

With regard to contemporary political transition two things appear to stand out if one wants to look at Indonesia and Egypt in a comparison. Firstly, the transition in both countries was sparked through political and/or economic crisis. Secondly, in both transitions the youth has played a significant role.

In 1997 and 1998 the exchange value of Indonesian Rupiah against US Dollar was plummeting down to Rp. 16,500, devaluated to more than 20% from its original value. This caused huge debts in foreign currency. Price of basic and essential needs skyrocketed. Poverty rate increased, almost instantly. People began to question whether the newly formed presidential cabinet had the capacity to restore the economic stability. Among those who posed a critical stand against Soeharto and his regulations were students. And they went protesting on the streets.

They were alone in the beginning, but soon they were joined by other social groups and some of the elites. Waves of protest and demonstrations were met with repression from the police and the military. Students and other civilians were shot dead or detained. Riots followed and spread widely. Vertical conflict between the protesters and the regime soon deviated from the initial targets and was replaced by horizontal conflict among ethnic and religious groups. The increasing conflicts and violence and the decreasing legitimacy of Soeharto, which was discernible in the changing political attitude of political elite, both within the cabinet and within other state institutions, created a new development that went beyond the political control of President Soeharto. Unable to contain the situation, Soeharto resigned from his presidential office in May 1998, only three months after he was elected as the President of Indonesia for the seventh time. He handed over his mandate and authority to B. J. Habibie, his vice president.

Habibie's presidency marked the beginning of the 'reformasi' (eng.: reform) era. Under his regime the restoration of civil and political rights began to take place. The print and electronic media were no longer controlled, demonstrations were allowed and East Timor got the approval to conduct a referendum. However, Habibie was perceived as part of the Soeharto's New Order. This was mostly due to the fact that he ignored the popular demands which insisted on the depoliticization of the army and investigation of Soeharto's wealth. Of these two demands only the first materialized.

It was Abdurrahman Wahid, the fourth president, who succeeded dismantling the army's socio-political functions and sent them back to the barracks. Wahid also made several important contributions to enhance the quality of democracy in Indonesia, such as the reinstatement of the

cultural rights of ethnic minorities. But despite (or perhaps, because of) his pro-democracy policies, the horizontal conflicts that had been sparked in 1998 began to occur again under his regime, this time in Maluku and Sampit (Central Borneo). On top of that, terrorist bombings cost innocent lives of Indonesians and foreigners in Jakarta and Bali. This condition became more severe because of Wahid's cacophonous relationship with the army. The horizontal conflicts stopped not long after Wahid was forced to step down.

By way of comparison, the Egyptian revolution that has led to a vacuum of power gives a pretext to military junta, under which to take over the government and to wield political power in a military way for the time being. This was not the case in Indonesia, though there was an opportunity to do so, because General Wiranto, the Chief Commander of the Army indicated that he could take over the government at that time. Wiranto, however, refrain from it for whatever reason. In hindsight his refusal became a blessing for Indonesian politics, in that no precedent was created for the military takeover. On top of that, the military was deprived of its political role thanks to a presidential decree of President Abdurrahman Wahid.

The political transition in Egypt is still going on. It is therefore interesting to figure out to what extent the transitions in the two countries might share some commonalities and to what extent the two transitions are different owing to their specific character and specific context.

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the two transitions are different owing to their specific character and specific context. In order to be able to answer the above questions, the seminar is expected to enlighten us on some following comparisons.

1. Is there a prospect for free and democratic election that will replace the present military junta?
2. By taking the modern Egyptian political configuration into consideration, will there be a significant change in the Egyptian governmental system? If yes, will the new system provide a space for democratic participation through multi party?
3. Assuming that a democratic government can be established, will there also be military depolitization in Egypt?
4. Many social movements in Indonesia were disappointed by the fact that Soeharto was not investigated in a fair trial. This is not the case in Egypt where Hosni Mubarak was brought to the court to to account for his previous actions. In this connection, how do the movements in Egypt perceive this? Do they see the justice is being upheld in the transistion?
5. Will the vertical conflict in Egypt be replaced by horizontal conflict?
6. Will freedom and democracy promote peace and prosperity in Egypt or will these lead to conflict among primordial groups in Egypt instead?

## **Objectives**

- The public seminar is expected to shed some lights on the current political situation in Egypt and to provide some lessons learned for Indonesia.
- The seminar aims to figure out some commonalities and the main differences of the political transition brought about by a political reform as is the case with Indonesia, and a transition brought about by a revolution as is the case with Egypt.
- The seminar shall also provide some analytical perspectives on whether or not Egypt could adopt a democratic system or fall into an authoritarian state.

## **Program Speakers, Topic and Moderator**

### **Speakers:**

- **Prof. Abdul-Monem Mohamed Ibrahim Al-Mashat**, Director of the Cairo Center for the Culture of Democracy (CCCD)

*“Political transition and the current state of affairs in Egypt”*

- **Hossam Eldin Aly Ahmed Mohamed**, Board Chairman of Egyptian Democratic Academy (EDA)

*“Transitional justice in Egypt (the case of Hosni Mubarak)”*

- **Amien Rais, Ph.D**, Chairman of the People’s Consultative Assembly 1999 – 2004

*“Social impacts of political transition in Indonesia (Reformasi 1998)”*

- **Indri Saptaningrum**, Executive Director of ELSAM

*“Transitional justice in Indonesia (the case of Soeharto)”*

- **Dr. Marcus Mietzner**, Senior Lecturer at the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University in Canberra.

- **Prof. Mohtar Mas’oed**, Professor of Political Science, Political Department, University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, a Board member of KID.

**Moderator:**

**Dr. Ignas Kleden**, Chairman of Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi – KID (Indonesian Community for Democracy)

**Venue**

Hotel Four Seasons, Jalan H. R. Rasuna Said, Jakarta, 12920

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