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# REPRESENTATIONS OF "THE NATION" IN *TEMPO* MAGAZINE

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For the twenty-three years prior to its banning on June 21, 1994, *TEMPO* was Indonesia's most important weekly news magazine. With few competitors or serious threats to its preeminence, *TEMPO* provided a picture of events that was highly influential.<sup>1</sup> Each week, both intentionally and unintentionally, *TEMPO* represented the nation and politics of Indonesia.

Many scholars have described the political culture of the New Order, but surprisingly few have analyzed it from a perspective chiefly concerned with news.<sup>2</sup> Like myth, parable, and poetry, news is a form of interpretation, giving form and order to events.<sup>3</sup> News explains things and puts them in a meaningful context. Newspapers and magazines do not simply provide readers with facts and information about the world; they also reinforce a set of shared values. In addition to telling us what has happened, news also suggests how to interpret events and what they mean. Each news

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<sup>1</sup>There were other weekly news magazines in Indonesia, including *Editor*, which began in 1987 with an "exodus" of journalists from *TEMPO*. But none was able to challenge successfully *TEMPO*'s position as market leader. I am grateful to David Hill for making this point, as well as for other helpful comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup>An important exception to this is Krishna Sen and David T. Hill, *Media, Culture, and Politics in Indonesia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Language and Power, Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); and the still valuable *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia*, ed. Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), esp. Nono Anwar Makarim, "The Indonesian Press: An Editor's Perspective," pp. 259-281.

<sup>3</sup>James Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communications," in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

story places events within what anthropologist Clifford Geertz called a “web of signification that [man] himself has spun.”<sup>4</sup>

The journalistic conventions that determine who and what will become news are situated in particular historical and cultural contexts. Behind the six questions basic to any news story—who, what, where, when, why and how—lies a “framework of interpretation” in which reporters and writers operate.<sup>5</sup> For example, which “whos” are newsworthy? What kinds of events even qualify as news? Where and when is news likely to occur? And most difficult of all to answer, how and why did something happen? Scholars taking a cultural approach to journalism have argued that in order to understand news, it is necessary first to understand the interpretive frameworks that give it meaning. These frameworks can include political and economic structures, social and occupational routines of news organizations, and the literary and cultural forms available in the society at large.<sup>6</sup>

The content of the National section of *TEMPO* magazine between its founding in 1971 and its banning in 1994 was influenced not only by the political context of the New Order, but also by reportorial routines and broader cultural frameworks. This essay draws on both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the picture of the nation of Indonesia that emerged in *TEMPO* magazine between 1971 and 1994. Content analysis reveals “who” and “what” *TEMPO*’s national stories were about and “where” the news occurred. My own interviews and fifteen months of fieldwork at *TEMPO* suggest factors both internal and external to the magazine that helped determine what would become national news.<sup>7</sup> Textual analysis casts light on *TEMPO*’s subtle portrayal of conflict, and its depiction of Indonesia as a nation engaged in a moral drama. And finally, a comparison of the National section of *TEMPO* during the pre-banning period with that of the magazine after its return to publication in 1998 suggests tentative conclusions about new ways of “depicting the nation” that are emerging in the post-Suharto era.<sup>8</sup>

Although Goenawan Mohamad and his friends deliberately imitated the format of the American magazine *Time* when they founded *TEMPO* in 1971, the departments

<sup>4</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> See Robert Manoff and Michael Schudson, eds., *Reading the News* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Manoff and Schudson, *Reading the News*, p. 5. Two well-known studies of news that emphasize political and economic frameworks are Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in the News Media* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990), and S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter, *The Media Elite: American’s New Powerbrokers* (New York: Adler and Adler, 1986). For a study based on the occupational routines of journalists see Gaye Tuchman, “Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen’s Notions of Objectivity” *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (January 1972): 660-679, and for an example of literary or cultural analysis see Robert Darnton, “Writing News and Telling Stories.” *Daedalus* 104 (1975): 174-194.

<sup>7</sup> I did fifteen months of fieldwork at *TEMPO* between May 1999 and August 2000. Editor-in-Chief Bambang Harymurti gave me nearly free reign at the magazine, permitting me to attend weekly planning and editorial meetings, experience training for new reporters, and observe weekend and deadline nights. I was also invited to attend off-site work meetings and planning sessions, and was included in a variety of social functions, formal as well as informal.

<sup>8</sup> For a thoughtful analysis of other representations of the nation during the New Order, see Virginia Matheson Hooker, “Expression: Creativity Despite Restraint,” in *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society, Transition*, ed. Donald K. Emmerson (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999).

they created took on very different meanings within the context of modern Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> In addition to National, the departments or "rubrics" in the earliest issues were: Cover Story, Religion, Books, Village, City, Economy, Entertainment, Law and Crime, Science, Illustrations (photos), International, Sports, Education, Press, People, Art, and Letters.<sup>10</sup> What did *TEMPO* mean by the rubric "National"? And how did it define the nation of Indonesia?

Long before Benedict Anderson gave a name to the problem of imagining a community with as much ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity as Indonesia, Indonesians had wrestled with the need to create and define Indonesia as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Aside from the shared history of Dutch colonialism and the lingua franca of *bahasa* Indonesia, there was little to hold together the fragile unity of the archipelago. As Indonesia's only weekly news magazine for many years, *TEMPO* was both a creator and signifier of national identity in the New Order. In its use of *bahasa* Indonesia alone, *TEMPO* has been influential in creating a sense of national identity and pride. As linguist Dede Oetomo said, "*TEMPO* was the first major vehicle for blending the banal prose of the regular press with poetry. [Goenawan Mohamad] actually gave a soul to modern Indonesian."<sup>12</sup>

Each week, *TEMPO* writers and editors hold a series of meetings at which they decide what will appear in the magazine. Few at *TEMPO* will disagree with the assertion that the question of what will be included as "National" news is one of the most important and controversial that must be decided during these sessions. Senior editors confirmed that in the past the repressive political atmosphere outside the magazine led to heated arguments within, over what stories would be included, and my own observations of weekly planning meetings during 1999-2000 suggest that even today the contents of the National section arouse debate.<sup>13</sup> *TEMPO* writers may whisper, doodle, or daydream throughout the discussion of what will appear in "Law," "Environment," or "Books," but nearly everyone pays attention to what will be included in "National." Although I witnessed very few major arguments, participants in planning meetings often suggested ways of modifying a story's angle, or

<sup>9</sup> For a concise history of the founding of *TEMPO*, see Daniel Dhakidae, "The State, The Rise of Capital, and the Fall of Political Journalism" (PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, May 1991), pp. 255-272. See also *TEMPO* Fifteenth Anniversary supplement, 1986. For a useful overview of *TEMPO*'s history, see Coen Husain Pontoh, "Konflik Tak Kunjung Padam," *Pantau*, August 2001.

