

**THE**  
**INDONESIAN**  
**DREAM**

**The Pursuit of a Winning Nation**

**ELWIN TOBING**

To  
Indonesian young generations

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# Introduction

## Challenges & Answers

*Having a dream is what keeps you alive.  
Overcoming the challenges make life worth living.*  
**Mary Tyler Moore**

### A Winning Nation

July 14, 2007. As I entered the Gelora Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta, about 80 thousand people already packed it. They wore red shirts with the logo of *garuda*, the nation's symbol, on the front and the word *Indonesia* on the back. They sang "Indonesia!...Indonesia!..." while waving the nation's red and white flag. The Indonesian national soccer team was about to play against Saudi Arabia in the Asian Cup competition.

The nation's soccer team has been the underdog for decades, even within the Southeast Asian region. After a stunning win over Bahrain a few days earlier, hope was mounting for a win to qualify for the next round of the Cup. The Indonesians have been longing to see their national team compete in the international arena.

Gamblers, perhaps those who weren't wearing red shirts, were the only ones who wanted defeat.

The crowd was hungry for a win.

But their team could not deliver it as they were facing a daunting task, playing against a much more experienced and formidable opponent. Despite the loss of 1-2, the supporters still sang "Indonesia!...Indonesia!".

As the crowd exited the stadium, they went back to the real world. Their nation has been longing for decades for a win in the competitive world. They want to have a winning nation. They are hungry for it.

And this book is about how to achieve it.

Building a winning nation is even more difficult and complex than building a winning soccer team. If one decade is perhaps sufficient to build a soccer team that can compete in the World Cup, the amount of time needed to build a nation that can compete with major developed countries such as France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Singapore and the United States is definitely much longer.

Just to give a perspective, building a world class soccer team requires a lot of things: world class players, great head and assistant coaches, outstanding management, well-maintained infrastructure, and so on. All of the above must not only perform with utmost professionalism, but also support each other.

We are talking about 22 players in a soccer team. How about building a winning nation of 220 million of people with very diverse backgrounds? Suddenly, managing a soccer team becomes like organizing a party of one person.

Building a winning Indonesia is a long and arduous task. It is not achieved merely by changing numbers, such as raising per capita income from \$1,000 to \$20,000. Nor is it accomplished by just changing the leader or by merely introducing democratic practices. What it means is the creation of progress in various

aspects of life, from attitude, outlook, economic status, spiritual life, societal life, political life, and so on.

And a winning nation cannot be developed solely by practical policies and ideas, either. So, if you expect that this book will discuss practical, short-term policies to create one million jobs or to reduce national debts, you will be disappointed. Not that I consider those issues to be unimportant, they aren't. But, like the parable of the forest and trees, if we pay too much attention to the trees, we may lose the sight of the forest. Creating jobs is just one of many inter-related, fundamental issues such as the lack of infrastructure, lack of human resources, lack of innovative spirit, corruption, transparency of government policymaking, time required to start a business, number of procedures required to start a business, and so on. It turns out the last three were considered by the *Global Competitive Report 2008* as the major problems that affect our country's competitiveness. But ultimately, all of those issues can be boiled down into this: The way we do things.

As an illustration, several years ago, Iowa City, a small city in the Midwestern part of the United States, was replanting the grass adjacent to the sidewalk in the downtown area. They closed half of the street, changed the soil, and built a watering system that could provide the water necessary for the grass to grow. They executed a fundamental change and carried it out with a well-planned procedure. How do we handle the same thing in Indonesia? We lay down some soil, plant the grass, and water it and somehow, nature will preserve the grass. Very soon, the sidewalk will be barren or left abandoned and then we'll have to plant the grass again. If, as a nation, we carry out things as usual, without making fundamental improvements, we will end up making very little progress. It's as if we only try to fix one immediate problem, only for it to pop up again somewhere else in the very immediate future. As a result, we don't make much progress.

"Insanity," once coined by Albert Einstein, "is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." To build a winning nation, we need fundamental, not cosmetic, changes. And fundamental changes require the right set of basic beliefs and values—the right paradigms and ideas.

This book is about those paradigms and ideas.

