

Ginandjar Kartasasmita. *Managing Indonesia's Transformation: An Oral History*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2013. 480 pp.

Colin Brown

For over three decades, Ginandjar Kartasasmita stood at or near the center of political and economic decision-making in Indonesia. Having graduated from the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology in 1965, he returned to Indonesia and joined the air force, rising steadily through the ranks until his retirement in 1994 as a vice marshal.

But it is his career as a bureaucrat and politician for which he is better known, and which is the focus of this book. He served as a senior bureaucrat or a minister under Suharto and Habibie. He was, at various times, head of the National Development Planning Agency (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional, BAPPENAS), Minister for Mines and Energy, and twice Coordinating Minister for Economic, Financial, and Industrial Affairs. He sat in the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, MPR) where he represented the armed forces faction, chairing that faction from 1997 to 2002. He was the inaugural chair of the Regional Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, DPD) of the Indonesian Parliament when that body was established in 2004. He retired from office in 2009, but remains a member of the Presidential Advisory Council under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). In mid-2013, he was even being talked about as a potential vice-presidential candidate for 2014.

Ginandjar was thus in the thick of things through several crucial parts of Indonesia's modern history. As such, this book promises much. It delivers, however, rather less. Described by its subtitle as *An Oral History*, this book consists of edited transcripts of lengthy interviews Ginandjar conducted with a team of Japanese scholars led by Takashi Shiraishi. The interviews were conducted in English, with, we are told, the occasional interpellation in Indonesian and Japanese, a language in which Ginandjar is apparently fluent. The Japanese connection is clearly important to Ginandjar.

We can draw some useful information about Ginandjar from these questions and answers. He makes it clear, for instance, that he is an admirer of Habibie, Mega, and Jusuf Kalla, but critical of Gus Dur and Aburizal Bakrie.¹ He argues—I think rather persuasively—that history will treat Habibie's record as president better than most of his contemporaries did. He is much more sympathetic to Habibie's brand of political Islam, expressed through ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia, Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals), than that of Gus Dur—though Ginandjar says he would never vote for an Islamist party.

¹ Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie was president of Indonesia from 1998–99. Gus Dur (born Abdurrahman Addakhil and also known as Abdurrahman Wahid) served as president of Indonesia from 1999–01. Megawati Sukarnoputri was president of Indonesia from 2001–04. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla was vice president of Indonesia from 2004–09 and chairman of the Golkar Party during the same period. Aburizal Bakrie, a politician and successful *pribumi* (native Indonesian) businessman, served as Indonesia's coordinating minister for economy (2004–05) and coordinating minister for people's welfare (2005–09). Today he is the chairman of the Golkar Party and its official candidate for Indonesia's 2014 presidential election.

Ginandjar is very proud of his efforts to support *pribumi* businesspeople, and to strengthen their capacity to compete with ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs; indeed, he wishes he had been more successful than he was. There is always a fine line to tread between support for *pribumi* as a disadvantaged group, and unthinking anti-Chinese sentiment. In places, I think Ginandjar gets very close to that line. He suggests, for instance, that the anti-Chinese elements of the May 1998 riots in Jakarta would have been much less had his pro-*pribumi* business policies been stronger. This seems to assume that the riots were a genuine outpouring of community resentment against ethnic Chinese, free of any degree of elite manipulation—hardly an interpretation that stands much critical scrutiny.

He is critical of the economic policies pursued by economist Widjojo Nitosastro and the technocrats. Nonetheless, he rejects John Bresnan's characterization of him as a pro-protection nationalist as "grossly misinformed" (p. 74).² Widjojo Nitosastro's economic nationalism, Ginandjar says, was not directed at protecting the economy, but rather at industrializing it. Ginandjar stands for a strong government-owned sector, but with the caveat that it would have to work efficiently.

In other places, though, Ginandjar's discussion of issues does not add much to what we already know. His discussion of the economic crisis that started in 1997, for instance, which led to the fall of Suharto the following year and the independence referendum in East Timor the year after that, gives us perhaps a few more details of what happened, particularly on a day-to-day basis. But it does not add any significant new insights. Nor is there any real sense of tension here, or of vital things being in the balance, regarding the great struggle for Indonesia's future. Things just happened—but he got on with his job as Coordinating Minister for Economic, Financial, and Industrial Affairs (he was Suharto's last and Habibie's first minister for economic matters). And amid the turmoil, he argues that under his guidance the economy had turned the corner by 1999.

Of the 2014 general elections, Ginandjar sees Golkar (Partai Golongan Karya, Party of Functional Groups) and PDIP (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) as being the likely front runners, followed perhaps by PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, Prosperous Justice Party). Nothing new here: that is what most of the polls have been saying for some time. Curiously, and perhaps rather rashly, he says that it is "beyond my current imagination" that there will emerge a presidential candidate in 2014 who will command as much popular support as SBY had in 2009 (p. 396). Even allowing for the fact that Ginandjar was talking in 2012, this would seem to indicate that his "imagination" is limited, given the rise of the Jokowi phenomenon.³

² The late John Bresnan was a Ford Foundation executive and Columbia University senior research scholar with longstanding ties to Southeast Asia and Indonesia in particular.

