The risky future of youth politics in Indonesia

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Any scan of daily headlines in major Indonesian newspapers in 2004 finds revelations of bribery, corruption and cover-ups among politicians, law-makers and law-keepers, even though it is now seven years since reformasi began. Corrupt bureaucrats and business leaders are still protected by their political cronies. The military continues to influence national and local politics, as well as internal security initiatives. Many of the parties which contested the 1999 and 2004 free elections remain fraught with divisions and factional infighting. It would seem that the political utopia of reformasi envisaged by youth activists in 1998 when the Suharto regime was swept away has not yet been realised. In 2004 the party which then represented the greatest hope, PDI Perjuangan, has just lost government to the once-enemy Golkar Party, as voters swing to nostalgia for the expansionist years of the New Order, driven by disappointment with the performance of President Megawati Sukarnoputri. Among young people there is political fragmentation, and one often finds a strong sense of disappointment and pessimism. The current generation of young Indonesians were there in the first glorious moments of reformasi (Aspinall 1999). They either directly participated in those events, or cheered enthusiastically at the television coverage. Since they were so involved, we can perhaps describe this current generation (16- to 25-year-olds) as highly politicised by the events of 1998. Yet now there seems little sense of common political purpose in the age cohort. Indeed, a quick scan of Indonesian political activist groups online in 2004 indicates a plethora of political positions and agendas among the pemuda (politically active youth) of the present generation.

We can divide these groups of young activists, for the purposes of discussion, into three ‘camps’. Firstly, there are many

different kinds of Islamic activist groups ranging from the apparently non-violent KAMMI, to the shadowy terrorist Laskhar Jihad. Secondly, a variety of groups representing leftist political orientations can be identified (Van Bruinessen 2002: 146; Lane 2002). For example, in 2003 a secular and leftist National Coalition was created to bring about reformasi total (total reform of the nation). Of 45 affiliated organisations, 28 were NGOs, trade unions and political parties. Twelve were student groups — the largest source of membership — and five were youth activist groups (ASAP 2003). The National Coalition, however, has struggled to find a unified voice. The third ‘camp’, not well-described under a single label, includes issue-based groups, such as those seeking specific sustainable environmental solutions, or secular law reform for example, and groups representing minority interests, such as Christian, Hindu and Buddhist youth. One finds that for every political cause there are youth or student activist groups. Of these, some are committed to intellectual expansion, public debate, and non-violent action for change. Around the same set of causes, there are also extremist groups committed to indoctrination of followers, covert operations, and violent action in pursuit of their revolutionary goals. In making this distinction it is crucial to distinguish between genuine activism and the actions of preman, or young men operating as civil militia groups in the pay of vested interests (Lindsey 2001). Furthermore, contemporary Indonesian youth activism, while emphatically local in its location and practices, looks more and more outside the country for inspiration and examples, using modern information technology. These outside influences tend to further fragment groups in the three ‘umbrella’ camps of youth activism described above.

In short, by the new century, youth political activism had fragmented along the lines suggested above, while demonstrations by ordinary citizens and students over food prices, loss of jobs and unemployment still went on occurring almost daily in Indonesian cities, since significant economic problems had not been solved. Moreover, beyond youth activist groups and campus demonstrations, the mass of middle-class Indonesian youth now seem overwhelmingly pre-occupied with upward social mobility and conspicuous
problems ranging from the apparently adowy terrorist Laskhar Jihad, entering leftist political orientations (102: 146; Lane 2002). For example, the Coalition was created to bring of the nation. Of 45 affiliated ide unions and political parties, largest source of membership — IPS (ASAP 2003). The National o find a unified voice. The third single label, includes issue-based specific sustainable environmental example, and groups representing , Hindu and Buddhist youth. One here are youth or student activist ed to intellectual expansion, public change. Around the same set of ps committed to indoctrination of violent action in pursuit of their his distinction it is crucial to m and the actions of preman, or a groups in the pay of vested more, contemporary Indonesian ocal in its location and practices, e country for inspiration and tion technology. These outside r groups in the three 'umbrella' above, youth political activism had above, while demonstrations by r food prices, loss of jobs and ring almost daily in Indonesian problems had not been solved. ups and campus demonstrations, youth now seem overwhelmingly al mobility and conspicuous consumption. The data in this paper illustrate some attitudes of middle-class, activist-oriented youth to politics around the turn of the century — 1999 and 2002.

