Introduction

Indonesia in 2009 is entering into its third democratic elections since the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime in 1998. The literature on the previous two elections, in 1999 and 2004, tended to focus on issues of democratic principle, such as whether the elections would be free and fair and conducted without violence, the attitude of the military and whether the losers would accept the decision of the electorate. There were also questions about the capacity of election administrators to deal with the logistical problems of conducting elections in a huge and geographically dispersed country like Indonesia. These questions have now largely been answered in a positive way. Not only have there been two successful rounds of nationwide elections, but there have also been successive regional executive elections for provincial governors and district heads since 2004. And despite controversy about aspects of the electoral system, various disputed results and criticism of the quality of electoral administration, Indonesia now has a functioning and tested system of democratic elections. It has certainly not been affected by the “democratic rollback” that has struck some democratising countries (Diamond 1997, 1999, 2008) that appeared to be part of a wave of democratisation in the last part of the twentieth century (Huntington 1991).

Debate about democratic governance in Indonesia has now moved on to different matters. The last year has seen vigorous debate about new electoral laws which were passed by the parliament (DPR) in October 2008. Since the passage of the laws there have also been a number of challenges in the Constitutional Court, some of which have been successful in overturning important aspects of the legislation. At a time when the election was rapidly approaching, the rulings of the Court opened up some major questions about the way the election would be conducted and how votes would be counted.
Indonesia’s 2009 Elections: The New Electoral System and the Competing Parties

counted. Thus although the basic shape of the Indonesia electoral system has been established, details of the system are still being hammered out. Compared to the scale of changes since 1998, these alterations are matters of detail, yet in most established democracies such reforms would be seen as having a major affect on the conduct of politics.

This paper analyses the new electoral laws and the reforms to the system that it introduced, as well as the effect of the challenges in the Constitutional Court. It examines how the new law and regulations will influence the way the parties and candidates conduct their campaigns and the type of coalition-building that will take place, as well as the impact on the likely results of the election, including both the number of parties that will win representation and the type of candidates that will be elected.

The changes to Indonesia’s electoral laws can be seen as a case study of the impact of electoral systems on the distribution and operation of power in a democracy (Reilly 2001). The steps towards “open-list” voting in the parliamentary elections will fundamentally alter the dynamics of the relationship between candidates and their party leaderships on the one hand, and between candidates and the voters on the other. They will greatly reduce the power of the party machines over the selection of candidates and have the potential to increase the accountability of members of parliament to their constituencies through the ballot box. In doing so, they have the potential to transform the way politics are played out in Indonesia.

The changes are largely the result of consistent pressure from activists in non-government organisations and in the media and academia who had argued that the previous system handed excessive power to the elites that controlled the political parties. Yet, at the same time, the granting of greater power to voters rather than party leaders has run counter to the efforts of advocates of affirmative action for women who wanted to use the law to increase the number of female candidates obtaining seats. This development provides a salutary lesson about the unintended consequences that certain legislative or judicial actions may have and the possible contradictory effects of multiple agendas of reform.

The paper also outlines the major parties contesting the elections. It argues that while the parties are hardly distinguishable in terms of articulated policy, they represent distinct streams of social and religious attitudes that have a long continuity in Indonesian society. The large number of parties is a much remarked upon and decried feature of Indonesian politics, but in fact there is a relatively limited number of parties who are significant in terms of electoral support. The introduction of a new and more effective threshold for parliamentary representation will greatly reduce the number of parties in the legislature. But just as the changes to the system for allocating seats
has created unintended effects, the new legislation creates contradictory pushes and pulls in relation to the number of parties. On the one hand, the parliamentary threshold will eliminate most of the tiny splinter parties but, on the other hand, the need to have the support of a party to stand for president has encouraged the formation of new parties by presidential hopefuls.

The electoral cycle – parliamentary and presidential

There will be five separate electoral processes taking place in Indonesia in 2009.1 Elections for four different legislative institutions will be held on 9 April. These are for the 560-seat national parliament (House of People’s Representatives (DPR)) and for the 128-seat second national chamber (House of Regional Representatives (DPD)), as well as for provincial parliaments (House of People’s Regional Representatives (DPRD-I)) and district parliaments (DPRD-II), whose size varies according to the population of the province or district. Thus voters have to mark four separate ballot papers in the elections of 9 April.

On 8 July there will be the first round of presidential elections. As described below, the candidates for the presidential election cannot be finalised until the results of the DPR elections are determined because there is a threshold of parliamentary representation required for eligibility to join the presidential race. Candidates must stand on a joint Presidential-Vice Presidential ticket. If no pair of candidates achieves an absolute majority of votes there must be a second round election. If necessary, that election will take place on 8 September. Elections for executive governments at the regional level (provincial governors and district heads) take place according to a separate schedule.

The new DPR, DPD, as well the new DPRD-I and DRPD-II in each province and district, will be sworn in during October. The Members of the DPR and DPD then meet together to form the People’s Consultative Council (MPR), whose function is to swear in the new President. Thus the existing legislative assemblies and President continue to operate during the election cycle and are not replaced until October. The elections take place over a fixed five-year cycle, so that the next election year will be 2014.

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1 The different elections and institutions are outlined in more detail in Sherlock (2004).
Electoral reform and its political implications

Towards an “open list” system: Contested approaches

One of the most important of the recent reforms to the electoral system was the change to the law on parliamentary elections (Law 10/2008) to move further away from a “closed list” system of proportional representation voting towards a more “open list” system. In a “closed list” system, the candidates to be elected are ranked in an order determined by the party (Reynolds, Reilly & Ellis 2005: 84). The voter chooses which party he/she wishes to vote for but the individual who occupies the seat in parliament is selected by the party. Voters cannot decide which particular party representative they send to the parliament, nor can they vote out an unpopular individual. This was the system that operated in the 1999 elections. In an “open list” system, on the other hand, voters have the chance to choose a particular individual in a list of candidates from a particular party. In doing so, they indicate a preference for both a particular party and for a certain individual from that party.

A “closed list” system places a great deal of power in the hands of the party machine and is often criticised on the grounds that it makes MPs answerable to the party but not to the electors (Reynolds, Reilly & Ellis
In the Indonesian case, this meant that DPR Members were much more concerned about maintaining close relations with the central party leadership than with the constituents that they were supposed to represent. It led to phenomenon of candidates paying the party for a winnable position on the party ticket. A party with a strong following in a particular district could charge a high price for the position, and the candidate received the comfortable assurance of winning a parliamentary seat without the effort of campaigning. This was a way for parties to raise funds and for wealthy individuals with little or no profile in a district to enter the DPR. Such practices tended to attract candidates seeking to buy influence, business connections and lucrative contracts, while neglecting the duties of parliamentary representation (Hadiz 2003, Robison & Hadiz 2004, Tan 2002).

The system became widely criticised for perpetuating the kind of political corruption that was common during the Suharto regime. At that time, a seat in parliament could be obtained by making payments to party leaders or to government officials. With the arrival of democratic elections, the power became the monopoly of party leaders and the price increased because the DPR now had greater influence and decision-making power. As a result of this and other issues, the standing of the parties as measured in media commentary and public opinion polls declined rapidly after 1999. Non-government organisations and media commentators began campaigning for reforms to reduce the power of party machines. Much of the commentary was full of naïve assumptions that parties were always the prime cause of political corruption, that their interests were inherently inimical to those of “the people” and that democracy could somehow operate without them, but the “anti-party reaction” resonated with widespread popular attitudes (Tan 2002).

As a result of pressure for reform, the election law for the 2004 election took a step in the direction of an “open list” system by allowing voters to cast a vote for a single individual as well as a party. But the details of the system meant that voter choice was largely illusory. If a voter failed to mark both candidate and party the vote was declared invalid, and the method of counting individual votes meant that only two candidates were actually allocated a seat in the 2004-2009 DPR on the basis of his personal vote. The reformed system still meant that candidates could not be elected without the endorsement of the party heavyweights in Jakarta.
With the 2004 election law still heavily weighted in favour of party control of candidates, proposals for further reforming the system were put forward during the deliberations on new electoral laws during 2008. The result of often vigorous debate in the DPR was that the law to govern the 2009 legislative elections moved further towards an “open list” system. The law contained two important new points:

- Voters could vote for either an individual candidate or a party – a vote would be valid even if the voter did not mark the name of the party. This would encourage voters to select an individual candidate and eliminate the possibility of such votes being ruled invalid on a technicality as had occurred in the 2004 election.

- Seats would be allocated to individual candidates in order of their personal votes, provided they received more than 30 per cent of the quota for their district. If not, the seat would go to the candidate placed highest on the party list. This would increase the possibility of candidates with a high personal vote taking up a seat, but it still gave some weighting to candidates with a favourable position on the list.

The second of these two reforms was, however, criticised as being insufficient to meet the standards of an “open list” system. The law was successfully challenged in the Constitutional Court and, in a decision that would have great implications for the conduct of the election campaign, the Court ruled that seats would have to be allocated to those candidates winning the largest number of personal votes (suara terbanyak), regardless of their position on the party list.

The Court’s decision had huge immediate implications for the conduct of the campaign. As DPR candidates absorbed the ramifications of the ruling, many had to quickly change the way they campaigned. Some who had thought their election was secured because of their place on the party list realised they had to campaign personally to establish their own individual profile with the electorate. The provision in Law 10/2008 to allow the option for votes for candidates had already shifted the emphasis to individuals rather than parties, but the Court’s ruling swung the balance completely in favour of individual rather than party-based election.

