

# Sukarno's Persona: Building Supremacy through Political Shibboleths

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**Abstract**--Sukarno, the first President of Indonesia, introduced a new political approach known as the Guided Democracy (GD) in August 1959. Along with its inception, he coined and disseminated some of the most venerated and remembered concepts in Indonesian political history such as Pancasila, Manipol-USDEK, NASAKOM and Marhaenism ideology. Sukarno's personality was a central attention during the GD. The glorification led to his supremacy, thus provided him an opportunity to dominate his people with the creation of political shibboleths. This paper discusses his sloganeering efforts with assistance from government propaganda bodies as well as his political proponents. It begins with a concise introduction of his biography to demonstrate that the effort to instill the cult of personality has begun ever since his childhood days. This paper then examines the emergence and development of Sukarno's revolutionary and political slogans like Revolusi (the Revolution) and Pancasila, which are amongst the most popular and powerful concepts employed by Sukarno to engage the public. The aim of this study is to show that Sukarno's persona itself was a crucial factor in moving and building the Indonesian nation since its independence in 1945. This study is carried out using qualitative analysis methods, by employing primary and secondary sources such as newspapers, official publications, magazines and books. This paper suggests that as a central figure from 1959 to 1965, Sukarno successfully influenced and manipulated the Indonesian political ambience through the expert use of propaganda and rhetorical speech.

**Keywords:** Sukarno, Indonesia, Propaganda, Guided Democracy. Pancasila.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Sukarno, known as Bung (Brother) Karno, was born Kusno in Blitar, East Java on 6 June 1901. Sukarno considered himself born to achieve heroic things in the twentieth century, the century of freedom and scientific developments. His birth date, double six was symbolized as having two extremes: he could be as hard as steel or as harmonious as poetry (Sukarno & Adams, 1965). Sukarno claimed that he was born to be a man of glory and a great leader of his people, as whispered by his mother, Ida Nyoman Rai, when he was about two years old, because he was born at dawn, a time of day that Indonesians believe to be propitious (ibid.).

His name was changed to Sukarno at the age of 11 by his father, Raden Sukemi Sosrodihardjo. According to his biographers, Sukarno inherited the affinity of the Javanese for mysticism and intrigue from his father's line, while his mental and physical vigour as well as his artistic instincts came from his Balinese mother (Hanna, 1964). Raden Sukemi named his son after the greatest hero of the Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*, Karna, because Sukarno was weak and vulnerable, ostensibly because of his previous "unfortunate" name. Sukarno recalled the moment when his father

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grasped his shoulder and said “for my son to be a patriot and great hero of the people. You shall be a second Karna.” (ibid.)

Sukarno mastered Dutch, and learnt some French, during his schooling at the Europe Lagere School in Modjokerto. At the age of fourteen he enrolled at the Dutch HBS (*Hogere Bueggerschool*) secondary school in Surabaya (ibid.). There he joined the Surabaya branch of the nationalist youth organization devoted to the struggle for independence, *Tri Koro Dharma* (Three Noble Objectives) in 1915 (Legge, 2003). He built his name here and became popular. From Surabaya Sukarno went to the West Javanese city of Bandung, where in 1921 he enrolled at what is now the Institute of Technology Bandung (Penders, 1974). Sukarno’s leadership capacity further escalated with the establishment of the *Algemeene Studieclub* (General Study Club) in Bandung in November 1925, shortly before his graduation (Ricklefs, 1993). In this club Sukarno wrote one of the greatest pieces in 1926, “Nationalism, Islam and Marxism” in the nationalist publication *Indonesia Muda*, in order to spread a sense of unity amongst Indonesians (Legge, 2003). His involvement in this club led to the establishment of a new political party, the PNI in July 1927. Developing as a mass party under Sukarno, the PNI started to create an emotional atmosphere in the meeting halls; PNI flags – red and white, with a buffalo head in the middle [to symbolize struggle] were everywhere, and the red and white colour scheme was carried onto the podium. Often patriotic songs were sung by the audiences before the arrival of the main speakers (Ingleson, 1988). Sukarno was the PNI’s major draw-card. Emerging as a brilliant speaker, he used popular myths and folklore in simple language to convey the nationalist ideas of the PNI.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts qualitative analysis methods. It attempts to prove that Sukarno was truly a central figure in the post-independent Indonesian politics up to 1965. This objective is achieved through examination of Indonesia’s political concepts throughout the years of Guided Democracy, 1959-1965. Why Guided Democracy? Guided Democracy period in Indonesia symbolizes a complete control by Sukarno as the head of State, assisted by his supporters from various background namely, the military, communists, religious groups and peasants-workers. Until the proclamation of Guided Democracy in 1959, there were no state-sponsored propaganda bodies in Indonesia.

This study predominantly uses primary sources to establish its findings. As a historiography, primary sources provide clearer evidence and understanding of the subject matter. These consist of government’s official publications, newspapers, magazines and books. Amongst the most important sources are publications by the Department of Information, including collections of Sukarno’s independence-day speeches; and magazines by the name of *Mimbar Penerangan*. Most of the materials were located from the Fisher library of the University of Sydney, Australia and *Arsip Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Archive), Indonesia. In addition, this study also refers to a number of secondary sources such as books and journal articles.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *The Creation of Political and Revolutionary Slogans*

In July 1959, Sukarno officially declared the inception of GD, an alternative to the previous system of liberal democracy, a move whereby “Indonesia would not see a democracy for another forty years, and its early leaders’

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hopes of building a just society would be dashed on the rocks of political ambition.” (Vickers, 2013). GD, a system which provided Sukarno with almost unlimited political power, was the impetus to shape and forge Indonesians’ physical and mental development through an abundance of propaganda and indoctrinations. One observer of the time, Jeanne S. Mintz, described this phenomenon in terms of how, “His personal prestige far transcends that of any political figure. To many Indonesians, he symbolises Indonesia. His face and name evoke virtually the same emotions as the country’s flag and national anthem.” (Mintz, 1965; Kahin, 2003; Feith, 1963; Weatherbee, 1966). Sukarno tried to cast himself as the embodiment of the nation, and portrayed himself as the “captain” of the nation. Without doubt, Sukarno used the display of prestige and image to proliferate his ideas, under the disguise of Revolution and nation-building. Sukarno’s lexicon was full of catch-phrases designed to indoctrinate the masses with his “New Gospel”, wrote an article in *New York Times* (Kalb, 1960).