### "A House Divided By Itself Cannot Stand"

I define a winning nation as a nation that can unite her people, that can provide liberty to all her people, and that can fully support the realization of prosperity to all her people. Put simply, it is a united, democratic, and prosperous nation. Of these, unity is the foremost because without it, it is almost impossible to establish a democratic and prosperous nation. A nation cannot make progress if it bleeds internally from sectarian violence and social chaos.

As the above title says, "A house divided by itself cannot stand."

Stretching from the west to the east for nearly 5 km, a distant equivalent of that from San Francisco to Bermuda, Indonesia is a home to a diversity of cultures and indigenous beliefs with about 500 tribes and 600 languages and dialects<sup>1</sup>. Building unity in such a diverse nation is very difficult. Soekarno understood this and perhaps his revolutionary mantra was designed to keep our people united by focusing their mind on *revolution*. Soeharto somehow kept the nation united by using a combination of force and pragmatic economic and social developments.

In both experiences, while unity was preserved to some extent, the cost was enormous. In the late 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Indonesians were killed due to political and ideological struggles. And in the 1990s, thousands of Indonesians lost their life due to communal conflicts and violence across the archipelago, notably in the Moluccas, Poso, Sampit, and Jakarta.

After the downfall of Soeharto in 1998, we experienced one of the worst periods in our modern history. We were confronted with various intricate and interrelated problems from regional, political, ethnic, and religion tensions to economic crisis. All of them were interacting in complex ways and have threatened national unity. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, most news and reports on Indonesia were crowded with the images of political, regional, ethnic, and religious strife. On June 3, 1999, BBC News carried a headline article: "Who owns Indonesia?" Donald Emmerson, a noted scholar on Indonesia, wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, May/June, 2000, "Will Indonesia Survive?" Still, in 2001, Edward Aspinall and Mark Berger wrote an article in *Third World Quarterly* titled "The break-up of Indonesia?..." and Jusuf Wanandi in *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer, 2002 wrote, "Indonesia: A Failed State?"<sup>ii</sup>

There was even a domino effect theory. Right after East Timor won its independence, there were predictions that other Indonesian provinces would aspire to follow and the country would disintegrate. Suddenly, something that Indonesians had never imagined could become a real possibility: the prospect of the "Balkanization" of their own country in which Indonesia would dissolve into regional chaos and civil war along religious and ethnic lines just as in the former Yugoslavia.

Of course, all of the above predictions and concerns did not come to fruition. Territorially, Indonesia is still one nation. Various complex problems that we faced have slowly subsided.

Moreover, we have taken big steps in amending our constitution, strengthening legislative and judicial bodies to make them more independent, compared to the Soeharto's era, and pushing the country to be more decentralized. A few leaders began to realize the roles they play in advancing Indonesia. Gus Dur, Habibie and other individuals established purposeful institutions that continuously give ideas to the development of our country's public policy. John Bresnan and several researchers on Indonesia in various American universities call this "the great transition."

But who can guarantee that this transition will be followed by positive and sustainable development? Who can guarantee that communal conflicts, the ones that once threatened national unity, will never occur again? After the bloody and gripping experiences in the late 1990s and early 2000s, will we automatically be united? Will we, in a compact manner and with a strong commitment, say "enough is enough" and happily embrace unity, both territorially and ideologically?

I'd rather bet my money in Las Vegas.

Notwithstanding the nation's motto is "Unity in diversity." The country is still being confronted with continuous challenges of unity and diversity. For one thing, a community in Papua wants a separation from Indonesia, and we have seen what happened in Aceh. The territorial disunity is still a continuing threat. Ideologically, it is even more alarming. Pancasila is no longer the only nation's ideology.

Progress toward mutual respect and unity has been painfully slow and marked with setbacks, especially after the various communal conflicts and the acts of terrorism in the early 2000s. The resurgence of divisive attitudes, particularly based on religious issues, has created a greater uncertainty about national unity. In a survey carried out by *Kompas* in 2005, around 70

percent of the respondents admitted that religion was a potential factor that could disintegrate national unity.

In college campuses, which are supposed to be a vibrant source of diversity, students tend to convene themselves on the basis of religions. In government, it is a general knowledge that the recruitment process of public officials has been heavily biased on the religious background of the candidates. In politics, religion has been the basis for separating one from another. To ignore the problem is to expose the country to physical, moral, and spiritual danger that will seriously threaten national unity.