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2 A quota is the number of votes required by a party to win a seat. It is determined by taking the total number of valid votes in a district and dividing it by the number of seats in the district.
campaigning. A tentative move towards a “semi-open list” system became a leap towards a fully “open list” system.

The content of posters, banners and stickers began to focus more and more on local candidates instead of parties and national leaders. In the 1999 and 2004 campaigns, election advertising rarely mentioned candidate names. PDIP material, for example, concentrated on Megawati in previous campaigns, but now featured the names and photos of local candidates, with Megawati as a background figure. Many candidates went to considerable length to prove that they were “sons of the soil” of the local area or had some other profile worthy of attention. One candidate in Gorontalo province displayed posters of himself alongside his glamorous pop-star daughter as “Papanya Cynthia” (The Father of Cynthia) who was not only a “true son” of the local Bugis ethnic group, but would “free the people from the chains of suffering and injustice”. A candidate from a district within the city of Jakarta featured himself in a computer-generated photo in a yellow Superman outfit (yellow being the colour of his party, Golkar), under the slogan “The Power of Creativity”. The perceived stature of being descended from local nobility moved one candidate in West Java to list his well-known ancestors on a poster, including up to the twelfth generation. The increase in election propaganda in public places was so marked that it brought complaints that every spare inch of space was cluttered with images of election candidates.

The immediate effect of the ruling for the internal life of political parties was to weaken the central leaders and to increase competition between candidates. The value of a position on the party’s list was greatly reduced and thus the power of the party office-holders who controlled the list was reduced accordingly. There were reports of candidates demanding that their party return the money paid for their position on the list because the funds were now required for the candidate’s own personal campaign. And since they were now running their own campaign they were less interested in being directed by the central party board. The new situation also meant that, as well as competition for votes between parties, there was now also competition between candidates within the same party. There was a marked decline in cooperation that might previously have existed between party colleagues. The national elections oversight body

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3 “Rakyat bebas dari belenggu penderitaan dan ketidakadilan”
(Bawaslu⁴), said that there were many cases of candidates from the same party reporting on each other with allegations of violations of electoral regulations (Jakarta Globe, 21 January 2009).

But as well as the immediate impact on campaigning, the new law and its interpretation by the Constitutional Court will have longer lasting effects on the internal operation of political parties and on the relationship between DPR Members and their constituents. The implications will become apparent in the coming months and years, but it seems likely that they will be profound. One variable will be the percentage of voters who vote for individual candidates rather than casting a “party list” vote. As many as 52% of voters indicated a preference for individual candidates in 2004 (Wall 2004) and in the current campaign climate the number of personal votes for candidates is likely to increase hugely. Candidates elected because of a strong personal profile will be encouraged to build on their popularity in the district in order to increase the likelihood of re-election in the future.

If there are large numbers of such members in the DPR after this election, it will demonstrate to prospective candidates that there is a path to parliament through constituency work, not just through patronage by party leaders. This could bring about a general increase in the emphasis given to constituency relations amongst DPR Members. The “working visits” that DPR Members currently conduct during recess periods are formal and ritualised affairs that Members tend to make because they are obliged to do so by the Standing Orders of the DPR, rather because they see them as an important element of their re-election. Closer relations with constituents could in turn help improve the channels for public input into the work of the DPR.

The extent of the longer term effects of the decision of the Constitutional Court was also partly dependent on how the KPU interpreted and implemented Law 10/2008 in the light of the Court’s ruling. The most important question was how seats should now be allocated to candidates after the total vote for each party had been counted. The intention of the ruling appeared to be that if a party won a seat, the seat should be given to the candidate on that party’s list who had won the most personal votes. If

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⁴ Badan Pengawas Pemilu (Bawaslu) General Elections Oversight Board, whose role is to receive, investigate and report on violations of electoral laws and regulations during elections.
a party in a district had won two seats, the second seat should go to the
candidate with the second highest number of personal votes, and so on.

But this interpretation of the ruling left out consideration of the fact that
not all voters would mark the name of any particular candidate –
following previous practice, many could be expected to mark the name of
the party only. There were thus two types of votes: votes for a party and
personal votes for a candidate on a party list. The question remained how
to regard each of these groups of votes for the purposes of assigning seats
to the candidates of winning parties.

There were at least two possible ways to deal with the issue. One way was
to use both types of votes for allocating seats to candidates. The personal
votes for each candidate would be allocated to them and the party votes
would also be allocated to particular candidates. But to which candidates
would the party votes be allocated? The most obvious answer was to use
the order of ranking determined by the party (nomor urut). This was
essentially the system used in the 2004 election, except that now the
character of the campaign was completely different: voters could vote for a
candidate alone and most candidates were now campaigning on the basis
their individual profile. This would greatly increase the number of
candidates with a high personal vote being elected and decrease the
number of those who depended mainly on their position in the party list,
an outcome which was compatible with the objectives of petitioners to the
Constitutional Court. Nevertheless such a method still gave some
weighting to candidates high on the party list, an effect which some critics
argued was contrary to the decision of the Court.

A second possible way was to say that party-only votes should be
disregarded for the purposes of allocating seats to candidates. If a party
won a seat, the seat would be allocated to the candidate from that party
who had received the highest number of personal votes. Party-only votes
would be counted to determine the size of the quota for a seat and which
parties received them (as well as the total national vote for the
parliamentary and presidential thresholds) but would be ignored for
purposes of allocating seats. Advocates of this method argued that voters
who voted only for a party either did not fully understand the voting
system, were unable to make a choice or had not bothered to make one

Ballot papers where the voter had marked both a party and a candidate would
presumably be treated as if they were candidate-only votes, that is they would be counted
as votes for an individual candidate.
and therefore their votes should not be directed towards a particular candidate.\textsuperscript{6} This method was simpler and not contrary to the apparent intention of the Constitutional Court. But it was based on imputing certain thinking and knowledge in the minds of the voters who had only marked a party on their ballot paper. It might equally be inferred that such voters supported the allocation of seats as determined by the party they supported. Their votes were valid according to Law 10/2008 and subsequent regulations, but they were excluded from the process of determining the occupants of a party’s seats.

A decision for government or administrators?

The question of which individuals would occupy the seats won by a party in the election is clearly very politically sensitive and very important for a smooth and timely determination of the election results. It is both a political and an administrative issue: disputes between candidates are not only politically damaging, but they make it very difficult for the KPU to take firm decisions and avoid delays. Many people have argued that the issue of how seats are allocated was a political issue and should be made by government and not by the electoral administrators in the KPU. They maintain that the government should issue a regulation in lieu of law (Perppu), a regulation which would have to be passed into law by the next session of the DPR. KPU Members called on the government to promptly issue a Perppu so as to avoid the chance of a delay in the election, with a former deputy head of the KPU arguing that it was outside the authority of the KPU to interpret independently the implications of the Court’s ruling on Law 10/2008. Counter arguments were that it was in the authority of the KPU, that there was insufficient time to draft a Perppu and that a Perppu would be challenged in the Constitutional Court once it had been made law by the DPR, thus further delaying resolution of the issue and possibly causing a postponement of the election (Kompas, 5 February 2009).

As it turned out, the government did not issue a Perppu and the decision on what to do was left to the KPU. The KPU opted to take the position that only personal votes for candidates should be used to determine the individuals who would be allocated seats. Votes for a party only would not be counted for the purposes of allocation of seats. This option was administratively simpler and it was also the option being advocated by the

\textsuperscript{6} Author’s discussion with NGO supporting the case against Law 10/2008 in the Constitutional Court.
NGOs and media commentators who had supported the case against Law 10/2008 in the Constitutional Court. These advocates had a strong influence over the opinions of many KPU Members.

It appears that the government was unable or unwilling to make a decision on these issues in the form of a Perppu. This was possibly because it found it politically convenient to shift the decision-making responsibility to the KPU. Issuing a Perppu would not only force the government to take a position, its decision would also be subject to debate in the next session of the DPR and, once made into law, subject to appeals in the Constitutional Court.

For election administrators it is very important that electoral laws and regulations be unambiguous and not open to wide interpretation, otherwise there will be disputes about the validity of the declared results. The effect of the government’s delay was to force the KPU to act on its own so as not to cause a postponement of the election date. But there is a significant danger that non-counting of party-only votes will cause a rash of disputes after the election and delay the declaration of the DPR results and jeopardise the timing of the presidential election.

**Thresholds, parties and political competition**

One of the constants of the electoral scene in post-Suharto Indonesia has been debate about a perceived problem of the proliferation of parties. A great deal of local and international media coverage concentrates on the large number of parties contesting elections, suggesting that the number causes problems for voters and election administrators and that it interferes with the efficient operation of the parliament. Superficially, the sheer number of parties (24 in the 2004 elections, increasing to 38 in 2009) does seem to lend credence to this impression. In reality, however, there is little substance to the concerns. In both elections, around 90 per cent of voters have supported the same 6 or 7 parties, with the minor parties (*partai gurem* or “flea parties”) failing to have any significant effect on the conduct of elections or on the work of the DPR after the elections (Sherlock 2003, 2007).

