

GREGORY COLES

“What Do I Lack as a Woman?”: The Rhetoric of Megawati Sukarnoputri

Abstract: After serving as Indonesia’s first female president from 2001 to 2004, Megawati Sukarnoputri remains one of Indonesia’s most influential politicians. However, Indonesian rhetoric in general and Megawati’s rhetoric in particular have been largely inaccessible to Western rhetorical scholarship because of barriers in language and culture. This essay extends scholarly access to Megawati’s rhetoric by transcribing, translating, and evaluating key portions of her May 27, 2014 address at the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* (National Democratic Parties Convention). Contextualized within the Indonesian political-rhetorical situation, Megawati’s rhetoric embodies the necessity of paradox for negotiating identity as a powerful woman within a historically androcentric system.

Keywords: Non-Western rhetoric, political oratory, Indonesia, transnational feminism, postcoloniality, national identity

In 2015, more than a decade after finishing her term as Indonesia’s first and only female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri remains one of the most influential political and rhetorical figures in the world’s largest Muslim-majority nation. As the daughter of Indonesia’s founding president, Sukarno, Megawati¹ carries the authority of her father’s name and invokes this authority to wield rhetorical power in a nation that is often suspicious of female

¹Most Javanese women have only one name, their given name. Megawati’s second name, “Sukarnoputri” (also spelled “Soekarnoputri”) is a patronym meaning “daughter of Sukarno.” When Indonesians refer to her, they typically use only her given name (or its affectionate abbreviation, “Mega”) and would never use her patronym alone. For this reason, I have chosen to refer to her as “Megawati.”

leadership. She chairs the political party PDI-P (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), and her endorsement was largely responsible for the election of Indonesia's current president, Joko Widodo, in 2014. Jokowi, as he is popularly known, emerged from relative obscurity to become PDI-P's presidential candidate; although he was not a newcomer to politics, having served as the mayor of the central Javanese city of Solo (also called Surakarta) and the governor of the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, his popularity was primarily regional prior to Megawati's endorsement. As PDI-P's chair and a figure with a substantial following, Megawati voiced her support of Jokowi in order to leverage the support of her entire party: one party official anonymously observed, "Whatever Ibu² Mega decides, so goes the party."³

Megawati's significance as an Indonesian political and rhetorical figure makes her words a valuable site of study for rhetoricians and postcolonialists alike. However, Megawati's speeches are transcribed rarely and translated into English even more rarely. Thus, Megawati has largely escaped scholarly notice because of the inaccessibility of her texts. In this essay, I extend scholarly access to Megawati's rhetoric by transcribing and translating key portions of her May 27, 2014 address at the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* (National Democratic Parties Convention), one setting in which she endorsed Jokowi's presidential campaign. Bringing together the methodological approaches of feminist rhetoric, comparative rhetoric, and postcolonial studies, I perform a close textual reading of Megawati's words in their original form. Contextualizing these words within Indonesia's unique rhetorical environment and Megawati's own history, I argue that Megawati constructs and enacts her rhetorical power by inhabiting a number of seemingly paradoxical identities as a rhetor.⁴

²"Ibu" is an Indonesian term of respect for married women and means either "mother" or "Mrs." depending on the context in which it is spoken. When used of Megawati, the term operates with an ambiguity that will be discussed in greater detail later in this essay.

³Quoted in Kanupriya Kapoor, "Three Times a Loser, Indonesia's Megawati is Pivotal in Elections," *Reuters* (4 March 2014).

⁴The centrality of paradox to Megawati's rhetorical identity bears some commonality to, but is also significantly different from, paradoxes observed by scholars of Chinese and Indian rhetorics. See Robert T. Oliver, *Communication and Culture in Ancient India and China* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1971); George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Vidya Niwas Misra, "Sanskrit Rhetoric and Poetic," *Mahfil* 7.3/4 (1971): 1–18; Keith Lloyd, "Rethinking Rhetoric from an Indian Perspective: Implications in the Nyaya Sutra," *Rhetoric Review* 26.4 (2007): 365–384; Scott R. Stroud, "Argument in Classical Indian Philosophy: The Case of Śāṅkara's

Although Megawati has not yet been studied by scholars of feminist or comparative rhetoric, my project to recover and study her persuasive language use joins a long tradition within rhetorical scholarship. Feminist rhetoricians have long argued for the necessity of expanding conceptions of “rhetoric” to include women’s rhetorical activity.⁵ Challenging the notion that rhetorical study ought to be based on a singular (and androcentric) rhetorical canon, these scholars have sought to reinvigorate rhetorical study by recognizing, recovering, and recuperating the rhetoric of previously unknown or ignored female figures. Likewise, comparative rhetoricians have demonstrated both the challenge and the value of extending rhetorical study beyond Western boundaries.⁶ The study of non-Western rhetorics, as Sue Hum and Arabella Lyon argue, provides opportunity not only to increase understanding of non-Western cultures but also to invite greater self-awareness among Western rhetoricians.⁷

Combining these efforts to examine non-Western women’s rhetoric, a number of transnational feminists have sought to simultaneously enlarge scholarly conceptions of what “counts” as feminism and what “counts” as rhetoric.⁸ Resisting the notion that women’s empowerment

Advaita Vedānta,” in *Ancient Non-Greek Rhetorics*, eds. Carol S. Lipson and Roberta Binkley (Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2009): 240–264.

⁵See, for example, Karlyn K. Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989); Andrea Lunsford, ed., *Reclaiming Rhetorica* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); Cheryl Glenn, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997); Shirley Wilson Logan, *We Are Coming”: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999); and Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

⁶See Mary Garrett, “Some Elementary Methodological Reflections on the Study of the Chinese Rhetorical Tradition,” *International and Intercultural Communication Annual* 22 (1999): 53–63; LuMing Mao, “Studying the Chinese Rhetorical Tradition in the Present: Re-presenting the Native’s Point of View,” *College English* 69.3 (2007): 216–237; and Bo Wang, “Comparative Rhetoric, Postcolonial Studies, and Transnational Feminisms: A Geopolitical Approach,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 43.3 (2013): 226–242.

⁷S. Hum and A. Lyon, “Recent Advances in Comparative Rhetoric,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, eds. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008): 153–165.

⁸See Rebecca Dingo, *Networking Arguments: Rhetoric, Transnational Feminism, and Public Policy Writing* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); Inderpal Grewel, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

exists as a universal goal regardless of location, these scholars note the necessity of different conceptions of feminism in order to accommodate the different needs and struggles of non-Western women. One locus for these studies has been the rhetoric of non-Western women politicians.⁹ In particular, the valuable insight that Indonesia can offer Western rhetoricians is exhibited by Amber Engelson's 2014 essay in *College English*, which uses Indonesia's unique religious context to make observations about the rhetoric of religion more broadly.¹⁰ Several other scholars of feminism and rhetoric have likewise identified Indonesia as a compelling site for further study.¹¹

Responding to these invitations and gaps in scholarship, this essay offers a preliminary proposal for understanding Indonesian rhetoric. Certainly, my intention is not to generalize Megawati's rhetorical practices and imply that they typify a singular, coherent "Indonesian rhetoric"; as LuMing Mao argues, work in comparative rhetoric has often been guilty of generalizing non-Western rhetorical practices too quickly, losing sight of the complex differences and particularities that characterize a nation's diverse cultural histories.¹² What Megawati offers, I argue, is simply an early and illuminating rhetorical snapshot among the many such snapshots that must be studied and compiled before a more comprehensive theory of Indonesian rhetoric(s) can be assembled. In this way I hope to continue bolstering what Mary Garratt once called the "desultory" state of research in Asian rhetoric,¹³ paying particular attention to Vernon Jensen's plea not to overlook Southeast Asia.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, Indonesian rhetorical practices share some commonalities with Arab Islamic rhetoric, Indian rhetoric, and other South and East Asian

⁹See Rebecca S. Richards, *Transnational Feminist Rhetorics and Gendered Leadership in Global Politics: From Daughters of Destiny to Iron Ladies* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2014); and Suki Ali, Kelly Coate, and Wangui wa Goro, eds., *Global Feminist Politics: Identities in a Changing World* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁰A. Engelson, "The 'Hands of God' at Work: Negotiating between Western and Religious Sponsorship in Indonesia," *College English* 76.4 (2014): 292–314.

¹¹Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia during British Colonial Rule* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Richards, *Transnational Feminist Rhetorics*, cited in n. 9 above.

¹²LuMing Mao, "Reflective Encounters: Illustrating Comparative Rhetoric," *Style* 37.4 (2003): 405–406.

¹³Quoted in Bo Wang, "A Survey of Research in Asian Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Review* 23.2 (2004): 174.

¹⁴Quoted in Wang, "A Survey of Research in Asian Rhetoric," cited in n. 13 above, p. 178.

rhetorics, and excellent work has been done in each of these areas.¹⁵ However, mere religious or geographic proximity does not render these rhetorics correspondingly proximate to Indonesian rhetoric. Thus, while I am eager not to overlook the valuable contributions of existing scholarship, I am equally eager not to elide the particularities of Indonesian rhetoric by generalizing it as simply another iteration of “Muslim rhetoric” or “Asian rhetoric.”

