

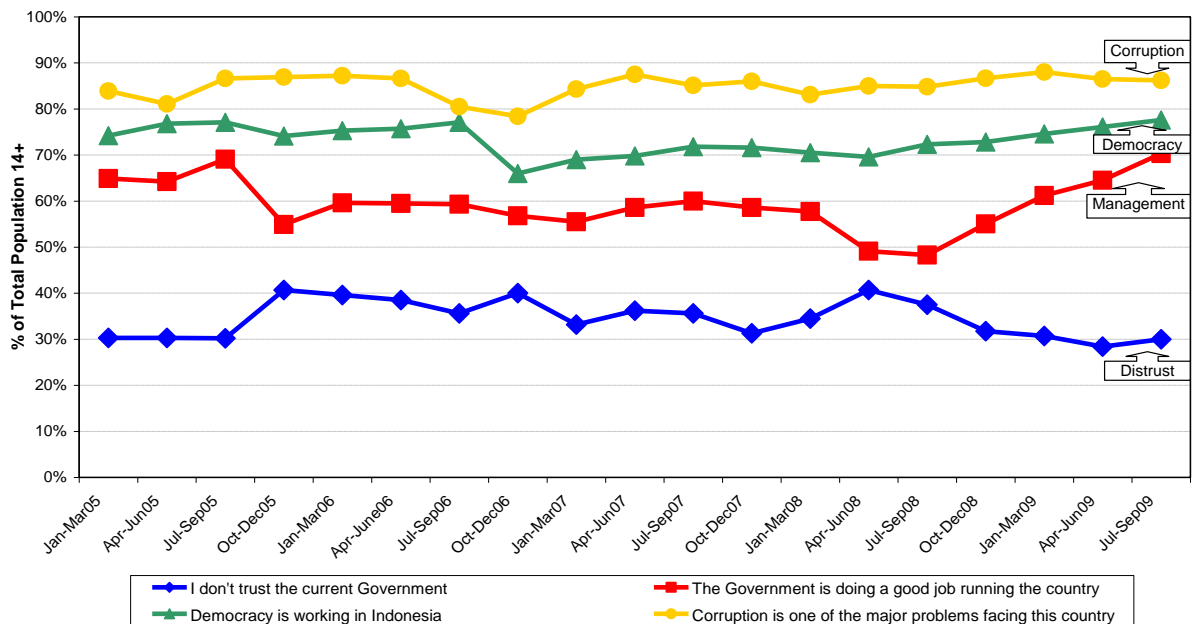
## The old dictator’s henchmen are still nursing a hangover.

Bank Century. Anggodo and Anggoro. KPK, AGO and POLRI. The gecko and the crocodile. Suspensions and sackings, threats and counter-threats, accusations and denials. The recent goings-on in the highest echelons of Indonesia’s business, bureaucratic and political circles would put the collective imaginations of Ludlum, Clancy and Brown to shame. To simply say that the nexus of big business and big power has raised its ugly head yet again would be a gross understatement.

That the drama is unfolding at a time of hope, the promise of a new political chapter heralded by the re-election of a popular president, is a sad indictment of the old guard still in positions of power. They have yet to learn how to curb their old instincts, shooting their mouths off and banging their fists, as in the good old days of totalitarian rule. They have not come to terms with the concept of people power, of popular revolt, of student uprisings even though they have seen them all at work in recent history. Old habits die hard, and this is a young democracy.

For a 10-year old, Indonesia is doing remarkably well. The Roy Morgan Single Source update for the July-September quarter has just been released, with over 6000 respondents from Indonesia’s cities, towns and villages expressing their opinions. The Good Governance monitor was looking good, before the shenanigans unfolded. The people had given the President and his team a collective thumbs-up. The country’s social issue No1, corruption, had received a lot of attention from his campaign promise to continue the big fight. In March of 2009, “corruption is one of the major problems facing this country” hit an all-time high with 88 per cent agreeing with the statement. A slow decline brought that number down to 86 per cent in September.

**GOOD GOVERNANCE UPDATE: AS AT SEPTEMBER 30, 2009**



That democracy has taken root, firmly, is no longer up for debate. 78 per cent of the population believes that “democracy is working in Indonesia”, up 2 points from the preceding quarter. The spin doctors have pounced on the one big positive outcome of the unfolding whodunit, patting themselves on the back for the freedom the press enjoys today. Without that freedom, very little of this endless reality show would have been in the public domain. This is undeniably true, a people’s achievement of no small measure. Captains of industry and generals in uniform would be wise to take note, to remind themselves that times have changed, will continue to change for the better. A people who have tasted freedom and democracy are unlikely to be cowed down or silenced, ever again.

Yet another measurement hit a record high in the July-September quarter. “The government is doing a good job running the country” went up another 5 points with 70 per cent of the population agreeing with the statement. There were several good reasons backing up the view at the time, tracking steadily upwards for three consecutive quarters. In contrast with most neighbouring countries and much of the world at large, the Indonesian economy was performing relatively well. Scandals such as the ones we are witnessing today are unlikely to impact the economy in real terms, but the damage done to the country’s reputation and morale is incalculable. Politicians and businessmen know that public memory is short, that people are instinctively forgiving. That is a reality that they will take advantage of.

The national yardstick that will take a beating this current quarter will be the key issue of trust. With only 30 per cent agreeing with “I don’t trust the current government”, the measurement was similar to the early days of President Yudhoyono taking the helm of government in 2005. The distrust comes primarily from younger men, 25 to 49 years in age. The older age groups have been supportive of the national leadership but that bedrock has been shaken. What happens to the pillars of support is entirely in the hands of one man, the man who now leads the nation with an enviable mandate. The spotlight is on, there is no wriggle-room. The executive actions taken in the next few days will leave an indelible mark on this presidency. What he chooses to do, or not to do, will either earn him stature befitting a national hero or he will disappoint, writing himself into oblivion. Optimists will hope that the three new generals are a positive indicator of things to come. Or as the cynics would say, a political manoeuvre to divert attention. The jury is out.

It is obvious from the behaviour of the old diehards that they have yet to embrace the dawn of a new era. Their scant respect for public opinion, their inability to choose right from wrong, is testimony to the old culture. Good governance is going bad, because of them.

These conclusions are based on Roy Morgan Single Source, a syndicated survey with over 25,000 Indonesians 14 years and older interviewed each year. Almost 90 per cent of the population is covered, from the cities, towns and villages around the country. The data is updated every 90 days. The people’s view of the state-of-the-nation formed during the October-December quarter will be released in three months from now.

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