, he invited Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana to visit a number of crucial *pesantren* in NU strongholds, courting her as a potential successor to her father and opening the NU constituency to Golkar's electoral machine.

Opposing the Opposition: NU and the Regime in 1997

The decision of the NU chairman to collaborate with the regime undermined the prospects for a more united opposition against Suharto, whose support in the general populace was fading. In defining his course, Wahid was driven by three major considerations related to political strategy, personal ambition, and the socio-economic and religious interests of his community. First of all, Megawati's unsuccessful resistance against the regime had contributed to Wahid's conclusion that the New Order had a good chance of lasting much longer than the Suharto opponents were ready to admit. Given Suharto's increasingly repressive approach and the possibility that he could be in power for at least another five-year term, it appeared unwise to re-open the conflict with the president. Moreover, Wahid saw the disappointing performance of other political actors as a chance to locate himself and his organization once again in the centre of Indonesian politics:

Many people looked to Megawati as a possible leader. But she did not have the courage to lead, and instead just sat at home. Let alone Amien Rais. He has become a victim of his own flip-flopping... In this situation, I am called upon, and NU has a great chance. I can help Suharto to secure an orderly succession.¹

The exact role he intended to play in Suharto's succession remained unclear, but some within the Muslim elite believed that he ultimately sought to assume the presidency himself.² The third element in Wahid's agenda was his concern for the religious and socio-economic interests of the Nahdlatul Ulama constituency. Many NU *kiai* were dependent on subsidies from



the bureaucracy, and they pressured Wahid to view cooperation with the government as his priority.³ Wahid himself was well aware of NU's economic backwardness, and he feared that other religio-political constituencies would develop faster than his own. One of the major themes in his addresses to NU crowds was "not to allow it to happen that others already take off, and the NU kids are left on the runway".⁴ Good relations with the regime translated into access to the economic infrastructure of the state, and the memory of marginalization in the past served as a reminder not to confront Suharto again.

Wahid's support for the regime led to considerable irritation in pro-democracy circles, and even among many NU activists and *kiai*. Pro-democracy groups had hoped that Wahid would protest against the exclusion of Megawati's party from the elections scheduled for April 1997, and probably even support his long-time friend's veiled recommendation to boycott the vote. Instead, the NU chief not only ordered his followers to go to the ballot box — he also launched targeted attacks on PPP, trying to damage Golkar's only serious rival and effectively mobilizing NU members for the government party. Adam Schwarz (2004, p. 333) noted that Wahid's support for Golkar was motivated by his inclination to "put the NU's institutional interests ahead of the democratic agenda, and his credentials as a democratic reformer suffered as a result". For many within NU, however, it was more complicated than that. While most *kiai* supported Wahid's decision to ask NU members to participate in the vote in order to avoid confrontation with the regime, they criticized the open courtship of Siti Hardiyanti and Golkar. Habieb Syarief Mohammad, chairman of NU's West Java branch, recalled the perception among senior *kiai* that NU had become a "laughing stock" as a result of Wahid's closeness with Suharto's hugely unpopular daughter.⁵ The doubts within NU about Wahid's strategy were also nurtured by the latter's own implausible explanations for his actions. Wahid insisted that he had supported Suharto's party in order to prevent an electoral victory for PPP, which he claimed would have been interpreted by the international community as an indication for the resurgence of radical Islam in Indonesia.⁶ Many NU members appeared to disagree: in the elections, PPP gained significantly in traditional NU strongholds, suggesting that Wahid's dislike for the party was not necessarily shared at the grassroots level.

Despite the controversies over his leadership style, there was no doubt that the majority of *kiai* supported Wahid's determination to exclude NU from political initiatives towards a more united opposition against the regime. Most of the *kiai* enjoyed the newly obtained harmony with the government, and they shared Wahid's distrust in the reliability of oppositional figures such



as Amien Rais. Thus the monetary crisis hitting the country in August 1997 could not have come at a more inconvenient moment for both NU and Wahid personally. The *kiai* feared that the economic crisis would affect their constituency seriously, with lower-class workers, peasants, and underemployed most exposed to the impact of inflation and food shortages. Although many economists initially predicted that the largely rural-based NU constituency would be shielded from the crisis by its strong network in the informal sector, imported inflation soon began to cross urban borders, causing severe loss of purchasing power in rural areas (Booth 2000, p. 159). In addition, much of rural Indonesia was affected by a severe drought related to El Niño, a specific climatic condition. The *kiai* therefore faced the prospect of increasing discontent within their constituency, possibly fuelling expectations that they take a more critical stand towards the government. A more confrontational approach, however, endangered the flow of subsidies facilitated by the strategy of accommodation, which in times of crisis played an even more crucial role than during the years of constant economic growth.

For that reason, the crisis presented itself to most NU leaders not as an opportunity to remove an unpopular authoritarian government, but as a disturbance in their search for a comfortable space in Suharto's polity. For Wahid personally, the crisis also threatened the consolidation of his position within Nahdlatul Ulama. After years of internal turmoil, he had aimed to strengthen his grip over the organization at an NU conference scheduled for November 1997 in Lombok, hoping that NU's smooth relations with the government would translate into increased support of Nahdlatul Ulama officials for his leadership. Previous conferences had seen enormous outbreaks of dissent against Wahid, with critics attacking both his tendency to make erratic statements and his lack of managerial skills. The last major NU gathering, the Cipasung Congress in 1994, had voted for Wahid only by a narrow margin.⁷ Since then, he had changed his approach to the Suharto regime, and the Lombok conference was therefore viewed as the first internal test for Wahid's new policy of non-confrontation. The worsening crisis, however, shifted the focus of the conference from the issue of organizational consolidation to NU's views of the economic downturn and Suharto's future as president.

Nahdlatul Ulama's response to the crisis was defined by spiritual and political support for the embattled government (Mietzner 1998). Most importantly, NU echoed the assessment of the Suharto regime that the crisis was not a political phenomenon, but an unfortunate external shock. The NU leadership thus refrained from analysing the structural roots of the problem, asking its members instead to pray for the recovery of the economy. In



addition, NU issued statements of support for Suharto's leadership, not only consolidating his position during the crisis but also assisting his re-election bid. The chairman of NU's religious advisory board, Kiai Ilyas Ruchiat, underlined in mid-September 1997 that the country still needed Suharto as its leader.⁸ In the same vein, Wahid began to denounce Suharto's increasingly self-confident critics. After Amien declared in late September that he was ready to succeed Suharto, Wahid attacked the Muhammadiyah chairman as a publicity-seeking self-promoter with a hidden political agenda, and threatened to mobilize one million NU members against possible "unconstitutional moves".⁹ Furthermore, Wahid demanded that Suharto alone be given the authority to arrange his succession, as too many participants in the debate would only produce a chaotic outcome.¹⁰ Wahid's attacks on Amien and his repeated pro-regime statements appear to be at odds with Hefner's analysis that "the two leaders coordinated their actions" and were "aligned" against the regime. Wahid made little effort to hide his hostility towards the Muhammadiyah chairman, and used every occasion to demonstrate that his current interests lay in standing by the regime and not in trying to overthrow it.

NU's decision to distance itself from the growing opposition against the regime allowed it to hold its conference in Lombok in November 1997 without experiencing the high levels of government intervention so typical of previous events. In his opening speech, Ilyas Ruchiat mentioned the devastating impact of the crisis, but did not link the economic misfortune to questions about the quality of political leadership.¹¹ Ilyas had been a tacit supporter of Golkar in the past, and in a separate interview, described Suharto as "a great friend of NU", who "has made an extraordinary contribution to our country". Insisting that "NU can't desert Suharto now", Ilyas pledged that "we will do all we can to overcome this crisis, and assist Suharto in every possible way".¹² Wahid, for his part, told the delegates that "NU supports the leadership of President Suharto in organizing a safe and smooth succession."¹³ He repeated his attacks on Amien, underlining that NU would not support anybody who promoted his candidacy in the press. With this, Wahid effectively ruled out the possibility of using the crisis to unite Indonesia's oppositional forces against the New Order, and exposed long-standing religio-political cleavages as the major reason for doing so. NU branches generally welcomed the de-escalation vis-à-vis the bureaucracy, reporting that they now faced the opposite problem of being accused of "collaboration".¹⁴ Ultimately, a large majority of NU's regional chapters endorsed Wahid's leadership. A group of young activists, who had a more critical view of NU's support for the regime but hoped that it was only temporary, chose not to speak up at the conference.



Wahid and the Struggle for Hegemony in NU

The cooperation between NU and the regime stabilized Wahid's leadership of the organization, but he was also aware of the negative side effects this strategy incurred. Wahid's manoeuvres had both damaged his reputation as a democratic reformer and isolated NU from those key forces of civil society that promoted political change. In order to counterbalance this trend, Wahid declared only a couple of days after the Lombok conference that NU was opposed to the status quo and demanded substantial political reform.¹⁵ The escalating economic crisis had ultimately forced Wahid to adjust his public rhetoric, but he remained opposed to any form of organized challenge to the political framework of the New Order. Based on the news that Suharto had suffered a mild stroke in early December, Wahid now believed that the president could die soon, and left no doubt that NU would support Try Sutrisno as Suharto's constitutional successor. William Liddle (1999*b*, p. 67) asserted that Try had been Wahid's preferred presidential candidate for some time, expecting him to neutralize the threat of political Islam and "be less authoritarian, more consensual, and more attentive to the needs of ordinary Indonesians than Soeharto had been". The other alternative, a collective leadership of political, societal, and military leaders, as proposed by Amien Rais, was anathema to the NU chairman.¹⁶ It was in this phase of the crisis that the foundations for an intra-systemic change of government were laid, with key societal leaders ruling out the possibility of forming an oppositional collective prepared to take over from the crumbling regime:

What is in it for me if I joined Amien in bringing down Suharto and forming the next government? Amien and his friends are not to be trusted. They now suck up (*menjilat*) to myself and NU because they know we are important, but once Suharto is gone, they want power for themselves. I know them.... We are much better off by supporting Try. He is a good nationalist, and when he assumes power, everything will be according to the constitution. Amien, in contrast, wants chaos.¹⁷

In mid-January, Wahid declined an invitation to meet Amien and Megawati, holding political talks with Siti Hardiyanti instead in which he assured Suharto's daughter that he had no plans to join the opposition against the government.¹⁸ Despite Suharto's waning political fortunes, Wahid preferred the benefits of cooperation with the regime to the uncertainty of building a coalition with his religio-political rivals.¹⁹ The "unity of democratic purpose among civilian political elites", which Diamond and Plattner viewed as



crucial for ending military-backed authoritarian rule, appeared impossible to achieve.

Ironically, Wahid's expectation that Suharto's death was imminent almost turned against him. On 19 January 1998, Wahid suffered a massive stroke, resulting in the complete loss of his already impaired eyesight and causing severe damage to his motor skills. During his convalescence, Wahid struggled to stay informed about political events, but he lost operational control over NU.²⁰ Given the previous concentration of power in Wahid's hands, however, no obvious replacement emerged to lead NU in the same authoritative way as the three-term chairman had done.²¹ There were at least three groups competing for control of the organization: first, the religious leadership around Ilyas Ruchiat and Sahal Mahfudz, who were apolitical in the sense that they wanted to maintain close relations to the power centre in order to promote the interests of NU's *pesantren*. They publicly demonstrated loyalty to both Suharto and the military, opposing initiatives that were likely to lead NU on the path of opposition to the New Order. Second, the Wahid loyalists coordinated by Deputy Secretary-General Arifin Djunaedi, who wanted to integrate Nahdlatul Ulama into the discourse about political alternatives to Suharto, but refrained from openly antagonizing him. As Wahid recovered from the stroke at his residence in South Jakarta, the loyalists established a temporary office there to maintain control over the central board. The third group consisted of young NU activists, who staged open demonstrations against Suharto and demanded his resignation.²² The various factions pursued their own strategies, but the majority still backed a policy of non-confrontation. Consequently, a leadership meeting in mid-February decided that NU would unambiguously support the president to be elected by the upcoming MPR session, i.e. Suharto.²³

After Suharto's re-election in March 1998, Wahid developed a double strategy that was difficult to read for both his followers and his increasingly numerous critics. While blasting the Suharto government in interviews with foreign media and meetings with diplomats, he assisted the president in his efforts to consolidate power in the domestic context. After the formation of a cabinet widely seen as ridiculously nepotistic, Wahid contended that NU was satisfied with it as some NU members had been included. Asked who exactly these NU representatives were, he had to pass on the question.²⁴ In mid-April, he claimed that demonstrating students in Yogyakarta had been paid by certain parties, undermining the credibility of the protest movement at a time when radical elements within the regime were desperately looking for a pretext to crush the dissent (Nadjib 1998, pp. 161–62). Pressured by the growing societal dissatisfaction with Suharto, and fearful that Wahid's



actions might damage NU's reputation irreversibly, NU officials from all three camps eventually took the initiative to restrain their chairman. Even Ilyas and Sahal, now sensing the shift in the power constellation, were worried that NU might ruin its prospects in the coming post-authoritarian era if it collaborated too closely with a doomed regime. A week after Wahid's heedless statement about the venality of the student movement, the NU central board issued a declaration supporting the demands of the protesters, and called on the military to listen to the aspirations of the people.²⁵ Wahid was deliberately excluded from the drafting of the press release.²⁶ Although contradicted by his subordinates, Wahid did not argue against the declaration, suggesting that he saw some benefit in his organization's undermining of Suharto while he personally continued to maintain good relations with the president.