Although my reading of Megawati’s rhetoric enters into dialogue with Western notions of democracy and feminism, I resist conflating these Western notions with Indonesian conceptions of *demokrasi* and *feminisme*. To invoke these terms differently than Indonesians invoke them would be to fall into the error Kathryn Montgomery Hunter calls “metonymic imperialism.”¹⁶ My purpose is not to evaluate Megawati’s rhetoric according to its fit within or its violation of Western political, rhetorical, and feminist practices; rather, I wish to encounter and evaluate Megawati on her own terms. This methodological approach, grounded in the work of such postcolonial theorists as Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is concisely expressed by philosopher Linda Alcoff: “We should strive to create wherever possible the conditions for dialogue and the practice of speaking with and to rather than speaking for others.”¹⁷ Research methodologies which are careful not to project Western experiences onto other contexts can help Western scholars avoid the error noted by postcolonial theorist Edward Said, who argues that the West’s “Orientalist” portrayal of the East often tells

¹⁵For work on Arab Islamic rhetoric, see Charles E. Butterworth, “Rhetoric and Islamic Political Philosophy,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3.2 (1972): 187–198; Barbara Johnstone Koch, “Presentation as Proof: The Language of Arabic Rhetoric,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 25.1 (1983): 47–60; Philip Halldén, “What Is Arab Islamic Rhetoric? Rethinking the History of Muslim Oratory Art and Homiletics,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37.1 (2005): 19–38. For Indian rhetoric, see V. N. Misra, “Sanskrit Rhetoric and Poetic,” 1–18; K. Lloyd, “Rethinking Rhetoric from an Indian Perspective,” 365–384; S. Stroud, “Argument in Classical Indian Philosophy,” 240–264; R. Oliver, *Communication and Culture*, cited in n. 4 above; G. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*. For other South and East Asian rhetorics, see again R. Oliver, *Communication and Culture*; G. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, cited in n. 4 above; and also Wang, “A Survey of Research in Asian Rhetoric,” 174–181; Akira Miyahara, “Toward Theorizing Japanese Interpersonal Communication Competence from a Non-Western Perspective,” *American Communication Journal* 3.3 (n.d.); Vernon Jenson, “Teaching East Asian Rhetoric,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 17.2 (1987): 135–149.

¹⁶K. M. Hunter, *Doctors’ Stories: The Narrative Structure of Medical Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 61.

¹⁷L. Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others” *Cultural Critique* 20 (1991–1992), 23.

us more about the West than it does about the East.¹⁸ Thus, while I have sought to bring my reading of Megawati into conversation with other scholarly work, I am cognizant that these links are invariably tenuous and engender the risk of misreading Megawati through Western eyes.

The translation methodology employed in this essay also reflects my desire to escape the trap of Orientalism. Far too often, Western scholarship of non-Western rhetoric has been limited to already-translated “canonical” texts or to texts originally in English. Such a privileging of the English language as the sole locus of scholarship risks plunging our field deeper into scholarly myopia, into misinterpretations caused by an overreliance on translation, and into the reinforcement of Western stereotypes about the East based on a limited and caricatured set of texts.¹⁹ It is critical, then, that more scholars of rhetoric begin to work with original non-English texts and perform their rhetorical analyses prior to or concurrent with translation into English. For this essay, I have grounded my analysis in Megawati’s original Indonesian words, and my subsequent translations are intended to reflect this analysis. All translations from Indonesian into English are my own, honed in consultation with Indonesian translators Ni Luh Carniti and Dave Coles.

In order to provide a reading of Megawati that is deeply contextualized by the Indonesian rhetorical environment, I begin my exposition with a brief discussion of Indonesia’s political development and Megawati’s fit within that history. Next, I turn to Megawati’s own words at the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem*, making these words accessible through transcription and translation, then analyzing them for their rhetorical implications. Finally, I consider what this speech can teach

¹⁸E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). Extending Said’s insight specifically to the language of “feminism,” Trinh T. Minh-ha eloquently argues that Western feminist theory cannot simply be transplanted into non-Western contexts by adding a prefix or suffix: see T. Minh-ha, “Difference: ‘A Special Third World Women Issue,’” *Feminist Review* 25 (1987): 5–22. As I further extend this argument to Indonesia, it is worth noting that many Indonesians conceive of feminism as Western and therefore irrelevant; see Tineke Hellwig, *In the Shadow of Change: Images of Women in Indonesian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 207.

¹⁹See, for example, L. Mao, “Reflective Encounters,” cited in n. 12 above, pp. 401–425; Suresh Canagarajah, “Translanguaging in the Classroom: Emerging Issues for Research and Pedagogy,” *Applied Linguistics Review* 2.1 (2011): 1–28; Theresa Lillis and Mary Jane Curry, “Professional Academic Writing by Multilingual Scholars: Interactions With Literacy Brokers in the Production of English-Medium Texts,” *Written Communication* 23.1 (2006): 3–35; Christiane Donahue, “‘Internationalization’ and Composition Studies: Reorienting the Discourse,” *College Composition and Communication* 61.2 (2009): 212–243.

us about Megawati's rhetorical self-presentation more generally, identifying four paradoxes of identity that Megawati inhabits in order to maximize her power as an Indonesian woman rhetor. These paradoxes, I argue, provide a unique window into the Indonesian rhetorical context and into the strategies that have enabled one of this nation's most notable rhetors to thrive despite her disadvantages as a woman in a traditionally patriarchal Muslim context.

A WINDING ROAD TO POWER

To construct a notion of Indonesian rhetoric and Megawati's place within it, it is first necessary to consider what is meant by the category of "Indonesia." The modern-day nation of Indonesia, made up of thousands of islands spread across an area approximately the size of the contiguous United States, has only been in existence since 1945, when a small group of nationalists declared their independence from both Dutch colonizers and Japanese occupiers at the close of the Second World War. Prior to this period, as historians M. C. Ricklefs and R. E. Elson have observed, the very idea of "Indonesia" did not exist.²⁰ The Indonesian islands were simply a collection of independent ethnic groups, comprised of over 700 languages and cultures.²¹

The unifying figure who brought together these disparate forces into a collective notion of "Indonesia" was Indonesia's first president and Megawati's father, Sukarno.²² Both a political figure and a military leader, Sukarno led the resistance against the Dutch, who fought from 1945 to 1949 to reclaim their former colony. Even after defeating the Dutch, Sukarno's early years as president were volatile, as he and other nationalists struggled to unify the Indonesian islands and instill a sense of collective identity. Indonesia's early parliamentary democracy, modeled largely after Western democratic models,²³ failed to

²⁰M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); R. E. Elson, *The Idea of Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²¹The precise number of languages represented in Indonesia is disputed, with interpretations varying based on definitional differences in what constitutes an independent language and what is merely a difference in dialect. See M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Eighteenth edition* (Dallas: SIL International, 2015).

²²Because of Dutch influence on Indonesian spelling, Sukarno is also sometimes spelled "Soekarno."

²³Of course, there is no singular Western model of democracy, since societies which claim the name "democracy" differ substantially in their understanding of

produce the necessary momentum to consolidate the floundering young nation, and so in 1957 Sukarno proposed what he called a *Demokrasi Terpimpin* (Guided Democracy), a more centrally authoritative system in which he declared himself president for life. Sukarno's new system was based on the doctrine of *Pancasila* (Five Principles): commitment to God, democracy by consensus, humanitarianism, prosperity, and national unity. The notion of democracy by consensus in particular was a reaction against models of Western democracy which called for polemical disagreement and rule by the majority. Instead, Sukarno argued that harmonious Indonesian democracy would best be achieved by the wisdom of consensus, a process inevitably guided by a single strong leader. Although Sukarno did not need to invoke Western democratic theory in defense of *Pancasila*, framing it as an explicitly anti-Western and therefore uniquely Indonesian mode of thought, his suspicion of majority rule nevertheless bears a resemblance to the cautions against "the tyranny of the majority" which have been central to Western disputes over the nature of democracy.²⁴ For Sukarno, the danger of centralizing power within a single democratic leader was less formidable than the dangers of mob rule or chaos.

Though the English language might vilify Sukarno's conclusion as "authoritarian," many Indonesian nationalists did not regard Sukarno's move in this way; instead, his willingness to redefine democracy in uniquely Indonesian terms and to do what was necessary in service of Indonesian unification was seen by supporters as a sign of effective leadership.²⁵ As time went on, however, an increasing number of Indonesians became uncomfortable with Sukarno's power, and Sukarno's sympathy towards Communism and hostility toward other world powers earned him the enmity of much of the Western world. In 1965–1967, Sukarno was overthrown by military general Suharto²⁶ following a bloody anti-communist purge endorsed by

how best to grant power (*kratos*) to the people (*demos*); see David Held, *Models of Democracy*. (3rd ed., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). Scholars like Jacques Ranciere and Wendy Brown have even argued that what is nominally known as "democracy" in many Western societies is in fact antithetical to the true practice of democratic rule by the people.

²⁴First introduced by thinkers like John Adams, Alexis de Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill, the tyranny of the majority continues to be a concern for contemporary political thinkers; see Noëlle McAfee, *Democracy and the Political Unconscious* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

²⁵See Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 117–150; and Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, cited in n. 20 above, pp. 289–365.

²⁶Also spelled "Soeharto."

Western democracies. Suharto instituted what he called an *Orde Baru* (New Order), still claiming the doctrine of *Pancasila*, and served as Indonesia's president from 1967 to 1998. Although Indonesia's political party system continued to exist, Suharto's regime carefully controlled the parties and elections to keep Suharto in power.

In 1987, after years of obscurity, Sukarno's daughter Megawati reentered the political scene, running for a seat in the DPR (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, the People's Representative Council). Threatened by Megawati's quickly rising popularity, Suharto's regime attempted to remove her from her leadership position in PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*, the Indonesian Democratic Party). On July 27, 1996, the Indonesia military attacked PDI headquarters to remove Megawati and her supporters forcibly. During the bloody attack later known as *Sabtu Kelabu* (Grey Saturday), five of Megawati's supporters were killed, more than twenty others are still declared missing, and over one hundred were injured. This incident, as Gary LaMoshi argues, became a "blood-stained unifier for opponents of Suharto, catapulting Megawati to national stature as a symbol of opposition to a regime that had reiterated its nakedly oppressive side by attacking unarmed foes over a purely political matter."²⁷

Instead of yielding to Suharto's attack, Megawati declared herself the leader of a new political party, the PDI-P (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), so named because of Megawati's ongoing struggle against Suharto's regime. As the popularity of "Ibu"²⁸ Mega" and her newly established party rose, Suharto's popularity dwindled. Disapproval of Suharto was exacerbated by Indonesia's 1997–1998 *krismon* (monetary crisis), in which the value of Indonesia's currency, the rupiah, against the US dollar plummeted from Rp. 2,700 per \$1 in mid-1997²⁹ to Rp. 17,000 per \$1 in early 1998,³⁰ a depreciation of over 600%. Suharto was forced to resign in May of 1998 and was replaced by his vice president, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie. Widely considered a mere extension of Suharto's regime, Habibie was even more unpopular than his predecessor. In fact, the most common theory for Suharto's choice of Habibie as a vice president was that Suharto felt he was less likely

²⁷G. LaMoshi, "Blood-Stained Ladder to Indonesia's Presidency," *Online Asia Times* (27 July 2004).

