Watching Indonesia change leaders is a slow process. It took three years for President Suharto to assume the mantle of office which he began to take from Sukarno's shoulders in early October 1965 after the ambiguous Gestapo affair of 30 September. And it is now over a decade, and two general elections, since academic observers first began to predict Suharto's imminent departure from the presidential palace. These predictions continue to be made and will no doubt ultimately be proven true. There is, however, no compelling reason except for age (Suharto was born in 1921) to suppose that the President will not accept a fifth term of office in 1988.

This political longevity is due to a considerable degree to the nature of the state apparatus of which Suharto is head. His rule rests on the twin institutional pillars of the army and the civilian bureaucracy, both of which are deeply fearful of instability and have a firm commitment to political continuity, especially at the presidential level. The government electoral organisation, Golkar, has no significant existence independent of the army and bureaucracy and is thus an improbable source of pressure for political change. To a considerable degree, Indonesia today can be understood as a bureaucratic polity, that is, a polity in which decisions are taken by and within the bureaucratic hierarchy with little reference to public opinion or popular representatives.  

While Suharto has remained firmly in office, however, the style of his leadership has not remained unchanged. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he was for most observers a quiet and efficient military manager. Opinions varied over whether the policies he managed were beneficial or otherwise for the Indonesian people, but little doubt was cast upon his personal capacity. In the middle seventies, on the other hand, the sense of Suharto's presence on the political stage receded considerably, as did the earlier air of efficient management. There was the Pertamina affair, in which the national oil company, despite the oil boom, went bankrupt after injudicious spending on a variety of uneconomic investments, and the Malari affair, in which rivalry between competing generals in Suharto's inner circle not only broke into public view but was expressed obliquely in street riots against a visit by the Japanese prime minister Kakuei Tanaka in 1974. With an attitude of mumpungisme (get what you can while you can) apparently the order of the day, it no longer seemed that one man was in control. Observers began to refer to the leadership as a junta and began to speculate
on the extent to which Suharto might be little more than a figurehead manipulated by concealed and more powerful figures.

Some of what was said then, perhaps a good deal of it, still applies to Indonesia in 1985. In an important way, however, things have changed, for Suharto has regained the centre of the political stage. This was clearly demonstrated in the far-reaching political reshuffle which followed the 1983 presidential elections. Old associates such as Amir Machmud, Andi Jusuf and Ali Murtopo were effectively eased out of power; the vice-president Adam Malik was dropped. Others, such as the new State Secretary, Sudharmono, and the new army commander General Benny Murnani, were diorbitkan ('orbited'), brought into Suharto's orbit. Suharto has become once more the dominant political figure in his country.

Despite Suharto's dominance, however, it is curiously difficult to fathom the personality behind the power. As a person, Suharto is distinctly absent from politics. Suharto's portrait, it is true, observes the nation from its postage stamps and from countless official photographs in government offices, but his presence is overwhelmingly ex officio. The caption in large letters beneath his portrait reads not 'Suharto' but 'Presiden Republik Indonesia'. He is flanked almost invariably by a portrait of his current vice-president, Umar Wirahadikusumah, identical in size and design and labelled with equal anonymity, 'Wakil Presiden Republik Indonesia'. The names of the two incumbents sometimes appear in smaller letters beneath their offices, but the importance of the office over the personality is illustrated by the swiftness with which the portrait of a new vice-president replaces that of his predecessor once the appointment has been ratified by parliament.

There is in fact little public sign that the president has a personality, let alone a personality cult. He appears to the public only in a seemingly endless series of ceremonies such as weddings and official openings. The aspects of his personal life which attract attention, such as his association with Chinese Indonesian businessmen, the alleged indiscretions of his family, and the heavy Javanese accent with which he pronounces the common Indonesian suffix-kan, are interpreted, if they make any impact at all, as signs of weakness, not of humanity. There is no officially cultivated counter-myth of benevolence or care. Shortly after coming to power, Suharto cooperated in producing a rather eulogistic biography called The Smiling General. Today, however, the once-smiling face is generally impassive.