NU's policy shift reflected the rapid decline of Suharto's authority. Even conservative *kiai* in the regions now strived to reconcile their traditionalist *fikih* with the popular demands for reform, indicating that Suharto's power base in Indonesia's rural society was crumbling.²⁷ The turn against the embattled ruler was not followed, however, by attempts to forge a broad coalition to prepare for possible succession scenarios. In this, the NU board shared the scepticism of its chairman. Like Wahid, many NU *kiai* still feared a possible backlash by the residual powers of the regime against their constituency, and they too had little interest in helping their modernist rivals to replace the faltering government. The *ulama* were concerned, however, that Wahid allowed NU's general policy to be defined by what Kevin O'Rourke (2002, p. 83) called "his determination to thwart Amien Rais". The majority in the NU board did not believe that Amien's leadership of the protest movement was sufficient reason for Nahdlatul Ulama to reject its goals. In the words of one NU deputy chair:

Between Gus Dur and Amien, that was personal. Whenever Amien said "A", Gus Dur said "B". If Amien said "B", Gus Dur said "A"... We, however, had to defend the interests of NU. And by April and May, it was clear for everybody to see that the regime had no future.²⁸

Despite Suharto's eroding power, however, the diversity of views within Nahdlatul Ulama still offered the president opportunities to divide the opposition against him. It was in particular Wahid's continued confrontation with Amien Rais and other modernists that fuelled Suharto's hope that the fragmentation of political Islam, used and nurtured since the late 1950s to sustain authoritarian rule, would also secure his survival in the crisis of 1998. So long as the goal of excluding competitors from power motivated



non-regime forces to align with Suharto rather than with reformist groups, the president had a realistic chance to maintain his grip on the political elite and extend his decades-long rule.

CHALLENGING SUHARTO: MUHAMMADIYAH, AMIEN, AND THE PRESIDENCY

Like Abdurrahman Wahid in Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah's leader Amien Rais had experienced high levels of fluctuation in his relationship with the New Order regime. In his earlier years, he had criticized what he saw as anti-Islamic policies of the Suharto government, condemning the disproportionate representation of non-Muslims in the bureaucracy and economic privileges for the Chinese. His predilection for sharp, witty comments, often in defence of the modernist community, made him popular among Islamic intellectuals, but also consolidated his reputation as a "radical" in the eyes of traditionalist, secular, and non-Muslim constituencies. After Suharto's endorsement of the foundation of ICMI in 1990, however, Amien changed his attitude towards the government. He now believed that the interests of the Muslim community were best served by seeking representation in the regime, and thought that ICMI provided a political platform to achieve this goal. Subsequently, Amien built political networks with Muslim bureaucrats around Habibie and began to defend the Suharto government against accusations that it politicized Islam for the purpose of regime maintenance.

Amien's cooperation with the government also advanced the political interests of Muhammadiyah, which made sure that Amien played an increasingly important role in the organization. For most of the New Order period, Muhammadiyah had cultivated good relations with the regime, declaring itself a non-political organization in 1971 and thus complying with Suharto's official depoliticization strategy. As a result of that decision, many Muhammadiyah members were allowed to hold influential positions in the bureaucracy and Golkar. Against this background, most Muhammadiyah officials believed that Amien had all the necessary qualifications to lead the organization. On the one hand, he represented a new generation of Islamic intellectuals, promoting reforms and breaking with the conservative leadership style of the previous chairmen Fachruddin and Azhar Basyir. On the other hand, his easy access to government circles offered protection for the vast network of schools, hospitals, and social institutions run by Muhammadiyah throughout the archipelago. In 1994, Amien eventually became Muhammadiyah's general chairman.



Once in charge of Muhammadiyah, however, Amien began to question the effectiveness of his cooperation with the New Order. He acknowledged that the Muslim community had received a number of legal-political concessions, but also came to realize that the regime had not changed its repressive character. On balance, Amien concluded, the New Order had profited more from his regime participation than Muhammadiyah and the modernist Muslim constituency.²⁹ Thus in late 1996 and early 1997, Amien issued a series of statements critical of the regime, mostly focusing on the excesses of economic cronyism in Suharto's family and inner circle. The regime reacted by forcing Amien to resign from his senior position in ICMI, and it put pressure on the Muhammadiyah central board to distance itself from its chairman. Lukman Harun, a former Parmusi politician and *Dewan Dakwah* official who had joined Golkar in the 1990s, was the most prominent critic of Amien's confrontational course against the regime. The majority of Muhammadiyah activists, however, strongly supported their chairman. Muhammadiyah representatives reported from the regions that while the bureaucracy had issued continued warnings against the organization, there was no significant regime backlash against their social activities.³⁰ Apparently, the indispensability of Muhammadiyah's officials and socio-religious institutions for the political, educational, and medical infrastructure of the state made the organization much less vulnerable to regime sanctions than NU, protecting Amien effectively from regime-initiated punishment for his criticism.

Between Crisis and Temptation: Amien and the Regime

Paradoxically, the crisis that began to unfold in August 1997 further consolidated Amien's authority within Muhammadiyah. In the eyes of many Muhammadiyah functionaries, the economic decline of the New Order confirmed the accuracy of Amien's earlier criticisms of the regime, which were now echoed in the standard commentaries of political observers. The crisis transformed Amien from a prominent Muslim leader into a key national figure, especially after he, rather spontaneously, declared his preparedness to run for the presidency in September 1997.³¹ The challenge to Suharto's bid for re-election was a cultural revolution in a regime that had previously used its tools of repression and political engineering to secure the president's unanimous re-appointment. Megawati's ouster in 1996, following rumours she might officially declare her intention to replace Suharto, had underlined the ageing autocrat's insistence on undivided support for his rule. While Amien did not command a political party in the MPR, and could therefore not directly intervene in the electoral process, the crisis



provided his candidacy with a psychological momentum difficult to control by the regime. Accordingly, in order to anticipate potential manoeuvres by Amien in the MPR, Suharto removed his name from a list of candidates for MPR membership.³² This decision, while excluding Amien from the formal structures of the New Order regime, in fact strengthened his determination to undermine them from outside.

The regime criticism launched by the Muhammadiyah chairman was unique not only in its trenchant intensity, but also in its outreach to other socio-political constituencies. Among the leaders of Indonesia's major societal forces, Amien emerged as the only key figure working towards a united opposition against the authoritarian regime. Megawati, for example, had followed Wahid in rejecting active regime opposition because she felt responsible for the security of her followers. This reluctance was underpinned and aggravated further by her non-combative personal style. Believing that the New Order might crack down on a possible protest movement, Megawati avoided any public statement that her supporters or the regime could interpret as an appeal for active resistance against Suharto. Her husband contended that "these people who criticize Megawati for not doing more during the crisis have no idea how it's like to have the responsibility for millions of people — one wrong word, and there could have been a bloodbath".³³ Amien, on the other hand, was confident that the importance of Muhammadiyah's socio-religious institutions for the regime would grant them immunity from potential acts of retribution, allowing him to ignore advice by some of his sympathizers in the government to drive a less confrontational course.

Accordingly, instead of toning down his criticism, Amien developed strategies to build up a broad-based alliance against Suharto. By December 1997, he contemplated ways of cooperating with both Wahid and Megawati. A coalition between nationalist elements, traditionalist Islam, and modernist Muslims would have been a serious challenge to the crisis-ridden government, possibly overcoming the very disunity among Indonesia's civilian forces that had allowed non-democratic actors to establish and sustain decades of authoritarian rule. The response Amien received from Wahid, however, was negative. Wahid had no intention of aligning himself with anti-Suharto forces and thereby putting his good relationship with the regime at risk.³⁴ Megawati, for her part, was slightly more sympathetic. She was deeply suspicious of Amien because of the latter's reputation for Islamic exclusivism, but acknowledged his contribution to undermining the regime that had excluded her from political life since 1996.³⁵ Megawati agreed to two public appearances with Amien in January, which were designed to explore the possibility of a coalition between them.³⁶ The meetings failed,



however, to overcome their mutual prejudices. Megawati saw no reason to revise her view of Amien as a political opportunist, and Amien felt that his perception of Megawati as an intellectually limited and politically overrated amateur had been confirmed (Tesoro 1998). By early February, the contact broke off.

The failure of Amien's efforts to forge an anti-regime alliance between influential elites reflected the fragmentation of Indonesia's civilian forces, and highlighted once again why the New Order had been able to survive for such a long time. The unwillingness of traditionalist and nationalist leaders to join him in eroding the regime had a profound impact on Amien, causing him to reconsider both his intention of mobilizing an oppositional movement against Suharto and the inclusivist character it was supposed to acquire. Furthermore, Suharto's decision to anoint Habibie as his vice-presidential candidate provided an additional incentive for Amien to revise his confrontational attitude towards the government. Indicating his shifting position, he returned to some of his political themes of the pre-crisis period. For example, Amien supported the president's attacks on Chinese conglomerates, identifying them as the source of the country's economic problems.³⁷ Evidently, the regime's increased use of Islamic sentiments in the crisis and the prospect of a Habibie presidency, under which Amien was likely to play a prominent role, softened the latter's criticism of the Suharto government. In mid-February, Amien told a Muhammadiyah gathering that Habibie had assured him Suharto would do all he could to overcome the economic crisis, suggesting that the president should be given more time. Moreover, Amien advised Emil Salim, a widely respected former minister and fellow ICMI associate, to drop his public candidacy for the vice-presidential nomination, which Emil had launched in protest against Suharto's monopolistic dominance over the political system.³⁸ For Amien, Emil's candidacy was a largely symbolic act, but it nevertheless carried the risk that Suharto could view the campaign as ICMI-driven and thus feel encouraged to cancel Habibie's nomination.

The opposition to Emil's candidacy indicated that Amien was about to redefine his political priorities. Amien's efforts to secure the rise of an Islamic ally to one of the top posts of the regime had obviously taken precedence over his support for expressions of protest against the non-democratic format of the New Order polity. Not surprisingly, speculation was rife that Amien had suspended his criticism of Suharto and thrown his support behind Habibie because he aimed at cabinet posts for Muhammadiyah.³⁹ The subsequent accusations of opportunism damaged Amien's reputation, and his critics appeared unconvinced by his assurances that he only followed the political advice of the former Masyumi leader Muhammad Natsir "to build up good



communication channels with all segments of this state, but don't make commitments".⁴⁰ As Suharto was re-elected in March with Habibie as his vice-president, Amien called on his followers to remain calm and pray for the success of the new government. His fundamental opposition of the previous months, driven by the analysis that Suharto's continued rule was certain to result in Indonesia's political and economic collapse, seemed now far away.

From Elite Politics to Populist Power: Amien and the Student Movement

Amien's sudden reconciliation with the regime raised questions about the reasons behind his previous demands for reform, and pointed to a general pattern of political motivations and strategic interests within the non-regime elite. Many of his critics suspected that Amien had sought to remove the regime only because it had broken its promises of increased political powers for Islamic leaders, and that he had hoped democratic change would bring the levels of regime participation for the Muslim majority that Suharto had not delivered. The prospect of a Habibie presidency, however, re-opened the possibility of achieving fair political representation for Muslims without replacing the foundations of the New Order polity. From this perspective, regime change was largely a function of serving sectoral interests of political elites, and not a rejection of non-democratic rule as such. Richard Robison and Vedi Hadiz (2004, p. 171) have suggested that Wahid, Megawati, and Amien "still considered that their ambitions could be achieved from within the regime", and that one of their main fears was "losing control to more radical and populist forces". While this observation is accurate for the political behaviour of both Wahid and Megawati throughout the crisis, it only partially captures the complexity of Amien's rapidly changing regime relations. The reason is that after only one month of conciliatory interaction, Amien did in fact conclude in March 1998 that Habibie was unable to serve his interests "from within the regime". Consequently, he aligned himself with the very "radical and populist forces" that Robison and Hadiz asserted were contradictory to his personal and political agenda. Hoping to combine his influence in elite politics with the moral authority and mass-driven force of popular protest, the chairman of Muhammadiyah linked up with the student movement in order to seek Suharto's removal from power.