Given this reality, the need for unity is even more imperative than any other time in the nation's history. In building unity, we need new paradigms. Rather than being centered on the territorial, the new paradigms must center on the people. Instead of focusing on politics as the mechanism to build unity, the new paradigms should focus on tolerance. And instead of emphasizing the use of power in promoting unity, the new paradigms should emphasize the use of conscience and persuasion. I call this "human-centered paradigms."

Generally, concerns and debates on national unity focus on the issue of territorial integrity. While it is important, they tend to sideline the unity of people. Facts have shown that achieving a territorial unity does not guarantee the unity of people living under the territory. The breakdown of the former Yugoslavia, where its territorial unity was superficially imposed under Tito's regime, is an example. Another is the former Soviet Union, which was disintegrated in 1991 after imposing a territorial unity for decades.

By contrast, a unity of people could lead to a territorial unity. As the Berlin Wall was collapsed in 1989, the territorial barrier between East and West Germany was crumbled, bringing the people of the two countries together. To a greater extent, it is the sense of unity among the people of Western Europe that has

transformed the divided continent into a European Union, not only by tearing down geographical borders, but also bringing the economy of more than 15 nations into one management, which is symbolized in one currency, Euro.

A unity of people encourages a territorial unity.

For decades, the Indonesian civil society has not yet developed itself properly. The superficially imposed unity during the New Order regime had been unsuccessful in fostering closed, inter-relationships among different groups of people without worrying about the issue of SARA (an acronym of ethnicity, religion, race and social classes). Each element of SARA was seen as a potential cause for violent conflict that could lead to national disintegration, inducing people to live in constant anticipation that there might be conflict driven by SARA. As a result, it failed to transform diversity from a challenge into an opportunity, which is a necessary foundation not only in realizing a united nation, but also in building a winning nation.

Building unity should begin by respecting and appreciating diversity. The unique diversity of our cultural heritage and backgrounds should be recognized as a valuable asset, one that has to be cherished and shared. Ethnicity, religion, culture, and language diversities are the soul of people and the very essence of nationhood. They reflect our history, our values, our dreams, and our view of our nation and the world. Those are that make us different, but also that tie us together. This may be a paradox: It is the heterogeneity, not homogeneity, of our people which is the crucial asset in building a solid national unity. The new paradigm in building unity is *diversity in unity*, not *unity in diversity*.

If we can ask, why did East Timor demand and successfully get its independence from Indonesia? And why are Aceh and Papua still demanding secession from Indonesia? Because they don't want to be part of Indonesia. Or, because they believe it is not so interesting to be part of Indonesia.

But imagine if Indonesia were a developed country with a well-managed society. Would those regions still demand secession? Maybe not.

In the midst of diversity, we must have core values that can unite us. It is the duty and responsibility of all parties in all spectrums of our society to rediscover and enhance those core, common values. I argue that these are the values that inspire us to strive for justice, liberty, and prosperity for all Indonesians. I call these values the *Indonesian Dream*. Not Republic of Dreams. And not Indonesians' Dreaming. They are core, common values that have been missing from our vocabulary.

Who doesn't want justice, freedom, and prosperity? Possibly, 99% of our people want them. The Indonesian Dream is related to a value system and hope that inspire each of us to pursue our better life. Whether Ujang in Ujung Kulon or Ucok in Humbang, North Tapanuli, they have aspirations and dreams for the future: a better life. And any other Indonesian would have the same dream.

These common values can be an unyielding uniting factor, far better than guns and tanks. Moreover, unity based on common values and vision is more dynamic because individuals in that community will have the freedom to pursue their own vision of life and yet, at the same time, they care for their community.

In the process of searching for a better life, Indonesians generally turn to religion as a source of inspiration and strength. For most of us, religion is destiny. As such, for us, rumors about our religion are very personal and real issues. It is not rare that violence seems to be legitimated when religion is on the betting table. That's why religion can be easily politicized by irresponsible individuals for their political ambitions. This is a challenge we have been facing and will continue to face for years to come; however, for us to be able to advance as a nation, we need to confront this challenge seriously, with a sense of humility. We are talking about a humility to ponder and ask fundamental questions about the

teaching of our religion and religion in general. I am not talking about the validity of certain or all religions, but the willingness of religious believers to emphasize the common denominators that exist in their religions so they can connect with people from all different backgrounds, including those who don't embrace any religion at all.

