

Constructing The Indonesian Nation Through Crises: Representations and Realities

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The ways in which nations remember and how remembrance becomes part of collective memory is a topic that has received increased attention since the 1990s. This interest has in part been a result from the awareness that, despite increasing globalization, the nation-state is going to stay and may even gain in importance, since it has maintained itself as the dominant format within which politics, economics, social systems and cultures are configured. Neo-institutional theorists like John Meyer argue for a basic similarity of modern societies in a single world order of nation-states, which are all characterized by the extension of a distinct formal structure based on originally western principles (Meyer 1997). Others, among which are representatives of the so-called area studies, argue for a focus on the plurality of nation-states because they are created from as well as embedded in quite different cultural systems. These opposite views illustrate the difference between structuralist thinking, which sees the core of the nation-state in its standardized structure, and a culturalist approach that sees the essence of its existence in the variety of its representations and lived experiences.

In order to overcome internal political, social-ethnic and cultural-religious differences and to be able to distinguish themselves from the outside world, nation-states need a collective identity in order to acquire stability. Cultural memory, being the history that is remembered, is a crucial component of collective identity and is produced through rituals, symbols, memory sites and publications. All these contain 'memory figures' i.e. culturally formed and socially constructed 'meaningful' representations of history. Memory figures are bound to a specific space and time, they relate to a particular group, stress continuity through a history without change, and are reconstructive in nature as they can be rearranged according to the changing needs of the present. Memory, however, is not merely cultural but also political. Some individuals and groups are included in the memory figures of the nation but others are excluded. Rule and memory making are closely intertwined, as power holders need to legitimize themselves retrospectively as well as attempt to perpetuate their rule prospectively. Remembering is selective, often aimed at stable fixed points in time and consciously omitting contingency (Assmann 1992).

How Indonesia as a nation is constructed through cultural memory is a challenging question, since in the light of its social plurality and its shifting configurations the tension between representations and realities seems to be particularly pronounced. Many of the memory figures of the New Order now seem to have lost their meaning and Indonesia is on a journey to reinvent itself. This paper argues that Indonesian collective identity, in contrast to much of the memory making that has been done until now, has emerged from crises instead of continuities. Highlighting the role of contingency,

exclusion, recuperation of what has been erased from memory radically alters the way in which the Indonesian nation can be thought of. This process of facing history anew through the critical reexamination of national memory is currently happening in Indonesian society itself. What then would be the historical Indonesia seen from the current democracy era perspective? In answering this question writings from foreign Indonesian specialists and Indonesian academics as well as public persons are taking as point of departure for a first, preliminary probe of what could ultimately become the 'new Indonesian history' as pillar of a new democratic Indonesia.

What Indonesia Is?

Four years ago the American political scientist Donald Emmerson reviewed what, according to him, constitutes Indonesia. He distinguished between a historical, spatial, centrifugal and personal Indonesia. Historically, Indonesia has first been a state and then became a nation, which implies that the move from state-nation to the current nation-state was only one option and that the struggle over control of the state has been the main driver of politics. The spatial dimensions of Indonesia, with its enormous expanse and innumerable islands don't seem to offer a particular coherence, its boundaries being rather arbitrary and Java not compellingly positioned at the core. What could be considered as a central zone, however, is an oval of coastal cities circumscribing the Java Sea, but with an open end towards the East. Also, despite linguistic diversity, bahasa Indonesia seems to have been effective in promoting a common identity while it is in 'stable complementarity' to many different vernaculars. Centrifugal Indonesia has not resulted in its breakup although around 2000 some feared this to happen. Aceh and Papua are still part of Indonesia and movements towards autonomy in other regions have receded in the face of decentralization. Finally, on the personal level Emmerson writes that his informants seem to experience Indonesia as 'not a fragile default but a solid design, not dutifully copied of the high doctrines of patriotism, not filtered through a parochial localism, but inductively built up around lives actually lived' (Emmerson 2005: 62).