²⁸*Ibu* is a common Indonesian term of respect for a married woman. It also literally means "mother," a linguistic ambiguity which will be examined in further detail below.

²⁹"Indonesia Floats the Rupiah, And It Drops More Than 6%," *The New York Times* (14 August 1997).

³⁰"Meltdown in Asia – Part 4: Chronology of a Crisis," *BBC News* (1 July 1998).

to be ousted if his opponents knew that Habibie might assume his position.³¹

Within this context, as the 1999 election approached, Megawati was in many ways the natural choice for president. Not only did she represent opposition to the current unpopular regime, but her campaign shunned the elitism so common to Indonesian politics by claiming that she would fight for the *wong cilik* (a Javanese phrase often translated “grassroots” that literally means “little people”).³² Since the 1999 election was the first fully democratic presidential race in Indonesian history,³³ Megawati’s alignment with the *wong cilik* marked her as the embodiment of the election. Yet the challenges faced by Megawati—as a non-military leader, as a symbolic representative of her father, and most of all as a woman—were still substantial. Although Megawati’s party won more votes than any other party in the general election, it still fell short of the 50% necessary to immediately declare Megawati president. As a result, the presidency was determined by the MPR (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, the People’s Deliberative Assembly), a parliamentary body whose votes reflected political alliances and grudges more often than they did the interests of the people they represented. Because of Habibie’s ever-plummeting popularity, his party offered to support Megawati’s ally Abdurrahman Wahid, better known as Gus Dur, as a presidential candidate before the MPR. Gus Dur accepted, withdrawing his support from Megawati’s campaign and seizing an unexpected eleventh-hour victory over her.

Megawati’s defeat sparked a string of riots, and to mollify the rioters, Gus Dur was forced to select Megawati as his vice president.³⁴ Despite this gesture of peace, unrest continued until 2001, when Gus Dur was impeached and replaced by Megawati, the candidate whom many Indonesians had seen as the rightful president all along. As was her initial triumph over Suharto and Habibie, Megawati’s eventual triumph over Gus Dur when she succeeded him in 2001 came by way of attrition, with Megawati managing to maintain her popularity as her opponents’ popularity dwindled. In both contexts, it was her opponents’ speech and actions that made them increasingly

³¹Judith Bird, “Indonesia in 1998: The Pot Boils Over,” *Asian Survey* 39.1 (1999), 28.

³²See Christopher Torchia and Lely Djuhari, *Indonesian Slang: Colloquial Indonesian at Work* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2011), 92.

³³R. William Liddle, “Indonesia in 1999: Democracy Restored,” *Asian Survey* 40.1 (2000), 32.

³⁴Marcus Mietzner, “The 1999 General Session: Wahid, Megawati and the Fight for the Presidency,” in *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 46–48.

unpopular, while Megawati maintained her goodwill by remaining notoriously silent. Though this silence would serve her well prior to 2001, it would prove to be a handicap once she finally assumed the office of president. Criticized as indecisive and ineffective because of that silence, Megawati's popularity dwindled in the same way her predecessors' had. Unlike her predecessors' declines, however, Megawati's decline in popularity was less severe, and she still retained substantial influence in Indonesian politics. Even among those who disagreed with her policies or considered her an ineffective president, Megawati remained a symbol of her father Sukarno and of the Indonesian unity he had made possible.

Following the end of her presidential term in 2004, Megawati remained the chair of the PDI-P. She ran two moderately successful presidential campaigns in 2004 and 2009, but lost both races to former military general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. In 2012, polls showed Megawati as the leading prospective presidential candidate for the 2014 election.³⁵ However, Megawati distanced herself from these poll numbers, ultimately choosing to endorse Jokowi instead of leveraging her popularity for another presidential race of her own. Although it is impossible to say whether or not Megawati could have won the 2014 election if she had chosen to run, the influence of her rhetoric on the outcome of the race between Jokowi and his rival Prabowo Subianto is undeniable. Without affiliation to such a well-known party, it is almost certain that Jokowi could not have mustered the political clout necessary to win the election. Even with the support of Megawati and PDI-P, Jokowi defeated Prabowo by only a slim margin, earning 53% of the popular vote while Prabowo earned 47%.³⁶

In short, Megawati is not merely a participant in the Indonesian rhetorical context. She is, both by virtue of her father Sukarno and through her own involvement, one of the defining figures in Indonesian political rhetoric. As *Sukarnoputri*, the daughter of Sukarno, Megawati is in a sense inseparable from the very idea of "Indonesia." Her father's doctrine of *Pancasila* has endured as the central philosophy of the Indonesian political system even during the reign of his archrival Suharto. Moreover, as the candidate of the *wong cilik*, the "little people," during the first truly democratic presidential election her nation had seen, Megawati became both the emblem and the enactment of modern-day Indonesian political discourse.

³⁵"Dihembuskan 'Angin Surga' Megawati Tak Mau Terlena," *Suara Pembaruan* (24 February 2012).

³⁶Andrew Marszal, "Indonesia Elections: Jakarta Governor 'Jokowi' Wins but Rival Rejects Final Results," *The Telegraph* (22 July 2014).

Even as she lost three consecutive elections, Megawati's name and identity became irrevocably fixed to the notion of a uniquely Indonesian democracy. As her instrumental role in Jokowi's 2014 election illustrates, Megawati remains a significant rhetorical figure in Indonesia. Moreover, understanding how Megawati's rhetoric invokes and embeds itself within Indonesian national identity offers a valuable point of departure for future studies of Indonesian rhetoric.

ADDRESS AT THE *RAKERNAS PARTAI NASDEM*

Megawati's methods of leveraging rhetorical power are exemplified by her May 27, 2014 address at the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* (National Democratic Party Convention). The convention brought together a coalition of five major political parties in support of Jokowi and his running mate Jusuf Kalla for the 2014 election: Megawati's PDI-P, *Partai Nasional Demokrat* (National Democratic Party, "Nasdem"), *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party, "PKB"), *Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat* (People's Conscience Party, "Hanura"), and *Partai Keadilan dan Persatuan Indonesia* (Indonesian Justice and Unity Party, "PKPI"). The event was hosted by Nasdem, a political party run by media tycoon Surya Paloh; Paloh used his influence to give this event in particular and Jokowi's candidacy in general extensive newspaper and television coverage. Though Paloh was in this sense the primary figure of the event, Megawati exercised a unique place of authority as the chair of PDI-P, the party on whose ticket Jokowi officially ran for the presidency.

Megawati asserts this authority from the very beginning of her speech by slightly subverting the traditional introductory style of Indonesian political speeches. Although Indonesian political parties are known almost exclusively by their abbreviations, Megawati begins by acknowledging Paloh and stating the full name of his party: "*Partai Nasional Demokrat*" instead of simply "Nasdem." She then jokes, "I whispered earlier, 'This isn't good—if we keep introducing ourselves [our political parties] with abbreviations, in the end we'll forget what our names are.'"³⁷ She goes on to greet each of the other party chairs by using their parties' full, unabbreviated names. Her joking here is not unlike chiding, as she revises the linguistic convention of abbreviation adopted by the other party chairs in their speeches.

³⁷"*Saya memang bisik-bisik tadi, 'Ini tidak baik, ya, kalau memperkenalkan diri dengan singkatan terus akhirnya lupa namanya apa.'*"

After this opening, Megawati self-consciously discusses her challenge as a rhetor in speaking after the speeches that have preceded hers. To scattered laughter and applause, she says,

If you happen to be coming after that [i.e., speaking after such excellent speakers], you certainly need to be creative. Because before me, orators were speaking, and people talking about friendship. So I thought, certainly each of these generals is usually ready to be honored, but on the personal level they're very close in camaraderie and friendship.³⁸

By calling those who have spoken before her "orators," Megawati downplays her own oratorical skill, a trope that has long been invoked by women rhetors around the world. Simultaneously, however, Megawati declares her intention to speak creatively, highlighting her own ability to meet and respond to rhetorical challenges. She also reveals an awareness of her obvious difference from the other major political figures speaking at the convention. Not only is she the sole female party chair, but she is one of the few high-profile Indonesian politicians who has not also served in the Indonesian military. By acknowledging the honor usually accorded to such men and then asserting that such honor has been replaced with camaraderie and friendship in the context of this convention, Megawati accords the degree of respect which is expected from her while absolving herself of the need to spend her speech extolling these men. Laying her emphasis instead on the common ground of camaraderie and friendship, she portrays herself as an equal partner and comrade with her fellow speakers.

Megawati then turns to the issue that will appear repeatedly in her speech as an assumed impediment to her authority: the issue of her gender. Rather than allowing her critics to decry her position of authority as "strange," Megawati makes this claim for herself, saying, "I'm a person who considers my role in this republic strange. Why is it strange? From the past until now there have been no female party chairs."³⁹ By acknowledging and reclaiming the "strangeness" of her position as a woman in authority, Megawati subverts the power of this objection to her authority. After all, she suggests, most Indonesians' discomfort with women in authority stems from the lack of historical

³⁸"Kalau dapat belakangan itu memang harus kreatif. Karena tadi dibilang orator, lalu ada yang mengatakan bersahabat-bersahabat. Jadi, ya, saya pikir, memang kalau jendral ini biasanya meskipun siap hormat, tapi mereka secara pribadi, sangat kental persaudaraan dan persahabatannya."