<sup>10</sup> *TEMPO*, March 6, 1971.

<sup>11</sup> Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983). See also George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), and Daniel S. Lev and Ruth McVey, eds., *Making Indonesia: Essays on Modern Indonesia in Honor of George McT. Kahin* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Dede Oetomo, May 5, 1998. *TEMPO*, of course, began as a writers' magazine, and many of its founders identified themselves primarily as poets and writers rather than as journalists. During the course of the magazine's history, the role of the writer has undergone subtle changes, and the magazine has moved towards a more professional model of journalism.

<sup>13</sup> When *TEMPO* returned to publication in October 1998 under the direction of then-chief editor Goenawan Mohamad, the editors returned to *TEMPO*'s previous editorial and organizational practices. During 1999-2000, I was repeatedly told that the four-year hiatus after the 1994 banning had not changed "the culture of *TEMPO*." This continuity began to erode, however, when *TEMPO* newspaper was launched in April 2001, and some members of the editorial staff began to feel that too many resources were being diverted from the magazine to the newspaper.

adding another dimension with a “box.” Sometimes one of the senior editors would argue that a proposed national story was too limited in scope, or of only minor significance—in which case it would be relegated to “Peristiwa,” or “Events.” Similarly, if a story was deemed to be of local interest only, it would be moved to the section on “Daerah,” or “Regions.” Regional correspondents who e-mail in story ideas for the national section face an often skeptical Jakarta audience. Once, for example, when a correspondent sent in a suggestion from Riau that was determined to be unsuitably local, someone at the meeting called out “send it to the *Riau Pos!*”

There is a long-standing numerical system of evaluating story ideas at *TEMPO*, involving how “hot” a story is, its magnitude, its relevance to Indonesia, what its angle will be, and how dramatic it is.<sup>14</sup> Each quality is assigned a point value (*kehangatan*, or the immediacy of the newspeg, is weighted the highest) so that the values of competing stories can be compared. Senior editors remembered that before the banning *TEMPO* writers who favored the inclusion of one particular story over another would often challenge their rivals to defend a competing story’s “magnitude.”

During much of the history of the New Order, disputes within the government had to be covered with particular caution. Many of *TEMPO*’s editors remember the debates over how many pages should be allotted to a story—or if a particular event should even be covered at all. Government and military officials made frequent use of the telephone, encouraging journalists to emphasize “harmony” and avoid reports of conflict. Editors were likewise warned against inflaming ethnic, religious, racial, or “intergroup” conflict.<sup>15</sup> One of the more nefarious aspects of this “telephone culture” was that because the warning was oral, there was no written record of the occurrence. As David Hill has written, “only if a paper [was] recalcitrant enough to breach such instructions [was] it sent written warnings. The last resort [was] the revocation of the company’s license, representing a total ban and often financial collapse.”<sup>16</sup>

The inclusion of a particular story within the National section of *TEMPO* draws attention to that event, and during the Suharto years it was sometimes safer to bury an account of a particularly “hot” incident under one of the other rubrics in the back of the magazine. Executive Editor Leila Chudori recalled disputes over the “angle” of a story, including several incidents in which writers argued with their editors over how

<sup>14</sup> This numerical system is still taught to new reporters today, although I never observed anyone using it during planning meetings. According to Assistant Chief Editor Toriq Hadad, this is because the system had long since been internalized by *TEMPO* editors and writers.

<sup>15</sup> The mnemonic SARA was used to describe these prohibitions: Suku, Agama, Ras, and Antar-golongan. For an overview of restrictions on the press in the New Order, see David Hill, *The Press in New Order Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1994), pp. 44-47, and Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 238-244. For a nuanced discussion of the relationship between the Indonesian press and the political economy of the New Order, see Daniel Dhakidae, “The State, The Rise of Capital, and the Fall of Political Journalism,

<sup>16</sup> David Hill, *The Press in New Order Indonesia*, p. 45. As is well known, *TEMPO* itself was banned on June 21, 1994. Although the banning was ostensibly triggered by a cover story on the purchase of thirty-nine East German war ships, other factors were involved as well. For a discussion of the various theories explaining *TEMPO*’s banning, see Duncan McCargo, “Killing the Messenger,” *The 1994 Press Bannings and the Demise of Indonesia’s New Order*, *Press/Politics* 1:4 (Winter 1999): 29-45. *TEMPO* had also been banned temporarily in April 1982 for its reporting during the period leading up to the general election. This banning lasted for almost two months.

far to push in questioning the government's point of view. Toriq Hadad, now the magazine's Assistant Chief Editor, remembered how particular generals or high public officials had the power to block the inclusion of a story simply by refusing to be interviewed. In the case of a 1993 incident in Sampang, Madura, in which the Army shot dead four villagers who were protesting the construction of a reservoir that would destroy their farmlands, *TEMPO* editors agreed that it was safe to publish the story in the National section only if the Commander in the field agreed to be interviewed. "Today I wouldn't include such a lengthy interview," Toriq said recently. "Just a few quotes. The interview wasn't all that interesting, but at the time we had to do it."<sup>17</sup>

Toriq also remembered the fear. "There was always this risk," he said. "We always felt this fear. The fear that perhaps *TEMPO* might be closed because of a quote of mine. Mas Goen [Goenawan Mohamad] used to say 'Kita boleh takut tapi jangan takluk.' We can be afraid but never subjugated."<sup>18</sup>

Despite the risks involved, each week *TEMPO* editors and writers had to decide what would appear in the National section. The weekly snapshot of the nation of Indonesia was the result of a complex interplay between the editors' assessment of what had actually happened and what in their judgment could be safely included without putting the magazine at risk.