The historical coming-into-being of one Indonesia in the face of complexity has been the subject of a recent study by the Australian historian Robert Elson, entitled *The Idea of Indonesia*. This is a chronological history of ideas, trying to explain, as the author puts it in his preface, 'the origins, development, triumph, tragedy, and, more recently, persistence and reframing of the idea of Indonesia as both state and nation'. The single shaping idea on which Indonesian leaders and thinkers have thought is that the archipelago is one. Elson's book is, as he himself admits, neither a history of reception nor how local figurations have modified the idea of Indonesia (Elson 2008: xxiii-xxiv). In well over three hundred pages it is concluded that over about hundred years the concept of Indonesia was slowly but increasingly gaining recognition but at the same time took an erratic course in combination with 'continuing failure' because of what Indonesian leaders did or failed to do with it. Elson sets his story in a tripartite chronology of hope during the early nationalist years, in which a horizontal, emancipatory 'sense' of Indonesia emerged, eighty years of failure and lack of direction on the part of elitist and narrow-minded leaders to implant the idea of Indonesia, followed by an indeterminate present in which a more modest sense of Indonesian identity seems to appear (Elson 2008: 315-318).

Very recently one of the leading Indonesian historians, Taufik Abdullah, has submitted his version of Indonesia as a 'nation in the making' in close to six hundred pages text. His plot is markedly different from that of Elson, because, while also acknowledging that oneness was at the core of nationalism, he stresses that from its very beginnings and despite various types of crises the ideal of democracy formed the basic principle of nationhood (Abdullah 2009: x, 569). Being self-reflexive and conscious of the role of memory making in what essentially is a cautious re-examination of Indonesian history, time and again he traces back the unfolding of a democratic tradition, which since the fall of Suharto in 1998 has been rediscovered. Among pre-war nationalists democracy as a program of social and political justice was shared by all, irrespective of Islamic, socialist or other forms of ideological inspiration, against a western-educated Javanese aristocracy whose cultural concerns would reappear several times in post-independence history.

Elson and Taufik Abdullah both adopt a three-phase narrative of modern Indonesian history, which interprets the current era of democracy as a return to the original ideals of nationalism, ideals that have been lost somewhere after 1945 and found back since 1998. This new mold of history is compelling, since it gives a unitary as well as linear pattern to the national narrative. It also shows that the social emancipation of the Indonesian people is not based on an alien, imported concept of democracy that is ultimately incompatible with indigenous cultural formations but rather the essence of these. There is a lot of zeal in this new narrative of Indonesian history and, alongside with it, a critical view of what conservative elites did wrong in the past. But the overall message is truly optimistic – after a severe 'total' crisis at the end of the 1990s, in which there has been an awful lot of communal violence around ethnic and religious affiliations, the nation has not been abandoned, on the contrary it has resumed its historic course.

Elson and Taufik present new syntheses of national history, viewing recent developments from a long term perspective. A more punctuated, critical approach is pursued by Asvi Warman Adam, who advocates the 'straightening of history' (*pelurusan sejarah*) by moving beyond the military-dominated version of national history (see Katharine McGregor 2007). Thus he comes up with alternative interpretations of the attack on Dutch troops in Yogyakarta in 1949, the 1965 coup and the Malari incident of 1974, something that leads to high esteem among those who have been marginalized by official Orde Baru history but also to protest by, for instance, the Gerakan Anti-Komunis, who in March 2007 turned up in front of his LIPI office to protest against what they see as the revival of communism in Indonesia (Siahaan 2008). The rewriting of Indonesian national history is also promoted by other historians. Mestika Zed attacked what he called the 'tyranny of national history', Bambang Purwanto criticizes the persistence of colonial impulses in neglecting local dynamics, the anachronistic tendency to neglect proper historical contexts and the still prevalent focus on leading persons and politics. He proposes a scientific historical approach, not a history of rancor (*sejarah dendam*) which replaces myths with new myths (Curaming 2003).

The new interpretations of Indonesia's national history are part of a much wider, encompassing public debate that is being conducted since 1998 on the question what Indonesia is. Without exception public intellectuals, politicians, social activists but also spokesmen of political parties, religious authority figures, and representatives of parts of the administrative apparatus have communicated views on the reshaping of the nation-state within the current democratic order. The unity that is supposed to emerge from national history is therefore faced with discursive multifariousness, not questioning the nation as such but rather what should be the principles to shape its future. Although some opinions seem to matter more than others and certain idea patterns can be discerned, the Indonesian nation is still in ferment and some even interpret the current situation as a continuing national identity crisis.

