

Epilogue

This book is a record of my experiences and personal observations between 1948—when as a toddler I first had limited awareness of my surroundings—and 1988, when I ended my tenure as the Secretary General of Golkar. During this period in my life, there were a great many lessons that I gained but which I could only fully discern through observation and contemplation.

I started writing this book in 2005 and continued the effort sporadically and then intensely in the first half of 2018. It was an interesting and instructive experience. I discovered that the more I wrote, the more I remembered. I also needed to rely on considerable self-discipline so that the various conclusions I made from the process of writing were commensurate with my actual awareness at the time. I tried to resist the temptation of using hindsight. In this respect, I naturally needed a process of control, which I was able to procure not only from the available literature but also from the services and help of friends and family, as I explained in the Preface.

My advice to the younger generations: record what is taking place around you and write down your experiences day to day, whether they had a little or big impact on the world beyond yourself. For my own part, I was lucky enough that certain important moments were documented by my late wife, Nini, who even when she was terminally ill, continued to file important documents, which I found invaluable for the writing of this book. Several colleagues also sent me media clippings

from their collections. In the digital age of today, also known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution—whereby digital technology is expected to develop exponentially—creating a record of our life’s work and the interconnectedness of different events will be easier to do. The past, the present and the future can be more easily mapped out in terms of relevance and mutual relationships. By turning it into an instrument for charting one’s life experiences, information technology will not be reduced to a facilitating tool for momentary uses but will instead contribute to more meaningful choices for the future.

Here are a few of life’s lessons that have accrued to me.

First, I was fortunate to be born into a family that adhered to good and sound values. My parents had different characters to each other, but they chose to put into practice what was good, rejected what was bad and they both cared about their surroundings and their fellow human beings, in the spirit of inclusive nationhood. Nevertheless, all this would have meant less had I not had an innate sense of curiosity since childhood. I always asked questions to seek to understand what I saw, what I experienced and heard. This curiosity has become an institutionalized habit of mine.

Second, often unbeknown to me, I was quietly observed by those who later made me life-changing offers. Mimi and I happily accepted Oom Son’s offer for us to accompany his family to go abroad because he and his family were very close to us. I was delighted to be offered such an opportunity because, among other reasons, I acquired a brother in the process, Juwono, who was only slightly older than me. My own brother, Mochtar, whom I admired and tried to emulate, was far older than me, and therefore our relationship was not as close as it might have been had we been closer in age.

I did not take all the offers that came my way. I turned down the offer made by the Headmaster of King’s School, Mr James H. Mosey, for me to continue my studies in the UK because I missed my family and homeland. If I had accepted his offer, my life might have turned out differently. I could have lived in a foreign land for a long time, even settled there with an English woman and ended up opening an Asian restaurant. Anything is possible.

Pak Harto’s instruction for Lieutenant General Benny Moerdani to make me Golkar’s Secretary General—which I related at the end of Chapter 3—was an implicit offer for me to step into the President’s

political inner circle. At the end of Chapter 4, I wrote about my conversation with the president. He gave out a signal that I should join his inner circle. By instinct, I chose to stay true to the Middle Course instead, to maintain a healthy distance from the political elite, to prioritize wholesome political life through public discourse and to take an active role in building up the system.

Third, as a family we chose to live decent but simple lives. As a politician, I had every opportunity to live affluently. We as a family did not choose to go down that path because we were used to the simple life. Besides, there were so many others who were in need that we felt thankful to be able to have all our needs fulfilled, which was consistent with the values our parents had taught us. Those values were in turn passed on to our own children during conversations at our dining table. Both Nini and I were so busy with our work that we designated quality time, one example of which was conducting a meaningful dialogue with our children at the dining table. Our children were profoundly impacted by our discourses. They told me never to sell the round marble-top table because they felt they had been brought up during the conversations at that very table.

Fourth, looking back and contemplating the multitude of events and life experiences, I can safely say I regret nothing. Of course, there were things I might have done differently, for instance my obsession with rectifying my weaknesses and with perfection could have been more balanced if I had paid more attention to my innate abilities. When I was little, for example, I had a knack for drawing pictures. But I chose not to develop this ability because I was too fixated with overcoming my weaknesses. As a result, this ability vanished and would be difficult to reawaken.

I managed to moderate my obsession with achieving perfection in work by incorporating teamwork. The role of each team member was determined by their individual strengths, so in the end it was the collective strength that stood out, with weaknesses being corrected in the process.

Between 1948 and 1988, great changes took place in Indonesia. I did not discuss all the events in the period. I managed to put forth my own impression of Indonesia's role in the Non-Aligned Movement in Chapter 2. At the time, I was in Europe and liked to visit Yugoslavia for every school holiday between 1956 and 1959. So I was intimately

aware of the struggles of newly independent nations and the friendship between Indonesia and Yugoslavia within the Non-Aligned Movement. Consequently, the awareness was present in me as a high school student, not with the benefit of hindsight.

The transformation from the era of Guided Democracy to that of the New Order was characterized by the shift from Soekarno's emphasis on nation and character building—as it was called then—towards national development under the New Order. The new paradigm was carried out using both security and an economic approach, subsequently formulated in the slogan of the Trilogy of Development: dynamic national stability, high economic growth and even distribution of development and its fruits.

The awareness of continued commitment to nationhood is the reason why the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is still standing today, despite the drastic political changes and conflicts throughout its history. Alas, this memoir, which contains my personal experiences, lacks the scope to describe all of our nation's growing pains, even in the period it tries to cover.

It is my hope that in the next memoir I will be able to remedy this defect to a certain degree by sharing my experiences and observations of the period when I was the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and a sitting member of the DPD, as well as what my life is like after a lifetime in politics, government and society.