Data and methods

Data was collected from eleven focus groups conducted with young Indonesian people on modernity, identity and social change. The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in ways which would not be feasible using other qualitative methods. Compared with one-to-one interviews, which target the individual, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context. Interaction is the significant feature of focus groups because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue, and their values and beliefs about a situation (Kitzinger & Barbour 1999). The focus group discussion question analysed here is that of the political future of Indonesia.

Four focus groups of between four and five young men and women were conducted in Singaraja, North Bali in October 1999, and seven groups with representation from both genders were conducted in Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi, in January 2002. Both cities are reasonably prosperous regional towns, and neither has much tourism activity, although tourists move through both cities en-route to the tourist enclaves of Lovina and Tana Toraja respectively. The criteria for recruiting young people into the groups, both in Sulawesi and Bali, were that they should be well-educated, active on campus or in the community, and of strong religious faith. These criteria were used because they are characteristic features of present and future leaders and political reformers in Indonesia at the local, regional and national levels. The inclusion of strong religious faith as a criterion implies, correctly I believe, the fracturing of pan-Indonesian national citizenship identity along religious fault-lines. Certainly a major discourse which emerged in the talk about politics by youth in this paper was the idea that religion, rather than secular political ideology, would provide moral solutions to the nation's ills. The Balinese youth were all student activists, enrolled in tertiary courses, and strong in
their religious faith of Balinese Hinduism. The young people in Makassar were all either tertiary educated or still enrolled at university. They were active in student affairs, politics, and/or religious radicalism. Two groups in Sulawesi were exclusively Christian youth, four were exclusively Muslim youth, one was mixed Muslim/Christian. The focus group interviews were conducted in both cities by local co-researchers who were native speakers of relevant languages. The aim was to create a free flow of talk without any language errors which might lead to misunderstandings. The author was present in all the interviews, and guided the translations which feature in this paper. In the discussion which follows, I emphasise the situation of middle-class youth because that is the socio-economic strata in which all focus group interviewees were located, in accordance with the selection criteria described above.

Risk and generation

Although Indonesia has become a democracy, it remains at 110th position on the human development index (HDI), the same as in 1995 (UNDP 2002). The economic meltdown of 1997 continues to adversely affect the lives of millions of people across the archipelago (WorldBank 2000; Booth 2002: 7). Indonesia has a relatively young population, and the number of young adults (20–24 years old) is predicted to increase from 20.7 million in 2000 to 23.1 million in 2005 (Hull 2001: 109). Like most of the rest of the world, Indonesia is subject to processes of globalisation. The global economy is a highly urbanised phenomenon and Indonesia was predicted to have experienced an urban growth rate of 3.36 per cent each year by 2005 (Forbes and Lindfield 1997: 13). While the term globalisation may have become a cliché, acknowledgment needs to be given of the vast transformations of the past twenty years and how they have impacted on nations in the region. These two decades have seen the development of a world order composed of hegemonic post-

1. In the quotes below, I include details about gender and religion of speakers through abbreviations as follows; [m] male, [f] female, [H] Hindu, [M] Muslim, [C] Christian. The place and number of the focus group are also included.
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about gender and religion of speakers J male, [f] female, [H] Hindu, [M] number of the focus group are also industrial nations, rapidly industrialising 'Tiger' nations of various kinds, and nations caught in post-colonial backwaters, slipping further and further into poverty. This hierarchically segmented world order is dominated by the merchandising and profit-making operations of transnational corporations (see Castells 1996; 1997) which 'have grown so big they have superseded government ... unlike governments, they are accountable only to their shareholders' (Klein 2000). The venture capital of transnational corporations contributed significantly to the rapid growth of Southeast Asian 'Tiger' nations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indonesia was one of these apparent development 'success' stories, but like its neighbours, suffered badly in the Asian currency crisis through over-exposure to money markets, and through unstable investments, both domestic and those achieved through foreign venture capital. Unlike other nations in the region, however, Indonesia is still struggling with a serious economic crisis (Bird 2001: 45). As it had one of the most 'centralised, state-driven command economies' (Robison and Goodman 1996: 7) in the region, a notoriously corrupt legal system, and an extraordinarily entrenched culture of cronyism, bribery and nepotism (Mietzner 2001: 30), economic recovery is proving very difficult.