Amien's abrupt switch from regime support to fundamental opposition was reflective of the many strategic choices and dilemmas that political actors faced in the constantly changing context of the crisis. But it also consolidated the view among Amien's critics in the elite that he was too unstable a partner



to form a coalition with. The two main factors that led Amien to cancel his temporary support for Suharto underlined, in the eyes of his political rivals, that his interests were largely defined by tactical and constituency-based considerations. First, the announcement of what David Jenkins (1999, p. 32) called a “Caligulean” cabinet in mid-March convinced Amien that Suharto had no intention of granting Habibie greater political influence, let alone of preparing him as his successor. Instead of appointing critical Islamic figures from the activist faction of ICMI, Suharto had chosen a cabinet of cronies, with his Chinese business associate Bob Hasan taking the crucial trade portfolio. Second, popular protest had replaced elite politics as the main factor driving political change, leading Amien to believe that Suharto’s fate would be decided on the streets rather than in political backroom deals.⁴¹ After the cabinet line-up was made public, Amien started immediately to tour the campuses, ridiculing the quality of the ministers and gaining the sympathy of the students by mediating in their conflicts with the security forces.⁴² He also stepped up his international media campaign against Suharto, and attempted to drive a wedge between the armed forces and the president by stating that the hope of the people now rested with the military.⁴³ With Wahid branding the students as paid agents of unnamed group interests, and Megawati refusing to play an active role in the opposition, Amien emerged as the *spiritus rector* of the student movement.

After his failure to build an elite-based alliance with central figures of other religio-political constituencies, Amien began to apply his pluralist strategy to the new coalition with students and grassroots groups. The student movement included significant non-Muslim and pluralist elements, and their leaders were apparently more prepared to believe in Amien’s inclusivist turn than his traditional rivals in the political elite. Meeting with church figures and Chinese businessmen, Amien tried hard to alter his predominant image as an Islamic politician. But like his earlier attempts to forge a pluralist elite coalition, Amien’s efforts to expand his grassroots support attracted accusations of opportunism from his political foes. His critics were quick to point out that Amien’s courting of non-Muslim groups was a calculated move to enhance his position in the crisis negotiations and improve his political career prospects for the post-crisis period.⁴⁴ In addition, Amien’s new pluralist outlook also appeared designed to polish his international image. The international community was likely to play an important role in determining both Suharto’s fate and the shape of the political landscape in the post-New Order era, encouraging Amien to lobby Western capitals for their support. In the midst of the student demonstrations in early May, Amien travelled to



the United States and Europe, presenting himself as the political alternative to Suharto and promoting his new pluralist agenda.⁴⁵

The tension between Amien's Islamic image and the pluralist design of the coalition he tried to create was reflected in the continued use of Muhammadiyah as his political vehicle. While it provided him with the necessary operational resources, the explicit identification with his modernist home base also discouraged the leaders of other constituencies, most notably Wahid and Megawati, from joining his alliance. Members of the Muhammadiyah central board had for some time allowed Amien to use the Muhammadiyah offices in Yogyakarta and Jakarta for political purposes.⁴⁶ Moreover, since the beginning of the student demonstrations, Muhammadiyah universities had figured prominently in the protest movement, and banners supporting Amien's nomination as president were common on Muhammadiyah-affiliated campuses.⁴⁷ In institutional terms, the organization remained neutral, but prominent Muhammadiyah figures openly expressed their support for Amien. Deputy Chairman Malik Fajar was one of them, offering his house as "some kind of operational centre for Amien's campaign".⁴⁸ Returning from his overseas trip on 11 May, Amien announced at a gathering of 5,000 Muhammadiyah *santri* in Jakarta that he would establish a People's Leadership Council (*Majelis Kepemimpinan Rakyat*) by the end of May.⁴⁹ For Megawati and Wahid, the event represented the very combination of personal leadership ambitions, calculated pluralist outreach, and sectoral modernist interests that they had identified as the basis of Amien's political behaviour for some time. For that reason, they stayed away from the council although Amien had earlier claimed that he had secured their participation.

The refusal of important constituency leaders to support the protest movement against Suharto, while Amien had assumed its leadership, pointed to the continued divisions within Indonesia's non-regime elite. Amien's plan to forge an alliance of modernist Muslims, traditionalist Islam, and secular nationalism to challenge and ultimately replace the regime had failed. Wahid and Megawati harboured severe doubts about Amien's political sincerity, consistency, and reliability, leading them to believe that the chairman of Muhammadiyah pursued the goal of alliance-building and regime change largely to satisfy personal ambitions and constituency interests. As a result of their deep mutual suspicions, the initiative for overthrowing the New Order polity shifted from societal leaders to the student movement, with Amien playing an intellectual, but by no means operational leadership role. The absence of coordination between the main oppositional forces not only allowed the government to prolong its rule, but impacted also on the nature



of the eventual regime change. With the civilian elite unprepared to seize power, and the student movement seeking a quick change of government, compromise-oriented elements in the armed forces took the lead in securing a negotiated, intra-systemic transfer of power. This handover of authority within the constitutional framework of the regime lifted its main beneficiaries into the limelight: B.J. Habibie and his ICMI associates.

ICMI: BETWEEN REBELLION AND COLLABORATION

The difficulty of creating a united front against the regime was aggravated by the continued ability of the Suharto government to tie key civilian elites, including some Muslim leaders, to its fate. Amien's oscillation between support for the regime and fundamental opposition towards it was not a unique political phenomenon, but was also reflective of the debate within ICMI, the organization that had sidelined him in early 1997. ICMI had since its inception in 1990 accommodated a variety of divergent interests, balancing critical activists, government bureaucrats, and moderate Muslim intellectuals (Schwarz 2004, pp. 176–77). The activists around Adi Sasono, ICMI's secretary-general, had been highly critical of Suharto, especially of his economic policies. Despite their aversion to the president, they had hoped that cooperation with the regime would grant them greater access to the policy debates within the government elite and allow them to realize their strategic goal of redistributing Chinese-controlled economic assets to Muslim small-scale businesses.⁵⁰

By 1997, however, many members of the activist faction were deeply frustrated with the limitations of their political influence. They filled only marginal posts in the lower bureaucracy as well as in think tanks and were largely excluded from the decision-making process in Suharto's power centre. Similar to Amien, the activist group in ICMI felt that the regime had failed to deliver on its promises of higher political representation for Muslims, but in contrast to the Muhammadiyah chairman, they had no power base of their own to launch independent political campaigns. In consequence, they continued to rely on Habibie's patronage and his appeals for patience. The bureaucrats in ICMI, on the other hand, had gained a number of important positions in cabinet, Golkar, and the armed forces. However, most government officials had shown little interest in ICMI's Islamic platform, aligning themselves with Habibie's group largely in order to improve their standing in the elite competition over crucial posts in the regime. ICMI-affiliated bureaucrats had very diverse agendas, ranging from the advancement



of dubious high-technology projects to influence over military appointments.⁵¹ It was the irrelevance of some of these goals for the social, cultural, and political needs of the Muslim community that encouraged the third ICMI faction, consisting of moderate Islamic intellectuals like Nurcholish Madjid, to almost completely disengage from the organization.

Crisis and Exclusion: Habibie In or Out?

The attitudes of ICMI leaders vis-à-vis the New Order regime mirrored not only factional divisions within the organization, but were also defined by the fluctuating political fortunes of their main patron. For much of the 1990s, Habibie was considered a strong candidate for the vice-presidency. Despite his failure to win the nomination in 1993, he had continued to work ambitiously towards the 1998 anointment. Changes in the composition of the regime in the second half of the 1990s, however, had not always worked in Habibie's favour. Suharto's dislike of the critical comments on his government by ICMI activists had cast doubts over Habibie's prospects, and new political figures had entered the inner circle of the president. Suharto began to contemplate a dynastic solution to the succession problem, and other loyalists such as Hartono, Ginandjar Kartasasmita, or Wiranto were also mentioned as potential vice-presidential candidates. The impact of the economic crisis further added to Habibie's apparent decline. With Suharto forced to call for international help to acquire emergency credits, and Indonesia increasingly exposed to the fluctuations of the currency market and stock exchanges, the economic reputation of vice-presidential candidates attracted particular attention. Habibie's unorthodox view on economic mechanisms and industrial policy, in the better days of the New Order called "Habibienomics", now appeared as a heavy burden for the minister. International donor agencies and domestic critics viewed his import-substitution programme in the high-technology sector, with billions of dollars spent to develop national aircraft and other prestigious projects, as an irresponsible waste of funds. As Habibie's chances to become Suharto's deputy and possible successor appeared to wane, so did the loyalty of the ICMI group around Adi Sasono towards their patron.

The impression of Habibie's declining career prospects sharpened the factional divisions within ICMI and drove the activist group closer to regime opposition. While the camp associated with the bureaucratic and military elite still believed that Habibie had a realistic chance of becoming Suharto's deputy,⁵² the activists around Adi Sasono were convinced that Habibie's campaign had been severely damaged.⁵³ In addition, Suharto had taken the



names of Adi Sasono, Watik Pratikna, Jimly Assidiquie, and Dawam Rahardjo from the list of MPR candidates, further distancing the activist wing of ICMI from the New Order establishment. The feeling of exclusion from the regime and the expectation of Habibie's political demise led the ICMI activists to change their strategic goal from the penetration of state institutions to regime change. In line with Amien Rais, Adi Sasono now believed that only an alliance of Indonesia's leading societal figures could force Suharto to resign. In this coalition, ICMI was to be a major element, neutralizing its image of a collaborator with the regime and positioning itself for the post-authoritarian era. In early January 1998, Adi went public with the proposal for a national dialogue to overcome the economic crisis.⁵⁴ The dialogue was to engage Amien, Megawati, Wahid, and other relevant society leaders in a discussion forum, with regime change as the ultimate goal:

We say generally that the goal is coalition-building for a better future, but I think everybody understands that our aim is to prepare the political landscape for the post-Suharto era.... It is clear that this country needs new leadership.⁵⁵

Like Amien, however, Adi earned little more than suspicion from the socio-political leaders he sought to include in the coalition. Wahid ruled out his involvement in the dialogue, and Megawati sent no clear signals as to whether she would participate.⁵⁶ As the press still speculated about if and when the summit would take place, Adi suddenly called the meeting off.

The cancellation of the national dialogue pointed to the multitude of political interests and motives that drove oppositional forces during the crisis. It highlighted both the often tactical nature of their political considerations and the extreme uncertainty of the environment they operated in. ICMI had abruptly given up on the idea of the national dialogue because its position in the political landscape had changed dramatically, and literally overnight: Suharto had indicated that Habibie was his vice-presidential candidate for the upcoming MPR session in March 1998. With this, ICMI was transformed from an increasingly marginalized group with large oppositional elements into a political force with a substantial stake in defending the regime, at least until Habibie was securely installed. The unexpected turn of events surprised not only ICMI, but sent shock waves throughout the political system. Only days before, Suharto had signed a second agreement with the IMF, which political analysts believed had excluded Habibie from the vice-presidential competition as it increased pressure on Indonesia to deliver concrete evidence of economic and political reform. Suharto's political logic, however, worked



contrary to the rationalism of the observers. Instead of bowing to the pressure, Suharto chose to defy the international finance community and demonstrate his unchanged control over domestic politics. In addition, the choice of a controversial vice-president allowed him to make the succession issue, in the words of John McBeth (1999, p. 22), “unpalatable”. Had he anointed a candidate popular with both foreign governments and domestic political forces, the pressure on Suharto to resign in favour of his deputy might have become irresistible if the crisis continued.