Nor is there a philosophy which anyone would seriously call Suhartoism. The official ideology is Pancasila. It was first expressed by Sukarno but it is not generally characterised as the thought of one man; rather it is said officially to be the essential and archetypal way of thought of the Indonesian people and to have been simply 'dug' out of the Indonesian soil by Indonesian thinkers. The explication of Pancasila today is not in the hands of Suharto but of a special body, the BP7, whose members include such practised ideologues as Roeslan Abdulgani. There is no doubt that Suharto exercises a close control over the contents of ideological public statements, but in formal speeches and other expressions of this government little but a faint obituary tone is allowed. The old cliche speeches in early 1984, of which Suharto himself was the voice, and of which the parliament to 'resolutely repudiate the enemies of the nation', have fallen into desuetude. The intriguing thing about Suharto's political style has to do with his political style at all. Although Suharto's personal style is still within the military tradition, the acceptability of his personality to the army and bureaucracy in power, however, is to explain his style and personal withdrawal, which are uniquely Indonesian, be it culture, or whether the Western realpolitik has an influence on him. The cultural lack of leadership in particular by some foreign observers suggest that in Indonesian studies of management, science, sociology and distinctive culture, the study could not be rendered complete.
exercises a close control over the activities of the BP7, but he is clearly not the source of its ideas. Indeed, his public pronouncements on ideological matters have generally brought him and his government little but trouble. It was, for instance, two off-the-cuff speeches in early 1980 which sparked the protest against Suharto known as the Petition of Fifty, in which fifty prominent figures associated with the early years of the New Order petitioned the parliament to 'review' the president's statements. Such outspokenness, however, is exceptional. Suharto does not write political texts; he gives no interviews and no press conferences.

The intriguing question in 1985 is what this changing political style has to do with Suharto's political longevity. Although Suharto's primary power base in Indonesia is institutional, his political style can be expected to contribute both to his position within the military and bureaucratic hierarchy and to the overall acceptability of his government. It is unlikely that the concern of the army and bureaucracy for stability is so over-riding as to keep Suharto in power independent of other factors. The difficulty, however, is to explain whether Suharto's combination of public power and personal withdrawal unusual in the modern world is a uniquely Indonesian phenomenon governed primarily by Indonesian culture, or whether it can in fact be analysed in conventional Western realpolitik terms.

The cultural analysis of Indonesian politics in general and of leadership in particular has been used extensively by Indonesian and foreign observers since at least the late 1950s. The rise of Indonesian studies as a discipline distinct from history, political science, sociology and so on was based partly on the notion that a distinctive culture gave to Indonesian society a coherence which could not be rendered adequately within conventional Western disciplines. Bernard Dahn's classic *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* interpreted Sukarno's leadership and philosophy in terms of the traditional epics of the Javanese wayang kulit shadow puppet play. Hamish McDonald's study, similarly, commences with a chapter called simply 'Java' in which he outlines what he sees as the cultural matrix within which Suharto operates.

Suharto's political self-effacement can be analysed in similar terms. Hindu ideas of dharma or duty have exercised a profound influence on the thought of the abangan (syncretist Muslim) Javanese, of whom Suharto is one. The ruler, like any of his subjects, has a task to carry out by virtue of his position, and he is obliged to do so with detachment and without regard for self. Action is defined by the office, or by the social position, not by the person holding the office or position. This concept is explicit in the name of the organisation Dharma Wanita, the official association of wives of civil servants, whose principles set out amongst other things the duty of a wife in caring for her husband. One of the strongest terms of praise for an official is the statement that he has acted tanpa pamrih, without personal motive. Excellence lies not in being superlative but in doing one's duty. Indonesia's 'Seven Heroes of
the Revolution', the army officers murdered during the Gestapu affair in 1965, received their posthumous recognition not on the strength of outstanding achievements but on the grounds that they had fallen in the line of duty. By contrast, the promoters of the Petition of Fifty have had to suffer being portrayed as motivated by self-centred ambition. Jakarta political gossip refers to the 'post-power syndrome', the unwillingness of individuals to accept that their days of power are over. Such a suggestion of venality and self-seeking is a serious disqualification for those wishing to take part in the political process.

There are, however, a number of problems with using culture as a tool for analysing leadership. There is of course the risk, pointed out by Edward Said, that describing a foreign culture may have more to do with defining our own culture than with accurately representing that foreign culture. There is also a major problem in the case of Indonesia in deciding what blend of regional and national cultures should be employed as the standard. Most observers have chosen the majority Javanese culture, but others have attempted to set one or more of the other regional cultures alongside it as a demonstration of the diversity of political cultures upon which contemporary Indonesia might draw. Even Javanese culture is internally diverse and there is no single dominant tradition. Perhaps the most serious problem, however, is the fact that the use of culture as a tool of analysis implies not only that some styles of leadership are possible or likely but also that other styles of leadership are impossible or unlikely. A cultural analysis does not cope very well with the contrast between Sukarno and Suharto. It also runs the risk of accepting that certain styles of political behaviour and activity are 'un-Indonesian'. As most readers of this Review will be aware, this kind of formulation can be a potent tool for the restriction of political activity.