The ongoing Indonesian economic crisis illustrates the new environment of 'risk' in a corporatised climate of investment and consequences. One effect of this new global world order at the level of increasingly enfeebled nation states has been for administrative and political institutions to 'distribute' (Beck 1999: 83) and delegate responsibility for the social management of 'risk' (of all kinds — health, financial, social, crime, etc.) down to the level of individual citizens and small groups (Beck 1992; 1999; 2000). In Indonesia, this has been particularly striking after the highly resented certainties of Suharto's repressive New Order regime were swept away. In 1999, real political choices appeared at the same time as a massive economic depression, resulting in a great deal of confusion and uncertainty about the future in the aftermath to the June elections. According to Beck, (writing about post-reunification Germany), as they grow up, contemporary young people learn to see themselves as not only 'at risk' in a variety of ways, but needing as individuals to take primary
responsibility for managing the risks in their lives. This process derives
directly from an increased public awareness (a 'dramaturgy') of risk:

Risk society means that the past loses its power to determine the
present. Instead the future — something non-existent, constructed or
fictitious — takes its place as the cause of present experience and
action. When we talk about risks, we argue over something which is not
the case, but which might come to pass if there is not an immediate
change of direction. Risks in which people believe are the whip
driving the present to make some move (Beck 2000: 100, emphasis
mine).

To explain further, Beck's hypothesis of 'risk', when applied to
industrial concerns such as manufacturing, describes a situation where
large corporations 'downsize' and contract out whole sections of
service and production activities to smaller businesses (see also Klein
2000). This amounts to a distribution of risk away from the centralised
corporate entity towards smaller, more vulnerable concerns which
then bear the brunt of the risks which attach to tendering for work
contracts in a fiercely competitive market. If we map this conceptual
framework onto Indonesia then this explains in part the difficulty of
implementing IMF restructuring. Privatisation, financial liberalisation,
deregulation of trade and investment, reduced state subsidies, which
form the demand basis for restructuring, represent a paradigm shift
away from the Indonesian business culture of the New Order. The
state is no longer constituted as the prime mover, but as enabler,
'assisting the private sector and communities both to undertake
productive investment and in the provision and maintenance of
infrastructure to support that investment' (Forbes and Lindfield 1997:
27). At the level of the Indonesian labour force, 'the middle classes
and the bourgeoisie have been heavily dependent upon the state for
jobs, careers, contracts and monopolies and, more broadly, as the
engine of economic growth' (Robison 1996: 81). In a restructured
economy and labour force, however, middle-class workers in
Indonesia have few if any guarantees or protections. According to
Beck, in order to control their own 'risk' potential, they must become
entrepreneurial in their own right, constantly proving to all levels
above (and below) their competence and financial viability as workers.
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The youth generation then, must not only ‘manage’ the high risk of actual unemployment in unpredictable times, but middle-class youth must learn to constitute themselves as entrepreneurial individuals ‘tendering’ for their own futures primarily in a competitive small business climate without any of the state-guaranteed certainties of the past. One result is a heightened ‘fragility of social life’ (Beck 1996). As politics gets re-invented in Indonesia, it cannot but be affected by the changes and effects just described.

In a time of rapid social, economic and political change, anticipation of a highly uncertain future drives the motivation for attempting to secure certain guarantees and certainties in the present. In the Indonesian context of vastly increased risk and uncertainty at all levels, we are certainly witnessing the discursive expansion of the constitution of the entrepreneurial human subject. Young people of the current generation in Indonesia are under the greatest pressure as they attempt to ‘make’ the future of their lives and of their nation, both individually and collectively. While we might like to imagine that as a generation they constitute a singular political force, as indicated here evidence is very much to the contrary.

The current knowledge (social, economic, political and intellectual) possessed, as a cohort, by young people in Indonesia is different to that of preceding generations (Mannheim 1927). This paper argues that new generational knowledge in Indonesia is characterised by a heightened consciousness of political risk. In the focus group discussion data analysed here, a profound sense of unease and uncertainty about the future prevails. As one participant says, ‘the problems will never end. That’s why I ask, what will happen to Indonesia in the future? It’s just like a groping thing in the darkness’ (Anwar, Sulawesi FG7 [m] [M]). It has been argued that ‘almost the entire civil bureaucracy remains under the control of old New Order forces’ (Munir 2000: 5) which were unable to deal with corruption issues in the past (see Aditjondro 2002: 51) and cannot deal with them in the present. So while much in the political and bureaucratic structures has changed, much has not. Furthermore, the shaping ideology of the middle classes at present may be not so much about urging democratic reform, as protection of family prosperity, concern
for career ambitions and achievement of a highly materialist lifestyle (Robison 1996: 85).