³⁹"Saya ini manusia yang menurut saya di republik ini aneh. Anehnya kenapa? Dari dulu 'pe sekarang kan nggak ada ya ketua umum perempuan itu ya."

precedent for such authority. Yet Megawati's own presence in PDI-P for two decades has proven this objection false. If a lack of precedent was the only thing that made Megawati's power seem unlikely in the 1990s, there is no longer any excuse for women to be treated as lesser political figures in 2014.

Megawati goes on to tell a story of her late husband Taufiq Kiemas, whom she describes as her "sparring partner." Rather than translating this phrase into Indonesian, she uses the English words "sparring partner" spoken in an Indonesian accent. Her blend of English and Indonesian functions as a form of codemeshing, a rhetorical strategy to which many scholars of rhetoric and World Englishes have rightly called attention. Codemeshing can "multiply the range of rhetorical styles,"⁴⁰ contributes to the construction of a "plurilingual ethos,"⁴¹ and often carries with it implications about race, class, and resistance.⁴² For Megawati, codemeshing serves as both a sign of privilege and a mark of relatability. Meshing English with Indonesian breaks the rules of formal Indonesian discourse and is common in the slang of Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, making Megawati's words seem more relaxed. However, codemeshing simultaneously evinces her own familiarity with English, a sign of her good education. The move to codemesh thus heightens the humor of her comparison while also bolstering her ethos. Megawati codemeshes English and Indonesian elsewhere in her speech, and she also meshes colloquial Indonesian slang into her formal speech at times. I will identify these instances of codemeshing as they occur.

Having comically introduced her husband as "sparring partner," Megawati describes a particular instance of their "sparring," explaining that Taufiq had expressed doubt that Megawati would ever become the sole leader of the PDI-P:

If he [Taufiq] were here, he would laugh. Because I said, 'Where are there ever two captains of one ship?' Then he said, 'What are you talking about?' 'I'm sure that one day I'll become the party chair.' Then my husband said, 'How could you become the party chair? You're a woman.' Just look at what kind of woman I am. See, you're laughing. It's true.⁴³

⁴⁰Vershawn A. Young, "Nah, We Straight: An Argument against Code Switching," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 29.1-2 (2009): 65.

⁴¹Suresh Canagarajah, "Multilingual Strategies of Negotiating English: From Conversation to Writing," *JAC* 29.1/2 (2009): 40.

⁴²Min-Zhan Lu and Brian Horner, "Translingual Literacy, Language Difference, and Matters of Agency," *College English* 75.6 (2013): 582-607; V. Young, "Nah, We Straight," 49-76.

⁴³"Kalau dia ada disini, tertawalah dia. Karena saya bilang begini, 'Mana ada dalam satu kapal dua nahkoda?' Lalu dia bilang, 'Mengapa kamu berkata begitu?' 'Pastilah satu saat

Once again, Megawati uses her current position as proof that the doubts leveled against her abilities as a woman were false. Rather than accusing her audience of prejudice, however, she invites their laughter, making herself and her husband the subject of a joke in which her listeners are the true subjects under scrutiny.

Megawati also acknowledges the unfair expectations that her society has placed on women to be sweet and mild-mannered, making their effectiveness in leadership difficult. These expectations, she implies, stood in the way of her success as president in the previous decade. Now, however, she claims the right to defy these expectations. As evidence of her own transformation, she tells a story of a man who knew her both during her presidency and more recently:

Around that time, there was a person who joined PDI Perjuangan, who had previously been a minister in my government . When he came in and saw my style, wow, he started sweating. He said, 'Why is it, ma'am, that when you were President you were so sweet? Why is it that now you've become the party chair, you're like that?' That's a secret.⁴⁴

By calling her change of demeanor "secret," Megawati refuses to address the gendering of her leadership directly. Remaining mysterious and refusing to answer her subordinate's question are gestures of rhetorical power, ways of reasserting her authority by remaining strategically silent both within the story itself and in her retelling of it. In this speech, however, within the context of the other stories she has told about her challenges as a woman, the implications of this story as it pertains to society's perception of her gender are clear.

At this point in her speech, Megawati pauses for a moment of self-conscious metarhetoric. Since she has just told several stories with very little exposition in between them, Megawati seems to mock her own rhetorical style by suggesting that the whole audience will age as she continues telling stories: "Friends, if I tell too many stories, brother Surya [Paloh], later your followers can join PDI-P."⁴⁵ By speaking with the conditional "if" and inviting laughter about her storytelling, Megawati deemphasizes her own rhetorical strategy in order to make

saya jadi ketua umum, ya.' Terus, suami saya bilang, 'Mana mungkin lah kan awak akan jadi ketua umum? Kamu itu perempuan.' Lihat aja perempuan model apa saya ini. Nah, tertawa, kan? Betul."

⁴⁴*"Ketika itu, ada seorang yang masuk ke PDI Perjuangan, salah seorang yang tadi ya mantan menteri saya. Ketika masuk, melihat tingkah laku saya. Adu, dia ya berkeringat, mengatakan, 'Kenapa, Ibu, waktu Presiden, manis sekali ya? Kenapa waktu jadi ketua umum seperti itu?' Mm, itu adalah rahasia."*

⁴⁵*"Saudara-saudara sekalian, nanti kalau say terlalu banyak cerita, Bang Surya, nanti anak buahnya bisa masuk ke PDI Perjuangan."*

herself seem casual and spontaneous. Perhaps, she suggests, she will tell “too many” stories, violating the rules of good public speaking. In calling attention to her stories, however, Megawati also hints that the message of her speech resides in the stories themselves.

Returning to her storytelling, Megawati tells several stories about her childhood and her father’s dreams for Indonesia in order to both align herself with Sukarno and prove that her success is not solely based on her lineage. She describes Sukarno encouraging her to pursue an education, challenging her commitment to her nation, and reminding her of the value of *kemerdekaan* (freedom) in the Indonesian context. After a string of such stories, she says, “Why is Ibu Mega not tired of talking like this? Because I am not the biological child of Bung Karno,⁴⁶ no. I am the ideological child of Bung Karno.”⁴⁷ Megawati’s denial that her biological relationship to Sukarno matters is, of course, a subtle affirmation that it does in fact matter. Yet she aligns herself more closely to his ideology than to his genetic lineage, framing herself as an extension of the legacy of Sukarno and therefore a natural Indonesian leader. Instead of articulating political stances on education, freedom, and national unity from her own perspective, she uses childhood stories to place these imperatives in her father’s mouth and then portrays herself as a dutiful daughter carrying out his requests. As if to reinforce her childlike posture, her linguistic style here is notably informal. She speaks of herself in the third person, a common feature of casual Indonesian conversation. She also uses the emphatic particles “*si*” and “*lo*,” both of which have no direct English equivalent but are used to heighten intensity in casual conversation.

Returning to the topic of gender, Megawati extends her previous arguments in order to suggest not only that women are equally fit for leadership roles but that they have a unique set of advantages which they bring to these roles:

The aura of the woman is full of motherliness, of love and affection, and she often speaks from her heart. So if the women here want to become members of the party [i.e., active in politics], don’t think that by wandering aimlessly, you’ll become someone influential. Not a chance. I guarantee it. But if you, with conviction, speak what is in your thoughts and in here [she points to her heart], with unity between your words and your actions, then you will become like me. It’s not that I’m arrogant, no. Not at all. In the past I was attacked, with people saying,

⁴⁶This commonly used affectionate diminutive of Sukarno’s name literally means, “older brother Sukarno.”

⁴⁷“Kenapa si ‘Bu Mega itu nggak cape-cape mengatakan seperti itu? Lo karena saya bukan ya anak biologisnya Bung Karno, bukan. Saya adalah anak idiologinya Bung Karno.”

'It's not possible for a woman to become president. This Republic of Indonesia has always refused to make a woman president.' I just, I said, 'That's just human talk. That's just people.' But if your name is Allah (may He be glorified in the highest), you say, 'What I say shall be, it shall be.' And so it happens.⁴⁸

Since one of the most substantial objections to Megawati's leadership has come from conservative Muslim interpretations of the Qur'an, Megawati's invocation of religion here is especially significant—she uses Muslim theology to defend her right to lead despite the Qur'an's apparent prohibition of women's leadership. As feminist rhetorical scholars like Roxanne Mountford have noted, Christian women adopted a similar strategy as they argued for their divine right to speak from the pulpit.⁴⁹ Megawati, as she acknowledges the many doubters who claimed that a woman never could or should be the president of Indonesia, characterizes these doubters as having spoken in opposition to Allah himself. In this way, Megawati uses the orthodox Muslim doctrine of Allah's sovereign power to prove that Allah meant for her to become the president of Indonesia. Therefore, she implies, those who sought to resist her on the basis of their interpretations of the Qur'an were seeking to resist the irresistible will of Allah. Meanwhile, although Allah comes to Megawati's defense on this issue, theology has little other impact on the vision Megawati casts her for nation. Echoing her father's progressive vision of *Pancasila* as her foundational doctrine, Megawati calls for a syncretistic goal of unity in which Allah is merely veneer, not sovereign power. The "commitment to God" outlined in the *Pancasila* leaves room for all of Indonesia's six legal religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Megawati is Muslim enough to lead her Muslim-majority nation, but also syncretistic enough to lead the nation's religious minorities. She is devout when necessary, but no more devout than necessary.

⁴⁸"*Aura seorang perempuan itu adalah penuh dengan keibuan, dengan kasih sayang, dan dia biasanya berkata dengan mata hatinya. Jadi kalau ibu-ibu disini mau menjadi anggota partai, jangan berfikir bahwa dengan berliku-liku, anda akan menjadi seseorang. Tidak akan mungkin. Saya pastikan. Tapi kalau anda dengan *stik* berbicara apa yang ada di pikiran dan disini dengan satu kata dan satu perbuatan, maka akan jadi seperti saya. Bukan saya som-bong. Bukan. Tak ada lo. Dulu aja saya diserang, lo, 'Tak bisa, perempuan itu menjadi presiden. Republik Indonesia ini selalu menolak seorang perempuan menjadi presiden.' Saya cuman, saya bilang, 'Itu yang ngomong wong. Itu yang namanya orang. Tapi kalau namanya Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'Ala, mengatakan, 'Apa yang saya katakan terjadi, terjadilah.' Maka terjadi."*

⁴⁹Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003).