In order to expand his influence, Sukarno used the power of metaphor in speeches to win the hearts and minds of Indonesians. Dwi Noverini Djenar describes Sukarno’s metaphors as a verbal tool for arousing the spirit of the masses to fight for Indonesia’s independence from colonial rule (Dwi Noverini Djenar, 1994). Furthermore, commenting on Sukarno’s oratorical prowess, eminent Indonesian scholar Taufik Abdullah, wrote:

*Political rhetoric was one of the major strengths of Sukarno’s. He had an unrivalled gift in communicating and disseminating ideas and messages in a style of speech the people could understand. He might not always manage to avoid foreign words or even sentences in his writings and speeches but he made the ideas come alive and become part of the people’s consciousness (Taufik Abdullah, 2009).*

What is metaphor? Metaphor, said Aristotle, is giving a thing a name that belongs to something else (Charteris-Black, 2011). It is a shift in the use of a word or phrase by giving it a new sense that evokes emotional responses (ibid.). Most metaphors used in political rhetoric are to establish that the speaker is a legitimate source of authority. A metaphor works within rhetoric. People use rhetoric to defend themselves and attack others. Aristotle asserted that a rhetoric combative character is illustrated by its metaphors (Remer, 1999). Amongst the favourite metaphors of Sukarno were *fire, wave, golden bridge* and *animals*. (Dwi Noverini Djenar, 1994; Sukarno, 1965; Sukarno, 1959) Interestingly, Sukarno’s choice of metaphors usually aimed to symbolise “power and strength”. In fact, demonstrating his partiality for metaphors, Sukarno selected metaphorical first names for some of his children, including Guntur (Thunder), Guruh (another word for Thunder) and Mega (Sky or Cloud, it also can be interpreted as a symbol of strength).

### ***The Revolution***

To legitimate his future undertakings, Sukarno had to manipulate the public eagerness to perpetuate the Indonesian Revolution. Popularly known as “Revolusi”, this revolutionary legitimacy was crucial to ensure people adhered to every concept that he introduced. The aim was to form a solid mass, unified by the same ideology, the Revolution and *Pancasila*, marching forward to build a strong Indonesian nation. Indonesians were urged to perceive every faction scattered across Indonesia as one nation, characterised by a set of shared values. Sukarno and his allies were able to demonstrate the congruence of their *weltanschauung* and the attitudes, predispositions and aspirations of the non-elite in Indonesian society (Weatherbee, 1966).

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Unity became one of the guiding themes of Sukarno's revolutionary ideas. Unity was important to integrate a diverse people who lived across hundreds of dispersed islands and to gather them together in a post-colonial and anti-colonial stance. To instil a sense of unity, Sukarno was fond of quoting a phrase from Félicité de Lamennais, the nineteenth century French political theorist, in his speeches, "If people ask you, how many of you altogether? Say, we are one because our brothers are we, and we are our brothers." (Roeslan Abdulgani, 1964). A similar sense of unity can be traced to his 1928 article in *Suluh Indonesia Muda* where he wrote, "It shouldn't be thousands of our races, not be millions of bodies and souls, but there should be only one unified body and soul of ours" (Sukarno, 1964). As the people were the focal point of the power to which Sukarno clung, "unity" was the most important weapon to inculcate and popularise. For Sukarno, the imagined "unity" was not only "a group of people living together harmoniously", but "a group of people living together to support and protect" his ascendancy.

Sukarno used the Revolution to signify two periods; the period of armed struggle in Indonesia against Dutch colonialism until 1949 and the subsequent period of his Presidency to 1966. Metaphors were central to Sukarno's oration and explain, in part, why his orations appealed so strongly to the Indonesian people. Although not all of Sukarno's metaphors directly concerned the Revolution, they were undoubtedly interrelated. His concepts such as *Pancasila*; *Ampera*; Guided Democracy; *Manipol-USDEK*; *NASAKOM* (Nasionalis, Agamawan, Komunis – Nationalists, Religious groups, Communists); *Nekolim* (Neo-colonialism); *Berdikari* (Standing on one's own feet) and *Marhaenism* were established under the banner of revolution. In one of his speeches during the indoctrination courses organised by the National Front (*Front Nasional*), Sukarno affirmed that, "Politics are devotion to the Revolution, developing *Manipol*, expanding *USDEK*, nurturing *Resopim* among the people. Politics are to safeguard and solve the Indonesian Revolution, safeguarding World Revolution." (Sukarno, 1963a). Although sometimes their meanings were vague and esoteric, they gained currency among Indonesians because they sounded great, expressive and invigorating.

Sukarno derived his idea of Revolution largely from Karl Marx and Soviet leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. In his speeches, he often referred to the Communist idea of struggle and revolution. As early as 1926, in one of his most celebrated speeches of all time, "Nationalism, Islam and Marxism", he quoted Marx's idea of class struggle against bourgeoisie-capitalists (Sukarno, 1970). In order to synchronise the Marxist style of struggle, Sukarno suggested that Marxists in Indonesia had to cooperate with Muslim and Nationalist movements to establish a larger column of independent fighters. Subsequently, in his speech on the birth of *Pancasila* in June 1945, Sukarno referred to Lenin's approach in building the Soviet Union, to support his argument for forging a new Indonesian nation, regardless of the literacy level of the people or the physical development of the country (The Indonesian Revolution, 1960). It was not materials which determined the success of struggle, rather the determination of the people to materialise it, said Sukarno. Although Sukarno also referred to other leaders like Ibnu Saud of Saudi Arabia and Dr. Sun Yat Sen in this speech, he focused his attention mainly on Lenin.