## I.

During a two-month period in the spring of 2000, I conducted a content analysis of the National section of *TEMPO*.<sup>19</sup> In this effort I was initially inspired by the work of American sociologist Herbert Gans, whose landmark study of *Newsweek* magazine and the CBS Evening News is required reading for anyone who seeks to understand how American journalists decide what's news. Gans examined a "a six-month sample of stories appearing in alternate months during 1967, 1971, and 1975" from *Newsweek's* National section, and recorded both the actor and activity that dominated each individual story—or "who" and "what" each story was about.<sup>20</sup>

Like Gans, I also examined a sample of National news stories, but there the similarities end. My sample consisted of 330 issues of the magazine and 1,291 stories extending over a twenty-nine-year period. One edition was randomly selected from each month that *TEMPO* was published between April 1971 and March 2000. A team of eight coders (seven students from the University of Indonesia plus myself) coded each story in that edition's National section for "who," "what," and "where," along with the two most frequently quoted sources. We also noted whether the story was an interview, a survey, or a profile. Stories categorized as interviews or profiles were deemed to have a "who" but no "what," whereas surveys were considered to have a "what" but no "who."

<sup>17</sup> "Nyo'on Odik, Lalu Robohlah Mereka," *TEMPO*, October 9, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Toriq Hadad, February 15, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> I am grateful for the invaluable help of my research assistant Theresia Citraningtyas, without whom this content analysis could not have been completed.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), p. 6.

One of the difficulties of doing cross-cultural research is the problem of striking a balance between the act of “training” local assistants and the accidental reinforcing of the “truths” of an academic discipline that one comes to recognize as dangerously culture-bound.<sup>21</sup> One of these “truths,” or conventions, was the idea common to students of American journalism that the main “who” of the story is the person who is quoted—or allowed to speak—the most.<sup>22</sup> The problems with this assumption became apparent during the three weeks of coder training, when I asked the coders to analyze a 1979 story about a speech that President Suharto had made in Blitar, East Java.<sup>23</sup> The occasion of the speech was the dedication of a new memorial plaque that would be placed at the grave site of Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno.

When I asked the coders to identify the “main who” of the story, the answer was unanimous: “Sukarno,” they said. But how could this be, I asked? Sukarno was dead and buried. He wasn’t saying anything, he wasn’t doing anything. To me it was obvious that the “main who” was President Suharto. Trying to explain, I told the coders that one means of identifying the “main who” is to see who gets quoted the most. There is a convention in journalism, I said, that the person who does the most talking is the most important.

At that point my assistant interrupted. “But that’s not true!” she said. “Not if you’re Javanese. In Java, the people who do the most talking are weakest. A really powerful person—like Suharto—doesn’t have to say anything at all.”

After a lively discussion of Javanese culture and power and who gets to “speak,” we changed the code sheet. “Who” became *pelaku utama*, or “the main actor,” which we defined as the person or persons who had set the story in motion.<sup>24</sup> We also identified “*sumber 1*” and “*sumber 2*,” or the first and second most quoted source. And finally, we identified whether or not the main actor was also one of the two most frequently quoted sources.<sup>25</sup>

There were other challenges. In designing the code book, I followed Herbert Gans’s general division of “what” into government versus non-government activities. Yet we quickly realized that Gans’s categories of government activity made little sense within the political context of the New Order, and would be of limited use in measuring the contents of *TEMPO*’s National section. We therefore divided the activities of the Indonesian government into four general areas: (a) ideological, structural, and political,

<sup>21</sup>For a disquieting discussion of ethical dilemmas involved in the fieldwork experience, see Clifford Geertz, “Thinking as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of Anthropological Fieldwork in New States,” in *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 21-41.

<sup>22</sup>Sigel writes, “The people in the news are most often the sources of news. Presidents and those around them are the most prominent examples.” Leon V. Sigel, “Sources Make the News,” in Manoff and Schudson, *Reading the News*, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup>“Di Sini Proklamator Dimakamkan,” *TEMPO*, June 30, 1979.

<sup>24</sup>We agreed that the *pelaku utama* could be a dead person, but only under highly unusual circumstances. If, for example, the story had been about Sukarno and his actions in uniting Indonesia and proclaiming independence—as the headline somewhat erroneously suggested—then he would have been the main actor. However to my knowledge we never saw another story in which this was the case.

<sup>25</sup>President Suharto was determined to be the *pelaku utama*, or main actor, in seventy-two (or 5.7 percent) of the stories in my sample. He was either the first or second most-quoted source in only forty-eight stories.

(b) military and diplomatic, (c) economic, and (d) public welfare.<sup>26</sup> We then divided each of these four categories into subcategories, which in several cases were deliberately designed to parallel the structure of Indonesian ministries (see Table 1, below).<sup>27</sup>

Most problematic were the subcategories under the general category of "Ideology, Structure, and Politics." Whereas many of the coders, for example, initially had no idea of what I meant by a "state ceremony," I also had to incorporate into the codebook the subtleties of the New Order distinction between an "election" and a "change of government officials."<sup>28</sup> Even more difficult was the unexpected problem of where to put the activities of the DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, People's Representative Assembly, or Parliament). Although I had at first categorized "*rutinitas DPR*" under *pemerintah*, several of *TEMPO*'s desk editors told me I had made a mistake. "Routine acts of Parliament don't belong under 'government,'" I was told. "They are 'non-government.'"<sup>29</sup>

But this made no sense, I thought. Wasn't Parliament one of three branches of the government? Aren't members of the DPR paid with state money? Don't they pass laws, and aren't they considered to be *pejabat negara* or public officials? My informants were insistent. Although *pemerintah* is routinely translated into English as "government," Indonesians consider members of Parliament to be *wakil rakyat*, or representatives of the people. The DPR is thus not seen as part of the *pemerintah*, which translates more accurately as "administration."

Perhaps this incident should be viewed as a simple cautionary tale, a warning to the researcher who attempts to analyze news—or politics—without taking culture into account. Or perhaps it suggests that no single methodological tool is alone sufficient to unearth the framework of interpretation behind the news.