Continuing to assert her gender as a source of advantage, Megawati turns her attention to Jokowi, the candidate whose presidential campaign her endorsement has made possible. She describes having Jokowi over for dinner and feeding him large quantities of rice in an attempt to fatten him up. When Jokowi becomes president, she speculates, he'll probably gain ten kilos. By taking on the role of adoptive mother to the future Indonesian president, Megawati reinforces her own status as a national mother figure. Megawati also takes advantage of the Indonesian language's conflation of femininity and motherhood. The common Indonesian term "*Ibu*" means both "mother" and "Mrs." By referring to herself as "*Ibu Mega*," Megawati renders her status as a married woman automatically motherly. She likewise refers to the members of PDI-P as "*anak-anak PDI saya*" ("my children of PDI"), rounding out the image of herself as political matron.

As she assumes the role of mother, Megawati claims not only to care for her "children" but also to have surpassed them in wisdom and life experience. Explaining why she has decided to endorse Jokowi instead of pursuing another presidency herself, Megawati says, "So a lot of people ask me, 'Why is it that you don't want to become president again?' Ah, I'm tired. I'm already full of experience."⁵⁰ Megawati's decision not to run for president, she explains, is motivated by her overqualification. Now, like a mother, she wishes to see her more inexperienced children take on positions of authority, elevating Megawati to the status of maternal overseer.

While celebrating her unique stance as a woman, Megawati simultaneously and paradoxically deemphasizes the notion that her gender ought to have any effect on her leadership. Speaking of her early days in PDI-P leadership under the Suharto regime, Megawati boldly asks, "What do I lack as a woman? I was seized by the police, I was brought to that circular building [the police headquarters in Jakarta] to be interrogated and all that. What do I lack?"⁵¹ Despite her female body, Megawati argues, she underwent the same oppression and exhibited the same boldness as her male counterparts.⁵² Invoking the language of deficiency, the question "What do I lack as a woman?" admits and emphasizes Megawati's place as woman even as it calls into

⁵⁰"*Na jadi ketika banyak orang menanyakan, 'Kenapa kok Ibu nggak mau menjadi presiden lagi?' Ah, capelah saya. Saya sudah penuh pengalaman.*"

⁵¹"*Kurang apa, sebagai perempuan? Saya pernah dipanggil ke polisi, saya pernah dibawa ke gedung bundar itu untuk ditanya dan sebagainya, eh, kurang apa?*"

⁵²For American scholars, Megawati's argument will likely call to mind Sojourner Truth's similar line of reasoning in her iconic speech "Aren't I a Woman?"

question the Indonesian discourse of gender in which a woman is somehow *kurang*, lacking. For women to succeed in politics, Megawati suggests, they must in some ways unsex themselves.⁵³ Speaking to other women who wish to become involved in Indonesian politics, Megawati advises, “Now, ladies, this is why you shouldn’t work hard trying to be beautiful: because if you think about beauty you’ll never understand politics.”⁵⁴ Her assertion is tongue-in-cheek, and it earns a laugh from her audience. Yet it recognizes the easily perceived binary between womanliness and political savvy in the Indonesian construction, and Megawati invites other women to join her in challenging this binary.

In proving that she deserves the leadership role she inhabits, Megawati must combat not only objections to her sex but also objections that she is merely relying on her father’s reputation. In addition to being Sukarno’s heir, Megawati must also paradoxically be a self-made hero. She positions herself as such by calling attention to her years as a housewife after her father’s death in 1970 and prior to her reentry into politics in 1987. Harkening back to the rhetoric of *wong cilik* from her 1999 presidential campaign, Megawati asserts her proximity to ordinary Indonesian citizens: “I can understand the heartbeat of the people because I myself have been an ordinary person.”⁵⁵ While this claim enables her to advance her father’s populist ideals, Sukarno himself could not have made such a claim. Megawati uses her experiential knowledge to bolster Sukarno’s belief in the inherent value of ordinary people’s participation in government, saying, “The people are intelligent. The people have hearts. What they don’t have is a voice. Their voices have been silenced, their throats frozen.”⁵⁶ On the basis of this observation, Megawati calls for politicians to get to know the people they are representing and to share their lives. This, she argues, is what Jokowi has done:

Descend lower, descend lower, meet people, shake hands. This is the Jokowi I have seen, because the people want to know, what does the hand of the president feel like, what does his hand feel like and what does he feel towards us? [She raises her hand.] This hand has shaken

⁵³The strategy of rhetorical unsexing has also been used by Western women leaders throughout the ages, including Julian of Norwich, Queen Elizabeth I, and Angela Merkel.

⁵⁴“Na, ibu-ibu itu lo, makanya jangan cantik-cantik, da, entar mikir kecantikan nggak ngerti terus politik.”

⁵⁵“Saya bisa mengetahui denyut jantungan rakyat karena saya pernah jadi rakyat biasa.”

⁵⁶“Rakyat itu pintar. Rakyat itu punya hati. Yang tidak dia punya adalah suara. Suaranya itu tertutup, kerongkongannya itu dibeku.”

thousands, maybe millions of hands. Not only the hands that are clean. Also the hands of the people who are dirty, who have HIV AIDS, who have leprosy, who have tuberculosis—I have shaken those hands. Everywhere I have shaken hands. Everywhere I have shaken hands.⁵⁷

No longer is Megawati simply the daughter of a leader earning an inheritance of leadership. She has claimed her own right to political power through her interactions with the Indonesian people. This interaction qualifies her to endorse Jokowi, who like Megawati has followed in the ideological footsteps of Sukarno while surpassing Sukarno's own experience. Megawati's interactions with the *wong cilik* set her apart from her father and prove that she is a leader in her own right, yet they also embed her even more thoroughly in the tradition of her father's leadership philosophy. Megawati emphasizes the importance of her father's tradition as she argues that forward progress requires remembering the struggles of the past:

But if there are a lot of people now who don't want to know, young people who don't want to know—'It's done, if I'm already free, enough, stop, I am free'—they don't care how other people are doing, don't care about their living conditions. That's what we have to reawaken. That is *nation and character building*. When we examine our minds and ourselves first, what do we truly find inside ourselves? Is it true that we as members of the People's Representative Council are only interested in connecting with our colleagues, and so we only make an effort to win the projects that can be gotten? That's the game being played right up to today. Is that what's going to be done? That's why I continually think about what my father said: 'Can you join in and continue the struggle, someday after I am gone?' 'Okay, I promise.'⁵⁸

⁵⁷"Turun ke bawah, turun ke bawah, temui, salaman. Itu seorang Jokowi saya lihat, karena rakyat ingin tahu, apa rasa tangan yang namanya presidennya, apa rasa tangan yang namanya perasaan dia kepada kami? Tangan ini, ribuan mungkin jutaan sudah bersalaman. Bukan ya saja yang bersih-bersih. Dari mereka yang kotor, yang kena HIV AIDS, yang kena lepra, yang kena TBC, tangan saya sudah menerima dimana-mana saya salaman, dimana-mana saya salaman."

⁵⁸"Jadi kalau orang sekarang banyak yang tidak mau tahu, anak muda tidak mau tahu, sudah, kalau sudah merdeka selesai, stop, saya merdeka. Nggak tahu orang lain-mau bagaimana, nggak mau kita ini hidup dimana. Itulah yang harus kita bangun kembali. Yaitu nation and character building. Ketika mental kita itu diri sendiri kita itu melihat dulu, apa sebenar yang ada di diri kita? Benarkah kita sebagai anggota DPR itu hanya ingin supaya kita bisa berhubungan dengan mitra kita, lalu kita hanya akan berupaya bagaimana mendapatkan proyek-proyek yang ada, itu kan permainannya sampai hari ini. Apakah itu yang akan dilakukan? Makanya saya berfikir terus menerus seperti apa yang dikatakan oleh ayah saya: 'Bisakah kamu ikut terus berjuang, setelah saya nanti tidak ada?' 'Sep, saya janji.'"

Once again, Megawati codemeshes English and Indonesian by using the English phrase “nation and character building” in the middle of her Indonesian sentence. In this case, she is directly invoking the words of her father, who used the same English phrase to articulate his own political ideology. As well as invoking her father, Megawati’s use of the phrase both reminds listeners again of her own education and places a special emphasis on how Indonesian nation-building interacts with other nations on the global scene. Criticizing the tendency of Indonesian youth to forget the past and assume their freedom has always existed, Megawati calls her listeners back to Indonesia’s roots. These roots, of course, center around the legacy of her father, reminding the audience that Megawati herself is an inextricable part of the construction of Indonesian national identity.

In an article for the Indonesian newspaper *Kompas*, Indra Akuntono describes Megawati’s speech as a set of meandering stories which was “*cukup panjang*” (literally “sufficiently long,” but with the implication that the speech ran longer than necessary).⁵⁹ Megawati’s own closing words seem to reinforce this notion that the speech meandered from story to story with little purpose and no clear end in mind: “Praise be to Allah, all of this happened. We’re done, yes? That’s enough.”⁶⁰ Yet this understated ending belies the careful crafting of Megawati’s stories as they assert and defend her rhetorical power. Far from a random set of stories, Megawati’s speech adroitly navigates the paradoxical identities required of Megawati as Indonesia’s foremost female leader. It is to these paradoxical identities that I now turn.

PARADOXES OF IDENTITY

Indonesia’s rhetorical, political, and literary history is often characterized by paradox, as political scholar Simon Philpott has argued in *Rethinking Indonesia*.⁶¹ Moreover, women who have assumed positions of political power have often been forced to adopt rhetorical tactics of paradox in order to negotiate their identities as powerful women in a predominantly androcentric system. For example, scholars have observed paradox at work in the rhetoric of Pakistan’s

⁵⁹Indra Akuntono, “Kalau Saya Banyak Cerita, Anak Buah Surya Paloh Bisa Ikut PDI-P,” *Kompas* (27 May 2014).