It is understandable that religion without obedience is nonsense. But obedience must be put in the context of a relationship, that is a relationship between human beings and their Creator as well as the relationship between human beings and one another. Therefore, at a personal and communal level, religions have to strengthen connection rather than stress idle conformity to some inflexible, collective system. They have to elevate the personal relationship between the human being and his Creator. If this is the main focus of religions, they can stifle purposeful provocations that are trying to divide our society and nation. Moreover, religious tolerance, which has shown an alarming declining trend in Indonesia during the last decade, will be more easily realized.

The young Indonesians in the 1920s realized that unity is the crucial step in achieving independence, it is also the first step in building a better Indonesia. A strong nation can only be built if all diverse elements in the nation—whether by religion, ethnicity, or race, are willing to associate, assemble, and cooperate with one another for the good of the country.

The first six chapters further discuss these issues.

### "A Tolerance of Informed Dissent"

When it comes to democracy, we have a lot of things to cheer for. After all, albeit still fledgling, Indonesia is the third largest democracy in the world after India and the United States. Despite having been ruled for almost 30 years by a dictatorial regime, we

have somehow managed to pass through the transition from the authoritarian rule to democracy, without a major setback.

Perhaps the most laudable experience was the 2004, general elections. About 155 million voters chose their representatives for local, regional, and the national parliament. The voter participation was over 80 percent, making it the largest one-day election in world history. On its front-page article in Sept. 17, 2004, the *Wall Street Journal* described it as a flourishing democracy. Only within 10 years since the fall of the dictatorship, Indonesia has become one of the most democratic countries in Asia. According to the *Economist*, Indonesia is ranked 65<sup>th</sup> in the 2006 Democracy Index, better than Malaysia (rank 81<sup>st</sup>), Singapore (84<sup>th</sup>), Thailand (90<sup>th</sup>), and slightly lower than Philippines (63<sup>rd</sup>).

But it is too soon to be overly optimistic and expect that we will quickly advance to a full-fledged democracy. We are still facing a lot of challenges and problems in promoting our democracy. Three of them, I consider to be major. The first is the lack of freedoms and the lack of understanding it.

The rise of our democracy offers a chance to move us closer to our ideals of justice and equality for everyone. Unless we somehow discover a new governing system that can guarantee a full liberty and justice for all, democracy, for better or worse, is still our best choice; however, we need to be cautious. The danger in newly-democratized country such as ours is that we may tend to believe that democracy is an ideal governing system that will solve all of our social and economic ills. When it fails to do so, due to government's incompetency or excessive politicking, people may get frustrated and disappointed and resort to violence.

The recent demonstration in Medan to protest the slow process and the politicking of the proposal for the establishment of Tapanuli province that has led to the death of North Sumatra's legislative speaker is an example. We have also seen the every-so-

often street rallies in Jakarta. Not surprisingly, Vice President Jusuf Kalla in June, 2008 stated, "Our system, which is too democratic, with too much individual freedom that often disregards the rights of others, has made it difficult for us to build infrastructure."<sup>iii</sup>

Nothing is wrong with protests and street rallies. I am not against them. But if we do it whenever we disagree with our government's policies or those of foreign governments, it is probably already too much. And when some of them have ended in violence, including rioting the House of Representatives' sessions, that's the point at which we should start asking, are all of them worthy? We don't want our democracy to be a blind unit behind a common cause. But we don't want any dissent to end up in violence and social chaos. Our democracy should be inspired by a tolerance of informed dissent.

Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Freedom is priceless, but not free. And democratic values embody the ideals that the demand for freedom is as important as the willingness to respect others and that preserving social harmony is superior to creating social disorder. Our right for freedom of expression is equally the same as our responsibility to safeguard that of other people. This is the subject discussed in Chapter 7, *Freedom or Free to Doom*.