Nevertheless, there have been attempts to reduce the number of parties through legislation since 1999 and this has continued in the recent reforms. This was partly because the “anti-party reaction” previously noted in this paper found common cause with the desire of the major parties to restrict competition from new players, as well a realisation that proportional
representation electoral systems have a tendency to encourage political fragmentation (Reynolds, Reilly & Ellis 2005: 58-59). Stringent regulations ensuring that parties have a nation-wide organisational structure have succeeded in preventing frivolous or insignificant political groupings from registering as parties (Sherlock 2004, Reilly 2006). In addition, a very unusual threshold for parliamentary representation was introduced in the 1999 legislation, according to which a party that won less than 2.5 per cent of the seats in one election was not allowed to stand in subsequent elections. The predictable result of this provision was that the parties affected simply changed their name and were registered as new parties in the next election: thus the Justice Party (Partai Keadilan – PK) in 1999 became the Justice and Welfare Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera – PKS) in 2004 and the Crescent and Star Party (Partai Bulan Bintang – PBB) of 1999 became the Star and Crescent Party (Partai Bintang Bulan – PBB) of 2004.

In light of the futility of the effort to reduce the number of parties through the parliamentary threshold of the 1999 law, Law 10/2008 introduced a more orthodox threshold of the kind that is commonly used in legislatures with proportional representation systems throughout the world (Reynolds, Reilly & Ellis 2005: 83-84). The new rule was that only parties that received more than 2.5 per cent of the valid national vote would be assigned seats in the DPR. Thus even if a small party received enough votes in a particular district to win a seat in that district, they would not be assigned a seat unless they exceeded the nation-wide threshold. Applying the 2009 threshold to the results of the 2004 election would have meant that 8 of the 16 parties with seats in the 2004-09 DPR would not have been represented. In total, those 8 parties collectively received under 12 per cent of the national vote (Sherlock 2004).

In addition to the formal 2.5 per cent threshold, an effective threshold was also introduced through reductions in the size of electoral districts. In the 2004 election, the number of seats per district ranged from 3 to 12. Therefore a party with just over 8 per cent of the vote in a 12-seat district could win a seat. In Law 10/2008, however, the range of district size was reduced to from 3 to 10 seats. The effective threshold in the largest districts was thereby increased to 10 per cent. This places another difficulty in the path of small parties seeking DPR representation.

The idea of formal thresholds for the entry of small parties into political competition was also introduced into the presidential elections in 2004 and has been strengthened in Law 10/2008. In 2004, all candidates had to be
nominated by a party or group of parties that held a minimum of 5 per cent of the seats in the DPR. The objective was to reduce the number of presidential candidates and to limit the number to those with substantial party backing. Law 10/2008 took this even further and increased the threshold to 20 per cent of DPR seats or 25 per cent of the total national vote. Parties with less than 20 per cent of seats must join with other parties in a coalition whose total seats reach the threshold. This effectively means that only four candidates will be able to stand for election and only two parties, Golkar and PDIP, would likely to be in a position to field a candidate by themselves. All other parties would have to join one of these two major parties in supporting a candidate or join with a group of a number of other small parties.

As mentioned above, one of the main objectives of the various thresholds was to limit the number of parties in the arena of electoral competition. In fact, however, some of the provisions have contradictory effects. Although the 2.5 per cent threshold for DPR representation and the reduction of district size should definitely reduce the number of parties, the requirement for presidential candidates to be sponsored by a party actually encourages the creation of new parties. Presidential candidates form new parties because the system gives advantages to candidates who have the backing of parliamentary blocks. They can then be in a good bargaining position during the period of intense “cow-trading” (dagang sapi) amongst the parties over who is supporting what presidential ticket in the period between the DPR elections in April and the presidential elections in July.

The most obvious example was President Yudhyono himself, who formed the Democrat Party in 2001 because it was necessary to have a party backing in order to stand for election in 2004. It seems clear that SBY personally would have won the election regardless of party backing, but he saw it desirable to found a new party because of the electoral law. Similarly, two prospective candidates for the 2009 elections, Wiranto and Subianto Prabowo, have both formed parties so as to enter the presidential race. These candidates presumably do not expect their parties to win 20 per cent of the vote, but they hope to win as many seats as possible to improve their bargaining position in the formation of a Presidential-Vice Presidential ticket and in the allocation of seats in Cabinet after the election. The requirement for party sponsorship for presidential candidates has thus potentially added two more significant parties to those already in the DPR.
Affirmative action for women: yes or no?

One of the unintended consequences of the Constitutional Court’s decision on allocating seats to candidates with the largest personal vote was to reverse a movement towards affirmative action for female candidates. Since 1998 women’s organisations have been arguing for the introduction of mechanisms to support the entry of women into politics as an essential part of democratisation and reform. In the 1999 election female candidates won just eight per cent of DPR seats, a figure barely higher than the seven per cent representation won by women in Indonesia’s previous democratic election held in 1955, and lower than the average representation during the 30 years of the Suharto regime. Advocates of affirmative action argued that many aspects of post-Suharto electoral laws worked to disadvantage women, and measures should be introduced to positively support women candidates (Siregar 2006). Very modest progress was made with passing of the 2004 electoral law which stated that parties should “give consideration” to making 30 per cent of their candidates women.

The movement towards affirmative action was strengthened with the passage of Law 10/2008 which declared that 30 per cent of all DPR candidates were to be female and that one in every three candidates on a party’s list should be a woman.7 The new clause would, if complied with, give more chances to women candidates to be elected because they would be better-placed on the party’s list and thus benefit from the rule that gave weighting to candidates high on the list. But with the Court’s ruling that giving weighting to a candidate’s position on the party list was unconstitutional, the potential advantage for female candidates was eliminated. Female candidates would have to campaign for personal votes in the same way as males, without benefiting from being placed on a relatively high position on their party’s list.

This effect created something of a quandary for organisations and individuals who had traditionally seen themselves as advocates of the people’s right to choose their representatives over the wishes of powerful elites. If the mass of voters, including women, were reluctant to vote for female candidates, should special legislative measures be used? And if parties did not provide sufficient training and support for their women candidates, should the electoral law attempt to compensate for this

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7 This is generally known as a “zipper” provision in international discourse on women in parliaments – the metaphor being that male and female candidates should alternate on a party list in the way that the teeth of a zipper alternate. The term was also used in Indonesia.
disadvantage? There is a tension between the conception of democracy as “what the voters vote for” and the goals of influencing the nature and quality of the representatives chosen. Advocates of increased women’s parliamentary representation, both internationally and in Indonesia, had grappled with such questions for many years (Bessell 2005, 2008, IDEA 2005, Siregar 2006).

The ruling was attacked by women’s groups, with one spokesperson arguing that it was “not fair to women [to use] the number of votes won as the basis for electing candidates” because of the “strong patriarchal culture in Indonesia” (Jakarta Post, 26 Dec 2008). Other women’s groups pressured the KPU to draw up its own regulation which would declare that one in three of all parties’ winning candidates would be women regardless of their personal vote or position on the party list. The proposal initially received support from within the KPU, but the idea was criticised by a judge of the Constitutional Court as being unconstitutional (Jakarta Post 19 Jan 2009). There was internal disagreement on the issue amongst KPU Members, but with the proposal so clearly breaching the intention of the Court’s ruling, the Commission eventually backed away from the proposal (Jakarta Post, 31 Jan 2009).

In reality, however, the details of the affirmative action provisions of Law 10/2008 would have rendered them ineffective in any case. The provision for the 30 per cent quota was backed by the sanction that it would be verified by the KPU and the list of complying and non-complying parties would be published in the media (Art. 53 & 66). The KPU conducted the verification and publication process and virtually all parties met the requirement. But there was no sanction for parties not meeting the requirement to have one in three of their candidates on every list a woman. The wording of the law was sufficiently vague that the KPU could have decided to also publish the names of the parties who had and had not met the requirement, but it chose not to do so.

The effort to increase the number of women DPR Members through affirmative action provisions in the electoral law and through KPU regulations has thus made only limited progress since 1999. The strengthening of the provision for a 30 per cent quota in Law 10/2008 ensured that all significant parties met the requirement, but the absence of

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8 Four out of the thirty-eight parties on the ballot did not meet the quota, but they were all very small parties. All the major parties and most of the medium-sized and smaller parties complied.
sanctions to enforce the “one-in-three” provision meant that it was flouted by many parties. But even if the requirement had been widely met, its effect was overturned by the Constitutional Court’s ruling. With the change in the nature of campaigning from a party to a personal focus discussed earlier, it remains to be seen if the number of successful women candidates is significantly different from the 2004 elections.

The Competing Parties

Seven Major Parties

As already mentioned, the idea that the Indonesian political scene is crowded by a multiplicity of parties obscures the more important fact that most voter support is concentrated in a relatively small number of parties. While there are 38 parties registered to compete in the 2009 DPR elections, only about ten are at all important. In 2004 almost 90% per cent of voters supported seven major parties. The following section outlines the history, ideological orientation and bases of support of these seven major parties. Brief mention is also made of two new parties that may attract some support.

It is necessary to place Indonesia’s political parties in the context of their historical origins in order to understand their conduct during an election campaign. The major parties have been able to build allegiances amongst the various religious, class and regional groupings in Indonesian society, but they have done very little to develop policies that would relate their party’s stance to the interests of the groups that support them. Thus it is not possible to describe a range of policies being debated in the election because, for the most part, the parties do not have them. Rather, one can only infer what the parties are likely to say on any issue from their place in the overall political spectrum and from the public pronouncements made by key party figures (Pahlevi et al 2003).