³ Joko Widodo, commonly called "Jokowi," was elected governor of Jakarta in 2012, and his success was widely seen as the voters' reaction against established elite politics. Jokowi was a member of PDIP, but his electoral appeal was based more on his clean, down-to-earth image than any party affiliation. His rise encouraged similar-type candidates to seek election, perhaps the most successful being Ridwan Kamil, who was elected mayor of Bandung in 2013. Though he has not confirmed his candidature, Jokowi is currently far and away the most popular choice for president in this year's election.

The problem here, I think, lies in the nature of the book itself. Clearly, the quality of the questions asked of Ginandjar by his interviewers are a key to what the reader will get out of it.⁴ The questions are, for the most part, important ones. The problem is that there seems to have been little interaction between the questioner and Ginandjar, little effort by the interviewers to probe deeply into the issues, or into Ginandjar's answers to them. Thus, for instance, Ginandjar is asked about (retired) General Prabowo Subianto's responsibility for (alleged) violations of human rights. Ginandjar's response is to say that he did not believe the allegations, because they had never been proven and because Prabowo himself told him they were false (p. 112). The reader might have expected the interviewer to press further on this point, asking, perhaps, about Ginandjar's response to the evidence adduced by various human rights NGOs both in Indonesia and overseas, and even to the fact that the US government barred Prabowo's entry under the provisions of the UN Convention on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Even a simple "but he would say that, wouldn't he?" from the interviewer would have been appropriate. But there is no follow up. The statement is left unchallenged.

Then there's the discussion of the Bank Century inquiry. Ginandjar argues that Sri Mulyani Indrawati—finance minister at the time—was "saved by the bell," the bell being her appointment to the World Bank, requiring her resignation from SBY's cabinet and her move to Washington, DC. What she was "saved" from is not clear. What is clear, though, is that in Ginandjar's explanations for the affair, there is no mention of Bakrie's feud with Sri Mulyani over the way she treated his corporate empire in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, and, in particular, its tax obligations. Bakrie allegedly sought favourable treatment, Sri Mulyani refused, and Bakrie then embarked on a campaign to dislodge her from her position. Even more curious, later in the book, when discussing Bakrie's chances of election as president in 2014, Ginandjar proposes teaming him up with ... Sri Mulyani! Undoubtedly, Ginandjar knows vastly more about elite Indonesian politics than I ever will. Nonetheless, the likelihood of either Sri Mulyani or Bakrie accepting this arrangement seems, to say the least, remote.

What is also curious about this book is what Ginandjar is *not* asked. For instance, he was a member of the air force through almost his entire bureaucratic and political career under Suharto, and yet we learn remarkably little about what this actually meant. He seems to have spent very little time in uniform, apart from his initial training. What was the process by which ABRI's (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, Indonesian National Armed Forces) leadership managed its members in the Parliament? To what extent was Ginandjar himself influenced in his bureaucratic or political decision-making by being a member of the air force? How did other members of the air force, who served in uniform, react to his steady progress through the ranks?

It is perhaps also worth observing—at the risk of being charged with political correctness—that sensitivity is clearly not one of Ginandjar's strong points. When elaborating on the achievements of his brothers and sisters, he says of two of the latter simply that they were "ordinary housewives." And explaining his opposition to Gus

⁴ On pages vi–vii, Shiraishi describes how the team interviewed Ginandjar for twenty-five hours. "It was agreed in advance that we were free to ask any questions we wanted to ask ... All the interviews were taped and then transcribed ..." (p. vi). "Both the transcription and the edited text, with the follow-up questions, were sent to Pak Ginandjar, who answered practically all of the additional questions ..." (p. vii).

Dur's candidature for the presidency, he says that this was in part because, owing to Gus Dur's physical ailments, including blindness, his election as president would "embarrass" Indonesia in world opinion. None of his interviewers seems to have reacted to these characterizations.

Finally—a minor point, perhaps, but an annoying one—the book's index is frustrating to use. It treats all personal names as if they were Indonesian ones, and lists them alphabetically by the first name. This is fine if you are looking for Abdurrahman Wahid: look under "A." But if you are looking for Joseph E. Stiglitz, you need to look not under "S" but under "J." A. H. Nasution, Ahmad Yani, and Basuki Rahmat are listed under "G"—for General. But Wiranto and Prabowo are listed under "W" and "P," respectively, presumably because, as currently active politicians, they are seen as civilians, rather than as retired military men. An interesting judgment, if that is the message we are supposed to take from this practice.

All in all, although there is much detail in this book, it ultimately does not provide much new information or critical analysis of events. It will be read with interest by those looking for a blow-by-blow account of life at the top in Indonesia—but it is unlikely to require revision of many of the established interpretations of political and economic decisions and decision-making in Indonesia since the late 1970s. Which is a pity, because Ginandjar is surely in a position where he could have said a lot more than what is provided in this volume. With more vigorous and pointed questioning, he might have done so.