Sukarno's reiteration of the continuity of revolution was actually a reflection of Trotsky's "theory of permanent revolution". Trotsky himself was a disciple of Lenin who advocated the concepts of vanguard party, democratic centralism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky's theory was about perpetual struggle against the

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empowerment of a single group in society to prevent dictatorship. Trotsky added that, “During a period of indefinite duration, and of a constant internal struggle, all social relations are transformed...The revolution of the economy, technology, science, the family, customs, develop in a complex reciprocal actions which doesn’t permit to achieve equilibrium. In this consists the permanent character of the socialist revolution” (Alexander, 1991). Trotsky suggested that the whole society, the government and its apparatus need to be reshuffled and transformed to ensure a fruitful revolution.

Sukarno mentioned and referred to this phenomenon of permanent revolution in several of his speeches. In his 1959 Independence Day speech, he reaffirmed the need to return to the trail of revolution. He divided the Indonesian revolution into three parts; 1945-1950 – the physical revolution; 1950-1955 – the survival of revolution; and 1956 onwards – the period of social-economic revolution; with each of them interconnected (Sukarno, 1963b). He also announced retooling programs, as Trotsky propounded, to replace the inefficient old apparatus with a new one. The same “Revolusi” theme then took place in Sukarno’s independence speeches in August 1960, “Djarek – Djalannya Revolusi Kita” (The March of Our Revolution); 1961, “Re-So-Pim – Revolusi-Sosialisme Indonesia-Pimpinan Nasional” (Revolution-Indonesian Socialism-National Leadership); and 1963, “Gesuri – Genta Suara Revolusi Indonesia” (The Resounding Voice of Indonesian Revolution). The continuous revolution provided Sukarno with a weapon to strike his critics, saying “the Indonesian Revolution has not failed and it is not going to fail...On and on go the striving of that Revolution, on and on one phase is followed by another phase...this is what some time ago I called the dynamic of Revolution!” (ibid.). Evidently, his speeches provide unequivocal evidence of his Trotskyite sympathies.

The revolution was exaggerated in panoply of metaphors by Sukarno, especially in one of the most important of his Independence Day addresses of 1960 titled *Djarek*. Sukarno cried that:

We are in the middle of Revolution, and not a small Revolution, but a Revolution greater than that of past American Revolution, or past French Revolution or the current Soviet Revolution. Our Revolution is five-faceted (*Pancamuka*), a multi-complex Revolution, a Revolution that sums up many revolutions in one generation (ibid.)

“Revolusi” was given top priority in his oratories, to legitimate, and subliminally divert his people from deteriorating domestic economic conditions. His speeches were a vibrant and rejuvenating entertainment for the majority of Indonesians – a kind of escapism. On 26 March 1961, in a speech before a group of youths and university students during indoctrination sessions in Pontianak, Sukarno reiterated “Revolusi” by referring to prominent foreign figures such as Trotsky and another philosopher who he did not mention the name. Quoting Trotsky, Sukarno said that “Revolusi” was a fierce inspiration like a cyclone from history and a juncture between the brain and sensation, will-power and the fire of passion. In another Independence Day address, *Gesuri*, in 1963, Sukarno positioned himself as a part of the rails of “Revolusi”. He claimed, “Rails of Revolution, namely consistence, confrontation, and discipline under one leadership...have embodied in our body...To survive! Physically and mentally! To survive!” (Sukarno, 1964). This justification was crucial for Sukarno to legitimate his authority and to retain his perch on the pyramid of power.

### ***The Pancasila***

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The ultimate achievement of the Revolution was said to consist of three aspects, known as the “Framework of the Revolution”. First, was the creation of the Republic of Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke; second, the creation of a just and prosperous society based on *Pancasila*; and third, the creation and preservation of world peace based on friendship, freedom and justice. *Pancasila* became the most important driving-force of the Indonesian Revolution. It consists of five pillars; Belief in one God, Nationalism, Internationalism, Democracy in the Indonesian way, and Social Justice. “*Pancasila* is the *philosophische grondslag*, a philosophical basis for Indonesia Merdeka (Independent Indonesia),” said Sukarno in his speech marking the birth of *Pancasila* on 1 June 1945, at the meeting of the Body for Investigating Efforts in Preparation for Independence (The Indonesian Revolution, 1960).

For his philosophical basis, Sukarno preferred *Pancasila*, the five bases or principles instead of *Pantja Dharma*, the five duties. In formulating his ideas Sukarno keenly used foreign words, especially the number five in Sanskrit and Islamic values, like *Pancamuka* (five-faceted), *Pantjalogi* (five-ideology) and *Panca Azimat* (five-talisman). He asserted that “I like symbolism, the symbolism of numbers also. The fundamental obligations of Islam are five in number; our fingers are five on each hand; we have five senses...the *Pendawa* also are five persons....” (ibid.) The principles of *Pancasila* are visually depicted on the Indonesian coat of arms. A star in the centre represents the supreme God; an Indonesian bull represents the symbol of nationality; a chain portrays the symbol of humanity; a Banyan tree portrays the sovereignty of the people; and cotton and paddy represent the symbol of social justice with a sufficient and equal distribution of the daily necessities.

For anyone reluctant to accept the five principles, the *Pancasila* could be compressed into three principles, “Trisila” comprising belief in one God; socio-nationalism, the combination of nationalism and internationalism; and socio-democracy, the amalgamation of democracy and social justice. The “Trisila” itself could be compressed to become one, “Ekasila”, namely *gotong-royong* (ibid.). *Gotong-royong* is a dynamic concept which portrays one endeavour, one act of service and one task and refers to joint struggle to help one another. *Gotong-royong* is said to represent the real nature of the Indonesian nation. It is “acts of service by all for the interest of all. *Ho-lopis-kuntul-baris* – one two three, heave!!!” cried Sukarno, referring to acts of mutual help in carrying out a huge task (ibid.). A visual depiction of *gotong-royong* was part of official publication of the Department of Information (Figure 1). The picture shows the total participation of the people with the image of women; a soldier; a child; a peasant; a *Pamong Pradja* wearing Javanese traditional custom; a religious man wearing a turban; and perhaps a nationalist wearing a hat. It became the shibboleth of the Indonesian people in reestablishing the spirit of the Revolution 1945.