Nevertheless, most of the major parties (as well as most of the smaller parties) can be identified as standing in one of a number of political traditions that have characterised Indonesian politics over the last century. Conventionally, Indonesian parties are usually viewed as attracting the support of various aliran or streams of political and religious thinking. The term aliran is a rich and nuanced one in Indonesian political discourse. The work of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz on Javanese society is generally credited with introducing the term as a category of social analysis (Geertz 1965, 1976). The term moved out of the arena of academic study into the
common language of politics and has been employed in ways that takes it far beyond Geertz’s conceptions.

There are differing opinions about how meaningful these distinctions have become with the evolution of Indonesian society in recent years, especially with increasing urbanisation. In fact the issue has become one of the key debates about voter behaviour and nature of political parties in Indonesia. Some recent work has argued that aliran allegiances remain central to explaining voter behaviour in Indonesia (King 2003), while other authors have argued that leadership and personality politics are now the dominating influence (Liddle & Mujani 2007). Other literature has taken the position that there is mixture of both these elements at work (Ufen 2006). Studies of elections in particular localities have emphasised the continuing importance of aliran identity in understanding the interaction between local leaders and their communities (Cederroth 2004, Turmudi 2004).

It is not the intention of this paper to explore the debate further. Whatever the merits of the classification, Indonesian political parties are usually viewed as either being secular nationalist, Islamic or Christian parties. Within the Islamic tradition there is also an historically strong division between “traditionalist” and “modernist” Islamic parties, with the former associated with the mass Islamic organisation Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) and the latter with Muhammadiyah. Islamic modernism refers to the international movement of Islamic thought dating from the nineteenth century that aimed to reform Islam in response to the perceived challenge of Western social and political thinking. In Indonesia the movement also reacted to what it saw as the pre-Islamic character of much popular practice of Islam, particularly in rural areas. This latter type of Islam is generally known as “traditionalist” Islam and is characterised by the influence of beliefs and practices from Hinduism, Buddhism and indigenous Javanese faiths.

The following section is a survey of the history and general outlook of the seven major parties. These are, in descending order of their vote in the 2004 parliamentary election:

- Golkar, led by Vice President Yusuf Kalla.
- Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perguangan (PDIP)), led by former President Megawati Sukarnoputri.
In Indonesia’s 2009 Elections: The New Electoral System and the Competing Parties

- National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB)), founded by former President Abdurrahman Wahid, now led by his nephew, Muhaimin Iskandar.
- United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP)), led by Suryadarma Ali, a Minister in the current government.
- Democrat Party (Partai Demokrat), the party of current President Susilo Bambang Yudhyyono.
- Justice and Welfare Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS)) (often translated as Prosperous Justice Party), the party of the current Speaker of the People’s Consultative Council (MPR).
- National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN)), founded by former MPR Speaker Amien Rais, now led by wealthy business leader, Soetrisno Bachir.

Golkar

History

Golkar was formed in 1964 during the Sukarno regime as a coordinating body for organisations connected with the military and the government. After Suharto’s coup in 1965, Golkar became his political machine, a channel of communication and control between the government and the population. It ensured that the state apparatus at all levels was committed to the political agenda of the regime. Dominated by the military, Golkar was a medium for the propagation of state ideology, as well as an instrument for distributing the patronage and developmental benefits that would guarantee loyalty, or at least acquiescence. It was the largest of the three parties allowed to contest in the stage-managed elections that took place every five years under Suharto. The other two parties were an involuntary amalgamation of the various secular nationalist and Christian parties and a similar forced marriage of the existing Islamic parties.

The crisis created for Golkar by the end of the Suharto regime in 1998 led many people to predict the demise of the party. Indeed, Golkar did suffer from the desertion of a large number of leading figures and it retained barely a third of the votes it had received in Suharto-era elections. But the party managed to survive and prosper in an open democratic environment because it had a country-wide organisational network, as well as experienced cadre with ties at the local level and with a reputation for delivering concrete developmental benefits. In many underdeveloped regions, such as the eastern part of the country, Golkar received much of the credit for the economic development fostered under the New Order.
And with the suppression of organised Islamic politics during much of the Suharto regime, Golkar captured some of the vote that had previously gone to Islamic parties, including in areas such as South Sulawesi, the home of the current Vice President, Jusuf Kalla. Golkar is generally seen as a secular party, but it has a number of Islamist elements, one of which is identified with Kalla.

**Ideological Outlook and Support Base**

Golkar is a secular party in the sense that it does not base itself on a particular religion. Many of its leaders with a military background retain a suspicion of Islamic politics. Although the party has had leaders who have emphasised their Islamic credentials, including former President B.J. Habibie as well as Jusuf Kalla, Golkar has never overtly associated itself with Islamic symbolism and, particularly in Christian areas in eastern Indonesia, emphasises its history of support for religious tolerance and inclusiveness. It could be said that Golkar’s core ideological position is *pembangunan* or development. Golkar has the most overtly instrumentalist approach to politics, emphasising its success in bringing economic and social development. As suggested above, Golkar portrays its governmental experience and administrative expertise as providing the best prospects for economic growth, security and national unity.

Golkar represents an attempt to supersede the traditional politics of *aliran* and to build a coalition of support across established social divisions. Golkar leaders sometimes argue that their party represents the “centre” of Indonesian politics, a balance between the “left” of PDIP and the “right” of the Islamic parties. Golkar is a nation-wide party, but its greatest concentrations of support are in the islands outside Java, although it has a strong following in West Java. The party receives a particularly good vote in the eastern part of the country, especially on the islands of Sulawesi, Kalimantan and East Nusa Tenggara. The eastern vote is very useful for Golkar because the region is over-represented in terms of DPR seats.

Golkar received the largest vote of all parties in the 2004 election and often refers to itself as the “winner” of the election, even though it scored only 21.5% of the total. But this self-perception as the biggest party has created problems in the run-up to the presidential election as the party tries to determine its candidate for president. The most logical choice would appear to be to maintain the winning partnership with SBY. But the party is loath to remain in the number two position: there is a strong feeling that the presidency rightfully belongs to Golkar. But the problem for the party
is that Yusuf Kalla has very little personal popularity and the party has no other candidates with a good public profile. And if Golkar did choose a candidate other than Kalla, he would probably join with SBY again on a non-Golkar ticket. There has been speculation that the Sultan of Yogyakarta would stand as a Golkar candidate, but nothing has been resolved. The uncertainty is reportedly causing major strains within the party. Combined with the party’s poor showing in a number of recent opinion polls, the issue has created internal recriminations and concerns that the party will not perform as well as it did in the 2004 election.

Splits and Rivals

Golkar has suffered a number of desertions from its ranks due to personal and political rivalries and the undemocratic internal party structures. Following Suharto’s resignation in May 1998, the long-standing factional rivalries in Golkar came quickly to the surface as the hostile groupings in the party battled for control of the organisation. B.J. Habibie was in the strongest position because he held the Presidential office and was Suharto’s anointed successor. Representing a more Islamic wing of the party, he joined forces with Akbar Tanjung and defeated a contending leader of the secular elements in the party, former Defence Minister and Armed Forces Commander Edi Sudrajat, for leadership of the party. Excluded from control of the party machine, Sudrajat departed from Golkar and established the Indonesian Justice and Unity Party (PKPI). Akbar Tanjung was in turn replaced as leader of the party by Jusuf Kalla when Kalla became Vice-President, but Tanjung has not moved to form his own party.

The gradual sidelining of military figures in Golkar since 1998 has led a number to start their own rival parties. A former close associate of Suharto’s, former Army Chief of Staff Raden Hartono, set up the Concern for the Nation Functional Party (PKPB), a name containing the word “karya” or “functional” on which the name Golkar is based. A further split from Golkar was lead by Yapto Sulistio Soerjosoemarno, a former leader of the Golkar youth wing Pemuda Pancasila and the organisation of retired officers’ families (FKPPI). Parties have also been established by Lt. Gen. Muhammad Yasin, a former head of military intelligence and Lt. Gen. Syahir, former head of the special forces unit, Kopassus. These parties will not individually receive significant number of votes but together they present a danger of leaking support from the Golkar constituency.
The phenomenon of multiple minor parties formed by ex-military figures shows the general decline of the political power of the military as an institution, but the continuing ambitions of individual military figures to continue to play a role in politics. Two other parties formed by ex-Generals, Gerindra and Hanura, are sufficiently prominent to be dealt with separately below.

**Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle (PDIP)**

*History*

The Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle (PDIP) has perhaps the longest pedigree in Indonesian politics. It was formed under the PDIP name in 1998, but was the immediate successor to the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), the nationalist party created to be one of the three legal parties under the Soeharto regime. PDIP also sees itself as the inheritor of the mantle of the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) formed by leader of the independence struggle and Indonesia’s first President, Sukarno.

From the 1970s to the 1990s PDI operated under a leadership that was largely obedient to Soeharto’s dictates. But by the mid-1990s Soeharto became concerned that, under the leadership of Sukarno’s daughter, Megawati Sukarnoputri, the party was becoming a rallying point for resistance to the regime. In 1996 he had Megawati replaced with a more compliant figure in the lead-up to the 1997 election. But the government’s heavy-handed action generated the very public response it had sought to forestall and Megawati became a symbol of opposition to Suharto. In July 1996, Suharto unleashed thugs and elements of the security forces to forcibly remove Megawati’s supporters from the party headquarters. The ensuing violence triggered riots throughout the capital for several days.