The analytical paradigm offered by Karl Mannheim can be usefully employed to explain the widespread politicisation of Indonesian youth since the mid-1990s, and the subsequent fracturing of political purpose among young people since that time. Mannheim's (1927) highly original framing of the 'problem of the generations' emerges from his determination to see age cohorts, like classes, as strongly inflected and shaped by history, even to the extent of members developing different consciousness and knowledge from other generations. Mannheim maintains that due to the march of historical events, a generation, like a class cohort, may come to recognise itself as a generation 'for itself' (für sich), rather than merely 'in itself' (an sich) (Mannheim 1927). It could be argued that the mass youth actions of 1998 represented an example of a generation in Indonesia recognising and acting for itself to bring about a revolution. Lloyd and Smith argue in the Indonesian context that 'change is perceived differently from one generation to the next' (2001: 313). What may be viewed as an unthinkable action by one generation (such as overthrowing the regime) will be seen as fully justified and possible by the next. If we employ Castells' framing of contemporary forms of identity, then we might argue that the mass youth movement of 1998 was an example of 'resistance identity' grouping on a grand scale. Potential therefore existed for mass 'project identity' (Castells 1997: 8) to emerge from the revolutionary consciousness of 1998 and suggest a unifying vision of social transformation, but this has not occurred. Instead, a plurality of smaller project identity groupings have emerged post-1998 among activist youth.

The generation of Indonesian youth in the decade between 1975 and 1985 (which could be termed the middle of Suharto's New Order regime) experienced a highly controlled period of political stability and steady economic growth, following the brutal massacres and blood-letting in the previous decade after the fall of President Sukarno in 1966. While it is not the case that this was a 'lost generation' in any sense (more than a few were imprisoned for 'illegal' political action), youth of that decade are not commonly
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acknowledged as a highly ‘political’ generation. Families across the 
archipelago who had survived the turmoil and bloody purges of the 
beginning of the New Order tended to avoid even talking about 
politics, and their children were similarly discouraged. There were 
‘elections’, but these were not free, and the Golkar party was always re-
elected, with Suharto as President. Political repression was a way of 
life. Conditions did not favour the organisation of radical groups, nor 
the dissemination of relevant political knowledge.

Vickers (2001: 73) maintains that at the end of the 1980s, 
international pressure lead to some de-regulation and the society 
seemed more open. Certainly, the following decade, 1988—1998, saw 
the emergence of a new generation of young people who were not 
willing to shut up, who wanted to talk about political corruption and 
did so loudly (Badiman 1999; Aditjondro 2002). At the same time, 
more sophisticated communications and information technology 
meant that news about the corrupt activities of the elite and the 
military (although censored in the official press) was widely available 
(Winter 2002). Young people in this generation were better-educated 
than ever before, were much further away in time from the massacres 
of the mid 1960s, and able to learn about global politics through 
satellite media and information technology. Many activists grew up in 
the rapidly expanding middle-class, in which confidence and 
entrepreneurship had become valued personal qualities. Robison and 
Goodman maintain that the middle classes played an important, even 
decisive role in political transformations in the region (1996: 2). In all 
these ways then, the political consciousness of young Indonesians 
16–25 years old during the decade leading up to 1998 was quite 
different from the political consciousness of the previous youth 
generation.

If we turn now to the political consciousness of youth since 
the triumphant days of 1998, we can see Mannheim’s insightful 
commentary on the ‘problem of the generations’ well illustrated. Like 
South Africa after the end of apartheid, the euphoric mood of massed 
youth on the streets in the first stage of reformasi was one of unity and 
euphoria, but quickly turned to factionalism and infighting. Even just 
a year later, the younger generation no longer seem to view the world
as it had in 1998. Back then issues seemed black and white. The 'enemy' was the tyrant Suharto, the corrupt Golkar party, and the equally corrupt and violent military. The 'goal' was democracy and free elections. As in the Philippines, young Indonesians in 1997 were on a unified mission to organise and bring about a 'people's revolution'. However, post-reformasi political idealism did not translate into instant economic prosperity. Reform of major institutions proved extremely slow. In data collected from focus groups conducted in 1999 and 2002, young people who potentially could become community leaders responded to a question about the political future of Indonesia with a variety of responses which suggest, more than anything, confusion (see Munir 2000: 5) and anxiety.

**A lack of optimism**

I'm sure Indonesia will collapse if the conditions remain as they are now. In other words we are heading for disaster (Darton, SulawesiFG6 [1] [M]).