Habibie’s anointment led to the temporary revival of the concept of regime penetration that many modernist intellectuals had abandoned in the mid-1990s after it was considered a failure. The realistic chance of a Habibie presidency appeared to contradict their bitter assessment that Suharto had lured Muslim groups into backing his rule through false promises of greater regime participation. With Habibie a heartbeat away from the presidency, the strategy of cooperating with the regime appeared to have worked eventually.⁵⁷ Thus within days of the announcement of Habibie’s endorsement by Suharto, Adi Sasono terminated his criticism of the government and began to bring ICMI back on the track of loyalty towards Habibie and, by implication, the New Order regime. In conceptual terms, Adi spoke now of an “accelerated evolution” instead of regime change.⁵⁸ The adjusted terminology tried to cover the fact that, once again, offers of increased representation in the New Order state had motivated a major religio-political force to suspend its opposition to the non-democratic nature of the regime. Most importantly, Adi and Achmad Tirtosudiro lobbied Amien Rais to end his policy of confrontation and put his trust in the prospect of a Habibie presidency.⁵⁹ They persuaded Amien to accept a truce with the regime, and for a while it seemed as if the promises of a prosperous era of Islamic politics under Habibie’s leadership had reunited the Muhammadiyah chairman with his former companions in ICMI.

ICMI’s Dual Option: Defending or Overthrowing Suharto

Suharto’s re-election and Habibie’s installation as his deputy in March broadened ICMI’s strategic options and anticipated yet another change in its relations with the regime. Before March, loyalty to Suharto’s rule was essential in order to secure Habibie’s ascension to the vice-presidency. After the MPR session, however, ICMI possessed two political options that were easily adjustable to the changing political environment: first, continued support for Suharto if the latter granted enough concessions to modernist Muslims in general and ICMI in particular; or, alternatively, joining the



opposition, eroding Suharto's government, and working towards Habibie's constitutional rise to power. It was primarily the formation of the cabinet that pushed ICMI into endorsing the second option. After it had become known that Siti Hardiyanti was in charge of distributing the portfolios, Adi Sasono warned on 13 March that if the names rumoured to hold key posts in the government turned out to be true, Indonesia's international reputation was at risk. In response to the rumours, an ICMI leadership meeting asked Habibie to secure cabinet positions for several critical ICMI activists. At the same time, Achmad Tirtosudiro took over the acting chairmanship of the organization, increasing its autonomy vis-à-vis Habibie and preparing the group for its turn against the regime.⁶⁰ On the day before the cabinet announcement, Habibie accompanied Suharto to his Friday prayers to remind him of the importance of ICMI participation in the cabinet. The president, obviously unnerved, reprimanded his deputy in an unusually harsh tone.⁶¹ When the line-up of the cabinet was revealed a day later, none of Habibie's nominees from ICMI's activist faction had been included. Instead, Suharto re-appointed the ICMI bureaucrat Haryanto Dhanutirto, whose questionable record had made him a controversial figure even within his own organization.⁶²

The disappointment within ICMI over the composition of the cabinet drove the organization back to the course of opposing the regime. This high fluctuation in ICMI's attitudes exposed the volatility of the political context in which societal groups had to make quick and immensely consequential decisions for their constituencies. Amidst the collective uncertainty, however, a general pattern emerged that appeared to guide socio-political leaders in defining their position vis-à-vis non-democratic rule. Offers of participation in the regime were likely to silence concerns over its authoritarian nature, while exclusion from it led almost certainly to demands for democratic regime change. Suharto's omission of Islamic activists led the ICMI leadership to believe that the president had no intention of granting Habibie a significant role in running the government.⁶³ Within ICMI, it was now not only Adi Sasono and his critical associates who pushed for fundamental opposition towards the Suharto government, but also the senior leadership with bureaucratic and military backgrounds. Achmad Tirtosudiro began to sense that Suharto was about to lose control, and he feared that continued support for him might drag ICMI down into the political abyss. As the student demonstrations gained momentum, ICMI took concrete steps to dissociate itself from the Suharto government. At a leadership forum on 6 May, ICMI endorsed calls for a special session of the MPR to change the national leadership. This suggestion, however, presented Habibie with severe political problems. Balancing loyalty to Suharto and the institutional interests



of ICMI, Habibie was forced to publicly disavow the statement of his own organization.⁶⁴

Habibie's public rejection of ICMI's oppositional stand could not distract from the fact, however, that the vice-president was now the main beneficiary of the growing protest against the regime. Therefore, many within the political elite believed that Habibie actually encouraged ICMI's criticism of Suharto in order to promote his own succession to the presidency.⁶⁵ Wahid even suspected that Adi Sasono financed the student movement against Suharto in order to catalyze the downfall of his regime and facilitate Habibie's rise.⁶⁶ These widespread suspicions were mostly based on Habibie's unique constitutional position within Suharto's web of political patronage. For legal reasons, Habibie was the only central figure of the regime Suharto could not dispose of, and was therefore largely immune from potential reprisals for ICMI's increased criticism. In this context, Habibie's public distancing from ICMI's demands for leadership change appeared as nothing more than a tactical manoeuvre to avoid the impression that he actively worked towards replacing Suharto. In the same vein, the ensuing public dispute between Achmad Tirtosudiro and Habibie over the leadership of ICMI and its political course was widely seen as theatrically staged and thus politically inconsequential. Achmad asserted that it was he, not Habibie, who led the organization, and that the controversial call for an MPR session had been issued through proper channels and procedures.⁶⁷ Satisfied with this explanation, Habibie never raised the issue again.

Islamist Groups and the Crisis

ICMI was not the only political force that had a strategic interest in Habibie's rise to the presidency, however. Most importantly, Prabowo believed that he had an arrangement with Habibie to make him chief of the armed forces once Habibie was in power. In Prabowo's entourage were a number of ultra-modernist Muslim groups with an Islamist religio-political agenda. Their political relevance was based less on numerical strength than their capacity to mobilize demonstrations, either for a particular issue or against selected institutions and individuals. KISDI (*Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam*, Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the Muslim World), founded in 1986, and DDII formed the core of this loose association of Islamist groups, with some senior PPP politicians offering protection and limited access to the political infrastructure. KISDI had participated in the demonstrations against Sofyan Wanandi in late January 1998, but otherwise appeared reluctant to formulate a clear position on the political crisis.⁶⁸ As their political affiliation



with Prabowo was stronger than their ties with Habibie, the radical Islamic groups had difficulties in following ICMI's anti-regime turn after the March announcement of the cabinet. In contrast to Habibie, whose constitutional position protected him from possible Suharto-initiated reprisals, Prabowo was politically vulnerable. The competition between Wiranto and Prabowo exposed the latter to the risk of dismissal if Suharto concluded that Prabowo's political allies worked against him. Accordingly, the Islamist groups could not afford to confront Suharto in the way ICMI did. In fact, as Schwarz (2004, p. 331) observed, "their fervent support for Soeharto put them in a distinct minority of defenders of Soeharto's family". KISDI leaders knew, however, that Prabowo began promoting the possibility of a Suharto resignation in Habibie's favour, which in turn would result in increased political access for Islamist groups.⁶⁹ The leaders of KISDI and DDII therefore maintained a low profile for most of the crisis, but made political preparations for the increasingly likely scenario of a Habibie presidency.

DIVIDED AGAINST SUHARTO

Political crises often provide traditionally divided civilian actors with an opportunity to forge the very coalitions that are essential for ending military-backed authoritarian rule. In Indonesia, the creation of a united front among Muslim groups would have gone a long way to remove Suharto from power and install a transitional government in his place. However, no such coalition emerged during the political crisis of 1998. Instead, Muslim-based and other civilian forces had highly divergent positions towards the troubled regime. Nahdlatul Ulama and Megawati's PDI were unwilling to become part of an aggressive oppositional movement, and the deterrent of Habibie's potential rise to power served as a further incentive to maintain their non-confrontational stance. By contrast, Amien and many Muhammadiyah functionaries had joined the student movement in demanding not only Suharto's resignation, but also a completely new political system. ICMI, finally, aimed at a controlled transfer of power from Suharto to Habibie. This confronted the organization with a delicate and seemingly contradictory task: while it had to damage the government severely enough to cause Suharto's removal, it also needed to ensure that the regime remained sufficiently functional to facilitate the orderly succession of Habibie.

The diametrically opposed interests of major societal forces obstructed the formation of effective elite opposition to Suharto and prevented the establishment of a political alternative to the faltering regime. Accordingly, the initiative for



overthrowing Suharto shifted to the student movement and other non-elite actors, setting the country on a course of regime change driven by popular protest and mass violence rather than the institutional assumption of power by oppositional groups. Only when the nation-wide upheaval had rendered Suharto's resignation inevitable did most societal organizations eventually unite to call for the president's immediate withdrawal. By that time, however, it was too late for them to play any significant role in negotiating the terms of the ongoing regime change — this process had already been taken over by compromise-oriented military officers keen to preserve the interests of key New Order groups and individuals.

Opposition after Medan: Strategic Options and Dilemmas

Not surprisingly, it was a major outbreak of street protest rather than elite-initiated activism that triggered the belated political consensus between Muslim and other civilian groups about Suharto's resignation. Highlighting the inevitability of Suharto's demise, the Medan riots of early May 1998 had a tremendous impact on the political behaviour of Indonesia's societal elite. The NU central board, for example, had cautiously declared its support for the student movement in mid-April, but the Medan incident accelerated its gradual desertion of Suharto. Shortly after Suharto's departure to Egypt, NU official Said Agil Siraj stated that NU would prepare its own reform proposals. He assigned special spiritual powers to these plans by stressing that the word "reform" was mentioned forty-one times in the Qur'an. On 12 May, leading NU *kiai* met in Surabaya and proclaimed their commitment to reform. In addition, two NU deputy chairmen, Fajrul Falaakh and Rozy Munir, became involved in efforts to establish a forum of opposition figures in order to maximize pressure on the regime. The preparatory meetings of the association, named *Forum Kerja Indonesia* (Forki, Indonesian Working Forum), were mostly held in the office of the NU-affiliated LKKNU (*Lembaga Kemashabatan Keluarga Nahdlatul Ulama*, Institute for the Benefit of Nahdlatul Ulama Families).⁷⁰

But while the establishment of Forki showed that most non-regime figures now agreed that Suharto had to go, it also underlined that they still found it impossible to cooperate with one another. Not only Wahid and Megawati appeared reluctant to engage in the forum; Amien too had at that stage concluded that an elite-based coalition with his rivals was neither possible nor necessary. Although Amien's private secretary Muhammad Najib took part in some of Forki's coordinating sessions, his boss preferred to focus on the preparations for his own opposition forum, the People's Leadership Council.



Amien's blueprint for the planned council reflected his belief that he no longer needed a broad elite coalition to achieve regime change. While still presented as a pluralist association of regime critics, the council now targeted intellectuals close to Amien rather than influential religio-political leaders. According to David Bouchier (1999a, p. 44), it was to consist "of people with moral authority" and form a "temporary repository of political power if need arose". The former editor of the banned news magazine *Tempo*, Goenawan Mohammad, assisted Amien in drafting a list of potential members, which included human rights activists Abdul Hakim Garuda Nusantara and Adnan Buyung Nasution, academic Arbi Sanit, and veteran politician Emil Salim. Involvement in the council was not without risks, however. After Amien had announced its imminent formation, the regime prepared to respond with its conventional catalogue of sanctions. Minister of Home Affairs Hartono questioned whether the council was a rival institution to the MPR, in which case the government would be forced to crack down on it. As Goenawan and Amien were preparing the official inauguration of the council, the killing of four students at Trisakti University on 12 May provided the plan with a new, significantly radicalized momentum. The subsequent chaos generated by mass protests, declining state authority, and open rifts within the regime prepared the stage for dramatic political change. The significance of the paradigmatic shift was captured in Amien's tour of the city on 13 May. As Amien passed the rioters, they applauded and shouted his name, and soldiers saluted him. The procedural insigniae of power, introduced and defended by the New Order for decades, were gradually transferred to those who challenged it.

With Suharto out of the country, and the security forces losing control over the capital, the induction of Amien's leadership forum on 14 May underscored the collective impression of imminent regime change. The name ultimately chosen for the forum was "Popular Mandate Council" (*Majelis Amanat Rakyat*, MAR), not coincidentally featuring Mohammad Amien Rais' initials. The organization was now tailored exclusively to the needs of the Muhammadiyah chairman, and its first press statement echoed Amien's political priorities. The release contained three major demands and appeals: first, Suharto had to step down immediately; second, the security forces had to exercise restraint in handling the riots; and third, the students and the broader population had to remain calm to ensure the unobstructed continuation of the reform process. Both in terms of its form and substance, the declaration of MAR constituted a further step in the disintegration process of Suharto's system of socio-political control. For much of its rule, the New Order had subjected all socio-political organizations in Indonesia to a regime of strict



conformity, forcing them to obtain numerous licences and permits, adopt the national ideology, and accept their subordination to the ministry of home affairs. The creation of new groups without state approval demonstrated that the rules imposed by Suharto's state began to lose their power of intimidation, which in turn convinced oppositional forces to intensify their attacks on the regime.