⁶⁰“*Alhamdulillah, semua itunya jadi. Sudah, ya? Cukup.*”

⁶¹Simon Philpott, *Rethinking Indonesia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000).

Benazir Bhutto,⁶² Germany's Angela Merkel,⁶³ and even England's Queen Elizabeth I.⁶⁴ As both a politically powerful woman and one of Indonesia's primary rhetors, then, it is perhaps unsurprising that Megawati inhabits a number of intertwining paradoxical identities. Four of these paradoxes are particularly worthy of note.

First, Megawati presents herself at times as brazen and outspoken; however, she has also gained a nationwide reputation for her public silence and her refusal to behave like an orator. Second, as the daughter of Sukarno, Indonesia's first president and a figure of national unity, Megawati both invokes her father's authority and presents herself as an independent thinker ushering in a new era. Third, though her association with Sukarno lends an imputed masculinity to her political presence, Megawati also invokes her femininity as a source of advantage. Finally, in a predominantly Muslim context where many conservative thinkers object to women in roles of leadership, Megawati constructs a religious persona that is in turns devout and progressive.

Each of these four paradoxes, I argue, is evinced by Megawati's address at the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem*. However, each is also characteristic of her rhetoric more generally, contributing to her rise to power in the 1990s and her popular success in the 1999 presidential election. Thus, Megawati's *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* address offers a synecdochic window into the rhetoric that has brought Megawati to her current position of power. I examine each of these paradoxes in turn, considering the context that necessitates the paradox and Megawati's strategies for invoking it.

While it would be premature based only on Megawati's example to claim paradox as a regular distinctive feature of Indonesian rhetoric, Megawati's use of paradox is at least suggestive in its illustration of how readily Indonesian political rhetoric accommodates paradox.

⁶²See Iqbal Akhund, *Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Anita M. Weiss, "Benazir Bhutto and the Future of Women in Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 30.5 (1990): 433–445; and Rafiq Zakaria, *Women and Politics in Islam: The Trial of Benazir Bhutto* (New York: New Horizons, 1989).

⁶³See Kristina Horn Sheeler and Karrin Vasby Anderson, "Gender, Rhetoric, and International Political Systems: Angela Merkel's Rhetorical Negotiation of Proportional Representation and Party Politics," *Communication Quarterly* 62.4 (2014): 474–495.

⁶⁴See Allison Heisch, "Queen Elizabeth I and the Persistence of Patriarchy," *Feminist Review* 4 (1980): 45–56; Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); and Mihoko Suzuki, "Elizabeth, Gender, and the Political Imaginary of Seventeenth-Century England," in *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500–1700*, eds. Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

Whereas the stereotypical Western rhetorical setting limits a rhetor's access to paradoxical identities, Megawati's multiple such identities imply a rhetorical situation where paradox is nearer the norm. Accommodation of paradox has also been observed as a feature of some other Asian rhetorics; for example, a number of scholars have identified nonduality and the resistance or transcendence of logical binaries as features of the geographically proximate rhetorics found in ancient India and China.⁶⁵ Yet these invocations of paradox are not as similar as they may at first appear. The paradox identified in ancient Indian and Chinese discourses is often epistemological in nature and rooted in religiophilosophical beliefs about nonduality or in purposeful rejections of linear systematization. Megawati's use of paradox occurs more exclusively in the realm of praxis (that is, in her adoption of multiple seemingly contradictory identities), with the epistemological implications of such paradox given lesser or no consideration. Crudely put, Indian and Chinese rhetorics have long been said to leave space for rhetors to think paradoxical thoughts—the Indonesian rhetoric of Megawati, however, permits and even expects a rhetor to be and to behave paradoxically. This distinction will, I believe, become clearer upon further examination of Megawati's enactments of paradox.

Silent Sufferer and Bold Speaker

Megawati has always been well known for her silence. She often met incidents that seemed to demand a response—incidents like the bloody battle on *Sabtu Kelabu*—with uncanny silence and inaction.⁶⁶ Both during and after the machinations of the 1999 election, numerous newspaper and magazine editorials were titled *Kenapa Mega Diam?* (“Why is Mega Silent?”). In these editorials, observes Daniel Ziv, “Commentators were split between those who attributed her silence merely to personal attributes of shyness or discomfort, and those who claimed that it was part of a self-consciously inclusive or consensus-oriented political strategy.”⁶⁷ Her silences sometimes opened the way for those around her, whether supporters or superiors, to speak out

⁶⁵See R. Oliver, *Communication and Culture*, cited in n. 4 above; G. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, cited in n. 4 above; V. N. Misra, “Sanskrit Rhetoric and Poetic,” cited in n. 4 above, pp. 1–18; K. Lloyd, “Rethinking Rhetoric from an Indian Perspective,” cited in n. 4 above, pp. 365–384; S. Stroud, “Argument in Classical Indian Philosophy,” cited in n. 4 above, pp. 240–264.

⁶⁶See LaMoshi, “Blood-Stained Ladder,” cited in n. 27 above.

⁶⁷D. Ziv, “Populist Perceptions and Perceptions of Populism in Indonesia: The Case of Megawati Soekarnoputri,” *South East Asia Research* 9.1 (2001), 85.

on her behalf. Gus Dur, who suffered from failing eyesight, famously quipped of himself and Megawati when she served as his vice president, "We make a perfect team: I can't see and she can't talk."⁶⁸

Even when she did speak, Megawati gave notoriously vague speeches. Tony Karon, writing for *Time Magazine* shortly after Megawati's rise to the presidency in 2001, observed that "little is known of her political thinking beyond a broad echo of her father's nationalism."⁶⁹ This practice of remaining silent on matters of public policy is exemplified by Megawati's speech at the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem*, as she relies on implications and storytelling instead of explicit policy claims. One quintessential moment of this rhetorical move occurs when she calls herself "*anak ideologisnya Bung Karno*" ("the ideological child of Bung Karno"), thereby mapping her stories about her father's policies on education and freedom onto her own political posture. Moves like these deemphasize Megawati's own rhetorical presence, an effect she also accomplishes by calling those who have spoken before her "orators" and dismissing her own address as "*terlalu banyak cerita*" ("too many stories"). Her verbal message dismissing her own rhetorical acuity is matched by her physical performance, as she downplays her oratorical skill with an air of extemporaneity.

Despite her reputation for silence and her de-emphasis of her own rhetorical ability, Megawati has also been known to speak with fiery boldness at times. When Suharto first attempted to displace her from the PDI in 1996, prior to the *Sabtu Kelabu* incident, Megawati responded unapologetically, "I am the lawful, legal, and constitutional [chair] of the PDI."⁷⁰ After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which occurred just months after Megawati assumed the presidency, she was the first Muslim leader to visit the United States and condemn the attacks, voicing her support of George Bush's "War on Terror."⁷¹ In public speeches, her voice often turns stentorian and crisp, a far cry from the demure style typical of Indonesian women speaking publicly. Megawati was rumored to have been trained in this speaking style by her father, who would take her to the beach during her childhood and demand that she speak above the sound of the

⁶⁸Quoted in Angus McIntyre, "Megawati Sukarnoputri: From President's Daughter to Vicepresident," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 32.1-2 (2000), 105.

⁶⁹T. Karon, "The Princess Who Settled for the Presidency," *TIME Magazine* (27 July 2001).

⁷⁰Quoted in McIntyre, "Megawati Sukarnoputri," cited in n. 68 above, p. 109.

⁷¹Verena Beittinger-Lee, *(Un)Civil Society and Political Change in Indonesia: A Contested Arena* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 78.

crashing waves. Though she was uncomfortable and lacked confidence when speaking extemporaneously, her “fiery” style kept the attention of thousands when she delivered manuscripts speeches.⁷² In the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* address, Megawati’s tone drifts between the demure maternal tone considered culturally appropriate to women and the bold style she learned from her father. Her stories are rife with jokes and untranslatable informal interjections, making her seem calm and unpracticed. At times, however, her pitch and pace rise; for instance, she closes her remarks by yelling the word “*merdeka*” (“free”) three times, her fist raised boldly.

Both Megawati’s silence and her speech are, I propose, deeply significant. Silence as a rhetorical move has been taken up both by rhetorical scholars like Cheryl Glenn and postcolonialists like Gayatri Spivak. Glenn argues in *A Rhetoric of Silence* that silence can be as rhetorically meaningful as speech and that it is often employed as a tactic by those stripped of more conventional rhetorical power.⁷³ Spivak likewise relates the employment of silence to the position of subalternity, writing, “When we come to the concomitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important. In the semioses of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of ‘the utterance.’”⁷⁴ Both these scholars call us to attune ourselves not only to the *strategy* of silence as it avoids speech, but also to the *message* of silence as it communicates a wordless text of its own. In order to make an audience aware of the message of silence, however, communicators must call attention to themselves sufficiently to make that silence seem salient and meaningful. For Megawati, her years of silence under the oppressive Suharto regime had meant very little until she entered the political realm and became known for her sometimes forceful presence. It was only in the context of this presence that her frequent absences from discourse became meaningful. By inhabiting the paradox of silence and speech, Megawati makes both her silences and her words more effective.

What factors have made Megawati’s speech/silence paradox so effective, especially during her early campaign years? The Indonesian public’s generally positive perception of Megawati’s silence was made

⁷²C. Torchia and L. Djuhari, *Indonesian Slang: Colloquial Indonesian at Work* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2011), 93.