<sup>26</sup> Gans's categories of government activity were (a) conflicts and disagreements, (b) decisions, proposals, and ceremonies, and (c) personnel changes, including campaigning. Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 16. I am grateful to Joel Kuipers for his thoughts on developing my categories, and to Citra, Bambang Harymurti, Wicaksono, and Arif Zulkifli for their advice and suggestions.

<sup>27</sup> This explains the otherwise odd subcategory of "Art, Culture, Tourism," a grouping that makes sense only if one accepts the Suharto government's definition of art and culture as something that can best be packaged and sold to tourists. See Melani Budianta, "Discourse of Cultural Identity in Indonesia during the 1997-1998 Monetary Crisis," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1 (2000): 109-128, for a full discussion of this point.

<sup>28</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980). The selection of governors posed particular problems. Despite the trappings of an election—including a slate of candidates and a vote—these events were actually orchestrated by a small circle of political elites, and reduced to what McVey has called a "ritual affirming loyalty to the state." Ruth McVey, "Building Behemoth: Indonesian Constructions of the Nation-State," in *Making Indonesia*, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> I am grateful to Wicaksono for initially pointing out this misunderstanding, and to Arif Zulkifli and Karaniya Dharmasaputra for further clarification of this point.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of "What" from March 27, 1971 to June 4, 1994**

CATEGORY	COUNT	% TOTAL
<b>GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>56.01</b>
<b>Ideology, Politics, Structure</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>26.10</b>
Pancasila	5	0.45
Laws	29	2.58
Changes in government officials	46	4.10
Conflict	36	3.21
Issues of justice	20	1.78
Bannings	40	3.56
National ceremonies	15	1.34
Holding elections	18	1.60
Military policy issues	19	1.69
Other announcements	44	3.92
Other	21	1.87
<b>Military, International Relations</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>16.83</b>
Military, police operations	29	2.58
Military public relations	25	2.23
International Relations	135	12.02
<b>Economy</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>5.79</b>
Money and banking	8	0.71
Industry and trade	21	1.87
Infrastructure	25	2.23
Human Resource Development	11	0.98
<b>Public Welfare</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>5.16 %</b>
Transmigration, Population	12	1.07
Health	5	0.45
Education	10	0.89
Art, Culture, Tourism	7	0.62
Religion	6	0.53
Women	1	0.09
Other public welfare issues	17	1.51
Other	24	2.14
<b>Political Party Activity</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>5.79</b>
<b>Routine Parliamentary action</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.51</b>

**Table 1, continued**  
**Summary of "What" from March 27, 1971 to June 4, 1994**

CATEGORY	COUNT	% TOTAL
<b>NON-GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>36.68 %</b>
<b>Activity of Organizations</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>7.21 %</b>
NGO activity	3	0.27 %
Press	7	0.62 %
Professional organizations	2	0.18 %
Business	7	0.62 %
Independence/Regional autonomy movements	6	0.53 %
Customary law	4	0.36 %
Religion	27	2.40%
Political prisoner activity	7	0.62%
"Organizations without shape"	5	0.45%
Other	13	1.16%
<b>Conflict</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>11.48 %</b>
Opposition/protest	69	6.14 %
Demonstrations	23	2.05 %
Strikes	9	0.80 %
Riots	11	0.98 %
Issues of SARA	10	0.89 %
Offensive acts	7	0.62 %
<b>Crime</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>8.55 %</b>
General crime	33	2.94 %
Corruption, misuse of authority	26	2.32 %
Subversion	28	2.49 %
Scandalous crime	9	0.80 %
<b>General news</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>9.44 %</b>
Accidents	15	1.34 %
Natural disasters	16	1.42 %
Society news	21	1.87 %
Social conditions	25	2.23 %
Other	29	2.58 %
<b>TOTAL WHAT</b>	<b>1123</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>

## II.

My findings suggest that during the twenty-three year period before the banning in 1994, an overwhelming majority of the National stories in *TEMPO* were either about the government or government activity (see Table 1). Sixty-three percent of the 1,123 stories examined for this pre-banning period were either about government activities, Parliamentary actions, or the activity of political parties that were closely related to the government.<sup>30</sup> Over 26 percent of the stories (n=293) were devoted to ideological, structural, or political aspects of the government. Of these subgroupings, the three biggest categories were "changes in government officials" (46 stories), "bannings" (40 stories), and "other announcements" (44 stories). Another 27 percent of the total number of National stories were devoted to activities relating either to the military or

<sup>30</sup> If the activities of Parliament and of the political parties are removed from this total, then 56.01 percent of *TEMPO*'s stories are about the government.

to government programs aimed at economic and social development. In this regard the contents of *TEMPO*'s National section followed what is widely understood to be the pro-development agenda of the New Order state.

The Suharto government made a lot of announcements, and *TEMPO* generally included them in the pages of the National section. When I asked Goenawan Mohamad about the presence of what could be called "non-news" in the National section—for example, announcements of lists of gubernatorial candidates who appeared to be up for "election" but were actually going to be appointed, or stories about President Suharto as "The Father of Development"—he agreed that *TEMPO* reported on these events as if they were the substance of democracy rather than political spectacle. "The reporters did focus more on the announcement, the statement, the decision, not the process," he said. "Because there was no process, there was no politics in the first place. If you had politics you would have a real process of changing things where more people are involved."<sup>31</sup> Of course, as Bambang Harymurti pointed out, many of the National stories that appeared to focus on empty *pengumuman* might actually offer hidden clues of conflict within the government, clues that particularly knowledgeable readers could recognize. In this regard, National news in *TEMPO* became part of an elaborate process of negotiating and signaling among elites.<sup>32</sup>

Of the National stories that appeared in *TEMPO* before the banning, only about one-third (36.68 percent) concerned non-government activities. Of the stories related to activities outside the government, the largest categories were either about conflict (11.5 percent) or crime (8.6 percent).