The events of July 1996 were something of a turning point in Indonesian politics and indicated the beginning of the end of Suharto’s total control. Although he successfully re-installed a submissive leadership in PDI, the party became a shell with virtually no public support, its vote collapsing from 15% in 1992 to 3% in the 1997 election, the last election of the Suharto regime. Following the collapse of the regime, Megawati’s faction formed PDIP and quickly assumed leadership of the secular nationalist constituency and emerged as the largest party in the 1999 election. The poor showing of Megawati as President from 2001 to 2004, however, combined with internal factionalism and allegations of corruption resulted
in the party suffering a catastrophic loss in support in the 2004 DPR elections, falling from 34 per cent of the popular vote in 1999 to 19 per cent in 2004.

**Ideological Outlook and Support Base**

As mentioned, PDIP portrays itself as the true upholder of Sukarno’s legacy. The figure of Indonesia’s founding leader is presented as the inspiration of the party’s advocacy of national unity and the separation of religion from political affairs. PDIP’s ideological position emphasises three main points: defence of the unity and integrity of Indonesia against internal and foreign threats; religious tolerance and cultural inclusiveness; and fighting for the interests of the common people. The party claims to be the defender of the masses or the *wong cilik*, a Javanese term popularised by Sukarno meaning “little people”. At the same time the emphasis on protecting national unity has meant that the party has cultivated ties with elements in the military.

Defence of religious and cultural diversity is stressed in the rhetoric of PDIP leaders and is seen as critical for maintaining a balance between the rights of all parts of the diverse Indonesian community. Like all positions adopted by the party, it is not expressed in clear policy terms, but can be seen in its response to sensitive questions that can emerge as defining issues for the divisions between the streams of Indonesian political culture. These have included matters such as the funding of Islamic schools versus schools of other religions and, in particular, the controversy over the recently-passed anti-pornography law which was attacked by PDIP as an attempt to enforce a particular Islamist view of morality of the rest of the community (Sherlock 2009).

Ideas about upholding national interests and fighting for the welfare of the *wong cilik* often combine to give a flavour of economic nationalism to PDIP rhetoric. PDIP is not alone in supporting policies such as support for Indonesian businesses and local rural producers against foreign competition, but the party tends to react particularly strongly on such matters. This created problems for the Megawati government when it reluctantly reduced subsidies on fuel prices in 2003, a policy that was essential for restoring the balance of the government’s precarious budget position but which was highly unpopular because of its effects on the price of transport, kerosene for cooking and other basic commodities.
PDIP receives support from across all the provinces of Indonesia, but is especially strong in Java (especially East and Central Java) and Bali. The party predominates in Bali, partly because it is seen as a defender of the rights of the minority Balinese Hindus, but also because the Sukarno family has some Balinese origins. PDIP’s greatest losses in the 2004 election were in areas outside Java and Bali.

Following its poor showing in 2004, PDIP adopted a strategy of attempting to position itself as the “opposition” party. The objective was to rebuild its image as the voice of the common people, something which had suffered as a result of its policies to increase fuel prices as well as allegations of corruption and mismanagement. In opposition the party had the luxury of being able to criticise the Yudhyono government for adopting policies similar to those PDIP had pursued while it was in office. In fact, the concept of an official opposition has never figured in Indonesian political practice, including in the DPR, but PDIP attempted to give meaning to the claim by declining to take up a ministerial position in the Yudhyono cabinet. This was in sharp contrast to all the other major parties who accepted the offer of cabinet portfolios.

PDIP’s “opposition party” strategy will pay probably pay dividends in electoral terms. But the party still has not developed a set of consistent alternative policies. It has had to weigh up the costs of giving up the resources and patronage of cabinet positions against the possible benefits of electoral kudos. Other parties with cabinet positions feel free to criticise the government and distance themselves from presidential decisions when it pleases them, regardless of the fact that they are themselves part of the administration. PDIP also still has a major problem with its leadership: Megawati remains one of the best-known figures in Indonesian politics and is one of the party’s prime assets, but she is also a liability because of memories of her poor performance as President and perceptions that she lacks ideas and intelligence. Nevertheless it seems likely that PDIP will recover at least some of the ground it lost in 2004.

Splits and rival parties

From its formation, PDIP has been challenged from within the secular nationalist stream for ownership of the Sukarnoist tradition. Both of Megawati’s sisters, Rachmawati and Sukmawati Sukarnoputri, formed small rival parties. Both claimed that Megawati and PDIP betrayed their father’s legacy of representing the poor, the wong cilik, and that the party was no longer leading the fight for reform and an end to corruption.
Rachmawati was particularly critical of what she saw as Megawati’s closeness to the military.

Internal factionalism and competition for party offices led a number of PDIP leaders to form rival organisations, all claiming to represent the real traditions of secular nationalism and/or Sukarnoism. Two former leading PDIP figures, Roy Janis, previously chair of the Jakarta branch of the party, and Laksamana Sukardi, a former Cabinet minister, left the party to form the Renewal of Democracy Party (PDP). Eros Djarot, a former adviser and speechwriter to Megawati was ousted from his position under pressure from Megawati’s husband and party power-broker, Taufik Kiemas, reportedly because he resented Djarot’s influence over Megawati. Djarot formed the Freedom Bull National Party PNKB (the bull is the favoured Sukarnoist party symbol). Meanwhile the rump of the old PDI still exists under the name of the Indonesian Upholding Democracy Party (PPDI).

None of the rival parties have become significant players but together they represent a significant nuisance to PDIP because each one of them shaves a percentage point or two off PDIP’s total popular vote. Under the new 2.5% parliamentary threshold, none of the small parties will win seats, but from the perspective of PDIP, the votes are “wasted” nationalist votes that could have won the party a few more parliamentary seats.

**National Awakening Party (PKB)**

*History*

The National Awakening Party (PKB) was founded by former President Abdurrahman Wahid in 1998. Although created after the fall of Soeharto, it is generally regarded as the inheritor of the traditions of the Islamic traditionalist organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which participated directly in electoral politics both before and during the Soeharto regime. NU had been pushed into the forced amalgamation of Islamic parties that became PPP in 1973, but Wahid withdrew NU from active participation in formal party politics in reaction to Soeharto’s meddling in the affairs of the party. In the changed political circumstances after 1998, Wahid decided to revive NU’s party political activity, but by this time many NU leaders had become individually involved in Golkar and some had stayed in PPP after NU’s formal withdrawal. Unable to draw all elements of NU behind it, PKB was formed instead as a party that attempted (largely unsuccessfully) to also draw non-NU forces into its camp.
Ideological Outlook and Support Base

PKB is strongly identified as an Islamic party, but it makes some effort to be seen as a tolerant party that is open to membership and leadership by non-Islamic elements. There are some Christians active in the party. The party has had a tradition of cooperation with secularist organisations, both in the political and non-political spheres. Like other parties, PKB’s policy statements do not consist of anything more than highly general statements of principle. Both PKB as a party and Abdurrahman Wahid during his time as President emphasised the idea of a “people’s economy”, but little or no work has been done to give it concrete policy substance (Witoelar 2002). PKB has also stressed its support for the work of non-government organisations (NGOs) in both facilitating economic and social development.

The heartland of NU is in Java, especially East and Central Java, and PKB’s support base is strongly focused in that area. The regional concentration of its vote means that it suffers from some “wasted” votes and is thus under-represented in terms of its DPR seats. PKB could be seen as the classic example of an aliran party. It has a close relationship with a very clear Islamic traditionalist constituency in rural Java, a fact that is a source of strength but also a limiting factor in its efforts to grow.

Splits and Rivals

Of all the major parties, PKB has been the worst affected by splits. The first occurred in 2001 when one important leader of the party, Matori Abdil Djalil (Vice Speaker of the MPR) failed to support Wahid during the campaign in the DPR to unseat him from the Presidency. This led to heated divisions and the creation of rival groupings claiming the PKB name, one led by Matori and the other by the Foreign Minister in Wahid’s cabinet, Alwi Shihab. The faction led by Matori failed to win recognition by the KPU for eligibility to contest the 2004 election.

Despite that traumatic experience, the party did not work out ways to deal with internal differences and a similar split has developed since 2006, culminating once again in the existence of two rival parties. One is supported by Wahid and the other is led by his nephew and Deputy Speaker of the DPR, Muhaimin Iskander. Both attempted to gain recognition with the KPU as the official party, but in this case the Wahid organisation lost out to the Muhaimin faction because the latter had control of more of the official party offices. In both cases, these internecine
battles were not over policy or ideology but revolved around competition for control of the party machine.

Despite its success in gaining KPU registration the Muhaimin-led party is likely to lose large numbers of votes as a result of the split. Many observers expect the official PKB vote to halve. Wahid has threatened to call on his supporters to boycott the election, although it remains to be seen what position the volatile and unpredictable leader will actually take when the campaign officially begins. The loyalty of many former PKB supporters to their version of Islamic politics may move them to support another rival NU-based party, the PKNU, and some may vote for PPP. But the scattering of its vote could benefit secular parties such as the Democrat Party and Golkar. One former PKB leader, A.S. Hikam, is standing as a candidate for Hanura, the party formed by former General Wiranto (see below), using NU connections in his home district in East Java.