The spirit of *gotong-royong* was reinforced with the establishment of the *gotong-royong* cabinet in March 1960 (*Mimbar Penerangan*, 1960). This cabinet consisted of representatives from various backgrounds intended as a manifestation of *gotong-royong*. The total number of cabinet members, officially the *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (DPR), the People’s Representative Council, was 261. Of these 130 were represented political parties and the remaining 131 were from the working classes. The *gotong-royong* DPR was the first attempt by Sukarno to synchronise the various groups and ideologies in Indonesia such as nationalist; communist; religious – Muslims, Christians and Hindu; workers and peasants; military and police; and youth and intellectuals.

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Figure 1. *Penerangan Rakyat*, 1959

### ***The Vehicles of the Pancasila Propaganda***

As a part of a larger campaign to popularise and indoctrinate the *Pancasila*, first and foremost, it was conferred with “religious” attributes. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad, Jesus Christ and *Ratu Adil* (the Just King), were propounded to accord *Pancasila* legitimacy as a supra-national ideology. “For decades past I have been thinking about this, that is, the principle of Indonesian *Merdeka*, our *Weltanschauung*”, said Sukarno (The Indonesian Revolution, 1960). The inspiration of *Pancasila* was delivered to the public as if it were God’s “gift” to Sukarno (Sukarno, 1965). Sukarno however emphasised that it was not a revelation – which according to Islam is a special attribute for prophets of God – rather it was an inspiration which could be obtained by ordinary humans by submitting solely to God Almighty (ibid.) Sukarno understood the sensitivity of the Muslims because to claim that *Pancasila* was a revelation would have been elevating his status to that of a “Prophet”, a major sin according to Islam which stipulates that Prophet Muhammad is the final messenger of God. To Sukarno’s enthusiasts, however, *Pancasila* served as a medium to honour him as a “Superior” leader and provide a noble impact on *Pancasila* and Sukarno’s teaching (Gempar, 1964).

The position of *Pancasila* was elevated beyond the efficacy of basic religious tenets, not only in Islam but also in Catholicism. In June 1965, a Christian missionary movement in West Irian carried out an indoctrination course, “The Week Introducing the Aims and Will of Indonesian Revolution for the Shepherds and Religious Leaders of West Irian” in Tjimatan. Prof. Dr. N. Drijarkoro, a Catholic scholar, in his opening speech stressed that, “*Pantjasila* is a meeting point between church and the world as intended by the 13 decisions/cases of the Konsili [*sic*] Vatican II”

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(*Madjalah Pancasila*, 1965). Recalling the tribulations of the church, Prof. Drijarkoro concluded that, “In my opinion, in finding the answer to this problem, *Pantjasila* is the best way, the world and nature of *Pantjasila* enable this observation be in reality...” (ibid.) *Pantjasila* was deemed to be “a form of higher life”.

Dr. H. Roeslan Abdulgani, Sukarno’s right-hand man, became the chief promoter of *Pancasila* at the time. Roeslan, born in November 1914 in Surabaya, had been involved in resistance since the early days of nationalist struggle. He commenced “radical” life by confronting the Dutch during his schooling at the Europase Kweek School (EKS) after completing the HBS in Surabaya (*Proyek Penelitian dan Pengembangan Penerangan*, 1978/1979). Due to Dutch pressure, Roeslan abandoned his studies and started his career as school teacher in Surabaya. Called “Captain” by peers out of respect for his education and extensive reading, he participated in the underground movement, the Young Generation (*Angkatan Muda*) during the Japanese occupation (Retnowati Abdulgani-Knapp, 2003). He was involved in the “Information” field since 1946, and appointed as the Republic’s Secretary General of Information in 1947. His biography, written by his daughter, reflects Roeslan’s admiration and close relationship with Sukarno (ibid.). Sukarno nicknamed him “Djubir Usman”, an abbreviation of “Djuru Bicara USDEK-Manipol” (The Spokesman for *Manipol-USDEK*) (Victor S. Jerry R., 2007). Roeslan played a role in propaganda throughout Sukarno’s ascendancy, and after Sukarno, he was the most important figure in propaganda making.

In a meeting of the Constituent Assembly, Bandung on 29 May 1957, Roeslan said, “To deny the ideals of *Pantjasila* is tantamount to denying the true substance and objective of our proclamation and national revolution.” (Roeslan Abdulgani, 1964). Ranked by Sukarno and his followers as amongst the greatest concepts in human history, *Pancasila* was deemed greater than Thomas Jefferson’s American Declaration of Independence or Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto. Subsequently, Sukarno even claimed those two great concepts were insufficient to satisfy the questions and disputes of human activity and suggested to the UN that *Pancasila* be adapted and implemented in the UN Charter to make the organisation appear more neutral.

From its proclamation in June 1945, *Pancasila* became the motto or title of many daily newspapers and magazines throughout Indonesia. Until 1965, at least 17 newspapers and weekly magazines played a role as the propagandists of *Pancasila* (*Petunjuk Pers*, 1961 and *Petunjuk Pers* 1964). All the newspapers and magazines were published in the Indonesian language, except the *Hui Chi Pao* daily, which was in Chinese. Propaganda tasks were carried out intensively after the official introduction of GD in 1959, when 14 out of the 17 publications published between the years 1959 to 1965 carried *Pancasila* as their direct reference-point. Among the motto or slogans printed at the front page of those newspapers were *Pembela Pantjasila* (The Protector of *Pancasila*); *Suara Karyawan, Penjebar Pantjasila* (The Voice of Workers, Propagator of *Pancasila*); *Pelaksanaan Sosialisme Pantjasila* (The Implementation of *Pancasila* Socialism); and *Pembawa Aliran Pantjasila, Pembina Kesatuan Bangsa* (The Bearer of the *Pancasila* Stream, the Developer of National Unity).