Sixty-five stories, or 5.79 percent of the total of National stories before the banning, were about political party activity. Determining how to code these stories posed a problem similar to that of how to categorize "routine acts of Parliament." Technically, the political parties are independent and therefore "non-government." Yet the largest political organization, and the one which beginning in 1971 won every election during the New Order period, was the government-created political organization Golkar. And the Suharto government repeatedly tried to engineer other political party activity, with varying degrees of success.<sup>33</sup> The most notorious example of this occurred in 1996, when the Suharto regime conspired to oust Megawati Sukarnoputri as Chairperson of PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, Indonesian Democratic Party). Because these stories are not really "government" and also not really "non-government," I have therefore included them in a third grouping in Table 1, along with routine acts of Parliament (1.51 percent).

Nearly half (47.3 percent) of all stories that were published before the banning took place in Jakarta (see Table 2, below). Two-thirds took place on the islands of Java, Madura, and Bali. Outside of Java, Madura and Bali, only provinces that contained very large cities or regional trouble spots commanded significant numbers of stories.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Goenawan Mohamad, June 20, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> See Michael Schudson, "When? Deadlines, Datelines, and History" in *Reading the News* for a discussion of how political elites use this signaling process as an instrument of governance.

<sup>33</sup> For an overview of government efforts to manipulate PDI, or the Indonesian Democratic Party, see Arif Zulkifli, *PDI Di Mata Golongan Menengah Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1996), and Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 180-184.

These included North Sumatra (which contains capital city Medan) with forty-two stories or 3.73 percent; East Timor, with nineteen stories or 1.69 percent; Aceh, with eighteen stories or 1.6 percent; Riau (the Sumatran province where the Caltex oil fields are located) with nineteen stories or 1.69 percent; and Irian Jaya, with seventeen stories or 1.51 percent.<sup>34</sup>

Between 1971 and 1994, the great majority of "whos" in *TEMPO*'s National stories were public officials, former public officials, military commanders, and leaders of formal organizations who were known to the public (see Table 3, below). These "knowns" were three times more likely to appear as the "main actor" and four times more likely to appear as most-quoted sources than were the ordinary people whom American media sociologist Herbert Gans has characterized as "unknowns." Before the banning, President Suharto was the most frequently appearing "main actor" in my sample, with sixty-eight appearances. As a source, he ranked number two—behind "anonymous."

One of the most surprising things about the category of "who" was the number of stories that had no "main actor." There were forty-seven stories that were "supposed" to have a *pelaku utama* (meaning that they were not surveys) in which the coder could identify no individual or group of individuals (such as members of Parliament, generals, University of Indonesia students, etc.) as causing the action.

This finding raises some intriguing questions. It is possible that despite the weeks of training (and intercoder reliability of between 80 and 90 percent) this was a coding error, and the coders were reluctant to assign "responsibility" for an occurrence. Yet after having examined many of these stories myself and confirming that there was indeed no "who," I believe that there may have been other explanations for the pattern. Given the tight restrictions on the press and the ever-present threat that it might be banned from publishing, *TEMPO* writers may have been reluctant to attribute responsibility (or blame) for an occurrence. Alternatively, Goenawan Mohamad suggested: "My theory is that we (*TEMPO* people, but also maybe Indonesian journalists, or Indonesians living under a certain kind of regime) tend to be uncomfortable with 'subjecthood.' We tend to evade putting somebody as the subject, or the origin, of actions and situations. . . . My sense is that this is an anxiety of 'doing.' The subject is made less exposed to an 'active situation.'"<sup>35</sup>

Despite the high percentage of stories in which the main actor was a "known," even more striking was the number of stories about victims, in which *TEMPO* journalists gave voice to ordinary people's struggle against the overwhelming power of the state. Victims were among the largest of the categories of actors in the National section of the magazine before the banning. Of the 228 stories that were about ordinary people, sixty-two (27 percent) were about victims. The largest group of these individuals were victims of economic development. In many cases they had been victimized by government confiscation of their land. Other types of victims included political prisoners, victims of hate crimes, riots, state-sponsored violence, or natural disasters. A final group of individuals who could also be characterized as victims of the New Order were the "suspects" who made up an additional 5.1 percent of the total number

<sup>34</sup> Prior to the banning, *TEMPO* had bureaus in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Medan.

<sup>35</sup> Private correspondence from Goenawan Mohamad, April 9, 2000.

of "main actors." Interestingly, the type of crime that appeared most frequently in *TEMPO*'s National section was "subversion." Former Siliwangi Commander HR Dharsono, a defendant in one of the several trials resulting from the Tanjung Priok incident, was a typical "suspect" involved in the crime of subversion.<sup>36</sup>

**Table 2**  
Summary of "Where" from March 27, 1971 to June 4, 1994

PROVINCE	COUNT	% TOTAL
Jakarta	530	47.03
West Java	53	4.70
Central Java	45	3.99
Yogyakarta	31	2.75
Throughout Java	17	1.51
East Java	54	4.79
Bali	16	1.42
Aceh	18	1.60
North Sumatra	42	3.73
West Sumatra	11	0.98
Jambi	0	0.00
Riau	19	1.69
Bengkulu	2	0.18
South Sumatra	2	0.18
Lampung	16	1.42
West Kalimantan	4	0.35
East Kalimantan	5	0.44
Central Kalimantan	2	0.18
South Kalimantan	2	0.18
West Nusa Tenggara	5	0.44
East Nusa Tenggara	7	0.62
East Timor	19	1.69
North Sulawesi	5	0.44
South East Sulawesi	2	0.18
Central Sulawesi	1	0.09
South Sulawesi	6	0.53
Maluku	4	0.35
Irian Jaya	17	1.51
Throughout Indonesia	61	5.41
Overseas	59	5.24
Unclear	72	6.39
<b>TOTAL WHERE</b>	<b>1127</b>	<b>100.00</b>

<sup>36</sup> *TEMPO*, August 17, 1985.