**United Development Party (PPP)**

The United Development Party (PPP) was formed in 1973 as a forced amalgam of Islamic parties created by the Suharto regime and one of the three legal parties during the New Order. As mentioned above, these parties were always kept under close government control and PPP was never in a position to be a real opposition party. But the party did sometimes act as a medium for the expression of Islamic concerns with the regime. Voting for the PPP was one limited way in which Muslims could express their identity. In regions of particular Islamic strength Golkar was forced to campaign particularly vigorously in order to win a clear majority of votes. In a few instances, PPP actually defeated Golkar in strongly Islamic provinces such as Aceh and sometimes seriously challenged Golkar’s electoral dominance in West Sumatra, South Sumatra, East Java and South Kalimantan.

PPP was weakened when Abdurrahman Wahid withdrew NU’s official participation from the party in 1984 and most NU leaders also resigned. Having received 28% of the vote in the 1982 election, it was reduced to 16% in 1987 and 17% in 1992. Nevertheless, PPP survived the transition from a regime-sponsored party to a democratic party after 1998 because it retained some standing as an Islamic voice. A range of both modernist and traditionalist Islamic leaders active in the party during the Suharto era decided to stay with the party rather find a place in the new Islamic parties formed in 1998.
**Ideological Outlook and Support Base**

PPP states that its ideological basis is Islam but the implications for this position are not spelt out in a detailed policy platform. Its commitment to Islamist politics tends to be expressed in relation to symbolic issues. For example, PPP supported the initiative to include the “Jakarta Charter” in the constitution in 2002 (see section on PAN below). The PPP leader (and then Vice President) Hamza Haz attracted considerable attention by his statement in 1999 that a woman should not become President. The party has also argued for an increased emphasis on religious education in schools.

In the post-Soeharto era PPP has struggled to establish a role in politics and a reliable constituency. Unlike PDIP, which was able to remake itself as a symbol of popular aspirations and inheritor of the Soekarno legacy, PPP is often seen as a relic of the past and has been challenged for the leadership of the Islamist constituency by PKS and PAN. The party’s vote fell from 10.7% in 1999 to 8.2% in 2004. Despite efforts to attract some younger activists into its ranks, the party lacks leaders with public profile or charisma and is unlikely to perform well in the 2009 election.

**Splits and Rivals**

The Islamist tradition of politics in Indonesia has always been highly fissiparous and, as mentioned above, PPP was unable to unite it after 1998. But as well as facing competition from new Islamic parties, PPP suffered from a split before the 2004 elections. This was led by the popular Islamic preacher, Zainuddin M.Z., who had campaigned in favour of Golkar in the 1997 election, but joined PPP after the fall of Suharto. Following an unsuccessful attempt to take over leadership of PPP, Zainuddin and a group of followers established the Reform Star Party (PBR) in 2002. PBR performed poorly in the 2004 election but managed to capture some of PPP’s important base of support in Sumatra.

**Democrat Party (PD)**

**History**

The Democrat Party (PD) is a new type of party in Indonesian politics. It was formed in 2001 by current President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) as a vehicle for his election as President. As outlined in the first part of this paper, it is necessary to have party sponsorship to stand for...
President and, rather than be beholden to one of the existing parties, SBY established his own. A former military officer, SBY had risen through the ranks to become a lieutenant-general. He was closely associated with reformist elements in the army and supported ending the military’s involvement in politics, including the withdrawal of serving officers from government administration and political office. He was first Minister for Mines and Energy and then Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security in the Abdurrahman administration. Although PD is clearly SBY’s political instrument (his birthday was deliberately chosen to be the party’s foundation day), he keeps aloof from the day-to-day running of the party, partly to emphasise that he was directly elected by the people rather than by the party.

**Ideological outlook and support base**

SBY has always been identified as a secular nationalist, in both his military and political careers, and the party is generally seen as a non-religious party. But its ideological outlook is probably the vaguest of all Indonesia’s parties and it makes a great effort to be “all things to all people”: hence its official label as a “national-religious” party. In the parliamentary arena the party can be relied upon to support the initiatives of the SBY administration. Notwithstanding SBY’s Javanese background and style, the party’s electoral support is spread across most provinces in the country, but is mainly concentrated in urban areas and amongst the middle class. Its biggest concentration of support is in the city of Jakarta.

Many of the original leaders and activists in PD were from a Golkar background. As a result of SBY’s election as President and the perceived success of his administration, the party has attracted a range of young and ambitious politicians since 2004. Nevertheless it does not maintain a reputation for effective internal organisation or campaigning. The centrality of the figure of SBY to the prospects of the party is attested by the fact that the President’s high profile is likely to attract substantial support to his party in the 2009 election. Some polls have even put PD as high as Golkar and PDIP.

**Justice and Welfare Party (PKS)**

**History**

The Justice and Welfare Party (PKS) (often also translated as Prosperous Justice Party), along with the Democrat Party, was one of the two important new arrivals on the political scene in 2004. In fact, the party had
contested the 1999 election under the name of the Justice Party (PK) but had to change its name to compete in the 2004 election because it had not reached the threshold of votes in 1999 to be eligible to stand. The party dramatically increased its vote from 1.7% in 1999 to 7.3% in 2004.

With its rapid growth, PKS became the focus of a great deal of local and international attention. Many predictions have been made about its potential emergence as a leading political force. A lot of the expectations around the party stem from the fact that it is led by a highly motivated and well-educated cadre of former leaders of Islamic student organisations. PKS activists combined their experience of Muslim student politics with a study of political parties and political theory in both the Western and Islamic worlds. The party has built up a reputation for effective internal organisation and successful electoral campaigning. Indeed, concern about being overtaken by PKS has pushed many other parties into re-examining their traditional methods of operation.

_Ideological outlook and support base_

Despite the “newness” of PKS as a party it stands in a long tradition of modernist Islamic organisations. For many years under the Suharto regime Islamic organisations were viewed with suspicion and campus groups tended to focus on religious and welfare activities for fear of official repression. Ideas about the role of Islam in society and politics, as well as organisational methods, were strongly influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Rahmat 2008: 59-96). The party also sees itself as part of the tradition of past Islamic parties such Masyumi, the leading modernist Islamic party of the 1950s and 1960s. It also traces its roots back to Sarekat Islam, a political/religious organisation that was prominent from the second decade of the twentieth century and one of the first attempts to organise politically under Dutch rule (Permata 2008: 41-83).

In the 1999 election PK concentrated its campaign on rallying the support of devout Muslims and mosque-based groupings. But with very modest gains from the strategy, PKS attempted to broaden its appeal in the 2004 election and campaigned on issues that it thought would unite a broader constituency. It presented itself as the party most opposed to corruption, with leaders who were both untainted by the nepotism and “money politics” of the Soeharto era and committed to providing clean and efficient government. The party’s religious identity is widely known, but has been played down in all national and regional elections since 2004. The PKS slogan in the current campaign is “clean, caring, professional”. The
party has continued to organise around issues it sees as important to Muslims, but it takes care to choose those that unite rather than divide the fissiparous Islamic community. These have included the plight of the Palestinians and supporting the passing of the bill against pornography. PKS has often been attacked by its opponents of having a “hidden agenda” of imposing Islamic sharia while posing as a tolerant and inclusive party (Rahmat 2008: 53-58).

While PKS succeeded in increasing its vote between 1999 and 2004, it is not so evident that it has broken out of its Islamic constituency. Historically, the Islamic modernist community has been more urban than rural, with a strongly middle-class character. This is the background of most PKS activists and is the party’s main support base. Its strongest concentration of support is in the city of Jakarta (where PKS and PD each won more than 20% of the votes) and in traditionally Islamic modernist areas such as West Java and Banten. In East and Central Java, on the other hand, where NU and traditionalist Islam is predominant, the party performed quite poorly. These patterns have been replicated in elections for provincial governors and district heads since 2004.

PKS has been quite innovative in its publicity techniques, but in ways that have sometimes been controversial and perhaps counter-productive. In late 2008 the party ran a series of television advertisements suggesting that PKS was claiming inspiration from the heroes of the nationalist movement, as well as more recent political figures such as Soeharto. It also organised a large anti-Israel demonstration during the Israeli invasion of Gaza in December 2008, with the party’s ballot paper election number prominently displayed. An indication of the party’s often polarising effect was that both of these actions were heatedly attacked by other parties as either unscrupulous or in violation of election campaign laws. PDIP was angered by what it saw as the misrepresentation of the views of secular nationalist figures such as Sukarno. The election supervisory body (Bawaslu) reported PKS to the Jakarta police for allegedly violating the law which restricts campaigning to within three weeks before election day.

The prospects for PKS in the 2009 election have been the subject of some debate, with different opinion polls giving vastly differing results. But no polls have suggested that PKS will make significant gains and some have suggested it may fall behind its 2004 result. The party would probably benefit from a flow of votes from PPP and PAN if those parties record a drop in support. But even this outcome would indicate that PKS had failed
to break from the limits of its immediate constituency, with the Islamic vote merely being shuffled from one Islamic party to the other.