Through these printed media, *Pancasila* was exploited as a weapon to defend Sukarno’s teachings as well as to inculcate a fighting spirit in the people during times of conflict. *Gempar* magazine, for instance, contained the pledge by a special team, headed by former Commandant of Sumatra Combat Legion, to defend *Pancasila* as the foundation of the Indonesian nation and basic teachings of Sukarnoism. Part of the pledge read, “Be prepared as a soldier of

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Pantjasila, the teaching of Bung Karno, to attack and destroy any hostilities against *Pantjasila*, in any forms, anywhere, and anyone.” (*Gempar*, 1964). Furthermore, the Indonesian Department of Information published monthly magazines titled *Pantjasila*, since October 1963, only few months after the start of *Konfrontasi*, the Indonesian-Malaysian dispute, to inculcate the *Pancasila* during time of confrontation (*Pantjasila*, 1963). Another *Pantjasila* magazine was published by the Coordinating Secretariat of West Irian Matters in 1965 to instil a sense of faith and religious awareness among Indonesians, and particularly the West Irian people under the first principle of *Pancasila*, Belief in One God (*Madjalah Pantjasila*, 1965).

Venerated as a way of life and the doctrine of the Revolution, the gleaming image of *Pancasila* was also propagated widely and vehemently through seminars and cultural programs. Sukarno himself spearheaded many courses and seminars at *Istana Negara* (The National Palace) and *Istana Merdeka* (The Palace of Independence) in Jakarta. For instance, on 17 June 1954, Sukarno delivered speeches to the *Gerakan Pembela Pancasila* (Movement of Pancasila Upholders) course at *Istana Merdeka*. Then, in 1958, a series of courses (*Kursus Pancasila*) were held at the *Istana Negara* and attended by youths, local leaders and students from all over Indonesia. A *Pancasila* rally was also held in Bandung on 16 March 1958. In Yogyakarta on 21 February 1959, a seminar was held, called *Kuliah Umum Seminar Pancasila* (Pancasila Seminar General Course). In the District of Pesisir Selatan, West Sumatra, a consecutive series of *Pancasila* lectures was held by the Department of Information from 6 to 20 June 1961 and attended by about 3790 religious leaders, local leaders and intellectuals (*Mimbar Penerangan*, 1961). At every seminar and course, Sukarno himself delivered the opening speech and expounded upon the necessity to uphold, disseminate and defend *Pancasila* as the national ideology (*Pancasila Bung Karno*, 2005).

In a similar vein, in the field of Indonesian arts and cultural activities, Harsono Hadisoeseno from Yogyakarta invented a shadow play, modified from the traditional *Wayang Purwa*, called *Wayang Pantjasila*. (*Mimbar Penerangan*, 1961). Consisting of information and propaganda elements, the shadow play depicted the course of history of Indonesia, from war of independence to 1945. In addition, *Wayang Beber* and *Wayang Suluh* were also used for propaganda. *Wayang beber* is a scroll-painting tradition in which puppeteers recite stories by unrolling the scenes depicted on a long roll of cloth. On 21 August 1960, a *wayang beber* was performed for about 140 people in the sub-district of Pringku, East Java relating a story about the struggle for independence, the revolution, victory and the essence of *Pancasila*, unity (*Mimbar Penerangan*, 1960).

*Wayang suluh* are puppets made from animal hide in the shape of human figures. *Suluh* here means “information” and it was conceived as a medium of information and propaganda due to the high levels of illiteracy among Indonesians, reaching 95% at the time. Sources from the Department of Information believe that *wayang suluh* was invented by the *Badan Kongres Wayang Baru* (Congregational Body for New Puppet Shows), consisting of revolutionary youths from Madiun (*Mimbar Penerangan*, 1961). In the Pacitan district of East Java, for instance, *wayang suluh* shows were held on three consecutive days in August 1960, attended by about 3500 people (*Mimbar Penerangan*, 1960).

Also in the realm of cultural activities, in Medan on 12 June 1965 a ‘*Pantjasila* Night and People’s Fiesta’ was held by the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI, Indonesian National Party), ardent supporter of Sukarno. In his speech,

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R.K. Zaman, the Head of the Committee, extolled *Pancasila* as a precious pearl dug out by 'Our Father' Sukarno, saying that it was obligatory for Indonesians to live according to what *Pancasila* propounded. He also urged the crowd to thank God for giving Sukarno the idea of *Pancasila*. (*Bendera Revolusi*, 1965). No evidence has been found that of similar events held elsewhere in Indonesia during this time.

### **Marhaenism**

*It was for no other reason but that on a certain day I was walking in the rice fields to the south of Tjigereleng and came across a man hoeing a field. I asked him: "Brothers, who owns this field?" "I do," he said. And so he participated in ownership of the means of the production, owning that rice field. "And the hoe, who owns that?" "I do." "These tools, who owns these?" "I do." "But Brother you live in poverty?" "That's right, I live poorly." And I thought to myself then, this man is clearly and certainly not a member of proletariat...for he does not sell his labour power without participating in ownership of the means of production...Everything is his own property...But still he is a pauper, he is poor...Then, Brothers, and Sisters, I asked him "What is your name?" "Marhaen," he said. He said his name was Marhaen. I had an inspiration: Now, this name I will hold to; I will use this name to describe the destitute People of Indonesia [sic] (Sukarno, 1960).*

Claiming that a powerful political revelation had dawned on him at age 20, (Sukarno and Adams, 1965) Sukarno held that *Marhaen* epitomised the "little people" or the Javanese "wong cilik." (Eklof, 2004; Anderson, 1966). It represented the Indonesian masses: workers, peasants, smallholders, the poor and the common people. Although there is a claim that the term existed far before this speech, without doubt it became popular only after Sukarno imbued it with passion and metaphors and embodied the term with the values of revolution, patriotism, struggle, endeavour and perseverance.