On July 23th 2008 I happened to be invited to the launch of a collection of essays, entitled *Reinventing Indonesia. Menemukan Kembali Masa Depan Bangsa*, in the auditorium of BPPT (Technology Agency) amidst a public of well-connected representatives of the business community and bureaucracy. In the introduction the editors, Komaruddin Hidayat and Putut Widjanarko, write that this bundle is arisen out of anxiety for the current situation of the Indonesian people, one hundred years after the national awakening. In the midst of much commotion the problems of the country, so they argue, require visions which go beyond the preoccupation with the present and which are no longer oriented towards the past. Indonesia is like a big boat with a great variety of passengers that since 1998 has become instable, leaking here and there and crossing the ocean of history without direction. Therefore the contributors to the book intend to give clues how to master the common project with the name of Indonesia (Hidayat & Widjanarko 2008: ix-xv). Ideas on the *negara bangsa* brought up are: a cultural unity that goes back thousands of years; social solidarity that can be achieved only through nation building; a concentration on inner-Indonesia instead of Indonesia Raya; the recognition of 'keindonesiaan' as an unfinished project which needs to be prolonged; the creation of Indonesia as a civic nation, in which the relationship between national and local identity is not a zero sum game; the reinvention of Indonesia which requires rejuvenation, by promoting the youth to be more active; and a return to Pancasila as an anthropo-cosmic ideology. All in all this reads like a patriotic call for a return to 'true' nationalist values in order to reinstall unity from disunity.

Besides a public debate on the nature of the nation, there is controversy on how much and what kind of Islam should be part of it. Among the recent issues that have acquired a high profile in western media are the passing of anti-pornography bill in 2008, the ban of Ahmadiyah and the introduction of *perda syariat* in a number of districts. These political concessions to sections of the Muslim community, however, fall short of more radical demands for the creation of an Islamic state substituting the secular order that was established in 1945. In April 2009 a book entitled *Ilusi Negara Islam* and edited by former president Abdurrahman Wahid attracted major attention in the country. This study commissioned by the moderate Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah attempts to increase public awareness of the rising impact of Salafiya transnational thought into Indonesian Islam and is a statement against *gerakan garis keras*, the so-called hard line movement to which PKS, HTI, MMI and FPI belong. What seems at stake here, according to a report in *Republika* on the 17th of May 2009, is the threat against national values laid down in the Constitution of 1945, the unity of the Indonesian

Republic (NKRI) and its religious values, as was stressed at the mid-Mai book launch by Abdurrahman Wahid, Ahmad Syafii Maarif and KH Mustofa Bisri.

Nation through Crises

If the Indonesian nation is currently under debate, so is its history. The nation might be remembered in recent academic studies as something which, despite setbacks, developed slowly as a project towards reaching its destiny in the format of a unified state under the rule of law and a system of social justice. But this history is framed through a number of binary oppositions, between noble ideas and bitter realities, between a self-centered elite and an overall peaceful people, a juxtaposition which can only be resolved by the plot of a final victory of 'good' over 'bad'. The elimination of contingency, ambiguity and contradiction through teleology of history is, from a purely academic point of view, problematic. What is at stake here is the nexus between political ideas and social realities or, to put into other words, the way in which representations of past and present constitute and/or undermine a particular order. In this, crises play a more important role than is often admitted. This in turn raises the question to what extent nations are created through crises instead of continuous adherence to a consensual set of ideas.

My framework of analysis hinges on three central concepts and their interrelatedness: representation, social order and crisis. The world can only be accessed or even created by the representations people make of it. Representations are cultural forms of knowledge which enable people to act concretely in historical, social or political reality. For instance, collective identity is the result of acts of representation, which are understood to show us who we are. Representations create a social order but they are at the same time part of it. The ways in which organizations, institutions, systems function are dependent on the way people conceive and then uphold them. In normal contexts representations and social orders are in balance but if one of both undergoes change this balance is upset. In situations of crisis that what seems to be self-evident is put into question, the stable interconnection between representations and social order is lost. Crises are situations of exacerbation and acceleration which force people to view and interpret the social order that is around them in new ways (Baberowski 2009).