**Table 3**  
**Summary of "Who" from March 27, 1971 to June 4, 1994**

CATEGORY	MAIN ACTOR	% TOTAL
<b>KNOWNNS</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>76.68</b>
President	68	5.72
DPR-MPR	33	2.78
Ministers, Cabinet-Level Officials, Former Public Officials	228	19.19
Regional Public Officials (Governors, Bupati, etc.)	80	6.73
Military Leaders	107	9.01
Political Party Leaders	83	6.99
Leaders of NGOs	5	0.42
Journalists	12	1.01
Leaders of Labor Organizations	7	0.59
National Committees, Foundations, Professional Groups	38	3.20
Regional Autonomy/Independence Leaders	11	0.93
Religious Leaders	53	4.46
Business Leaders	25	2.10
Ambassadors, Leaders of International Organizations	63	5.30
Other "Knownns"	98	8.25
<b>UNKNOWNNS</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>19.19</b>
Demonstrators, Strikers, Rioters	33	2.78
Victims	62	5.22
Suspects, Criminals	61	5.13
Other ordinary people	72	6.06
Anonymous	2	0.17
No "Who"	47	3.96
<b>TOTAL WHO</b>	<b>1188</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Did the average reader notice *TEMPO*'s emphasis on victims? It is difficult to say. But to my seven coders, students from the University of Indonesia in their early 20s, something was very clear. To these young people, many of whom had never read *TEMPO* before the banning, what was most striking about the National stories was their obvious sympathy with "the little guy."<sup>37</sup> When I conducted a three-hour focus group interview with my coders after the content analysis was completed, this is how they described what they had seen in the National section of *TEMPO*:

If there was a conflict between the government and ordinary people, [*TEMPO*] told a lot more about the people's side.

They showed the people's suffering. There were direct quotes from the people. Dramatic ones. And what's more, if they interviewed someone from the government, a mayor or whoever, they quoted only one. If the government provided an answer or an explanation it was more likely to be jargon.

Quotes from the government weren't specific. For example they said they didn't have the authority to answer it. They denied it. "Oh, later I'll confirm it." Or maybe they based their answer on stability, or security. Or they said it had already been decided by the boss, they were just following procedures.

<sup>37</sup> The interview was conducted on June 2, 2000. I am grateful to *TEMPO* reporter and George Washington University graduate student Ahmad Fuadi for transcribing the interview and providing me with an invaluable "glossary" of student slang.

Often in *TEMPO* if there was a quote from a general there was a hidden message. Sometimes that general spoke in jargon, about national stability, or taking firm measures. If *TEMPO* included a quote from a general, they didn't want readers to fall for what that general said, but actually implied something quite different.

What my coders saw as the "hidden message" of *TEMPO* has also been noted by William Liddle, who described the "mission" of *TEMPO* in the pre-banning period as having been explicitly political—"to defend those who can not defend themselves."<sup>38</sup> Goenawan Mohamad explained *TEMPO*'s portrayal of ordinary people as victims in this way:

There is no government that can control totally the rest of the population, especially in Indonesia. So actually the government was all-powerful, but the people didn't succumb totally to it. In an authoritarian bureaucratic state the government regime doesn't try to enter your mind, they just try to control your behavior. They don't want to change you into a new man, but they want you to follow the directives of the government. In other words, the people still own this private area of themselves, of their lives, of their anger. They can speak of the government in private without being really scared.<sup>39</sup>

The veiled quality of *TEMPO*'s political message was the result of several strategies deliberately designed to evade the censors. Since as early as 1974, *TEMPO* had operated under considerable constraints. The founding editors of *TEMPO* agree that for those who had hoped the New Order would bring about freedom of expression, the turning point came with "Malari" or the Fifteenth of January incident in 1974. The demonstrations that were ostensibly triggered by the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka actually reflected widespread dissatisfaction with the political and economic policies of the New Order and exposed the fissures within the Suharto regime. This dissatisfaction, along with conflict at the upper levels of the administration, resulted in the withdrawal of twelve periodicals' permits to publish as well as the arrest of many leading press figures.<sup>40</sup>

*TEMPO* survived "Malari," yet the magazine's relationship with the New Order became increasingly complex after 1974. Reporters, writers, and editors cultivated close professional connections with sources within the government and the military, efforts at "lobbying" that reveal the profound ambiguity of *TEMPO*'s relationship with the New Order. As long-time National editor of *TEMPO*, Susanto Pudjomartono, said, "we had many strategies."<sup>41</sup> The use of "chronologies," or time lines, with the appearance of objective fact, was one means of casting doubt on official government statements. Although journalism is supposed to be based on verifiable facts, the choice of which facts to use is a subjective one—and artfully arranged "facts" can leave

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<sup>38</sup> R. William Liddle, "Improvising Cultural Change," in *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p. 147.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Goenawan Mohamad, June 20, 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), esp. chapter 12.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Susanto Pudjomartono, February 18, 2000.

careful readers with an alternative framework of interpretation.<sup>42</sup> Examples of controversial stories in which *TEMPO* utilized chronologies to challenge the official view of events were reports concerning the 1981 hijacking of the Garuda airplane "Woyla," the 1991 "incident" at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, East Timor, and the 1993 shooting of protesters over the construction of the Nipah dam in Samping, Madura.<sup>43</sup>

Another of *TEMPO*'s "strategies" was to publish extensive and unedited quotations from testimony given in trials for subversion. The thoughts of a dissident could be published if they had been heard in open court and were thus already a matter of public record.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, *TEMPO* often quoted foreign media reports, or international figures whose views contradicted those of Indonesian government officials.<sup>45</sup> The magazine often used certain narrative devices too, such as the rhetorical question. Susanto pointed out how *TEMPO* writers liked to use the expression *konon* or "it is said." This device was particularly useful in stories that had no "who."

*TEMPO* frequently relied on the ideology of journalistic professionalism in its careful *pas de deux* with the government. In many instances, *TEMPO* managed to include a critique of official viewpoints by arguing that as responsible journalists they were obligated to "cover both sides." In 1992, for example, *TEMPO* journalist Dewi Anggraeni Fraser was permitted to accompany a group of protesters on the voyage of the Lusitania Expresso from Darwin, Australia to East Timor because her bosses had convinced the military that it was imperative that *TEMPO* cover both sides of the controversial event.<sup>46</sup> Of course, as some critics have noted, the Suharto government likewise benefited from this kind of news coverage, in that it allowed the regime to boast of its openness.<sup>47</sup>

Despite *TEMPO* writers' use of certain rhetorical devices as a deliberate means of evading the censors, not all of *TEMPO*'s narrative techniques were intentional. As James Carey has written, "there is truth in Marshall McLuhan's assertion that the one thing of which the fish is unaware is water, the very medium that forms its ambience and supports its existence. Similarly communication, through language and other symbolic forms, comprises the ambience of human existence."<sup>48</sup> News is also drama, with players, dramatic action, and an audience. Even the way we describe news, as "stories," reflects this dramatic component.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> For a fascinating discussion of the slippery nature of "facts" in news, see Carlin Romano, "The Grisley Truth About Bare Facts," in *Reading the News*, pp. 38-78.