*Splits and rivals*

PKS has not suffered from any significant split or internal dissension that has come to public attention. This is probably because its disciplined and highly centralised organisational structure has prevented the development of open splits. The party has internal divisions over the degree to which it should downplay its Islamic objectives in order to widen its vote base, but the issue has not been debated in public. The principal challenge for the party is to maintain its competitive position in relation to the other Islamic parties and not allow a drift towards secular parties such as Golkar and Democrat whose vague but inclusive political outlook has successfully accommodated voters and activists with an Islamic modernist background.

**National Mandate Party (PAN)**

*History*

The National Mandate Party (PAN) was formed in 1998 by Amien Rais, the leader of the mass Islamic modernist organisation, Muhammadiyah. Amien had a profile as one the promoters of the pro-democracy movement and “was seen as one of the few leaders who could unite some of the more disparate elements of [Islamic] modernist politics” (Fealy & Platzdasch 2004). He also had ambitions to attract a broader constituency, especially amongst the more liberal and secular-minded urban middle class. The party fielded a number of Christian candidates in the 1999 and 2004 elections.

*Ideological Outlook and Support Base*

Amien attempted to build on his image as a modern reforming leader combining Islamic credentials with an inclusive and tolerant attitude towards all communities. PAN’s 1999 election performance, however, was far below expectations and the party received only 7% of the vote. The Indonesian electorate is still tied to long-standing identities and although a newer liberal-minded educated urban constituency has emerged in recent years, it remains relatively small in electoral terms. After 1999, Amien appeared to react to PAN’s disappointing result by returning to his core constituency, including addressing a mass rally in early 2000 in support of a fundamentalist Muslim campaign against Christians in Maluku. Such
efforts did not pay off in electoral terms, however, and the party’s vote slipped to 6% in the 2004 election.

PAN has lost much of the vigour and direction that characterised the party in its early years. It suffers from the fact that issues where the party was seen to be a leading advocate, such as democratic reform and the withdrawal of the military from politics, are no longer at the top of the country’s political agenda. PAN also lost its most important champion when Amien Rais withdrew from formal leadership of the party.

PAN, like PKS, can claim to stand in the tradition of earlier Islamic parties such as Masyumi, particularly given the party’s close connection with Muhammadiyah figures, the organisation that was one of the core elements of Masyumi. PAN’s primary constituency is within the Islamic modernist community, particularly amongst the urban middle class, and is thus in direct competition with PKS. But PAN is less aggressive in campaigning and much less well-organised than its rival. Thus the party is caught within the same limited constituency as PKS, but appears to be less successful in wooing that electoral base. Its vote is likely to decline further in the 2009 election.

The position taken by PAN during the debate on the Jakarta Charter (discussed in the section on PPP above) was indicative of the party’s attempts to straddle the competing pressures from its two target constituencies. The leaders of PAN opposed the inclusion of the Jakarta Charter in the Constitution, but supported an alternative proposal that would have imposed an obligation on all religious groups to practice their various religious obligations. In doing so PAN hoped to distance itself from the idea that Islam had a special status above other religions in Indonesia, while also maintaining its image of a party that supported religious piety and observance.

**Splits and Rivals**
PAN has not gone through any major splits, but it has suffered a drift of non-Islamic leaders from its ranks. Since it presented itself as an alliance of Islamic and non-Islamic forces, this has been a major failing. The party is broadly divided between those who support a broad inclusive strategy and those who argue that the party should emphasise its roots in the Islamic community and appeal to the electorate in terms of an Islamic identity. The growth in strength of the latter elements has partly been the
cause of the departure of some of those who feel uncomfortable inside an avowedly Islamic party.

New parties

It has already been noted that a number of new parties have been formed since 2004, but that none of them are likely to gain any significant level of support. But there are two new parties who should be briefly mentioned because they have been formed by influential and wealthy figures and have gained some profile since 2008. Two very prominent former Generals, Wiranto and Prabowo, have both formed parties in order to be able to contest the 2009 presidential elections. They were very powerful during the final years of the Suharto regime and clearly have ambitions to maintain influential roles in a democratic Indonesia. Both were also seniors to SBY during their military careers and it is often said that they resent a former junior officer junior assuming such a powerful position as President.

Hanura

The People’s Conscience Party (Hanura) was formed by former four-star General Wiranto. As a rising army officer in the 1980s, Wiranto won himself a position close to President Suharto when he became Suharto’s adjutant. He rose to become, in succession, head of Jakarta regional command, chief of the reserve forces (Kostrad), army chief of staff and then commander in chief of the armed forces (ABRI) in the final months of the Suharto regime, concurrently holding the position of Minister for Defence. Although a Suharto loyalist, Wiranto retained both these positions under President Abdurrahman Wahid, a sign of the continuing power of the military after the fall of Suharto. In a dramatic standoff with Wahid in 2000, however, Wiranto was sacked from both positions and appeared to withdraw from the centre of politics. He continued to appear regularly in public, however, and maintained an extensive network of connections amongst retired and serving officers and with civilian organisations and business people. In 2004 Wiranto was Golkar’s candidate for President, but he performed poorly and was eliminated in the first round of voting.

Hanura is predictably vague on its political outlook and program, but the party has built up a significant national organisation based on fairly independent branches run by influential local figures and wealthy business people. Wiranto has proved very adept at attracting a diverse range of people to the party and has reportedly raised large amounts of
money for campaigning. With the support of this network, combined with Wiranto’s profile, the party has been able to present itself as a credible vehicle for Wiranto’s candidacy for President. Public opinion polls have put it well behind the seven major parties, but high enough to register as a serious player.

Gerindra

The Greater Indonesia Movement (Gerindra) is the presidential machine for former Lt General Prabowo. Prabowo was also a very powerful figure before 1998 because of his close relations with Suharto. His father was a Minister under both Sukarno and Suharto and he was at one time Suharto’s son-in-law. Prabowo rose quickly through the ranks to become the youngest Lt General and chief of the special forces, Kopassus. This position gave him a great deal of influence in the regime and made him associated with some its worst human rights abuses, especially in East Timor. Partly for this reason Prabowo lived abroad for a number of years after 1998, but has now re-established his position in the country as a very wealthy businessman.

As a party, Gerindra does not have the same network of organisational support as Hanura, but appears to be able to tap into greater levels of financial backing. Beginning in the final months of 2008, Gerindra launched a major series of very effective media advertisements that seem to have established a profile for Prabowo and his party. The party has quickly established a high recognition factor amongst the electorate and has achieved higher ratings than Hanura in recent opinion polls, although still below that of the major parties.

Future directions for new parties

The two new parties that emerged from the 2004 election, PD and PKS, represent contrasting models of possible future directions for new and existing parties in Indonesia. The two parties exemplify the various legislative, institutional, social and international influences that are shaping political parties today and the way that different organisations are responding to them. They indicate that not all the influences work in a consistent way and that trends can be contradictory and are not always easily interpreted.

PD is the clearest example of a party revolving around a single leader, created largely for the leader’s presidential ambitions. Like similar parties that have emerged in countries such as Thailand and South Korea, it is
largely devoid of ideology and a clear policy orientation and responds to
issues on an ad hoc basis, according to its assessment of the popular mood.
The party’s internal structures are weak and party workers tend to be
attracted on the basis of opportunities for career advancement. As
mentioned above, two new parties of this kind have arisen since 2004,
Gerindra and Hanura.

PD is a clear example of the forces that are weakening the traditional
*aliran*-centred divisions of Indonesian politics. It is a party that has been
built “top-down” from a national-level leader and has eschewed the
politics of local patronage and of establishing electoral “vote-banks”
through local village and neighbourhood figureheads. The party shows
the opportunities for electoral politics that are available in an urbanising
society with near universal literacy and where influences from the media
and global culture compete with the older (though still powerful)
influences from village life. Yet at the same time, PD still feels the need to
define itself in relation to the nationalist-religious spectrum. The party fits
loosely into the secular nationalist tradition, and the party’s somewhat
transparent efforts to present itself as embracing all political and religious
worldviews only testifies to the continuing power of such reference points.
*Aliran* distinctions are no longer so intensely felt (or violently expressed)
as they were in the 1960s, but they are changing their meaning rather than
disappearing.

Apart from the social and demographic change that made it possible for
SBY to build a party virtually overnight, the key driving force behind PD
(as well as Gerindra and Hanura) is, of course, the institution of direct
presidential election and the regulations that mandate party sponsorship
of presidential candidates. Presidential systems internationally tend to
promote personalised politics and place parties in the background, at least
during election campaigns. PD is a presidential party and would not have
been established under the pre-2004 system of presidential election by the
legislature. While its candidate could win almost two-thirds of the vote in
the presidential election, it was able to attract only 7 per cent in the
legislative election. Direct presidential election will continue to provide
the impetus for the creation of such parties and for a personalised style of
politics.

PKS, on the other hand, represents another possible future for Indonesian
political parties, one that will exist in parallel to, and in competition with,
presidential-style parties. PKS is a mass-based party that was built from
the “bottom-up” from a milieu of student activists and Islamic modernist organisations. Its activists are attracted to it on the basis of its ideas and vision of Islamic virtues forming the basis for wider politics and society. Office-holders exercise very strong control over the party organisation, but unlike PD, Gerindra or Hanura, their leadership style is not based on charisma or national media profile. PAN could be seen as a similar kind of party created by similar trends, although it has been more dependent on a single leader for its success.