Translated to the Indonesian situation, what interests me here is not crisis itself but the idealational dimension of it, which forces political leaders and others to induce new representations of social order be taken up in society. Crises involve destruction but also the creation of something new, which is the outcome of a complex interplay of representations between power holders and civil society. The kind of interface between both parties can be highly variable, ranging from imposing certain representations of social order from above to reaching social consensus on what central ideals the social order should be based and maintained. In most instances, however, a bargaining process is involved the result of which is constantly being renegotiated in the arenas of power.

It is useful to distinguish between crises of the state and those of the nation. Although both overlap, state crises involve a possibly violent struggle for power mostly covering short periods of time marked by major political events, whereas crises of the nation may precede or follow state crises and are often less clearly demarcated by particular

moments. Although the abdication of Suharto in May 1998 marked the culmination of a state crisis lasting for several months, more than ten years later the crisis of the nation seems still not completely resolved. Whereas the proclamation of independence on the 17th of August 1945 marked the beginning of multiple political crises during what is conveniently labeled as the Indonesian Revolution, the main ideas that shape the nation were already put in place beforehand. Historians consider 1945, 1965 and 1998 as the three major political crises of the Indonesian state during almost 65 years of existence. Crises of the nation coincide with crises of the state but are not necessarily identical as the latter, so is my assumption, often connect with the former in the format of ‘forward’ and/or ‘backward’ linkages. In other words: crises of the nation either follow or precede crises of the state. In this manner, the crises of the Indonesian nation I want to briefly discuss here are 1945, 1959, 1967 and 1998. So, besides arguing a connection between representations and social order, I think a connection exists also between crises of the state and the nation regarding genealogy and contents.

The First Crisis of The Indonesian Nation: 1945

Both Elson and Taufik Abdullah devote few pages only to the process of designing the basic features of the nation Indonesia during the final months of the Japanese occupation.

Concentrating on the two sessions of the BPUPK (Badan Untuk Penyelidik Usaha² Persiapan Kermerdekaan), Elson tells about the biased composition of this sixty-two member body as territorial nationalist, Java-centric, conservative, authoritarian in disposition and aged. Supomo in particular, influenced by European organicist thinking, placed a lasting stamp on Indonesia’s future course. Sukarno came up with his Pancasila, Yamin was mainly responsible for drafting the constitution with the Piagam Jakarta preamble, Islamic thinking having only a modest impact on the final outcome (Elson 2008: 105-110). The narrative of Taufik is more issue-oriented: the BPUPKI decided on the basic philosophical foundations of the state, its boundaries and a democratic system of government in the form of a republic. It also highlights the role of other major players among the “founding fathers of the nation”, Radjiman Wediodiningrat and Hatta, who in the face of a number of controversial issues all together managed to reach compromise (Taufik Abdullah 2009: 114-120).

Taufik goes at greater length than Elson to explain the fundamental importance of the BPUPKI deliberations for the future nation-state of Indonesia, calling it an extraordinary historical event. The identification between the concept of nation and territory turned, what he calls, ‘the poetic notion of tanah air, homeland, into a prosaic concept of territorial boundaries of a nation-state’. Likewise the constitution described the ‘proper arrangement of the state, the job descriptions of its high institutions, and the interconnection of the institutions and their respective branches’ (Taufik 2009: 115; 116). Based on doubts of Hatta whether the draft constitution would not open the door for a negara kekuasaan (Machtstaat), he concludes that that notion of the strong state and the idea of citizen’s rights (in Articles 27 and 28) ‘were to continue to have their impact on the course of the political history of the post-independence period’. The place of Islam was a great divide in the history of nation-building and continued ‘to haunt Indonesia long after the nation-state had been established’ (Taufik 2009: 118; 119). So besides stressing its historical importance, Taufik sees in the original design of the

nation-state of Indonesia the seeds of future discord, whereas Elson seems to suggest that in the confrontation between two different political visions – one ‘hierarchical, integralist and corporatist, that would tie the Indonesian peoples together under a strong and dominant state’ and the other which ‘sought to place strong limits and balances on the exercise of unified state control’ (Elson 2008: 105) – the former prevailed over the latter.