<sup>43</sup> For *TEMPO*'s chronology of the Garuda Woyla hijacking, see *TEMPO*, April 4, 1981; for the Santa Cruz incident, see November 23 1991; for the shootings at the Nipah Dam project, see *TEMPO*, October 9, 1993.

<sup>44</sup> See former Jakarta Governor Ali Sadikin's electrifying testimony in the subversion trial of Letjen (ret.) H. R. Dharsono. *TEMPO*, November 9, 1985.

<sup>45</sup> See "Jika PBB Datang Ke Dili," an account of international reaction to the Santa Cruz incident. *TEMPO*, December 7, 1991.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Dewi Anggraeni Fraser, January 14, 2001. See also *TEMPO*, March 14, 1992.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Arief Budiman, December 6, 1999.

<sup>48</sup> James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, p. 24.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories," *Daedalus* 104 (1975): 174-194.

Both the results of my content analysis and my focus group interviews suggest that, during the years before the banning, *TEMPO* presented politics in Indonesia as a moral drama, a struggle between two equal and opposing forces: the government and the ordinary people. Although *TEMPO* sided with the ordinary people in very subtle ways, the government was not presented as being all bad—nor were the ordinary people presented as being unambiguously good. Just as there were a few true *kesatria*, or nobles, in the government, there were also criminals and rioters among the ordinary people. And the ordinary people were hardly passive or helpless. They demonstrated, they rioted, they went on strike, they burned one another's homes. They sent their complaints and representatives to Parliament. They had champions like the Legal Aid Institute (LBH, Lembaga Bantuan Hukum), and they told their stories to *TEMPO* journalists.

There are striking parallels between the way in which *TEMPO* depicted the moral drama of the clash between these two powerful and deeply flawed forces and what has been called the "*wayang* tradition." This tradition, based in part on the great Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, has been explained in many places. What is most significant here is that the *wayang* tradition—like news—is a means of explaining reality. And like the struggle between the government and the ordinary people, as depicted in *TEMPO*, the *wayang* tradition can be described "a stable world view based on conflict."<sup>50</sup>

According to Goenawan Mohamad, "the Mahabharata is a moral drama." In this way it resembles *TEMPO*'s coverage of politics in the New Order. "The way I see it," he said, "it is the absence of politics. So the issue becomes moral. And that's also a danger. If politics exist, then negotiations exist. And negotiations cannot be morally pure. So there is a give and take."<sup>51</sup> Significantly, before the banning many of Goenawan Mohamad's own "Catatan Pinggir" (Sidelines essays) mirrored the conflict between the government and the ordinary people that was presented in the National section. In "Catatan Pinggir," Goenawan frequently wrote about the struggle of individuals against the overwhelming power of the state. By telling the reader the stories of ordinary people, he transformed victims into heroes—or sometimes even into "saints." One of Goenawan Mohamad's most famous essays, "The Death of Sukardal," made explicit the government's victimization of a *becak* driver, a man who is crushed but not silenced by the state's arbitrary power.<sup>52</sup> Sukardal was a *becak*, or pedicab, driver whose only means of livelihood was confiscated by the security police in accordance with a new regulation. After futilely attempting to stop the authorities, Sukardal hanged himself in a final act of defiance, leaving behind the words "If this is indeed a nation with justice, then the security police must be investigated."

<sup>50</sup> Claire Holt, as quoted in Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese*, 2nd. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1996), p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Goenawan Mohamad, June 20, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> *TEMPO*, July 19, 1986. I am grateful to Wicaksono for suggesting that I pay particular attention to this essay.

"He died, and he was not silent," wrote Goenawan. "And our life, as a wise person once said, is made from the deaths of others who do not remain silent."<sup>53</sup>

Although some have criticized "Catatan Pinggir" for its ambiguity and disengaged stance,<sup>54</sup> "The Death of Sukardal" suggests exactly the opposite. By commenting on the news in an oblique way through the use of poetic language and metaphor, Goenawan challenged the authority of the state and reinforced the moral drama of conflict between the government and ordinary people that appeared elsewhere in the magazine.

For many years, "Catatan Pinggir" was the most engaging part of *TEMPO*, and the only part of the magazine that spoke directly to the reader. As Wicaksono remarked, perhaps "Catatan Pinggir" was like a "noisy spectator"—a perceptive and sometimes irritating skeptic in the audience who interrupts and bothers the *dalang*. Or maybe, as desk editor Yusi A. Pareanom suggested, the voice of "Catatan Pinggir" was more like that of the *punakawan*, or wise clowns. Like the fool in *King Lear*, the *punakawan* alone have the courage to speak truth to power.<sup>55</sup>

As Benedict Anderson has observed, "in *wayang* of whatever sort, the *punakawan* appear both as comic characters *within the line* of the drama, embedded in its space and time, and as mouthpieces for satire and criticism directed straight at the audience, so to speak *at right angles* to the drama and outside its space and time."<sup>56</sup> This dual nature of the *punakawan*, a part of the *wayang* world but also its sly and powerful critic, resembles not only the voice of Goenawan's "Catatan Pinggir," but the position of *TEMPO* as well. A product of the New Order, but also its subtle critic, *TEMPO* operated both within and outside the moral drama of Indonesian political life.

### III.

When *TEMPO* returned to publication in October 1998, for the first time in many years its editors were free to create a magazine in any manner they chose without fearing government censorship. There was a strong sense that the "reform era" demanded a new kind of magazine. New rubrics were created, and it was decided that the magazine would have a fresh focus on opinion and investigation.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the most significant development in *TEMPO* since the banning has been its new orientation towards an explicit depiction and analysis of the political process—a change that is also evident in the results of my content analysis. Although one must be cautious in drawing conclusions based on the relatively short period since *TEMPO*'s return to publication, my findings nonetheless suggest some intriguing trends.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Quoted from the translation by Jennifer Lindsay, in Goenawan Mohamad, *Sidelines: Thought Pieces From TEMPO Magazine* (Lontar, Jakarta 1994), pp. 111-3.