When a question about the political future of Indonesia was put to young people in Bali in 1999, PDI Perjuangan (Democratic Party of Struggle) had just won the election, but the leader of a conservative Muslim party, Abdhurraman Wahid, had just become president. Like most Balinese, the youth interviewed were strong supporters of PDI Perjuangan and were suffering disappointment that its leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri, had not been elected president. Their comments showed a great deal of doubt and suspicion, for example:

> It seems that the new government is uncertain about whether it can do anything to alleviate the economic crisis. And also I am pessimistic about whether the new government will be able to overcome the issue of national disintegration' (Eka, BaliFG1 [m] [H]).

We may note that at the time the idea of secession was popular in some leftist circles in Bali (Couteau 2002). Another girl said 'I wonder about current and future political development in Indonesia. The majority regards itself as superior ... I am concerned that this group will oppress minority groups' (Agung, BaliFG3 [m] [H]). Almost ninety per cent of Indonesians are Muslim (Hassan 2002). Many
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Balinese, as Hindus, were worried that the new conservative Muslim
president would impose Islamic practices on them (Vickers 2002: 85).

It might be imagined that this mood of doubt and pessimism
on the part of young Balinese was specific to the 1999 political
context. Certainly, in 2002 when focus groups were conducted in
Makassar, Megawati Sukarnoputri had become president, but there it
was Muslim activist youth who were disappointed, because she was a
woman and represented secular interests. Yet that was only one
concern expressed in the focus groups, and a minor one at that. Most
participants in Sulawesi deplored political conflict, corruption and
alluded to the threat of national disintegration, for example:

Chaos, and an unstable economic situation. It’s very hard for Indonesia
to recover while the elite politicians are busy fighting among
themselves. At the same time there are many disasters happening,
conflicts between ethnic groups which never come to an end. I’m very
worried about the future of Indonesia (Firman, SulawesiFG1 [m] [M]).

and

I am pessimistic about the Indonesian political situation. The elite lack
moral values. (Dewi, SulawesiFG2 [f] [M]).

In fact, both Sulendra from Bali in 1999, and Firman from
Sulawesi in 2002, mentioned exactly the same song lyric, ‘politics are
cruel’ (politiskena kejam), from a popular song by Iwan Fals, blacklisted
during the Suharto regime (Nusa Tenggara 2002: 12). The sense of the
song is that politics (and politicians) are both ruthless and heartless.

A prevalent theme in Bali and Sulawesi was failure of political
leadership; for example, ‘the leaders are only concerned about their
own interests’ (Andre, SulawesiFG5 [m] [C]). It must be recalled that
all Indonesian youth, from Java to Bali to Sulawesi, grew up in a
strong-man state structure, one that Robison describes as
‘authoritarian rule under Soekarno and Soeharto’ (1996: 82). Since no
democratic political party process even existed until 1999, it is not
surprising that these young Indonesians should think so strongly of
political leadership as concentrated in a single person — for example,
‘the destiny of Indonesia will depend on its leader’ (Made Wardana,
BaliFG2 [m] [H]) — rather than in the discourse of a political party
and its agenda for reform. Indeed, the resurrected Golkar party was probably elected in 2004 due to widespread nostalgia for the New Order, rather than the quality of its policy and planning.

KKN (korrupsi, kolusi dan nepotisme — corruption, collusion and nepotism at all levels of government and industry) was also a frequent theme in focus group responses at both sites. For example, 'if KKN can be eliminated, the country will be in a better situation' (Suarani, Bali FG1 [f] [H]), 'if we want to improve the condition of our nation, which is now very bad, we must be strong enough to stop the old practices, such as KKN, that inflict financial loss upon society' (Meri, Bali FG1 [f] [H]), and 'our country will be better off if those who govern us are not involved in KKN' (Handayan, Bali FG4 [m] [H]).

Two years later in Sulawesi one can hear the same complaint, 'the culture of KKN is very dominant so there is a need for supreme law to handle this' (Bachtiar, Sulawesi FG1 [m] [M]). Here Bachtiar alludes to the claim of Muslim youth activists that only an Islamic state can deliver the nation from its old corrupt practices. Identification of the KKN problem, however, is subtly different from that which prevailed in the lead-up to reformasi. Then it was mainly seen as a problem stemming from Suharto, his family and cronies. It is now obvious that KKN is found everywhere in politics, business, the military, the state bureaucracy, even the education system; it is an embedded cultural norm. Bachtiar implies that only some kind of imposed moral (read religious) rule of law can effectively eradicate KKN.