Sukarno's experience, cited in the passage above, cemented the fundamental differences between Sukarno's *Marhaenism* and Marx's Proletariat. In Sukarno's analysis, Marx's Proletariat did not fully describe Indonesian conditions. A member of proletariat referred to a person who sold his labour to another, without owning the means of production himself. Whereas a *Marhaen* referred not only to a person who sold his labour to another but also comprised persons who owned the means of production yet lived in poor conditions. *Marhaenism*, however, eschew itself completely from Marxism, especially in terms of revolutionary struggles and hostility towards capitalist-bureaucrats. Furthermore, Sukarno emphasised on several occasions that *Marhaenism* was Marxism, implemented in Indonesia in its own unique way (*Pedoman Pokok*, 1965). Sukarno did not take on the class concepts of Marxism, however. As Rex Mortimer observed, Sukarno developed a "populist" social philosophy, according to which the archetypal citizen was the *Marhaen*, representing the majority of Indonesians (Mortimer, 1974).

While *Pancasila* was considered to be the pillar, *Marhaenism* was deemed to be the essence of Sukarnoism. "If one speaks of the teachings by the Charles Darwin as "Darwinism", of the teaching of Karl Marx as "Marxism", one may well speak of *Marhaenism* as "Soekarno-ism", wrote Juti, an advocate of Sukarnoism (*Ampera Review*, 1964). This was also supported by an article by Roeslan Abdulgani in comparing Marxism and Sukarnoism. In 1848, Marx was recorded uttering his most popular appeal, "Proletariats of the world, unite!", whereas Sukarno, borrowing the

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same spirit, cried in 1927, “Marhaen of Indonesia, unite!” (*Madjalah Umum Manipol*, 1964) “Marhaenism is a Marxism-Sukarnoism”, said the *Partindo* (Indonesian Party) resolution at its 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Meeting on 2 July 1964 (*Api Marhaenism*, 1964).

The Department of Information, as a propaganda wing, also maintained the belief that *Marhaen* was born out of Marxism. It was based on Marx’s analysis in *Das Kapital*, Vol. 1, in the “The Genesis of the Industrial Capital” about the cruel and inhumane Dutch administration in the Indonesian archipelago during the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (*Pantjasila*, 1964/1965). Marx’s arguments were manipulated by Sukarno in urging the Indonesian people to study and master Marxism in order to understand the “fire of *Marhaenism*”, the “fire of *Manipol*” and the “fire of *Pancasila*”. The mass basis of Marx in Europe was the proletarian class while the mass basis of Sukarno in Indonesia was the *Marhaenists* (ibid.).

The term *Marhaen* had a rival during the time called “Saminism”. Although it strived for the same goals as *Marhaenism*, it differed in the means to achieve its ends, which were not based on scientific considerations. The differences between these two ideologies might be compared to Scientific Socialism and Utopian Socialism in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Ampera Review*, 1964). Named after Surontiko Samin, a peasant from Blora regency, this movement was completely different from *Marhaenism* in terms of its faith and creed. Samin himself denied the existence of Allah or any other divinity, as he had never seen Him. Conversely, *Marhaenism*, as Sukarno propounded, had strong faith in Allah and religious belief. Some of the Saminists even used messianic themes in viewing Samin as a Ratu Adil who would come from the East and the West to establish a kingdom based on equality (Benda and Castles, 1969). Upon his death it was predicted that Samin would return and divide the world in two. Samin’s followers would be allocated one part, while non-Saminists, the subjects of the Dutch, would be assigned a place in the other (Korver, 1976). While *Marhaenism* was based on the struggle to overcome poverty and raise the standard of living for all Indonesians, *Saminism* stemmed from Samin’s refusal to pay crop taxes to the Dutch. However, *Saminism* failed to thrive due to a decreasing number of followers who were more inclined to embrace Sukarno’s *Marhaenism*, which was perceived as more realistic and timely, as well as having the support of the authorities.

In the battle to reach out to the people, historically, another term was invoked to symbolise the struggle and misery of the people, the “Murba”. Basically, *Murba* described the Indonesian proletariat. *Murba* was based on the ideology of Tan Malaka, the former leader of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). *Murba* represented the workers, the majority of Indonesians who possessed nothing, other than his own “brain” and “energy” (*Bulletin Murba*, 1964). Although perceived as having the closest meaning to *Marhaenism*, in terms of its hostility to neo-colonialism and feudalism, *Murba* was more homogenous because it was limited mainly to the working class, while *Marhaenism* comprised all classes in Indonesia. *Murba* differed from the western proletariat in term of its historical development for unlike the proletariat, it adhered to the smallest unit in society, family values.

There were six categories of *Murba*, namely *Murba-mesin* (machine-Murba) for those worked in plants, mines and workshops; *Murba-tanah* (land-Murba) for those involved in farming and rice-field agriculture; *Murba-pengangkutan* (transport-Murba) for those worked on the railways, ships, automotives etc.; *Murba-perdagangan* (trade-Murba) for those worked in private firms, banks, shops etc.; *Murba-kota* (city-Murba) for city slum dwellers;

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and *Murba-intelek* (Intellect-Murba) for the unemployed (*Istilah Murba*, n.d.). This ideology was later translated into the political party *Partai Murba* (Murba Party), established on 7 November 1948. Tan Malaka, wrote a letter to encourage the establishment of the party in July 1948, and emphasised the necessity for propaganda and agitation in the party. He said, “In short we must execute real propaganda and agitation, based on proletarian daily life. So should our propaganda and agitation in the villages, farms or plantations be based on proletarian life. From here we walk up to the program to move forward, as an alternative to the resolution of current tangles” (Aidit, 1963). As a result, the *Murba* Party formed a Bureau of Agitation and Propaganda as one of its three primary bureaus in November 1948 for the purpose of mobilising the people.