⁷³C. Glenn, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

⁷⁴G. Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 287.

possible in large part by the nature of oppression under Suharto, argues Angus McIntyre: "Megawati became a mute symbol; or, rather, a symbol because she was mute, a sign for decency amid the abuse of power of the Suharto regime. Her silence and her stillness, her speaking in sign language (as it were), is an interesting variation on her father's volubility, and perhaps no less eloquent."⁷⁵ Because her very position as the leader of an opposition party (and as her father's daughter) made her a figure of resistance to Suharto, her silence became an uncensorable protest against the censorship of Suharto's New Order. It is in this sense that McIntyre portrays Megawati's silence as a kind of substitutive speech. News coverage of Megawati during her periods of silence often used the word *bertahan* ("to endure"), framing her silence as evidence of strength. These moves enhanced Megawati's image as "an embattled figure," an image which Ziv argues "cannot be overestimated" in evaluating her popular success.⁷⁶

In addition, Megawati's combination of speech and silence enabled her to enter the political realm while appearing to remain aloof from the corrupt Indonesian political system. Bolstered by the unpopularity of the Suharto regime and particularly the unpopularity of Habibie, Megawati's primary concern was with demonstrating that she was not like her predecessors and opponents. While this claim needed to be asserted verbally (and often was), the true evidence of Megawati's distinction from Suharto and Habibie was her refusal to enter the political fray in the way they had. Again, Ziv's commentary proves enlightening: "To a point, at least, Megawati's silence has indeed seemed golden. The less exposed, the more revered. She has come to represent something Utopian, something beyond the realm of the political."⁷⁷ Particularly because she was participating in Indonesia's first fully democratic election, Megawati embodied the promise of a whole new Indonesian system, one that escaped the excesses of Suharto politics and hearkened back to the days of her father's leadership.

Although notable on these merits alone, Megawati's silence/speech paradox also serves as a central feature of the other paradoxes enacted by her rhetoric. In proving herself as Sukarno's heir, Megawati is expected to exhibit some of the same charisma that had made her father famous; simultaneously, her silence allows people to support her by relying on their positive perceptions of Sukarno without having her own individuality stand in their way. In constructing her public presentation of gender, the silence/speech paradox allows her to play

⁷⁵McIntyre, "Megawati Sukarnoputri," cited in n. 68 above, p. 109.

⁷⁶Ziv, "Populist Perceptions," cited in n. 67 above, p. 76.

⁷⁷Ziv, "Populist Perceptions," cited in n. 67 above, p. 86.

the roles of both paternal leader and national mother. Finally, remaining silent on issues of policy makes her more easily able to present herself as an appealing candidate to both conservative Muslims and more progressive syncretists. The following sections further examine these dynamics.

Sukarno's Heir and Self-Made Hero

As the most politically active of Sukarno's children, Megawati is uniquely positioned to draw upon Indonesians' love of Sukarno in her campaign.⁷⁸ Although Sukarno had been a controversial figure during his presidency, he was fondly remembered after his death in 1970; a 2001 opinion piece in the influential Indonesian newspaper *The Jakarta Post* claims, "It is generally accepted that Sukarno was a great man and one of the greatest nationalist leaders in contemporary Indonesian history."⁷⁹ Sukarno became a symbol of the idealized past as Suharto's regime grew progressively more corrupt. In addition, as the unifier of the Indonesian nation, Sukarno's identity is central to the very idea of an Indonesian political rhetoric. His notion of the five-fold values of *Pancasila* serves as a basic political assumption in Indonesian rhetoric, surviving Sukarno himself and extending into and beyond Suharto's New Order. *Pancasila* has come to function as a Burkean "god term"⁸⁰ in Indonesian politics: a term that holds the supreme place in a linguistic hierarchy, not unlike the function the term "freedom" serves in American politics. In death, Sukarno holds the sort of political clout that all America's "founding fathers" might be said to possess collectively.

On the basis of Sukarno's influence in national memory, it is unsurprising that Megawati invokes him extensively in her political rhetoric. In addition to speaking his name often in her speeches, Megawati describes her own political stance by echoing her father's policies, particularly his populist sympathies.⁸¹ Megawati's silence also functions as an invocation of her father, rendering herself a blank slate on which Sukarno's supporters can inscribe their own memories

⁷⁸In Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto rose to power under similar circumstances, serving as prime minister in 1988–1990 and 1993–1996. Bhutto was the daughter of former Pakistani prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and assumed her beloved father's mantle of leadership not long after his assassination in 1979.

⁷⁹"Remembering Sukarno." *The Jakarta Post* (6 June 2001).

⁸⁰See Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

⁸¹See Karon, "The Princess Who Settled," cited in n. 69 above; and Ziv, "Populist Perceptions," cited in n. 67 above, p. 75.

of him. "For her followers," argues Ziv, "it was and is their ideas of Megawati, not Megawati's own ideas, which have counted."⁸² In addition, Megawati demonstrates a visual dependence on her father's ethos in many of her campaign posters, as sociologist Sonja van Wichelen observes: "Often he stands either behind her or beside her as if he is there ready to help her when in need."⁸³ Megawati's effectiveness as a perceived substitute for her father is aided by the prevalence of traditional Javanese mysticism in the capitol region, since Megawati is believed to share the *wahyu* (divine aura) of her father.⁸⁴ Even during Megawati's earliest political activity, other leaders within the PDI recognized and sought to capitalize upon this dynamic; R. William Liddle and Rizal Mallarangeng speculate that these leaders first made Megawati a prominent party figure "to take advantage of Megawati's vote-getting potential as her father's daughter."⁸⁵

Invocations of Sukarno are an important part of Megawati's rhetoric even in her *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* address. By remembering her father's words, "Can you join in and continue the struggle, someday after I am gone?"⁸⁶ and her response, "Okay, I promise."⁸⁷ Megawati portrays herself as someone still functioning under her father's authority. Her pursuit of political power is simply the result of a *janji*, a promise, which her fellow Indonesians can help her fulfill by joining her cause. She reminds her audience of her biological connection to Sukarno, the connection that first made her leadership within her party possible.

Affinity to her father's identity has also had its drawbacks, however. Megawati is often accused of being popular only because of her father. One Indonesian critic has used her reliance on her father's policies as a way of discrediting Megawati's own fitness for the presidency, saying, "Suppose she was not the daughter of Bung Karno, she wouldn't be anyone at all: only a housewife with simple thoughts."⁸⁸ In order to combat the accusation that she is merely a shadow of her father, Megawati needs to construct herself as someone who is not only

⁸²Ziv, "Populist Perceptions," cited in n. 67 above, p. 86.

⁸³Sonja van Wichelen, "Contesting Megawati: The Mediation of Islam and Nation in Times of Political Transition," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 3.2 (2006), 49.

⁸⁴See Kapoor, "Three Times a Loser," cited in n. 3 above; and Ziv, "Populist Perceptions," cited in n. 67 above, p. 74.

⁸⁵R. William Liddle and Rizal Mallarangeng, "Indonesia in 1996: Pressures from Above and Below," *Asian Studies* 37.2 (1997), 169.

⁸⁶"Bisakah kamu ikut terus berjuang, setelah saya nanti tidak ada?"

⁸⁷"Sep, saya janji."

⁸⁸Quoted in Mietzner, "The 1999 General Session," cited in n. 34 above, p. 48.

inheriting a legacy but also earning her own place in Indonesian leadership as a self-made hero. She most often does this by calling attention to her years of obscurity after her father's death before she reentered politics. This is the move she makes in her *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* address when she says, "I can understand the heartbeat of the people because I myself have been an ordinary person."⁸⁹ Here Megawati claims a rationale for her leadership that is wholly separate from her father's legacy, claiming her own "ordinariness" in a way that both distinguishes her from her elite family and makes her the heir apparent to her father's populist ideas. The brutal events of *Sabtu Kelabu* further contributed to Megawati's image of independence, situating her in the public eye not merely as Sukarno's privileged daughter but as a fellow sufferer under the oppressive Suharto regime. Indeed, Marcus Mietzner argues that Megawati's resistance of Suharto in 1996 was the beginning of her true popular success.⁹⁰ What Indonesia wanted in 1999 was both a representative of Sukarno and someone independent of Sukarno, and Megawati did everything within her power to fill both needs. By invoking this struggle during more recent speeches like the *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* address, she continues to keep this paradoxical aspect of her identity alive.

Paternal Leader and National Mother

As a symbolic substitute for her father, Megawati also occupies a uniquely gendered space at once masculine and feminine, both "a mother figure and the reincarnation of a father figure."⁹¹ On the one hand, Megawati's presence is clearly and even deliberately feminine. Yet the specter of Sukarno imbues his daughter's political career with a degree of substitutive masculinity. Speaking of Megawati's striking success during her 1999 presidential campaign, Wichelen argues, "A vote for Megawati was also (or actually) a vote for Sukarno and with that it was not a vote for a woman per se, but rather a vote for a return to a politics with a nationalist and masculine leader who can keep the nation together."⁹² According to Wichelen's portrayal, those who supported Megawati were voting not for the female-sexed leader herself

⁸⁹"Saya bisa mengetahui denyut jantungan rakyat karena saya pernah jadi rakyat biasa."

⁹⁰Mietzner, "The 1999 General Session," cited in n. 34 above, p. 48.

⁹¹Ziv, "Populist Perceptions," cited in n. 67 above, p. 86. This same paradox has been inhabited by countless other female leaders and rhetors; see, for example, Logan, "We Are Coming", cited in n. 5 above; Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit*, cited in n. 49 above; and Richards, *Transnational Feminist Rhetorics*, cited in n. 9 above.

⁹²Wichelen, "Contesting Megawati," cited in n. 83 above, p. 50.

but rather for the masculine gendering of her rhetoric, the return of the old and beloved patriarchy that she symbolically represented to voters. During that campaign, Megawati often spoke publicly with an image of her father hanging behind her, appearing to look on while she spoke as if he were lending his authority to the event.

During the same campaign, however, Megawati was often introduced at rallies as "*Ibu kita yang penuh kasih*" ("our mother full of compassion"), presenting herself as the embodiment of "maternal tenderness, compassion, and care for her 'children,' the Indonesian people."⁹³ Because of the ambiguity in the Indonesian language of the word "*ibu*" to mean both women and mothers, the polite designation of Megawati as "*Ibu Megawati*" or "*Ibu Mega*" implicitly marked her as a national mother. In the traditionally patriarchal Indonesian context, Megawati needed to establish herself as capable of filling a presumed "man's role," yet she also capitalized on Indonesia's high cultural respect for motherhood.