The foundation of a pluralist association of regime critics not only widened the gap between Amien and the government, but also threatened to antagonize his long-time political allies in the modernist faction of Indonesian Islam. Only one hour after the MAR press conference had concluded, Adi Sasono asked Amien to visit him at ICMI headquarters. There, the two Muslim leaders engaged in a heated debate about both the strategy behind MAR's formation and the plurality of its composition. Adi objected to MAR's heterogeneous membership, which included Christians, secular nationalists, and even a gay activist. The ICMI secretary-general warned Amien that his core supporters in the modernist constituency felt increasingly alienated by his courtship of non-Muslim groups, and recommended that he reassert his Islamic image by speaking to a public gathering at the modernist Al-Azhar mosque a couple of days later (Najib 1998, p. 50). The invitation exposed Amien's structural dilemma that, in its various manifestations, had contributed to his reputation as a political chameleon: serving the interests of his own constituency while at the same time expanding his interaction with other religio-political groups was not only a delicate, but often impossible task. His cross-constituency approach led to confusion over his political and ideological positions, with Amien more often than not surrendering to the temptation of adopting the stance of the crowd he addressed or the person he debated with. In the discussion with Adi, he reassured his fellow modernist activist that the inclusion of Christians in MAR was inconsequential as he was determined to define the direction of the organization himself. He managed to excuse himself from the Al-Azhar event, but agreed to give a speech after the Friday prayers at the same place. Adi Sasono appeared satisfied, for the time being, and the two Muslim figures continued their exchange of views throughout the night as they awaited Suharto's return from Egypt in the early morning of 15 May (Najib 1998, p. 51).

Amien's temporary success in appeasing his core Islamic constituency confirmed his belief that he could bring down the regime without a broad-based coalition of key socio-political leaders. Although representatives from both ends of the political spectrum, such as the conservative Muslim politician Husein Umar and the leftist gay rights activist Dede Oetomo, eventually decided not to join MAR, Amien appeared confident that his



popularity was sufficient to guarantee the success of the organization and the agenda it pursued. Thus he refused to cooperate when the idea of an alliance between Wahid, Megawati, and himself was revived by several civil society figures. Remaining conspicuously absent from the declaration ceremony of Forki on 15 May,⁷¹ Amien signalled that he had given up on the idea of overthrowing the New Order government with an alliance of non-regime constituency leaders. Wahid and Megawati did not turn up either to the event, disappointing a crowd of domestic and international journalists who had hoped that the three national figures would finally come together and claim the leadership of Indonesia from the disintegrating regime. It was most likely the tangible inevitability of Suharto's departure, brought about by the student movement and widespread popular unrest, that convinced the three leaders that the regime's days were numbered even without their forming an alliance. In addition, Amien apparently saw Forki as an act of undeserved assistance for Wahid and Megawati who had kept a convenient distance to the popular protests and only emerged when the regime had almost collapsed.⁷²

Preparing for Post-Suharto Politics: Continuity or Radical Change?

Despite continued disunity among them, the major religio-political organizations began to prepare their constituencies for the end of Suharto's rule. NU issued a statement on 15 May that welcomed Suharto's contemplations in Egypt about resigning from office. Within Nahdlatul Ulama, the view was now prevailing that defending the lost cause of the regime would damage the organization more than taking the risk of a final retaliation from Suharto's side:

We had a leadership meeting on that Friday (15 May), during which we were bombarded with phone calls from the regions, all pushing us to do something. Imron Hamzah [a respected *kiai* from Surabaya] shouted through the phone that he found it inconceivable that NU remained silent while everything fell apart. We said "yes, yes, be patient, we are working on it." ... At the end, we endorsed Suharto's alleged plan to resign.⁷³

Wahid, by contrast, still preferred a negotiated settlement with Suharto to a chaotic transfer of power to a council of oppositional politicians. On 16 May, Wahid predicted that the student movement "will fade away like its predecessors, the 1974 and 1978 movements". He brushed aside calls for Suharto's resignation, saying that the president had been provided with



strong legitimation from the MPR.⁷⁴ Van Dijk (2001, p. 199) claimed that Wahid made the remarks because he was “shocked by the violence in the middle of May”. However, Wahid’s comments followed an established pattern of his thinking that had its origins in much earlier periods of the crisis, and appeared to have more to do with his political strategy than with the distressing images of the riots. The prospects of either a populist transitional government dominated by Amien Rais or a constitutional handover of authority to Habibie were nightmares for both Wahid and the Nahdlatul Ulama constituency. Accordingly, he engaged with moderate elements in the armed forces that lobbied for a gradual withdrawal of Suharto from politics, but were prepared to leave the latter in charge of its details and schedule. In a meeting with Wiranto, Wahid underlined the necessity for close cooperation between NU and ABRI. Wiranto emerged from the encounter with the impression that Wahid was a loyal ally in his efforts to seek an orderly transition, and asked his staff in ABRI headquarters to draft a press release that emphasized the general importance of ABRI-NU relations.⁷⁵ It was this press release that led to considerable irritation on Suharto’s part and, as described above, sparked a further escalation in the competition between Prabowo and Wiranto.

While key political forces now agreed on the necessity of Suharto’s removal, they continued to differ about the form and composition of a possible post-New Order government. Amien aimed at the disposal of Suharto and the political system that carried him, while Wahid supported an orderly transition process largely controlled by the outgoing president. ICMI, on the other hand, began to promote Habibie’s succession as the only constitutional solution to the crisis. On Sunday, 17 May, Adi Sasono suggested in a discussion with Amien that the most likely scenario was the handover of presidential powers from Suharto to Habibie.⁷⁶ Amien, however, was aware that a Habibie presidency was not what the students had been demonstrating for. The mere replacement of political leaders within the paradigmatic framework of the New Order system might have been satisfactory to the protesters only a couple of months ago, but the increased radicalism of the student movement after the Trisakti incident demanded nothing less than the complete reform of the political foundations of the state. While personally inclined to believe in Habibie’s commitment to the interests of political openness in general and modernist Islam in particular, Amien felt that he could not promote an intra-regime solution to the crisis without jeopardizing his reformist credentials. But with Suharto still clinging to power, and the threat of a military crackdown hanging over the protesters, Amien conceded that removing Suharto had absolute priority over everything else.⁷⁷



The dispute among major societal forces over the conditions of Suharto's withdrawal and the format of the post-New Order polity sparked a hectic search for compromise. Nurcholish Madjid, who was widely acknowledged as a mediator between traditionalist and modernist Islam and even respected by the New Order authorities, appeared to be an ideal candidate to offer solutions acceptable to all. On 14 May, Nurcholish had presented his ideas to ABRI headquarters, outlining the timetable for Suharto's gradual withdrawal from politics. The interaction over the following days with a large number of political leaders, however, convinced Nurcholish that his plan was unsustainable. It was most of all Amien whose arguments made Nurcholish conclude that the country could not afford taking the risk of allowing Suharto to set the terms for his own succession as the latter might well use the opportunity to consolidate his power. Nurcholish recalled that "at first, I thought Suharto could be given some time to organize the transfer of power — but Amien convinced me that Suharto might just want exactly that, and that he might come out on top again".⁷⁸ Unaware that Nurcholish had changed his mind, Suharto felt attracted to the idea of a controlled, loosely scheduled departure from the power centre. The Nurcholish initiative, in its initial form, provided Suharto with the chance of influencing the negotiations about his replacement, reach agreements over the legal aspects of his retirement, and seek long-term solutions for the business interests of his family. With the parliament demanding his resignation on Monday, 18 May, Suharto sent for Nurcholish to discuss the details of his plan.

As their discussion began, it quickly emerged that Suharto's main concern was to avoid a concrete time frame for his long-term withdrawal plans. Ignoring Nurcholish's opening remark that developments had overtaken his earlier proposals, and that the president's immediate resignation was now inevitable, Suharto insisted that general elections had to be held before he could resign in a constitutional and orderly fashion. Nurcholish, however, told him "that the elections and his resignation had to be completed within six months; he got irritated at that, and went off about how big Indonesia is and how long electoral preparations would take". Nurcholish then conveyed to him "that I was not convinced, so he tried to slightly increase his offer by proposing to step down 'as soon as possible' after general elections".⁷⁹ Clearly aware that his political credibility was exhausted, Suharto asked Nurcholish to assemble a team of Muslim leaders to announce his retirement proposals. As they went through the list of possible candidates for what Donald Emmerson (1999, p. 304) has termed Suharto's "Muslims of last resort", it emerged that the president intended to exploit the cleavages in the Islamic



community for his agenda of a controlled political retreat: he nominated five representatives from NU, including Wahid and Ilyas Ruchiat, but insisted on the exclusion of Amien Rais. Mindful of NU's accommodative stance under Guided Democracy and much of the New Order, Suharto apparently hoped that the organization could be tempted to back his blueprint for the political transition. In this context, Amien's central role in the protest movement as well as the prospect of a Habibie presidency provided Suharto with deterrents potentially strong enough to lure NU into supporting his plans.

Suharto's courting of NU in order to outplay Amien Rais triggered an intense debate in Wahid's inner circle over the question whether to participate in the presidential meeting or not. For Suharto, Wahid's participation was crucial. His socio-political status equalled Amien's, and he was therefore potentially able to neutralize the latter's radicalism. In order to ensure Wahid's involvement in the gathering, Suharto asked Siti Hardiyanti and Hartono for help. Both had been politically aligned with the NU leader in the 1997 election campaign, and a loose personal contact had been maintained.⁸⁰ Siti Hardiyanti phoned Wahid in the early evening, explaining the reasons for the meeting. Wahid immediately agreed to take part, provided that his health allowed him to do so. Fearing that the NU chairman might finally back down from the event, Hartono visited Wahid two hours later. As the minister of home affairs left, he even asked Wahid's assistant to make sure that the NU leader showed up the following day.⁸¹ While Wahid had made up his mind and was determined to participate, some of the younger intellectuals in his circle warned that he might be forced to lend moral legitimation to Suharto's consolidation plans. Muhaimin Iskandar, his nephew and a leader of PMII, suspected that the president had the draft for his political future already completed and only wanted Wahid's public blessing for it. Concerned about "Gus Dur's image and NU's reputation", Muhaimin warned Wahid that he was walking into a trap.⁸² Others feared that rival political leaders participating in the meeting could overpower an unprepared Wahid with their scenarios for solving the crisis. However, with Wahid's younger brother Hasyim and Fajrul Falaakh arguing the case for participation, the NU chairman decided to go ahead as planned.⁸³

Wahid was not the only Muslim leader who was inclined to grant Suharto a dignified, generously scheduled departure from politics. Wahid's Islamist opponents also felt that Suharto's withdrawal came at a time when they were profiting most from his regime. On Monday evening, when Nurcholish met Suharto, DDII patriarch Anwar Haryono sent for Amien Rais. In an attempt to deradicalize the Muhammadiyah chairman, the ailing *Dewan Dakwah* leader reminded him of Suharto's achievements in defending Muslim



interests since the early 1990s: the foundation of ICMI, the establishment of Bank Muamalat, the publication of the Islamic newspaper *Republika*, the termination of the controversial state lottery SDSB, and the lifting of the ban on wearing headscarves in schools. In addition, according to Anwar, the number of non-Muslim ministers in the cabinet had been reduced to a minimum.⁸⁴ Based on his positive Islamic record, Anwar recommended that all Muslim groups support Suharto in the implementation of his reform project. Anwar's explanation highlighted the suspicions of Islamist forces concerning the political uncertainty that might succeed the authoritarian regime. While a Habibie presidency was viewed as a positive outcome, other scenarios were as likely: the military could take over and return to the anti-Muslim policies of the 1970s; a transitional government with representatives from diverse backgrounds could be installed, watering down Muslim demands; or, as in 1955, parliamentary democracy could split the Muslim forces and hand victory to the nationalists. Anwar's lecture, however, failed to convince Amien. When Amien left Anwar's house, he kissed his senior's hand, adding that he wanted to do so for Anwar, but "I won't do it for [Suharto]" (Najib 1998, p. 60).