Owing to its complexity and abstract nature, the “people” (*rakjat*) in Indonesia had various identifications apart from *Marhaen* and *Murba*. They were “the public”, “BUTAKIN” and “massa rakjat”. James T. Siegel, in analysing the Indonesian novel *Loves of a Football Player* by D.E. Manuturi, used “the public” to identify the people of Indonesia. “The public” derived not only from the Dutch *publiek*, but from the Indonesian *orang banyak*, a phrase that means, “others” and “many” (Siegel, 1997). The “public” meant here was the “native public”, the Indonesian majority. Siegel gives a valuable analysis on how the information was transmitted amongst “the public”, in which rallies became a main platform of propaganda. In one part of the book, he studies the importance of the “people” whose most important weapon of struggle was their unity (*ibid.*). Siegel’s writing is important for understanding the background of relations between “the lingua franca [Malay] and the people”, which sheds the light on how later governments, especially during GD, were able to manipulate the people using language and identity.

Another term, “BUTAKIN” was introduced by the Acoma, *Angkatan Komunis Muda* (the Young Communist Forces). Acoma was established on 10 June 1946 under the leadership of Ibnu Parna (*Mingguan Pakerdja*, 1964a). It was a study-club dedicated to instil Trotskyism in Indonesia. For this movement, “the people” were referred to as “BUTAKIN”, namely *BURuh*, *TAni*, and warga *misKIN*, (workers, peasants and the poor) (*Mingguan Pakerdja*, 1964b). The enemy of “BUTAKIN” was known as “BORFEOSI”, namely *BOrdjuis*, *FEOdal* and *birokraSI*, (bourgeoisie, feudal and bureaucracy) (*ibid.*). In an official document titled “Transition Programs for Indonesia” regarding political principles, ideologies and programs, Acoma stated that the struggle to achieve Socialist conditions lay with the Indonesian majority, the working class (*Mingguan Pakerdja*, 1965). The workers consisted of labours, poor peasants, urban poor, and *massa pradjurit*, “masses of soldiers”. In general, the “masses of soldiers” were the children of “BUTAKIN” (*ibid.*). Although Acoma worked hard to disseminate its ideology, it failed spread the notion of “BUTAKIN” due to lack of support from the press, other than in its own publications, the PKI and the government itself. Acoma was hostile to the PKI, and even mocked it a “the drunken monster” because of the PKI’s involvement in the Madiun uprisings and its repudiation of Trotskyism (*Mingguan Pakerdja*, 1964a).

Adding to this vocabulary was “massa rakjat”, the ideology of DN Aidit of the PKI. For Aidit, “massa rakjat” consisted mainly of the peasants (*tani*) and labours (*buruh*), who represented 90% of the population (*Madjalah PKI Surabaya*, 1962). Aidit added that the peasants, different from the concept of Sukarno’s *Marhaen*, were the pillar of the Revolution (*Bintang Merah*, 1964). He extolled peasants by saying “of the classes in society, the peasants are the firmest and most reliable ally”. For Aidit, “massa rakjat” signified a more radical group of people. Together the

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peasants, workers, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie comprised the forces of the Revolution, referring to a Socialist revolution to topple capitalism (DN Aidit, 1964). This revolution would establish a “proletariat dictatorship” which meant “a huge ‘massa’ dictatorship”. This dictatorship, a prerequisite for Socialism, would predominantly consist of peasants and workers. Aidit also wrote that the Indonesian proletariat consisted of about 500,000 workers in modern industries such as transport workers, factory workers and mine workers. These workers were the most revolutionary in terms of their knowledge and capacity to lead the peasants in the revolutionary struggle against capitalists. On many occasions, however, Aidit used the term “massa rakjat” intermittently with “proletariat” (ibid.).

This term, alongside many other terms identifying “the people” in Indonesia, never had a chance to surpass *Marhaen*. The clarity and authority of the term *Marhaen* portrayed the majority of Indonesians or, more accurately, the total Indonesian population who supported the Revolution. Whoever denied the importance of the Revolution would be condemned as “counter-revolutionary”. In fact, Aidit himself as a leader of the most “populist” party during the time, never denied the popularity and effectiveness of *Marhaen*. Aidit’s acceptance of this concept and many others is highly understandable in the light of his close contact with Sukarno before Independence. Rex Mortimer described their relationship in terms of Aidit’s adoration of Sukarno’s myth-making and spellbinding capacities (Mortimer, 1974). Aidit even declared in 1965 that it was Sukarno who gave him his first training in Marxism at the *Asrama Angkatan Baru Indonesia* (Hostel of the Indonesian New Generation) (Anderson, 1972; *Harian Rakjat*, 1965). Furthermore, *Marhaen* was officially supported and disseminated by the authorities, Sukarno’s government. Sukarno mobilised every possible means to popularise the concept as will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

### ***The Vehicles of Marhaenism Propaganda***

In order to disseminate and indoctrinate this idea, Sukarno invented a functionary figure to coordinate the *Marhaen*, the *Marhaenist*. Sukarno explained the *Marhaenist* in February 1959 in his address to the *Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Students Movement) at Tawangmangu. In short, a *Marhaenist* was a person or group who would help the poor and fight the capitalists and neo-colonialists to build a prosperous Indonesia. The PNI played the most crucial role in indoctrinating the idea of *marhaenism*, culminating in the proclamation by Ali Sastroamidjojo, chair of the PNI, of the *Deklarasi Marhaenis* (Marhaenist Declaration). Earlier in July 1964, Ali had announced the mobilisation of *Marhaenis* cadres to form development squads throughout the country to assist the *Marhaen*, especially for food production. The cadres came from the *Gerakan Pemuda Marhaenis* (The Movement of Marhaenis Youth), *Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia* (The Movement of Indonesian National University Students) and *Gerakan Siswa Nasional Indonesia* (Movement of Indonesian National Students) (Pak Ali, 1964). The PNI released the *Deklarasi Marhaenis* at the Congress Working Committee Meeting in Bandung, in November 1964 (*PNI Penegak Pantjasila*, 1965). Consequently, the *Deklarasi Marhaenis* contributed to a change in the working style of the party during the last years of GD. It called on the PNI/Front *Marhaenis* to engage in indoctrination to unify interpretation of the party ideology and create a corps of “vanguard cadres” from all over Indonesia who would be responsible for the implementation of “total retooling” in their respective places.