Religion as the answer to political crisis

It was plain that some of the Muslim youth in Sulawesi regarded Islam as the obvious answer to corruption, bad government and economic crisis. The 'supreme law' referred to by both Firman and Bachtiar in Sulawesi FG1 is Syariah law. Syariah or Koranic law is the ideological basis of Islamic fundamentalism; 'its main goal is to establish [Syariah] as the explicit, comprehensive and legal base of society' (Hassan 2002: 11). Agreeing with his Islamic activist friends in the same focus group, Indra claimed that 'the leaders apply too much Pancasila.' This is a common claim among Muslim activist youth. Islamist political parties want Pancasila, that is the constitutionally enshrined principles of
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Theism — corruption, collusion and...industry) was also a frequent...th sites. For example, ‘if KKN be in a better situation’ (Suarani, tove the condition of our nation,...strong enough to stop the old financial loss upon society’ (Meri, will be better off if those who ‘) (Handayan, BalifG4 [m] [H]).

In hear the same complaint, ‘there is a need for supreme law could [m] [M]). Here Bachtiar alludes to that only an Islamic state can impose practices. Identification of the different from that which prevailed was mainly seen as a problem of cronies. It is now obvious that is, business, the military, the state...power. It is an embedded cultural modernists. Islamicism is an...and Bachtiar in this Koranic law is the ideological...main goal is to establish [Syariat] as the gal base of society (Hassan 2002: 4). Friends in the same focus group, by too much Pancasila.’ This is a...youth. Islamist political parties...theologically enshrined principles of religious tolerance, justice and equality, replaced with Syariah (Vatikiotis 1996; Barton 2001; Van Bruinessen 2002). The theological argument against Pancasila is that it represents an integrationist constitutional doctrine of values and principles which are too western-influenced, secular and weak to effectively act as a guide for the moral economy of the nation. Argument against Pancasila also expresses resentment about the way it was deployed by the New Order to impose order on the people, that is as a tool of heavy-handed governance (Vatikiotis 1996: 122). The point is that, despite the high idealism of the imposed Pancasila constitution, corruption, greed and immoral practices flourish in Indonesia. The moral principles of Islam, however, especially those which pertain to usury, decadent practices, and sexual behaviour, are seen by Muslim activists as much stronger, enforceable by law and capital punishment, and so more likely to be effective. This is an argument for an Islamic state. Why is this idea so popular among Muslim youth?

Two significant influences on Indonesian youth derive from nationalist discourse, on the one hand (Parker 2000), and discourses of ethnic and/or religious community on the other (Robinson 2002; Widya 1999; Barth 1993). When economic and political conditions are characterised by extreme perceptions of risk, young people are more open to the emotive urgings of ethno/local and religious separatist movements (see Maffesoli 1996), rather than pan-nationalist identity frameworks. Moreover, the structures of global capitalism threaten local historical practices and identity frames (Giddens 1991: 201). In resistance to ‘forces that people perceive to be largely out of their control’, groups and social movements often define themselves away from the global and individual, towards the ethno-local and the collective (Connor & Rubinstein 1999: 5). This manifests as a strong anti-Western discourse among some Indonesian activist youth (Nilan 2003: 186). Both Giddens and Castells point to the resurgence of religious fundamentalism as a coping mechanism for the recent rapid changes experienced by many people around the world. Religious fundamentalism in the contemporary world is therefore both political and modern. As such it is extremely attractive to many young people.
In the focus groups, the desire to reshape the moral economy of Indonesia through religion was not just expressed by Muslim youth. Christian Fenijati (SulawesiFG4 [C]), says 'we can't predict what is going to happen. As citizens we must turn to God to decide. Maybe He needs to intervene in Indonesia.' Balinese Hindu youth argued much the same point from their own faith, for example:

In Hindu religion, we have a special concept for leadership which could be used as a guide for implementing leadership in Indonesia. Possibly the government could put Hindu teachings into practice in ruling the country (Suarani, BaliFG1 [I] [H]).

Oka Sudiarna concurs, 'actually, Balinese young people are well-prepared to govern wisely if they want to, because they have excellent political guidance in Hindu religious texts' (BaliFG3 [m] [H]).