PKS has a very strong self-image as a “new” party: in the sense that it was founded by members rather than politicians, is free of the moral corruption of the old parties and uses new modern methods of organising and campaigning. But the party could also be seen as blend of the old and the new, or perhaps as an example of the way that long-term trends are remade in new and changing societal conditions. As a party that grew out of a certain social milieu and a tradition of political and religious thinking it is indelibly marked by those origins. PKS in this sense is a classic aliran-based party, one based in the devout Islamic community, but one which has also been able to benefit from the growth of urban society, the spread of orthodox religious education and religious observance. It has also adopted a highly intellectual and systematic approach to politics, including drawing on Middle Eastern and Western political ideas. But even these latter “new” elements are a continuation of well-established trends: the urban middle class has long been the basis for modernist Islamic thought and a conduit for ideas from the outside world. As Robison and Hadiz (2004: 326) noted about PAN (and which applies equally to PKS), the party “is an expression of the 1950s alliance between the Masyumi, the old party of the ‘modernist’ wing of Islam, and the intelligentsia-based Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI)”. The fact that this tradition was largely forced underground during much of the Suharto regime contributed to the feeling that it was “new” when it re-emerged into the daylight after 1998 under a new young leadership.

PKS and PAN thus represent an alternative model to the personalised politics of PD, Gerindra and Hanura. Both of these models are the products of social and demographic change and the infusion of new approaches to politics, but both of them are (to varying degrees) a product of continuity and change. While PD has the potential to break the bounds of traditional aliran politics because of its claim to universal appeal, its fortunes depend on the leader’s success and it will face a crisis of existence when SBY completes his second presidential term and cannot stand again
because of the two-term constitutional limit. PKS, on the other hand, is facing the problem of broadening its constituency without betraying the principles which keep its activists loyal. Yet the fact that it is grounded in ideas and internal discipline, not leadership charisma, means that it has a better chance of staying as a fixture of the political scene, albeit as one party amongst many.

The PKS model is also one that works far better in the context of legislative rather than presidential elections. If the party can win a significant minority of DPR seats over successive elections it can build and maintain a powerful role inside the legislature, be in a good position to bargain for seats in Cabinet and potentially act as a king-maker in the negotiations over presidential–vice presidential tickets. But the party’s current lack of high-profile leaders and its reputation for having a “hidden agenda” of Islamisation for Indonesia make it a poor prospect in the presidential election. In fact, there has been internal dissension in the party which, for the first time, it has not been able to keep from the media over the question of who to support for the presidency. Not being in a position to field its own candidate alone, the party leadership has become divided between those who want to join in a ticket with Yusuf Kalla and those arguing for an alliance with the Sultan of Yogyakarta or Wiranto (Jakarta Post 4 March 2009).

Conclusion

Indonesia has succeeded in establishing a working multi-party presidential system that is arguably now the best example of democracy in Southeast Asia and a model of successful transformation from authoritarian rule to popularly elected government. But developments in the lead up to the 2009 elections are also an indication of just how many elements must be put in place to establish an effective electoral system in a new democracy. Finalising a set of workable institutions and regulations that are appropriate for the political culture of the country and acceptable to the key power players is a task that is full of potential pitfalls and requires balancing a range of often conflicting objectives.

The passage of the various political laws in 2008 (including Law 10/2008) represented an agreement reached amongst the parties in the DPR and the government to further refine the electoral system in the light of the experience of two elections. It was a compromise that reflected pressures for change from within the political elite, as well as from outside opinion and pressure groups. The intervention of the Constitutional Court,
however, gave effect to a range of voices who had dissented from the agreement represented by the final text of the legislation. The Court’s ruling overturned that outcome and left a number of issues unresolved immediately before an election had to be organised.

The officials in the KPU responsible for administering the election were placed in a situation where they had to put into effect regulations that were suddenly in need of reformulation and clarification. The government’s apparent unwillingness to provide clear guidance to the KPU shifted the burden of responsibility to unelected officials rather than the people’s representatives in executive government and has created the potential for a great deal of post-election disputation and uncertainty. There is a looming danger that Indonesia’s third democratic election could be its most problematic.

The changes and reinterpretation of Indonesia’s electoral laws since 2008 are a classic case of the well-recognised reality that even small changes to electoral procedures can have huge and lasting political effects. It is also an indication that attempting to engineer features of a democracy through legislative and judicial instruments can have unintended and contradictory consequences not always foreseen by their advocates. While some legislative measures can have a major impact, the Indonesian experience shows that conscious attempts to restructure the system do not always work. The efforts to reduce the number of parties, a feature of all electoral legislation since 1998, have had only a marginal effect. The various laws have created obstacles for small parties and the new law will prevent many small parties from entering the DPR. But the effective number of parties grew from five to seven between the 1999 and 2004 elections and may increase by a further two in 2009 if Hanura and Gerindra cross the parliamentary threshold.

The changes to electoral regulations examined in this paper may have the long term effect of further fracturing the party system in Indonesia and encouraging the formation of parties which are merely vehicles for individual politicians, such as Democrat, Hanura and Gerindra. The introduction of an “open list” system will weaken the bonds between candidates and their party and thus further weaken the organisational and ideological coherence of most parties. It is well known that these latter features are already far from strong (with the possible exception of PKS), but the new system created by the Constitutional Court’s ruling appear likely only to exacerbate the problem. The danger is that the only glue
between a candidate and his/her party will become “money politics”. For the individual candidate on the campaign trail, the incentives to resort to a personal campaign of vote-buying and “pork barrel ing” are made even more compelling.

As discussed in this paper, many pro-democracy advocates in the NGO community and amongst academic and media commentators have taken the position that political parties are instruments of oligarchic forces whose only interests are power and material gain. Implicitly or explicitly, this influential current of post-Suharto discourse seems to be of the view that parties are an obstacle to, rather than a tool of democracy. While it is obvious that most parties in Indonesia are far from paradigms of virtue, it is also true that there are many individuals and groupings within parties who recognise the need for internal reform and, in particular, for improving the role of parties in policy-making. Even if parties are nothing more than a necessary evil, international experience strongly indicates that they are an integral part of a well-functioning democracy. If the presence of parties on the political scene is an unavoidable fact, it would be wiser to improve the quality of their structural role rather than trying to squeeze them to the margins.

Electoral law is one of the mechanisms that have often been used internationally to encourage the development of parties that are more than simply electoral machines for individual politicians. But such legislative instruments are of limited effectiveness if the country lacks traditions of political organisation and social solidarity beyond local clans and communities. Indonesians could look across their border to Papua New Guinea where many years of efforts to create legislative incentives for the development of a party system have foundered on the reality of weak national identity and extremely localised politics.

Indonesian parties, on the other hand, have grown out of long-standing trends in political and social attitudes in the country and have been able to maintain a fair degree of voter loyalty. More significantly, the electorate continues to show a propensity to be attracted to parties in relatively consistent ways. This paper has already made the point that “new” Islamic parties such as PAN and PKS have historical pedigrees and have attracted voters from within a particular circumscribed constituency. These parties have therefore tended to grow or decline at the expense or benefit of each other or of other Islamic parties. Likewise, the voters who deserted PDIP in 2004 could find a home in the secular atmosphere of the Democrat Party.
or one of the splinter Sukarno/nationalist parties. Indonesian voters are not all “swinging voters” and if they are they seem reluctant to stray far from familiar aliran territory.

The historical relationship between identifiable social and cultural groups in Indonesian society and certain political traditions provides a basis on which to institutionalise and strengthen political parties in Indonesia. Building on such existing strengths would be more productive than trying to eliminate the negative features of the parties by eliminating the parties themselves. There is a wide range of different problems that characterise Indonesian parties today and not all of them are amenable to change by legislative tools, but it is important not to discount the achievement represented by the party system that does exist.

The time may have come for Indonesians to revisit the issue of the introduction of a single-member constituency system, or “district system” as it is known in Indonesia, for legislative elections. The alternatives of proportional representation (PR) versus a district system were hotly debated during the lead-up to the 1999 election and PR was eventually introduced on the basis of the argument that a district system was not suitable for a large diverse country like Indonesia. This is despite the fact that a district system has worked well in the world’s largest and most diverse democracy, India, for over fifty years and is the system in the lower house of the world’s second largest democracy, the United States. A district system, or a mixed PR-district system such as Germany’s or New Zealand’s, tends to limit the number of parties by creating incentives for coalition-building amongst political organisations. At the same time, the system maximises opportunities for local constituents to make contact with their representatives and makes such contact a productive political exercise for legislators keen to be returned to parliament in the next election.

But whatever system is adopted, there needs to be an assessment of the likely impact on the number and quality of parties that any particular system is likely to encourage. And this assessment should extend to the question of the role of parties as institutions within democracy. To date, the discussion has tended be dominated by a mutually hostile debate between party leaders who want to maintain the dominance of existing parties and an NGO and activist community which can see no productive place for parties. The end result seems to be a drift towards a fragmented party spectrum.
The role for academic discussion would therefore appear to be to try to bridge the gulf between current perspectives. A discussion based on international experience can be realistic in its assumptions about what motivates those who enter party politics, while at the same time not shrinking from a advocacy of the importance of parties in promoting democracy that is more just a ritual of elections. It is not necessary to be naïve about the realities of power politics in order to see that parties are potentially important in the development of public policy and the encouragement of public input. Weakening the parties will not create new avenues for popular participation, but will only lead to the continuing proliferation of personalised parties with shallow roots in the community and a short-term view of politics.

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