The Final Act: Suharto and his "Muslims of Last Resort"

The deep divisions within the civilian elite over Suharto's fate appeared to offer the president a final chance to play the various factions off against each other. The leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama and the Islamist groups were leaning towards a settlement with Suharto, while the modernist organizations Muhammadiyah and ICMI openly demanded his immediate resignation. That Suharto's efforts were ultimately in vain was not only due to the unstoppable force of the popular protest, but was also the result of Nurcholish's decision to include Amien in the preparations for the presidential meeting with the Muslim leaders. One hour before the meeting on Tuesday morning, 19 May, Nurcholish and Amien met with three modernist Muslim figures invited to the encounter with Suharto. Among them were Yusril Ihza Mahendra, an Islamist activist but also a speech writer in Suharto's state secretariat, and Muhammadiyah's Malik Fadjar. Addressing his modernist colleagues, Amien demanded that Suharto not be given a chance to consolidate his position, "warning us that we had to resist Suharto's charm".⁸⁵ The Muhammadiyah leader insisted on Suharto's resignation and elections within six months or, alternatively, the surrender of presidential authority through a decree similar to the 1966 letter that had transferred executive powers from Sukarno to Suharto. Equipped with Amien's proposals, Yusril, Malik, and Nurcholish



left for the palace and met with the NU-affiliated participants. Nurcholish gave a short speech to the group before they entered the meeting room, stressing that it was Suharto who had invited them, and not the *ulama* who had sought the encounter. As Nurcholish conveyed Amien's message, he reminded the participants that they had to communicate the people's aspirations to Suharto, and these aspirations clearly demanded the president's resignation. Wahid and some military officers who listened to Nurcholish's words remained silent.⁸⁶

The coordination between Nurcholish and Amien destroyed Suharto's hopes for a gradual withdrawal on his own terms. Nurcholish and former NU leader Ali Yafie made it clear from the beginning that Suharto's resignation was not negotiable. They also objected to Suharto's plans for the establishment of a "reform council" under his own coordination. Yusril raised concerns about the legality of the council, pointing out that "such a political-legal institution needed to be anchored in the constitution and related laws, and could not be established just like that".⁸⁷ Eventually, the participants agreed on the foundation of a "reform committee", elections at the earliest occasion possible, and Suharto's resignation afterwards. They added, however, that none of them was ready to sit either on the committee or in any reshuffled cabinet. They also declined Suharto's request to line up behind him during the announcement of his plans. Not only Suharto was taken aback by the intransigence of the Nurcholish-led team. Wahid, surprised about the extent of detailed coordination between Nurcholish and the modernist participants, expressed his discomfort with the way that Nurcholish had asked Suharto to resign.⁸⁸ Wahid's generous biographer, Greg Barton (2002, p. 242), explained Wahid's behaviour in the meeting in cultural terms, quoting him as saying that "now that the knife had been thrust deftly into Soeharto's side there was no need to twist it for it to accomplish its work". In addition, Barton also referred to Wahid's continued concerns over a possible regime backlash. It is more likely, however, that Wahid's indignation was triggered by his increasing fear of political marginalization. Amien and Nurcholish had taken the political initiative away from him, positioning themselves in the forefront of those deciding over the succession issue. When Wahid left the meeting, he called on the students to stop their demonstrations in order to give Suharto a chance to implement his reform programme.

Despite Suharto's failure to impose his initial agenda on the group of Muslim clerics, his announcement of a reform package created remarkable levels of irritation among its members and other societal leaders. Nurcholish and Amien, for example, had very different interpretations concerning the



concessions that Suharto had made to the gathering. Nurcholish felt that he had resisted Suharto's attempts to push through a succession mechanism on his own terms, and viewed the result as the best possible outcome.⁸⁹ Amien, on the other hand, saw his fears confirmed that Suharto might use the meeting to consolidate his power. He questioned why Suharto had only invited Muslim leaders to the encounter, and criticized the use of Islamic symbols for political ends.⁹⁰ At the centre of his criticism was, of course, Suharto's failure to provide a clear date for his resignation. Accordingly, Amien decided to proceed with his preparations for a mass demonstration at the Monas Square on the following day, 20 May. Student leaders also emphasized that Suharto's announcement was insufficient to satisfy their demands, and that they were determined to continue their protest. It was once again the forceful initiative of the student movement that drove the process of regime change, exposing the elite debate over the quality and reliability of Suharto's offers as a hypothetical deliberation with limited political impact.

The most significant outcome of the palace gathering was that Suharto's efforts to sideline Amien and regain control of the political process had failed. Both in terms of his elite relations and his intellectual leadership of the student protest, the momentum remained with the Muhammadiyah chairman. This was reflected in public statements of student leaders that they intended to continue their protests, as well as in the political manoeuvres of elements within the regime struggling to save their career prospects. Amien's two operational centres, the Muhammadiyah office and Malik Fajar's house, were now crowded with ICMI leaders and prominent cabinet ministers keen on cutting their ties with the falling regime. Ministers Tanri Abeng, Fuad Bawazier, and Akbar Tandjung felt it necessary to demonstrate their presence in Amien's company on Tuesday evening, preparing the stage for their resignations on the following day. The cabinet ministers knew that Suharto's attempts to prolong his rule had no chance of succeeding. In Yogyakarta, students geared up for a huge demonstration protected by the Sultan, and despite Amien's cancellation of the Jakarta rally in the early morning of 20 May because of warnings from inside the armed forces, the disintegration of the regime proceeded at a rapid pace.⁹¹ Even Wiranto viewed the banning of the protest not so much as an effort to sustain the regime, but as a final service to Suharto, allowing him to withdraw in dignity rather than going down in the chaos of a populist revolt.⁹²

The last full day of the Suharto polity saw a stream of former loyalists turning their backs on the crumbling regime. With Yogyakarta witnessing one of the biggest rallies in its history, combining the power of the masses with the cultural strength of the sultanate, there was no hope that the



protest would subside. In Jakarta, Amien made his way through the street blockades to the DPR building, where the students celebrated the third day of their occupation and showed no signs of declining enthusiasm for their cause. Fuelled by such images of unrelenting societal pressure, the internal erosion of the regime continued. As Suharto's assistants tried in vain to convince credible figures to sit on his reform committee, fourteen of his ministers handed in their resignations. Most importantly, Habibie now also accelerated his dissociation from his former patron. He had received information that in the meeting with the Muslim leaders, Suharto had used the prospect of a Habibie presidency as a political deterrent, asking them in a dismissive tone if they were aware that his resignation would automatically lead to Habibie's ascension.⁹³ Furthermore, in a subsequent meeting with Habibie, Suharto indicated that in the case of his resignation, he expected his vice-president to step down as well, clearing the way for a succession controlled by Suharto's cronies in the military and the political establishment (Habibie 2006, p. 37). Habibie refused to endorse this scenario, however, marking the end of their decades-long relationship of "filial responsiveness" (McIntyre 2005, p. 123) and provoking Suharto to break off all contact with the man he once believed to be a loyal student and supporter. Against all odds, Habibie was now determined to be president, eventually outsmarting his mentor who had put so much stress on his own political cleverness (McIntyre 2005, p. 116).

Habibie's insubordination provided Suharto with undeniable evidence for the extent of his isolation and decline. If it was impossible to secure the loyalty of a former minister who had famously called him "super genius" and "Professor Suharto", then there was nobody else to turn to. After Quraish Shihab, the minister of religious affairs, had made several unsuccessful attempts to talk Nurcholish into joining the president's reform team, Suharto dropped first hints to his aides about an immediate resignation. The desertion of key loyalists and the collapse of his reform ideas left Suharto trapped in a situation where only the military could keep him in power. Suharto knew, however, that the power constellation had irreversibly shifted to his disadvantage, and that military intervention was unlikely to prolong his rule, let alone restore the unchallenged authority he was used to exercise. When Wiranto suggested that the armed forces were not supportive of a military crackdown, Suharto concurred at once and asked his inner circle to prepare for the transfer of power to Habibie on the next day. In acknowledgement of the central role played by his main opponent, Suharto sent a personal message to Amien, informing him of his imminent resignation and asking him to refrain from further protests.⁹⁴



Suharto's departure sparked highly diverse reactions in the various factions of Indonesia's Muslim community. While Amien was undoubtedly the central figure in the movement that convinced the long-time autocrat to leave, the Muhammadiyah leader was not completely satisfied with the details of the regime change. Habibie's presidency certainly offered rewards for the modernist Muslim constituency, but Amien suspected that the New Order power structures had a better chance of survival under Suharto's handpicked deputy than they would have had after a revolutionary disintegration of the regime.⁹⁵ Amien's friends from ICMI, on the other hand, were electrified by the opportunities that the new constellation provided. Only days after Suharto had used Habibie to fend off demands for his resignation, ICMI functionaries found themselves drafting Habibie's first speech as new president. The Islamist groups around DDII and KISDI, having failed to defend Suharto's presidency, swiftly redirected their pro-regime activism towards Habibie. Within hours, they led thousands of supporters to the parliament, fearing that the student movement might try to remove Habibie from power as well. The confrontation between student protesters and pro-regime demonstrators exposed the very vulnerable legitimacy that would become a dominant feature of the new government throughout Habibie's interregnum. Nahdlatul Ulama, for its part, also opposed the sudden transfer of presidential authority to Habibie. Some of Wahid's fiercest opponents were now likely to sit in government, possibly denying traditionalist politicians access to state resources. In short, Suharto's downfall had done little to overcome the divisions within Indonesia's Muslim community, but had sharpened them amidst increasing competition for the spoils of the evolving post-New Order polity.

CIVILIAN DISUNITY, POPULAR PROTEST, AND THE END OF SUHARTO

Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (1996, p. xxiv) maintained that militaries or authoritarian figures supported by them are able to seize power and sustain it over long periods of time when "civilian politicians are weak and divided". Indonesia's New Order has been an obvious example of this linkage between the level of democratic unity among civilian forces and the likelihood and duration of military intervention in politics. Cleavages in the civilian political sphere, and particularly within the Muslim community, allowed Suharto to seize, expand, and sustain authoritarian rule for more than three decades. This conclusion has led some analysts to explain Suharto's downfall with the reverse argument: that his demise was due to the sudden unification of civilian oppositional forces against him. Robert



Hefner (2000, p. 199), for example, argued that “for the first time, that opposition now united under Wahid’s NU, Megawati’s nationalists and the reform-minded modernists around Rais”. The discussion in this chapter has shown, however, that no such coalition existed, and that the leaders of key socio-political organizations continued their long-standing, religio-political disputes throughout the crisis. Some of them appeared prepared to engage with the regime and secure its survival at various junctures of the evolving crisis, while others simply isolated themselves from the popular protest engulfing the New Order state. That they finally agreed that Suharto had to resign had to do less with a genuine political consensus between Indonesia’s main societal groups than with the fact that the uncontrollable force of the student movement, combined with widespread social unrest, had driven the regime to the brink of collapse. The demands for Suharto’s departure were, in most cases, post-factum endorsements of the inevitable.

The theory of a united opposition causing Suharto’s fall has been challenged by several authors who stressed the non-involvement of major religio-political forces in the movement against the regime. Andrée Feillard (2002, p. 118), for example, conceded that “Nahdlatul Ulama was not a decisive factor in the 1998 political change”, blaming the fact that Wahid was “quasi-absent” during the crisis as he was “lying in bed during most of this crucial time”. Ken Young (1999, p. 120) concurred that Wahid’s stroke had such an impact that “he and NU have not been at the forefront of the movement for change”. These assessments, while contradicting the assumption of a united front against Suharto, still do not capture the systematic unwillingness of religio-political leaders to join forces with their rivals against the regime. Wahid’s inclination to favour cooperation with the embattled autocracy over the agenda for democratic change predated his stroke, and was pursued consistently until the very end of Suharto’s government. His endorsement of Golkar in the 1997 elections, the attacks on Amien Rais’ candidacy, the public denunciation of plans to unite the opposition, and his calls to leave the succession to Suharto were perfectly compatible with the post-stroke criticism of the student movement and his lobbying for a negotiated settlement with Suharto. In fact, many NU leaders acknowledged in private that a healthy Wahid would probably have put even more effort into opposing the popular movement for Suharto’s resignation than the ill chairman eventually did.⁹⁶ Wahid’s political stance was defined by long-term considerations of strategy, religio-ideological convictions, constituency interests, and personal ambition that were largely immune to the effects of his medical condition. The NU central board, on the other hand, shared many of Wahid’s sentiments, but felt overwhelmed by the force of popular



protests and finally withdrew its support for Suharto when his position had become indefensible.