There is a curious 'inner dialectic' (Mannheim 1936, 242) in these claims. It seems that young people acknowledge the problems that corrupt practices cause, and how unlikely it is that the economic crisis can be solved while corruption flourishes. So if the major identified risk is KKN, then the proffered solution is the reassuring moral haven of religion. Except there are three different religions being talked about here, and even within Islam, a variety of theological camps which can't seem to agree. So the 'solution', bringing religion directly into politics, is not a script for moral recovery, but a recipe for disaster, or at the very least ethno-local disintegration, because of the competing theological claims of different religious groups in the country. Religious differences constitute a major force for political instability in Indonesia, both between the three major religions, and between the different sects of Islam. There are over thirty different Islamic political parties in Indonesia, and it is not uncommon for their respective followers to fight pitched battles. That these suggestions for religious intervention in government were made by many focus group members in both locations, seems even more curious given that they often expressed anxiety at the same time about endemic violence between warring interest groups in the society. Awareness of the risk of religious and ethno-local tensions was implied in many comments; for example, 'fights, and no consensus' (Saipul, SulawesiFG3 [m] [M]),
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and, 'a little thing can cause chaos, bombing' (Nailah, SulawesiFG1 [f] [M]). Comments from Balinese youth in 1999 on the presumed Muslim bias of political leaders also convey this sense of threat, 'those who govern us should not mix their religious and political interests (Barus, BaliFG4 [f] [H]), and 'in politics we should not have intense religious fanaticism (Made Wardana, BaliFG2 [m] [H]). One of the Christian youth asks, 'how can we be torn apart like this?' (Fenijati, SulawesiFG4 [f] [C]). These sentiments demonstrate acknowledgment of how disruptive to national unity religion can be, yet at the same time, they do not seem shy of advancing their own religion as the moral answer to the Indonesian crisis. Huntington would describe this as a common reaction to globalisation/modernisation, typified by 'a reaffirmation of indigenous values ... in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures' (2000: 33). Religion stands both as a unifying force in Indonesia, which promotes stability, and a force for 'balkanisation' at the same time.

Clashes of political parties

In the 1999 focus groups, even after the first ever democratic elections in Indonesia, there seemed to be a curious lack of interest in talking about political parties. The Balinese youth interviewed, like almost all Balinese, were all committed supporters of the PDI Perjuangan party. Some of the Sulawesi youth in 2002 were also supporters. PDI Perjuangan is often referred to as the favourite party of Indonesian youth. It was claimed in Makassar that 'PDI Perjuangan is a powerful symbol in South Sulawesi, where the history of struggle is never forgotten (Fahmi, SulawesiFG3 [m] [C]). In the 2002 focus groups, political parties as such were not emphasised either, but the conflict and disintegration of political party process proved a topic worthy of criticism:

It (the national arena) is politically volatile. There are political groups which do their best to dominate, to take control of authority and law.

This heads in the direction of anarchy (Fahmi, SulawesiFG3 [m] [C]).

Prior to the 2004 elections, it was widely claimed that Indonesia's political parties 'are not fulfilling their intended role' (Fealy 2001: 100). Fealy maintains that not only was there little interest in policy
formation, but parties failed to convey to government the interests of their communities. Furthermore, they failed to properly educate members about issues that would lead to informed and mature political debate. The problem is that control of the major parties lies in the hands either of famous charismatic figures — personality-oriented politics (Mietzner 2001, 41) — or of centralised elites who battle constantly over leadership — ‘they do the best they can to provoke people so that they fight one another’ (Akzar, SulawesiFG2 [m] [M]).

The problem of political party conflict was recognised in the interviews as a threat to future stability and prosperity.

There are conflicts like when Golkar supporters fight with PDIP supporters. They want their party to win in the general election and to prepare the way for their leader to take the top position (Hazariin, SulawesiFG2 [m] [M]).

A popular suggested solution was the political education of the people. For example, Fahmi claimed that ‘there is no political education provided to people in the nation, in the social sphere’ (SulawesiFG3 [m] [M]). Also:

There is fighting now, because people lack political education. In the Suharto regime, there was no opportunity for the political education of the people. So when the road opens, people’s emotion explode and they undertake radical actions (Muhammed Ihram Rifai, SulawesiFG6 [m] [M]).

One of the other young people interviewed in Makassar talked directly about the role of young people in bringing about political reform, for example:

It depends on whether people, the younger generation and teenagers, can be critical towards the government. Show them! Look, we want Indonesia to be like this. But if we are passive, it will stay the same as it is now (Rina, SulawesiFG6 [f] [M]).