The paradox between imputed masculinity and advantageous femininity is likewise central to Megawati's *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* address. She invokes her father's masculine authority by telling stories about her father's words to her as a child, placing her own claims into her father's mouth. She also emphasizes the masculine gendering of her own suffering at the hands of Suharto's regime, asking "What do I lack as a woman?"⁹⁴ in order to blur the boundaries of gender difference. In the same speech, however, she claims feminine identity as an advantage when she argues that "The aura of the woman is full of motherliness, of love and affection, and she often speaks from her heart."⁹⁵ Rather than inhabiting *either* paternal boldness or maternal affection, Megawati claims to inhabit both spaces at once.

Traditional Muslim and Progressive Thinker

The question of Megawati's gendering is made still more salient by the Indonesian religious context. With an 88.1% majority of Muslims in 2011,⁹⁶ Indonesia has a political sphere heavily influenced by Islamic thought. Islam has had an impact on Indonesian history and culture for centuries, far predating the notion of "Indonesia" itself,

⁹³Ziv, "Populist Perceptions," cited in n. 67 above, p. 86.

⁹⁴"*Kurang apa, sebagai perempuan?*"

⁹⁵"*Aura seorang perempuan itu adalah penuh dengan keibuan, dengan kasih sayang, dan dia biasanya berkata dengan mata hatinya.*"

⁹⁶See Simon Rogers, "Muslim Populations by Country: How Big Will Each Muslim Population Be by 2030?" *The Guardian* (28 January 2011).

and the religion played a substantial role in the development of a unified Indonesian identity in the 1900s.⁹⁷ Given the Qur'an's statement that "men are leaders for women" (4:34), it may seem unusual that Indonesia's highest office could ever be held by a woman.

Before this tension can be addressed, it is necessary to note that not all Muslims are in agreement about the implications of the Qur'an for gender relations. Scholars like Margot Badran, Fatima Mernissi, and Amina Wadud have argued that, although the Qur'an has usually been interpreted in patriarchal contexts, the proper interpretation of the text is open to dispute, leaving room for devout Muslims to support women's empowerment.⁹⁸ Moreover, Muslims often disagree about the extent to which Muslim theology ought to influence political praxis; as Badran argues, "It is important to avoid a simple collapse between Islam the religion and political Islam or Islamism."⁹⁹ Thus, no one nation's negotiation of gender relations or political power can be understood to speak for the whole of Islam, even if that nation claims to derive its policies and actions directly from the Qur'an.

In the case of Indonesian Islam and its impact on national policy, the situation is undeniably complex. While some Muslims in Indonesia are highly conservative in their religious views, most practice a blend of Islam and residual tribal animism. As a result, female leadership in Indonesia is regarded much differently than it might be in a more conservative Muslim nation: "Islamists usually understand [the Qur'an's rejection of female leadership] literally, but contemporary Indonesian Muslims overwhelmingly do not. Only 7 percent of respondents reject the right of women to become members of parliament. . . . And an only slighter larger minority of 26 percent believe that Islam proscribes women from becoming president."¹⁰⁰ Because of this theological openness to female leadership, Megawati's gender disadvantages her political authority less than it might in a more conservative Muslim context.

⁹⁷See, for example, Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960).

⁹⁸Margot Badran, "Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism," *Journal of Women's History* 13.1 (2001): 47–52; Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1991); Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oneworld Publications, 2006); Amina Wadud-Muhsin, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford UP, 1999).

⁹⁹M. Badran, "Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism," cited in n. 98 above, 47.

¹⁰⁰Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle, "Politics, Islam, and Public Opinion," *Journal of Democracy* 15.1 (2004), 115.

Within this religious atmosphere, writes Donald K. Emmerson, Megawati prefers “not to identify closely and publicly with her religion,” and she has “never advanced it as a blueprint for the state.”¹⁰¹ During the 1999 election, she was not seen as inimical to Indonesia’s dominant religion, but neither was she seen as the most devout candidate. Megawati’s strongest support came from syncretists and non-Muslims; thanks to her alliance with Gus Dur, she also had the support of many traditional Muslims. However, many Muslims, especially modernist Muslims, “believed deeply that the ‘Christian-dominated’ PDI-P would not only exclude pious Muslims from a Megawati-led government but would intimidate and repress them as well.”¹⁰² Driven by this fear, Muslim delegates in the MPR were quick to desert Megawati once Gus Dur declared his candidacy in opposition to her.

Despite her loss in 1999, Megawati nonetheless garnered substantial support within and beyond the Muslim community. Once again, her trademark combination of speech and silence proved instrumental in creating this persona:

By avoiding clear positions on sensitive issues, Megawati avoided confrontation. By embracing everything and everyone, she transcended social cleavages, providing a platform—and a message—which cut across class, religion, and ethnicity. Thus she greeted predominantly Moslem crowds on Java and elsewhere with *Salaam Aleikum*: but pushed a nationalist, inclusive agenda that gained her the trust and support of Christians, Hindus, and ethnic-Chinese businessmen. By not speaking out, her purity was enhanced in the eyes of her followers.¹⁰³

When Megawati does speak about religion, she is respectful without being obsequious: Allah is credited and acknowledged in her speeches but does not serve as the basis for her rationale or ideology. Although she occasionally wears the traditional Muslim *jilbab* (head covering) in photos, she almost never wears it in public. This practice stands in contrast to that of Suharto’s daughter Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, who was also engaged in politics during the 1999 election and often seen on TV. Unlike Megawati, Siti was promoted as a proper Muslim woman: “Frequently wearing a yellow jilbab, she led an effort to enhance Golkar’s Islamic appeal.”¹⁰⁴ Megawati’s political self-presentation, resting as it does on the paradoxical embrace of both masculinity

¹⁰¹D. Emmerson, “A Year of Voting Dangerously?” *Journal of Democracy* 15.1 (2004), 101.

¹⁰²Liddle, “Indonesia in 1999,” cited in n. 33 above, p. 36.

¹⁰³Ziv, “Populist Perceptions,” cited in n. 67 above, pp. 85–86.

¹⁰⁴Stefan Eklof, “The 1997 General Election in Indonesia,” *Asian Survey* 37.12 (1997), 1185.

and femininity, cannot afford the wholehearted acceptance of conservative Islamic femininity afforded to Siti, nor does Megawati want to risk alienating her non-Muslim and syncretist supporters. Yet again, Megawati occupies not a “moderate” space between conservative Islam and progressivism but a paradoxical space in which she seeks to inhabit both identities simultaneously.

The tension between Megawati’s paradoxical religious identities can be seen in her *Rakernas Partai Nasdem* address when she invokes Allah as the reason for her presidency. On the one hand, she affirms the doctrine of Allah’s sovereignty, contrasting the “human talk” which has told her she will never be president against the words of Allah which brought about her presidency. She even addresses Allah with the highly respectful religious phrase “*Subhanahu Wa Ta’Ala*” (“may He be glorified in the highest”), showing both her familiarity with and her adherence to Indonesian Muslim practices. Yet she is also selective in her invocation of Allah. Unlike the more conservative Muslims who understand the Qur’an to prohibit women’s leadership, Megawati inverts this argument by suggesting that her presidency proves the falsehood of this belief. Reemphasizing the sovereignty of Allah thus becomes Megawati’s means of undoing the conservative reading of Allah’s words in the Qur’an.

CONCLUSION

What fresh insights does the rhetoric of Megawati offer to rhetoricians? Megawati’s deep connection to the history of Indonesian independence and politics demonstrates how individual figures can come to have an ineluctable influence on nascent political and rhetorical thought, especially in a young country like Indonesia. The tenuous nature of Indonesian unity and the very idea of “Indonesia” grant special authority to figures who, like Megawati, embody Indonesian nationalism in its earliest and most idealistic sense. Given Megawati’s substantial power in this context, her embodiment of paradoxical identities serves to illustrate the unique possibility for paradox in Indonesian rhetoric. Instead of framing herself as a “moderate” figure meeting two identities halfway, Megawati inhabits multiple seemingly contradictory identities simultaneously, often gaining the merits of both identities even as she incurs the dangers of both.

As scholars of rhetoric continue assembling a fuller vision of Indonesian rhetorical practice, Megawati’s example can offer a compelling point of departure. Future studies might consider how other

Indonesian rhetors, those without a biologically inherent connection to Indonesia's political past, invoke tropes of history and national identity as they construct their own identities. How does silence function differently for those who cannot silently invoke a connection to Sukarno? In addition, scholars might investigate the role of paradox in the identity constructions of these rhetors, attuning both to the particular paradoxes negotiated by Megawati and to other paradoxes that might respond to Indonesian sociocultural tensions. Are Indonesian women rhetors more likely to resort to paradoxical identity construction than Indonesian men, or does the Indonesian rhetorical environment demand paradox equally from all rhetors? How, finally, do Indonesian Muslims with varying levels of religious commitment and conservatism respond differently to the same rhetorical environments, and how do non-Muslim minorities respond likewise? As these questions are pursued, our understanding of the possibilities and complexities of Indonesian rhetoric can only be deepened.

As international disputes over Islamic identity, immigration, and statehood crescendo to a fever pitch, the need for Western scholars to understand non-Western rhetorics from Muslim-majority nations has become more urgent than ever. As long as the voices of Muslims and citizens of Muslim-majority nations in Asia and Africa and the Middle East remain unheard by Western ears, they are far easier to caricature, to Other, to vilify, or to ignore. However, by making key rhetorical figures like Megawati accessible to Western readers, we enable our Western world to discover similarities within the voices of those once dismissed as Other. In this work, feminist rhetoricians, comparative rhetoricians, and postcolonial scholars are united, representing previously unheard voices in order to make new avenues of dialogue and understanding possible.