Established historiography, including the new studies of Elson and Taufik, is written from hindsight, on the one hand stressing the historical importance of the committee decisions taken mid-1945 and on the other hand prefiguring the state problems that were to emerge from these. The records of the deliberations within the committee for the preparation of independence within the context of the final months of the Japanese occupation, however, show that there was an atmosphere of urgency and crisis pushing those involved forward. In a surprisingly short time the blueprint of independent Indonesia was drawn up. The BPUPKI sessions ran from 28th of May until 1st of June and from 10th till 17th of July 1945 i.e. 13 days in total. The results of these sessions were finalized within five days after the declaration of independence, from 18th until 22th of August 1945. Convening the BPUPKI, as agreed upon by the Japanese authorities, was seen by its chairman Muhamad Yamin, as great opportunity (*kesempatan besar*) in a crazy time (*zaman gemilang*), although trying to finalise thoughts on the groundwork of the state (*dasar nagara*) was a difficult undertaking amidst war time instability (*dalam kegoyangan zaman peperangan*) (Bahar & Kusuma 1995: 9, 10, 13). Sukarno also characterized current times as turbulent (*zaman gegap-gempita*), which necessarily brought the people to expect Indonesian independence as soon as possible (*Indonesia Merdeka selekas-lekasnya*) (Bahar & Kusuma 1995: 91, 93).

Likewise Sukiman stressed that all steps had to be quick (*segala tindakan harus bersifat kilat*) in a context in which a clash between Asian nationalism and western imperialism was occurring. He said: ‘all Asian nations are at the moment conducting a terrible war in order to free themselves from the greed of the Allied who want to subjugate and occupy Asia again’ (*Segenap bangsa Asia pada waktu sekarang ini melalukan peperangan dahsyat untuk memerdekakan bangsa terhadap keangkaramurkaan Sekutu yang hendak menaklukkan dan menjajah kembali Asia*) (Bahar & Kusuma 1995: 285). The day after the Independence Proclamation, as the Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI) convened to complete the drafting of the constitution, the sense of urgency after the Japanese capitulation had increased even more. Sukarno urged the members of this committee to stick to the main issues in a time of change quick as lightning (*zaman yang beralih sebagai kilat cepatnya*) (Bahar & Kusuma 1995: 413).

This sense of urgency is confirmed in classical histories of the Indonesian revolution, such as those of George McKahin and Benedict Anderson. Anthony Reid also wrote: ‘The collapse of Japanese defences and communications during the middle months of 1945 caused a drastic change of pace in the independence preparations’. On the 9th of August Sukarno, Hatta and Radjiman were flown to Dalat, ‘to be told by Marshal Terauchi, Commander of the Japanese Southern Army, that independence was in their hands’ (Reid 1974:21). Before the news of the Japanese surrender was spread, pemuda kidnapped Sukarno and Hatta and kept them at Rengasdengklok in order to pressure

them to proclaim independence immediately and without Japanese mediation. It was only seven weeks in which Indonesian independence was prepared and the content as well as the format of the discussions were beyond Japanese control (Kurasawa 1997: 107).

Indeed this was a time of revolutionary change, raising the issue to what extent the central representations of the future Indonesian national order were shaped by the increasing pace of events reaching a peak in mid-August 1945. Certainly there was unexpectedness in the surrender of the Japanese but already in the BPUPKI sessions the sense of urgency was there, leading to a situation in which only the main issues of the independent Indonesian state to have been clarified at the moment its independence was proclaimed. Pancasila, as the basic principles of the nation, as Robert Cribb and Colin Brown argued, needed ‘amplification’, the definition of its content being overshadowed by the need to secure independence (Cribb & Brown 1995: 16). Immediately after the independence declaration, the revolutionary dynamics of *bersiap* and *perjuangan* unfolded, forcing the state to establish itself further in several years of vehement external and internal contest. The political manifesto of 1st of November 1945 signaled already a departure from the constitution, although it was officially maintained. Contrary to what was needed, the further development of Pancasila did not materialize. The national motto of Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), introduced in 1950, has been subsequently shaken by a series of regional revolts, the crushing of the PRRI-Permesta rebellion gave ‘enormous momentum to the rate of political change’, as Elson puts it (Elson 2008: 205).