Wahid's fears that his support for a cross-constituency coalition against Suharto would open the door for the forces of modernist Islam to seize power turned him into one of the largest obstacles for a united opposition to the struggling New Order government. He was by no means the only civilian leader, however, who harboured deep suspicions about his religious-political rivals and thus refused to forge an anti-regime alliance. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the leader of the secular-nationalist segment of Indonesian politics, was equally reluctant to align herself with modernist Muslim figures and the populist force of the student movement. She too had concerns about the possible rise of Islam as a political factor, and she was not prepared to subject her constituency to the risk of retaliation by the troubled Suharto regime. Accordingly, she was hardly heard of throughout the crisis, except for a half-hearted declaration in January 1998 that she was ready to accept the presidency if it was offered to her. Amien Rais, for his part, saw himself confronted with accusations that he temporarily suspended his opposition to Suharto because Habibie had promised him increased regime participation for modernist Muslims. He also had little confidence in Wahid's reliability and Megawati's political skills, opting to link up with the student movement and critical intellectuals instead. In contrast to Wahid, Amien immediately understood the significance of the student protest. He was convinced that it would not just "fade away" like its 1974 and 1978 predecessors, but that it was to become the decisive political force in the crisis. Unlike Megawati, Amien put his personal safety and that of his followers at risk, earning him the respect of the students who subsequently allowed him to use their movement as his political vehicle. Established as the informal leader of the popular protest, Amien extracted himself from last-minute efforts to form a coalition with Megawati and Wahid. ICMI, finally, only supported a broad-based elite coalition against Suharto when it felt excluded from the regime, but turned to promote an intra-systemic transfer of power when its leader became the main beneficiary of such a solution.

This chapter has shown that deep divisions between crucial civilian forces were as important for the character of the 1998 regime change as developments within the armed forces. If intra-military conflicts gave rise to compromise-oriented officers willing to negotiate Suharto's resignation within the framework of the existing regime, then the inability of civilian groups to offer a credible alternative to Wiranto's plan made the succession of Suharto's deputy unavoidable. The material presented here has demonstrated that it was the anarchic force of popular protest, and not



the effective coordination among key oppositional elites, that succeeded in removing Suharto from office. This, in turn, had significant implications for the way the power transfer took place as well as for the emerging political landscape of post-Suharto Indonesia. With the most influential societal forces unprepared and too fragmented to take Suharto's place, they had to surrender the political initiative to military officers and other New Order elements who arranged for a regime change that protected their interests. Instead of a non-regime alliance of societal leaders, it was Suharto's "student" who was put in charge of the first eighteen months of the post-authoritarian period. Under his tutelage, patronage networks and power structures of the New Order state, including those associated with the armed forces, managed to extend their influence into the new polity. The continuity of authoritarian structures and forces in the post-Suharto state was certain to complicate and delay the process of democratic consolidation, with the area of civil-military reforms particularly vulnerable to pressure from residual powers of the old regime. In addition, many of the religio-political cleavages that marked the pattern of elite conflicts during Suharto's fall were likely to persist after May 1998, with serious consequences for the prospects of democratic change.

Notes

- ¹ Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, Mataram, Lombok, 16 November 1997.
- ² Interview with Nurcholish Madjid, Jakarta, 28 May 1998.
- ³ In 1997, NU had 6,800 pesantren and 21,000 schools under its coordination. While money for development and civil society projects was increasingly coming through international channels (such as the Australian and American governments, UNICEF, or foundations like the Ford Foundation and The Asia Foundation), the majority of NU institutions remained dependent on funds from local governments. See "NU Kini Miliki 21,000 Sekolah dan 6,800 Pesantren", *Media Indonesia*, 21 October 1997.
- ⁴ "Gus Dur: Warga NU Jangan Tertinggal di Landasan", *Suara Merdeka*, 21 August 1997.
- ⁵ Interview with Habieb Syarief Mohammad, Lombok, 17 November 1997.
- ⁶ "Gus Dur Buka Rahasia Istigotsah Bersama Mbak Tutut", *Jawa Pos*, 15 October 1997.
- ⁷ Nahdlatul Ulama conducts congresses every five years, with mid-term conferences (*Konferensi Besar*, or *Konbes*) organized in between to evaluate the performance of the leadership elected at the congresses. The Lombok conference was one of these mid-term conferences.



- ⁸ “GM Trikora, KH Ilyas Ruchiat Mendukung Pak Harto”, *Media Indonesia*, 17 September 1997.
- ⁹ “NU akan Gerakan Kekuatan Massa”, *Kompas*, 7 October 1997.
- ¹⁰ “Suksesi Harus Lewat Satu Tangan, Jika Banyak Tangan Bisa Amburadul”, *Tempo Interaktif*, 31 October 1997.
- ¹¹ Rais Aam PBNU, “Khutbah Iftitah Rais Aam Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama Pada Pembukaan Munas dan Konbes NU”, Bagu, 17 November 1997.
- ¹² Interview with Ilyas Ruchiat, Mataram, 19 November 1997.
- ¹³ Abdurrahman Wahid during his accountability speech at the Konbes NU, Mataram, 19 November 1997, personal notes by the author.
- ¹⁴ PWNU Jawa Timur, “Laporan PWNU Jawa Timur Pada Konbes NU di Lombok”, Mataram, 19 November 1997.
- ¹⁵ “Gus Dur: NU tidak Menghendaki Status Quo”, *Kompas*, 24 November 1997.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, Jakarta, 17 December 1997.
- ¹⁷ Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, Jakarta, 17 December 1997.
- ¹⁸ “Resmi Diumumkan ‘Kelompok 28 Oktober’”, *Media Indonesia*, 16 January 1998.
- ¹⁹ In an interview with a Dutch radio station, Wahid added another reason: “So, if you ask me why NU is not mobilized to, let’s say, topple Soeharto, then the answer is easy: I don’t want my people to be slaughtered by the military.” See “Gus Dur: Soeharto Harus Turun”, *Kabar dari Pijar*, 13 January 1998.
- ²⁰ Wahid spent more than two months in hospital, returning to his home on 22 March. See “Gus Dur Sudah Boleh Pulang”, *Jawa Pos*, 20 March 1998.
- ²¹ NU’s Deputy Chairman Hafidz Utsman was appointed acting chairman of NU on the day after Wahid’s stroke, and Secretary-General Ahmad Bagdja was given the mandate to act as spokesman for the organization. Hafidz and Ahmad Bagdja were both low-profile functionaries without significant power bases. See “Hafidz Utsman Ditunjuk Pimpin NU Sehari-hari”, *Media Indonesia*, 21 January 1998.
- ²² The activists were organized in three major NU-affiliated associations: IPNU (*Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama*, Nahdlatul Ulama Students Association), IPPNU (*Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama*, Nahdlatul Ulama Female Students Association), and PMII (*Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*, Indonesian Movement of Islamic Students). See “Generasi Muda NU: Krisis Ekonomi Akibat Mismanajemen”, *Suara Pembaruan*, 22 February 1998; Forum Aliansi OKP/LSM/MAHASISWA, “Seruan Suksesi Damai dan Terbuka Untuk Keselamatan dan Masa Depan Rakyat dan Bangsa Indonesia”, Jakarta, 5 February 1998.
- ²³ “NU Hanya Dukung Yang Dipilih MPR”, *Jawa Pos*, 21 February 1998.
- ²⁴ “Tinggalkan RSCM, Gus Dur Langsung Komentari Kabinet”, *Media Indonesia*, 23 March 1998. Within the cabinet, only the Minister of Religious Affairs Quraish Shihab and the Minister for Women Affairs Tuti Alawiyah had NU backgrounds.



- ²⁵ “PB NU: ABRI Sebaiknya Dukung Reformasi”, *Kompas*, 16 April 1998.
- ²⁶ Arifin Djunaidi attempted in vain to convince the central board to listen to Wahid before completing the draft, but his suggestion was ignored. Arifin engaged in a heated argument with NU Deputy Chairman Fajrul Falaakh, who was put in charge of writing the release in cooperation with senior *kiai* Mustofa Bisri. Fajrul reminded Arifin that it was unnecessary to carry Wahid’s name for all purposes, and that the latter was sick anyway. Interview with Fajrul Falaakh, Yogyakarta, 22 November 2000.
- ²⁷ Nur Iskandar al-Barsany, one of Central Java’s leading *kiai*, complained that NU should have popularized the ideas of reform much earlier: “If ideas like [those in the NU declaration in April] had been developed by NU headquarters earlier, and had those ideas become the theological foundation in the NU community, especially in the communities of the *kiai* and the *pesantren*, I am sure that in times when the state is facing a crisis like this, the culture of silence would not have been so evident” (Barsany 1998). He therefore demanded that the *kiai* immediately begin developing a theological foundation for the debate of politics in the *pesantren* (*fikih siyasah*), including the discussion of social issues (*al-fiqh al-ijtima’iy*).
- ²⁸ Interview with Fajrul Falaakh, Yogyakarta, 22 November 2000.
- ²⁹ Interview with Amien Rais, Yogyakarta, 25 November 1997.
- ³⁰ Interview with Muhammadiyah representatives from Padang and Makassar in the Muhammadiyah office in Yogyakarta, 28 November 1997. In addition, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah branch in Magelang described Amien’s criticism as “sincere, clean, and without any pretension”, and as such in line with Muhammadiyah’s mission. See “Senat UMS Tolak Serahkan ‘Kaos Dukungan’”, *Bernas*, 4 October 1997.
- ³¹ Amien’s candidacy had begun with a question from famous soothsayer Permadi at a seminar at the Legal Aid Institute LBH (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*) in Jakarta in late September. Permadi had asked Amien if he was ready to take up the presidency if he were elected that day. Amien responded, “God willing, I’m ready.” See “Calon Muhammadiyah dari Muhammadiyah”, *Suara Independen*, October 1997.
- ³² Amien interpreted his exclusion from the MPR as a rupture in the relations between the regime and Muhammadiyah. He stated that “A.R. Fachruddin was included [in the MPR], Ahmad Azhar Basyir was included, Amien Rais is not included.” See “Amien Rais: ‘Apakah Habibie itu Well Qualified? Jawaban Saya, Yes’”, *Forum Keadilan*, 20 October 1997.
- ³³ Interview with Taufik Kiemas, Sanur, Bali, 10 October 1998.
- ³⁴ Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, Jakarta, 17 December 1997.
- ³⁵ Interview with Laksamana Sukardi, senior PDI-P official, Sanur, Bali, 10 October 1998.
- ³⁶ “Opposition in Public Attack on Soeharto”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1998.



- ³⁷ “Amien Rais Imbau Warga Muhammadiyah Tetap Tenang”, *Republika*, 11 February 1998.
- ³⁸ Amien Rais, “Emil Salim dan Duet Soeharto-Habibie”, *Republika*, 25 February 1998.
- ³⁹ Amien offered to have his head shaved if it turned out later that he had sought cabinet seats for himself or his organization. He stated that “if he [Amien himself] has ambitions to get one of the ministerial seats, then it’s not him anymore. If that happens, this is no *Amien* who is a *Rais* [leader] any longer. Or no *Rais* who is *Amien* [trusted] any longer. I receive bets for shaving my hair.” See “Beri Pak Harto Kesempatan Lagi”, *Jawa Pos*, 19 February 1998.
- ⁴⁰ “Beri Pak Harto Kesempatan Lagi”, *Jawa Pos*, 19 February 1998.
- ⁴¹ Amien openly acknowledged that he had previously underestimated the student movement as a political force. Speaking at the UI (*Universitas Indonesia*, University of Indonesia) campus on 12 March, Amien admitted that two months earlier, he thought that the young generation was already exhausted (*loyo*), but “obviously we, the older generation, were wrong. Yesterday, the students of Gajah Mada organized similar protest activities, and I gave them eight out of ten. This time, I give eight and a half.” See “Amien Tampil di Tengah Ribuan Mahasiswa UI”, *Jawa Pos*, 13 March 1998.
- ⁴² “Amien: Nepotisme Tetap Berkonotasi Negatif”, *Jawa Pos*, 19 March 1998.
- ⁴³ On several occasions, Amien invited ABRI “to march together with the people while maintaining Pancasila, the Constitution, and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika [Indonesia’s national motto, lit. “unity in diversity”]”. By calling on the military to join the movement, and assuring it that the fundamentals of the state were not at risk if Suharto was to be deserted, Amien hoped that ABRI would finally conclude that supporting reform was a better choice than defending the president at all cost. Without ABRI’s “green light”, Amien declared on 21 March, a People’s Power movement would never happen. See “Amien Rais: Reformasi Dari Kampus Jangan Dianggap Enteng”, *Suara Pembaruan*, 19 April 1998; “Amien: Saya Siap Diperiksa 24 Jam”, *Jawa Pos*, 22 March 1998.
- ⁴⁴ Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, Jakarta, 26 May 1998.
- ⁴⁵ During a discussion in Washington on 30 April, Amien underlined that for the “last seven months, I have actively conducted dialogues with the leaders of other religions, like the bishops. They come to my house in Yogyakarta and have regular meetings with me. I am also invited to speak in front of Christian students. I am convinced that with meetings like these, we can cultivate a common understanding.” See “Amien: Pemimpin Golkar Kehilangan Arah”, *Jawa Pos*, 1 May 1998.
- ⁴⁶ Amien often stressed that he criticized the government “as chairman of Muhammadiyah”, and he frequently started his catalogue of demands with sentences such as “for Muhammadiyah, reform has to contain three aspects ...”. The reference to the organization he led added weight to his demands, but also strengthened the protection against possible punishment by the regime.