<sup>54</sup> See Ignas Kleden's forward to Goenawan Mohamad, *Catatan Pinggir 2* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1996), pp. vii-xxi.

<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Goenawan has written about the similarities between the *punakawan* and Lear's fool. "Send in the Clown," a manuscript in the author's possession.

<sup>56</sup> Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Cartoons and Monuments," in *Language and Power*, p. 167-8.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with S. Malela Mahargasarie, July 1, 1998.

<sup>58</sup> Because I conducted the analysis in the spring of 2000—eighteen months after *TEMPO* returned to publication—my coders and I were only able to analyze a sample of ninety-two National stories.

The total percentage of National stories “about” government activity has dropped significantly since *TEMPO*’s return to publication (41.25 percent versus 56.01 percent), and the content of these stories has likewise undergone a significant shift. Whereas before the banning only 3.2 percent of the National stories were about conflict among political elites, my post-banning sample includes more than twice that percentage (7.5 percent). Other large groupings of stories about government activity are those focusing on military policy issues (7.5 percent), military operations (7.5 percent), issues of justice (3.75 percent), and international relations (3.75 percent). Since October 1998, there have been no stories about “bannings” or “national ceremonies,” and only one story about “changes in government officials.” Of the post-banning stories that focus on non-government activity, the largest single category (15 percent) is political party activity. Other significant “whats” in the category of non-government activity include conflict between groups (7.5 percent), corruption and misuse of power (6.2 percent), and stories about social conditions (5 percent). Interestingly, despite the significant drop in the percentage of stories about government activity since *TEMPO* returned to publication in 1998, the percentage of stories taking place in Jakarta has increased from 47 percent to nearly 60 percent. The percentage of stories taking place elsewhere in Java and on Bali has dropped from 19 percent to 14.6 percent.<sup>59</sup>

Likewise the “whos” of the National section have changed. Today, Ministers, Cabinet-level officials, and former public officials are the “main actors” of the story only 8.7 percent of the time, as opposed to 19.2 percent prior to 1994. Reflecting the new significance of electoral politics, political party leaders are now more than twice as likely to appear as main actors than they were before the banning (14.13 percent versus 6.99 percent). Evidence of the emergence of a “civil society” can also be found in the increased presence of leaders of national committees, foundations, and professional groups (6.52 percent versus 3.20 percent). The activity of the President in the National section has remained more or less constant. Between October 1998 and March 2000, the President was the “main actor” in 6.5 percent of the stories as opposed to 5.72 percent before the banning.

Only two of the stories examined (2.17 percent) from the post-banning period have victims as the main actors. Whereas in the past *TEMPO* would use stories of victims in order to offer a subtle critique of government policy, today such subterfuge is unnecessary. Conflict between political elites is now presented openly, no longer requiring the elliptical language employed during the previous era. If during the years of the New Order *TEMPO* had to use the language of metaphor and present the people’s struggle as a “moral drama,” today this is no longer the case. According to current *TEMPO* journalists, stories of victims that before the banning might have been included in the National section are now more likely to appear in the Events, Regions, or Features sections of the magazine.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Assistant Chief Editor Toriq Hadad attributes the increase in the percentage of stories originating from Jakarta to the realities of the post-1997 economic crisis. Although *TEMPO* still utilizes regional correspondents, it no longer has bureaus in major cities outside of Jakarta. Personal correspondence, October 28, 2001.

<sup>60</sup> An example would be stories about victims of armed conflict in Aceh. I am grateful to both Arif Zulkifli and Karaniya Dharmasaputra for their insights on these points.

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Prior to the banning in 1994, the portrait of the nation of Indonesia that emerged in the national pages of *TEMPO* was government-dominated and Java-centric. Its geography was consistent with the New Order concept of the nation: Java, Bali, parts of Sumatra, and tourist and resource-rich pockets of the outer islands. The "nation" was peopled primarily by Cabinet ministers and other non-elected political elites, who made decisions by fiat and consensus rather than by democratic means. Although depictions of conflict within the government were largely absent from the pages of the National section, astute readers capable of reading between the lines could nevertheless glean an understanding of the political machinations that were taking place behind the scenes.

During the New Order, *TEMPO* portrayed the nation of Indonesia as engaged in an ongoing moral drama in which the power of the state was pitted against ordinary people and their champions.<sup>61</sup> Despite the ever-present threat of government censorship, writers for the National section used a variety of rhetorical devices to present the suffering of "victims" in ways that subtly undermined the authority of the regime. Their representation of the people as victims was reinforced by other parts of the magazine—most notably Goenawan Mohamad's "Catatan Pinggir."

Although it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions about the portrait of the nation that is emerging in the pages of *TEMPO* today, it is obvious that there is a new emphasis on political conflict. The announcements, bannings, and national ceremonies that were typical of the Suharto-centered "theater-state" have disappeared from the pages of *TEMPO*. Political party leaders and democratically elected public officials take a larger role, and are routinely shown to be engaged in open political struggle.

*TEMPO*'s new emphasis on conflict may be disconcerting for readers who came of age in a political culture that favored harmony over clear expressions of disagreement. In a comment on the 2001 standoff between then-President Abdurrahman Wahid and the DPR, Bambang Harymurti wrote,

Indonesians are learning a lot about democracy. Now they know that the President can have a conflict with the Parliament without any violent chaos happening on the street. That it is okay to have political differences and that the Parliament is the place to have such conflict worked out. Also to understand that defeat in political matters is not a permanent position.<sup>62</sup>

As Bambang Harymurti said, in the past it was often difficult to decide on the contents of the National section when there was officially "no news." In this era of unprecedented press freedom *TEMPO*—like other Indonesia media—is now free to report on the politics as well as the process of governance. This new emphasis cannot help but change the portrait of the nation that emerges from its pages.

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<sup>61</sup> Significantly, the banning of *TEMPO* itself took place outside the moral drama—in the political process that officially didn't exist.

<sup>62</sup> Personal correspondence, February 3, 2001.