Another Makassar interviewee stated that:

People are confused about what is happening in Indonesian politics. The rise in the price of fuel and electricity has impacted harshly on people.
ney to government the interests of key failed to properly educate lead to informed and mature control of the major parties lies charismatic figures — personality— or of centralised elites who - 'they do the best they can to ne another' (Akzar, SulawesiFG2
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What does the government do with international aid money? What a terrible condition our country is in! (Satriani, SulawesiFG7 [f] [M]).

It was also claimed that:

The [political] elites are busy with conflicts and revenge, interests and revenge ... Because those people who were cast out of power felt humiliated (Anwar, SulawesiFG7 [m] [M]).

This comment echoes the analysis of Mietzner who argues that:

The high level of political conflict among the elite has prevented significant progress in the major sectors of institutional, legal and military reform, with New Order-inherited problems of regional discontent remaining unresolved (2001, 43).

Anwar adds wistfully, 'fighting is common now in the political world, but when I think about how good Indonesia was before, I think it's not necessary.' Anwar is, of course referring sentimentally to Suharto's New Order, which mass protest by his own generation had brought down in triumph three years before. Anwar would have been 21 at that time. In 2004 at the age of 23 he probably voted for the 'new' Golkar Party in the hope it would restore that remembered prosperity. To some extent this is understandable since the economic crisis continues even at the time of writing, with the rupiah hitting a two-year low in June 2004.

**Conclusion**

To summarise, there was pessimism and disillusion evident in the talk of youth focus group participants from both Bali and Sulawesi when discussing politics around the turn of the twentieth century, an important juncture in the political history of Indonesia. They talked most about the economy, national disintegration, endemic corruption, the role of religion in effective governance, and the need for political education. All these imply significant risks to their own future as successful adult citizens. In attempts to shore up this future, Islamic radical youth are driving a strongly conservative political agenda, but leftist groups are also flourishing in the new atmosphere of freedom since 1998. Religious youth of all faiths seem rather more preoccupied with the moral economy of the nation than the political economy.
Contemporary youth activists define themselves against the perceived passivity of previous generations (see Rina's comments above). However, while the majority of young people might still be concerned about politics, perhaps they find the current 'shades of grey' in political debate confusing by contrast with the iconic black and white clarity of immediate political history, for example Anwar's nostalgia for the New Order.

If Mannheim is correct, and members of a particular age cohort, due to their socio-historical location, develop a common awareness of their situation and thus develop a capacity to influence social change, then this apparent lack of any shared goal for the political future is a worrying sign in the current youth cohort of Indonesia. Although the contemporary youth generation have experiential knowledge about the stirring and heroic events of 1998, this common historical perspective does not seem to have generated a common set of political goals and purposes in the present. They seem to agree about the problems, but not the solutions. This may be partly an outcome of the failure of political parties to do anything but fight to get their share of revenue and power (Lloyd & Smith 2001: 316), since the 2004 elections (like those in 1999) lacked any real showcasing of policies and planned reforms by major political parties. Perhaps this is evidence of the phenomenon Beck (1996) labels 'subpolitics', in which the risk-driven trend to individualisation produces a kind of political counter-modernity. We could argue, using Mannheim, that while there are shared meanings among the mass of young people regarding national problems, there is no common interpretive framework of political action as a solution. Rather, sub-groups within the age cohort are falling back on the stock of meanings, values and modes of conduct established by the larger, even global, groupings to which they belong. So, for example, while Hindu, Christian and Muslim youth were more or less united in common cause for reformasi, they now demonstrate little unity across the age cohort. We could argue that since 1998, the generation of young people in Indonesia has lost that definable sense of a generation 'for itself' (pemuda), and has become more of a generation 'in itself' (remaja, ABG), linked mainly by temporal similarity rather than by shared political knowledge and purpose.
Turning to Beck’s thesis, it may be that the perception of risk among young Indonesians is so high that the past has, indeed, lost its power to determine the present. Taking an example, for Muslim activist youth, the future imagined as a morally pure religious utopia, has taken the place of messy past history as the prime mover of present experience and action. The dialectic implied in the focus groups is not so much about something which is the case (the political present is too confusing), but about something which might come to pass if there is not an immediate change of direction. ‘Risks in which people believe are the whip driving the present to make some move’ (Beck 2000: 100). In the Indonesian context, deep ethno-local and religious divisions, sharpened and incised by the New Order regime, mean that there are many groups of young people, each with a distinct set of political ‘moves’ in mind to manage generational risk and solve the present crisis. However, these ‘moves’, if all taken together, would actually have the very opposite effect.

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