Further Crises and Reconfigurations of The Nation in 1959 and 1967

The limited scope of this paper does not allow for a full analysis of the tribulations and deviations from the 1945 ideals during the period of Guided Democracy and the New Order. Already in the 1960s Donald Weatherbee described what he called the ‘ideological framework’ of Indonesian politics between 1959 and 1965. Drawing upon Herb Feith’s juxtaposition of ‘administrators’ versus ‘solidarity makers’, the latter, including Sukarno, reverted back to the spirit of the Indonesian revolution in order to be able to reconnect to the people. The culmination of the rediscovery of the revolution was the Political Manifesto (MANIPOL) promulgated on 17th of August 1959. Willfully Sukarno promoted the idea of national crisis, Indonesia being surrounded by old established forces / neocolonialism/imperialism (OLDEFO and NEOKOLIM) and on the interior characterized by the suffering of the people (*ampera* i.e. *amanat penderitaan rakyat*). As a solution the spirit of the revolution should be revived and Pancasila should be adopted by all new emerging forces (NEFO). Orthodoxy became later enshrined in MANIPOL-USDEK, the latter referring to the Constitution of 1945, Indonesian socialism, a guided economy and Indonesian personality. Later NASAKOM (the synthesis of nationalism, religion and communism) was added (Weatherbee 1966).

As Ruth McVey showed, under the post-1965 New Order Pancasila became a tool ‘for the Gleichschaltung of social organization and thought’ (McVey 1996: 23). Military dominance was guaranteed by the doctrine of *dwifungsi*, announced in September 1966, put into law in 1982 but in fact based on Nasution’s earlier ‘middle way’ concept (Taufik 2009: 346). Leading principles of state policy were *tata tertib* (order) and

pembangunan (development). The MPR formulated in 1978 an official interpretation of Pancasila, as the soul, identity and life orientation of the Indonesian people. In 1985 all mass organizations had to accept Pancasila as their sole ideological foundation (azas tunggal). These ideas then, considered to be a 'deepening' of Pancasila, were promoted through education (Pendidikan Moral Pancasila) and compulsory P-4 courses (Penghayatan dan Pengalaman Pancasila). All these measures were implicated in the 16th of August 1967 speech of Suharto, in which a return to the constitution of 1945 and Pancasila was advocated with the aim of bringing national stability (Elson 2008: 243-245; Taufik 2009: 363-364). In contrast, opposition was viewed as a betrayal of the national worldview and the 'identity of the nation' (jati diri bangsa) (Taufik 2009: 389).

The 1959 and 1967 reframing of basic representations of the nation in order to bring about a desired social order occurred after severe crises of the state happened. Instead of finding a new idiom, a pretended return to the origins and genuine spirit of the independent nation of 1945 was advocated by both Sukarno and Suharto, although the former stressed 'revolution' as a form of fast and crisis-prone forward movement whereas the latter chose to slow down in order to create 'order' as a sterile form of 'non-crisis', relegating crises to the realm of peristiwa.

The New Crisis of The Nation: 1998 and Beyond

The story of how a monetary crisis (krismon) turned into a total crisis (kristal) has been told many times and is familiar to all contemporary Indonesians. Besides the troubling and mostly suppressed memories of massive interethnic and interreligious violence, including the bloody secession of East Timor, there is also the narrative of successful state reform and the resumption of democracy in what is aptly labeled as era reformasi. The chronological account of 'a country in despair' between 1997 and 2000 was soon put into writing by a Leiden anthropologist and professor in the history of Islam (Van Dijk 2001). Although the state crisis seems to have been overcome after three successful free elections (1999, 2004, 2009), four presidents and a large number of reform laws, the crisis of the nation, as was suggested above, has not completely abated. One observer notes that instead of the emergence of a strong nationally oriented civil society, regional identities have mushroomed, which have precluded a common aspiration for a strengthened Indonesian citizenship (Schulte Nordholt 2008: 159).