It may be more satisfactory to account for Suharto's current style of leadership as simply a phase in the life of his government. The term 'regime fatigue' was popular amongst Western observers in the mid-1970s, implying that the passage of time brought a sense of stagnation and loss of direction to any regime, regardless of how enthusiastically it had started. The regime has now passed beyond all that. Suharto has been apotheosized into an elder statesman. He has accepted for the first time an official title, 'Father of Development', which he took in 1983. He has been president for so long that he is a part of the political landscape. There is no need for him to project an active presence because his presence is taken for granted.

There are political advantages, too, in Suharto's distancing of himself from day-to-day politics. He can avoid implication in government actions which misfire, while claiming general credit for those which succeed. Like many leaders, Suharto has a practice of employing political hatchetmen who can carry out unpleasant but necessary tasks and be discarded, along with the odium they have attracted, once the job is done. The government's behaviour during the so-called 'mystery disappearance' of the criminals in 1983 and 1984 was virtually no doubt come from high within. Suharto was thus able to enjoy the particularly violent and brutal enemies he had worked so hard to denounce. The opposition to his rule has been a factor he has been able to exploit to his advantage.

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What, then, of Indonesian political life? It is an attempt to analyse the political process in Indonesia in terms of changes in the political institutions. Indonesia has a vast number of political institutions, from the bureaucratic institutions of the state, to the military institutions, to the various political parties, to the various organizations that make up the political system. Each of these has its own set of rules and procedures, and each has its own set of goals. The political process in Indonesia is thus a complex one, with a number of different factors at play. The analysis of the political process in Indonesia is thus a complex one, with a number of different factors at play.
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the so-called 'mysterious killings' of alleged gangsters and criminals in 1983 and 1984 was instructive in this respect. There was virtually no doubt that the order to carry out the killings had come from high within the government hierarchy and the government was thus able to enjoy credit for ending what had been a particularly violent crime wave. Publicly, however, the government denied responsibility, thereby deflecting some of the criticism levelled at it by Indonesian and foreign human rights organisations.

Realpolitik, in the long term, is probably also a better way of incorporating culture into our analysis of Indonesian politics. We should not suppose that traditional culture is a kind of mental straight-jacket which holds Indonesia in a particular political shape. Rather, it is likely to be a different way of looking at a range of political techniques and styles as broad as those employed in the West. Ben Anderson's essay, Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese, published just before the massacres of 1965-66, may have been mistaken in attributing tolerance to Javanese society, but he was correct in pointing out the wide variety of acceptable models of behaviour within the wayang kulit tradition of Java alone.

What, then, of other leadership styles? The two presidents of Indonesia have tended to monopolise the attention of scholars attempting to analyse styles of leadership. Studies of other post-independence figures have tended to be brief and to focus on the ideas of their subjects rather than their activities. This is the case, too, with a recent full-length study of the former army chief of staff and defence minister A.H. Nasution. The analysis of Nasution's political career, spanning the period 1945 to the present, however, makes it clear that Nasution's style has been very different from that of either of Indonesia's presidents. There are in fact three elements to Nasution's style. One is a formularist, bureaucratic respect for hierarchy, reflected in obedience to his superiors and an expectation of absolute obedience from his subordinates. Another is a quasi-democratic insistence on a number of occasions that he is acting on behalf of his subordinates in pressing difficult issues. A third is an allegiance to principles, such as military autonomy and the national unity of Indonesia, which transcend hierarchy and friendship. These elements are contradictory to a significant degree, and it is tempting to suggest that this inconsistency is one reason why Nasution was never able to use his position to become president. Nasution's political survival on the other hand is an indication that these have been effective techniques at least to a degree.

The analysis of leadership style is perhaps most important in our understanding of the texture of politics in Indonesia. For the broad cut of the political cloth an analysis of political institutions is likely to be more useful.
NOTES


4. Hamish McDonald, Suharto's Indonesia (Blackburn, Vic.: Fontana, 1980).


The historical society has consistently addressed the problem of the Marxist concept and Marx's writings have been interpreted as the victory of a revolutionary charisma, organisational leadership, as opposed to a class-based mode of power. Bonaparte (the leader of 1848) as a 'mediocre hero's role' because it has been interpreted as the promotion of power and potentiality. The context creates the leader's role of leadership requires the mass movement to act in opposition to the government is thus severely limited.

Lenin, of course, seriously the problem of the mass movement to leadership. In contrast to the extreme Menshevik opponents, the movement relied heavily on effective leadership in the political arena. In this way, in prescribing the organisation of the vanguard party of revolutionaries, the social and political power problem. From its mass movement to the party was balanced with a formula left largely to the party leadership by the movement. Lenin's insistence on allowing information on the mass movement. Lenin's insistence on long-standing organisational belts' which would keep the masses. The Lenin's insistence on Lenin suggests, however, a failure to allow information on the mass movement. His position...