- See “Amien Rais: Reformasi Dari Kampus Jangan Dianggap Enteng”, *Suara Pembaruan*, 19 April 1998.
- ⁴⁷ “Amien Rais: Orang Bisa Saja Mengeksploitasi Nama Saya”, *Republika*, 8 February 1998.
- ⁴⁸ Interview with Malik Fajar, Jakarta, 3 June 1998.
- ⁴⁹ The supposed shape and function of the council changed frequently as Amien adjusted the idea to the rapid political developments. On 7 May, he had told a radio reporter in Germany that the “team” was to be formed by leading political figures of the country, including himself, Megawati, and Wahid. The task of the team was to meet with Suharto and his cabinet to discuss ways out of the crisis. On 8 May, Amien explained to a *Kompas* journalist in The Hague that the main agenda of the team was to work out a reform platform and then, interestingly, a power-sharing arrangement. After 11 May, Amien used the term “council”, but Megawati’s and Wahid’s participation was no longer mentioned. Instead, he suggested the formation of a board of political and academic figures sympathetic to him, with the leadership of the council clearly in his hands. See “Amien Rais Ingin Bentuk Tim Kepemimpinan Rakyat”, *Suara Pembaruan*, 8 May 1998, and “Amien Rais: Akan Dibentuk Majelis Kepemimpinan Rakyat”, *Kompas*, 12 May 1998.
- ⁵⁰ Adi wanted to develop “a national distribution system that reaches the whole society and reduces the risks of exclusive distribution as it happens these days”. See “Sekum Adi Sasono: Unjuk Rasa itu Wajar dan Sehat”, *Ummat*, 4 March 1998.
- ⁵¹ The military group in ICMI was led by Achmad Tirtosudiro, a retired lieutenant general with extensive experience in military business, bureaucratic jobs, and diplomatic postings, who had met Habibie in Germany in 1973 and had maintained a close relationship with him ever since. His closeness with Habibie also helped Tirtosudiro to become chairman of ICMI’s Jakarta chapter (Sriwidodo 2002).
- ⁵² Tirtosudiro created severe tensions in Golkar in September 1997, when he stated that Habibie was ready to take up the vice-presidency. Supporters of Golkar Chairman Harmoko, who had vice-presidential ambitions himself, deplored the statement publicly, and Habibie finally had to distance himself from it. See “Golkar Merasa Di-Fait-a-compli ICMI”, *Siar*, 19 September 1997. Z.A. Maulani, another retired general active in ICMI, was convinced that Habibie would surprise everybody and become the next vice-president. Interview with Z.A. Maulani, 11 December 1997.
- ⁵³ Interview with Adi Sasono, Jakarta, 8 January 1998.
- ⁵⁴ “Sudah Waktunya Dengarkan Pendapat Tokoh-tokoh Kritis”, *Kompas*, 5 January 1998.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with Adi Sasono, Jakarta, 8 January 1998.
- ⁵⁶ “Gus Dur Tolak Dialog Nasional”, *Kabar dari Pijar*, 13 January 1998.



- ⁵⁷ Adi Sasono expressed ICMI's view that "the office of the vice-president in the upcoming term will be of strategic importance in the effort to change the economic and political system in Indonesia". Even Nurcholish Madjid was convinced that "if Habibie is elected vice-president, the future of Indonesian democracy will be brighter". Nurcholish had been one of the most vocal critics of ICMI's pro-regime approach. See "ICMI Siap Lepaskan Habibie Jadi Wapres", *Kompas*, 26 January 1998; "15 Tokoh Muslim Bertemu Habibie", *Republika*, 25 February 1998.
- ⁵⁸ "Sekum ICMI Adi Sasono: Unjuk Rasa itu Wajar dan Sehat", *Ummat*, 4 March 1998.
- ⁵⁹ "Siapa Yang Lebih Baik daripada Habibie?", *Jawa Pos*, 28 January 1998.
- ⁶⁰ "Setelah Habibie Jadi Wapres: Emil Salim, Tirtosudiro, dan Azwar Calon Kuat Ketua Umum ICMI", *Surabaya Post*, 4 March 1998; "Pimpin Rapat ICMI, Pilih Pelaksana Harian", *Jawa Pos*, 13 March 1998.
- ⁶¹ Interview with Adi Sasono, Jakarta, 8 June 1998.
- ⁶² In late 1995, Haryanto had been in the centre of a corruption scandal, with the government's inspector-general accusing him of financial misconduct involving around US\$3 million (van Klinken 1996).
- ⁶³ "Adi Kecewa Susunan Kabinet", *Jawa Pos*, 16 March 1998.
- ⁶⁴ "Perombakan Kabinet Hak Prerogatif Presiden", *Republika*, 9 May 1998.
- ⁶⁵ Wahid, for example, was convinced that "this was all just a shadow play. In public Habibie said 'Don't be so harsh with poor old Suharto.' Behind the scenes he instructed them to demolish him so he could take his seat. Very predictable, but smart, I must admit.... But see, this is exactly why you can't work with these people. They always stab you in the back." Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, Jakarta, 26 May 1998.
- ⁶⁶ "Amien: Jangan Main Kucing-kucingan Lagi", *Suara Merdeka*, 13 April 1998.
- ⁶⁷ "Pak Habibie Sebaiknya Konsentrasi sebagai Wapres", *Kompas*, 18 May 1998.
- ⁶⁸ KISDI's pro-regime attitude also led to a rift with Amien Rais. KISDI distanced itself from Amien as much as Amien turned his back on the organization. In October 1997, Amien still spoke at a KISDI event in the Al-Azhar mosque, but afterwards Amien's confrontation with the regime and his lobbying of non-Muslim constituencies resulted in cool relations between the Muhammadiyah leader and the ultra-modernist group. See "Amien Rais: Ada yang tak Wajar dalam Kehidupan Nasional", *Kompas*, 6 October 1997; "Dibentuk Front Solidaritas Nasional Muslim Indonesia", *Kompas*, 9 February 1998.
- ⁶⁹ The Cooperation Body of Indonesian Pesantren (BKSPPI, *Badan Kerja Sama Pondok Pesantren Indonesia*), which had close relations to DDII and KISDI, organized a prayer meeting for Habibie on 19 February. At the event, the complex of common interests between ICMI, Habibie, Prabowo, and the ultra-modernist Islamic groups became evident. Adi Sasono, Prabowo, and Jakarta military commander Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin gave speeches, and the event culminated in a prayer for Habibie's successful election. See "BKSPPI Doakan Habibie



- Jadi Wapres”, *Republika*, 20 February 1998. One week later, BKSPPI, DDII and KISDI leaders met Habibie to remind him of the hopes of the modernist Muslim constituency regarding his upcoming vice-presidency. See “15 Tokoh Muslim Bertemu Habibie”, *Republika*, 25 February 1998.
- ⁷⁰ The idea for Forki was born earlier in the year. It was conceptualized as a solidarity forum to organize food deliveries to poverty-stricken areas. After remaining inactive for a couple of months, the political dynamics of May provided Forki with a fresh momentum not only to implement its initial aims, but also to bring together political figures with different backgrounds to unite against Suharto. Interview with Fajrul Falaakh, Yogyakarta, 22 November 2000.
- ⁷¹ “Empat Anggota MAR dari Surabaya Mundur, Dede: Upaya Curi Panggung”, *Surabaya Post*, 19 May 1998.
- ⁷² One of Megawati’s advisers explained that Megawati refrained from visiting the campuses because she had been told by intelligence sources that she was the target of Prabowo-affiliated military units. The same applied to her brother Guruh. Interview with Mochtar Buchori, leading PDI official, Jakarta, 5 June 1998.
- ⁷³ Wahid was neither involved in nor informed of the press release. Interview with Fajrul Falaakh, Yogyakarta, 22 November 2000.
- ⁷⁴ “Ada Pembelokan Arah Reformasi”, *Jawa Pos*, 17 May 1998.
- ⁷⁵ Interview with General (ret.) Wiranto, Jakarta, 13 October 2000.
- ⁷⁶ Some ICMI regional branches went public over the weekend with their demands for a special session of the MPR with the explicit agenda of replacing Suharto. The Central Java branch even demanded the resignation of DPR Chairman Harmoko for failing to follow up on the popular aspirations regarding Suharto’s position. ICMI’s central board would “only” call for the president’s resignation on Monday, 18 May. See “ICMI Jateng Tuntut Ketua DPR/MPR Diganti”, *Suara Merdeka*, 17 May 1998.
- ⁷⁷ Interview with Nurcholish Madjid, Jakarta, 28 May 1998.
- ⁷⁸ Interview with Nurcholish Madjid, Jakarta, 28 May 1998.
- ⁷⁹ Interview with Nurcholish Madjid, Jakarta, 28 May 1998.
- ⁸⁰ Wahid and Siti Hardiyanti had been scheduled to take part in an IPNU initiative to distribute money to poor school students on 25 May, before events determined otherwise. “PP NU dan Gerakan Berbagi”, *Republika*, 6 May 1998.
- ⁸¹ Interview with Al-Zastrouw Ng, Jakarta, 26 May 1998.
- ⁸² Interview with Mohaimin Iskandar, Jakarta, 26 September 1999.
- ⁸³ Interview with Hasyim Wahid, Jakarta, 14 November 1998. Fajrul compared the inter-elite politicking to a game of chess. As the game had already begun, and the major players already participated, NU had to play its part as well. Even if Wahid refused to attend, Fajrul continued, there was no guarantee that he would not be manipulated in his absence (Al-Zastrouw Ng 1999, pp. 41–42).
- ⁸⁴ Interview with Anwar Haryono, Jakarta, 25 July 1998.



- ⁸⁵ Interview with Malik Fadjar, Jakarta, 3 June 1998.
- ⁸⁶ Interview with Nurcholish Madjid, Jakarta, 27 May 1998.
- ⁸⁷ Interview with Yusril Ihza Mahendra, Jakarta, 25 August 1998.
- ⁸⁸ Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid, Jakarta, 26 May 1998.
- ⁸⁹ Interview with Nurcholish Madjid, Jakarta, 28 May 1998.
- ⁹⁰ “Perihal Pernyataan Presiden Soeharto: Ada yang Berharap, Ada Pula yang Kecewa”, *Kompas*, 20 May 1998.
- ⁹¹ In a TV address, Amien had called on his followers to pray at home. The cancellation apparently did not harm his image as the leader of the protest movement. Newspapers quoted students as saying that the decision had underscored Amien’s stature as a rational and responsible politician. See “Amien Rais: Cegah Jatuhnya Korban Sia-Sia”, *Surabaya Post*, 20 May 1998.
- ⁹² Interview with General (ret.) Wiranto, Jakarta, 13 October 2000.
- ⁹³ Interview with Z.A. Maulani, Habibie’s chief of staff, Jakarta, 5 June 1998.
- ⁹⁴ Interview with Yusril Ihza Mahendra, Jakarta, 25 August 1998.
- ⁹⁵ Interview with Amien Rais, Surabaya, 15 May 1999.
- ⁹⁶ Confidential interview with a NU deputy chairman, Jakarta, 27 May 1998.



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