In his resignation speech of 21st May 1998, shortly after national awakening day, Suharto acknowledged the failure of his plans for a reform committee, which he had planned to install 'pushed by the conviction that reform must be conducted properly, peacefully and constitutionally, for the sake of the unity of the nation and the continuation of national development'. Whereas Suharto until the very last moment spoke of the nation, so did Habibie in his first TV address after he had taken over power. He said he had paid attention to 'the dynamism which has developed for total reform', pleaded his commitment to the aspirations of the people for constitutional reform, and asked for support of the people to get out of the crisis 'which has almost paralyzed the nation'.

In the first half of 1998 there seems to have been a return of a situation in which political leaders spoke for the nation, whereas the population was much more

preoccupied with their economic plight and wanted state reform first. But besides economic relief and political reform, first appeals for a renewed, more emancipative form of nation were put forward, redefining key terms that had been coined by New Order politics and arguing for justice (*keadilan*). In a speech on 22th of March 1998 on the subsistence crisis of urban poor Drs. Sandyman Sumardi of the Jakarta social Institute said: 'Now it is time to return the true essence of development: a development which has the personality of the people and is based on the people. For the future of this country and this nation, there is no other choice but returning to people's rights, especially of the people who have been marginalized.' Likewise the actress and social activist Ratna Sarumpaet convened an 'Indonesian People's Summit' or 'Kongress Indonesia' on 10th of March 1998, complained of the lack of freedom of movement and expression and brought those present to sing the song of a free people (*bangsa yang merdeka*) 'Indonesia Raya'. The meeting was then broken up by the police and Mrs. Sarumpaet and eight other visitors were taken into custody.

In March 1998, when Suharto was sworn in for a seventh five-year term as president, on the economic crisis he said 'as a nation, we must tighten our belts'. At the same time in Yogyakarta thousands of students shouted 'Bring down prices, replace Suharto' (*turunkan harga, gantung Suharto*) and at the UI a huge banner was carried around stating 'UI rejects Suharto'. At the time all kinds of publications were put out which highlighted the role of students 'pointing the way to the door of reform' (*menuju gerbang reformasi*). Remembering the contribution of the student generations of 1966, 1974, 1977/78, the events in 1998 were framed as a sequence of action, tragedy and succession. Already then the question was raised 'Quo Vadis Gerakan Reformasi?' (*Nusantara 1998*), and we now know that the influence of students on further developments rapidly dwindled. However, the question still remains 'Quo Vadis Indonesia'?

Concluding Remarks

The wild days of 1998 now seem long gone but the public debate on the nation continues, reflecting many different views of a great multitude of actors and opinion makers. Likewise opening up Indonesian history to new interpretations has been slow and only just started (see Zurbruchen 2005). My digressions are an attempt to contribute to the debate on how Indonesian history could look like from the current democracy perspective. Robert Elson and Taufik Abdullah have recently presented new integral interpretations of Indonesian national history as an enduring encounter between ideals and realities.

Adopting a slightly different angle, my framework of analysis is that of the correlation between representations and social order in times of crisis. Instead of arguing that the history of the Indonesian nation is structured by a gradual, though often countered unfolding of one more or less coherent set of ideas, I tried to show that the nation is remade time and again through crises, which necessitates the realignment between representations of the nation and its history on the one hand and the prevalent social order on the other. The direction of this realignment in circumstances of crisis has been contingent or dependent on eventuality. Here historical events should be separated from the narratives of the main political actors, who always tended to refer back to an

imagined stable base line – that of the birth of the independent nation in 1945. This kind of narrative has then been followed up in official, and partly also academic, national history-writing.

Describing the development of the nation as an idea construct, of which central representations need to be adjusted after a crisis of the state occurs, makes the national project of Indonesia open-ended. Looking at the crisis of 1945, we have seen that the urgency created by the sudden collapse of Japanese rule, led to the designation of a ‘nonamplified’ form of nation to support a state that was declared independent immediately afterwards but had to fight for survival for more than four years. The unfinished nation was subsequently ‘retooled’ both in 1959 and 1967 after a repeated crisis of the existing state occurred. The events of 1998 again led to both a crisis of the state and the nation. Whereas the main elements of political reform seem to have been settled by now, the discussion on the principles of the nation and its history is far from over. Maybe this no longer belongs to the format of ‘crisis’ but rather to the multi-voice, discursive dynamics of a democratic sociopolitical space which has finally opened up between state and nation.

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