The PNI/Front *Marhaenis* boosted cadre indoctrination training to inculcate and propagate the *Marhaen* ideology. After 1960, Ali himself headed the cadre training section of the party Central Headquarters. Between 1961 and 1962,

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the section conducted one two-month and three one-month training programs for 101 cadres in Jakarta. This was followed by provincial-level programs for 233 cadres (Special Report of the Cadre Training, 1963). The contents of indoctrination were always derived from Sukarno's speeches, such as *Pancasila*, *Marhaenism* and *Manipol-USDEK*. After 1963, the recruitment of cadres was greatly accelerated. In 1965, a mega indoctrination program was convened at the Gelora Bung Karno in Senayan, Jakarta. Some 15,000 cadres from across the archipelago gathered in the indoor stadium for a three-day course, which was delivered by Sukarno, Roeslan Abdulgani and party leaders.

As usual, the event was conducted in a metaphorical and aggrandised manner. The opening ceremony commenced with a newly composed *Marhaenist* anthem, "Mars Marhaen Indonesia" (The March of Indonesian Marhaen). Among the evoking lyrics of the song were: "*Marhaen Indonesia bersatulah segera didalam satu barisan anti-kemiskinan...berjuanglah setjara dinamis didalam Front Marhaenis...bersatulah segera Marhaenis Indonesia.*" (Marhaen of Indonesia let's unite in one anti-poverty front, let's fight dynamically in Front Marhaenis, let's unite hastily Marhaenis of Indonesia). This was followed by a welcome speech by Ir. Surachman as the Head of Committee for the Education of *Marhaenis* Pioneers. His speech glorified Sukarno and his ideas, urging the cadres to pledge to fight tooth and nail to defend Sukarno as the Supreme Leader of the Revolution. Sukarno's son, Guntur Sukarnoputra led the cadres in reciting the pledge, "Janji Pra-Satya". (*Pedoman Pokok*, 1965). The program and its speeches were then widely reported in newspapers and special publications (*Suara Marhaen*, 1965; *Pantjasila*, 1965).

With regard to the print media, many of the newspapers and magazines published by organisations to survive during GD directly or indirectly bear the message of *Marhaenism*. Among them were *Marhaen*, *Duta Masyarakat* (The People's Ambassador), *Patriot*, *Warta Berita* (The News Report), *Harian Patriot* (The Patriot Daily), *Ampera Review*, *Bahtera Ampera* (The Ark of Ampera), *Api Marhaenisme* (The Fire of Marhaenism), and *Suara Marhaen* (The Voice of Marhaen) (*Petunjuk Pers*, 1961; *Petunjuk Pers*, 1964). To promote *Marhaenism*, the print media used catchy phrases. On every front page, they displayed slogans praising and promoting the idea of *Marhaenism* such as "*Bersama Rakyat Marhaen dengan Manipol ke Sosialis Indonesia*" (Alongside Marhaen People with Manipol to Socialist Indonesia); "*Pembela untuk Keadilan Rakyat Marhaen*" (Defenders of Justice for the Marhaen People); "*Suara Rakyat Marhaen*" (The Voice of Marhaen People); and "*Bersama Rakyat Marhaen*" (With the Marhaen People). Of all of them, *Suara Marhaen* (The Voice of Marhaen), published by the PNI's Department of Information and Propaganda, was the most vigorous promoter of *Marhaenism* with its slogans, "*Dari-Untuk Kaum Marhaen, Kader Pelopor Marhaenis, Penegak Marhaenisme Adjaran Bung Karno*" (From-To the Marhaen Community, the Pioneer of *Marhaenis* Cadres, Upholder of *Marhaenism* the Teachings of Bung Karno) (*Suara Marhaen*, 1965). However, these measures could not be interpreted as free-will on the part of the media but were done according to the media rules of the regime.

*Marhaenism* was not only propagated through conferences, mass rallies and publications, it was also used to name a specially grown paddy, *Padi Marhaen*; the Yayasan Poliklinik *Marhaen* (*Marhaen* Polyclinic Foundation) (*Bendera Revolusi*, 1965); and a bridge *Djembatan Marhaen*, The *Marhaen* Bridge, in Yogyakarta in March 1965 (*Gema Mahasiswa*, 1965). Interestingly, none of these projects was directly funded by the government, but were the initiatives of Sukarno's supporters who worked to publicise his concepts. The principle of *gotong-royong* was

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highlighted throughout these projects. For Sukarno, these developments gave him the confidence that his concepts were widely accepted by the people and put into action.

In the field of cultural activities, the life of *Marhaen* was depicted in stage shows called *Ludruk Marhaen* portraying the daily life and struggles of the people. *Ludruk* is a traditional drama form originated in East Java. In March 1962, these shows were arranged for the *Marhaen* in Jakarta in order to distract them price hikes and food shortages in Jakarta at the time (*Api Kartini*, 1962). A special show was also held in Bogor Palace and the National Palace to entertain the President's family. As James Peacock observed, *Ludruk Marhaen* was influenced and infiltrated by the PKI to instil its ideology (Peacock, 1987). Apparently, since the dividing-line between *Marhaen* and proletariat was not clear, communism found a chance to thrive in Indonesia.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In accord with many other scholars, this study has confirmed and developed the idea of Sukarno's total control during GD. It demonstrates that control was achieved through the use of political shibboleths and propaganda. The effect of propaganda is immeasurable and abstract, though it can be determined from the pervasiveness of his concepts throughout the country. Some of the concepts predated GD such as *Marhaen*, *Pancasila* and *NASAKOM*, but gained popularity through extensive propaganda during GD. The Revolution functioned as a seed to grow other concepts with *Marhaen* as its propeller. The birth of *Pancasila* provided the *Marhaen* with a doctrine of life; Socialism ala Indonesia provided *Marhaen* with the aims of their struggle; *gotong-royong* reflected the lifestyle of the *Marhaen*; and *Ampera* was the message of the *Marhaen*. Essentially, rejecting Sukarno's concepts were equated by his propagandists as rejecting the proposal of the Homeland. Indeed, Sukarno's personality was not merely aggrandised by him, rather was propagandised by his admirers within his power circles.

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