The second challenge examined in Chapter 8, *Trust, Thrust, and Social Engine*, is about the lack of trust we have in each other as well as our government and our high state institutions. People have less trust in those who have different backgrounds (race and religion) from them. Whether we disagree or not, the minority and majority labels, which are widely used in our daily lives, are a divider, rather than a unifying notion.

When the recent surveys indicated that around 41 percent of Muslim respondents felt uncomfortable if their Christian neighbors worshipped, and more than 51 percent would reject the

efforts of their Christian neighbors to build a church in their community, we have a serious lack of trust in each other.

When we have 35 or more political parties (or could be much higher than that if not for the hard-work of the General Election Committee to rule out many tiny parties) contesting in the last three elections, we have a big deficit of trust in each other. To be sure, politics tend to be divisive, but reasonably, if there were a high degree of trust among us, we would probably not have 35 or more political parties competing with each other. It was a waste of time, energy, and money.

Trust is a "substance" that can be the glue in a society. Studies have shown that trust not only underpins a nation's prosperity, but also positively promotes her democracy. Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone* blames the television for the lack of trust among Americans, which can hinder the country's democracy. It may be true, but it is also hard not to pay attention to the behavior of people from the extreme groups of the two ideologies, the extreme liberal left and the extreme conservative right, that tend to disparage and insult each other. I am not willing to bet my money that half of the liberal left will ever trust the conservative rights on vital issues to their country, such as security and social policies, and vice versa. This is certainly not healthy for the country. We may disagree on many issues and strongly defend our position accordingly; however, isn't it possible to do that in good faith and spirit that without resulting in distrust? Again, democracy should be based on tolerance of informed dissent.

Our lack of trust in government and high state institutions can be a problem as well. The legitimacy of political and administrative institutions and actors vital to the political process is based largely on trust. Paradoxically, an inherent part of any democracy is a "healthy distrust" or at least skepticism towards the powerful; however, too little trust in government and high state institutions can be problematic and hinder our democracy. In

2008, in a poll reported by Kompas, only 15% of the respondents believed that their representatives were working for public interest. A staggering 84% said that their representatives were not serious in doing their job to monitor the executive branch.

The third challenge, discussed in Chapter 9's *Leaders and Ladder*, is the lack of inspiring political and societal leaderships. If it is put in the context of an individual's growth stage, our democracy is still in the childhood stage. At that stage, it really needs role models, guidance, and inspiration. We need good leaders and politicians to give inspiration and be models to our people. Those leaders and politicians should be capable of leading a multi-ethnic and troubled country, showing the path to a better future, motivating people, and executing credible development plans.

As Indonesia grows in size and diversity (in terms of economy and population), fundamental disagreements over how to address any given issue are likely to grow even more intense. To avoid jamming over the policy decision process, the country needs leaders and politicians who know how to provide stability, to accommodate different points of view, and to build consensus in order to preserve and promote the Indonesian Dream. That is what they do: to function and enhance democracy. They make democratic government possible in a nation that is filled with competing interests and they make the country work. That's why we need more good leaders and politicians these days.

### "All Prosperity Begins in the Mind"

In 2007, a group of businesspeople, academicians and government officials presented a document called *Indonesian Vision 2030*, to President Yudhoyono. In it, they set an ambitious target of transforming Indonesia into one of the world's major powers in 2030, joining the ranks of major economies after China, India, the

United States and the European Union. To be concrete, Indonesia's per capita income, according to the group's target, would be \$18,000 by 2030. But there is one problem: Too many "ifs."

Currently, our per capita income is around \$3,200 (adjusted for the cost of living or Purchasing Power Parity—PPP). We are ranked at 141<sup>st</sup> among 208 countries. With per capita income of \$18,000 and assuming all current countries' per capita income is growing at the same rate as ours, we will jump to rank 46 among the same number of countries. That's a heck of an achievement, which unfortunately, is more a dream than a reality.

The fundamental objective in building a prosperous nation is not to increase the nation's annual per capita income from \$3,200 to \$18,000 or to any number. Imagine if we wake up in the morning and suddenly discover that our per capita income has increased by six-fold. If our government is still doing business as usual, our politicians are still operating in the same way, our businesspeople are doing nothing differently, our society still behaves in the same way, and we still have the same attitude toward others who are different from us, I don't think the increased income has any meaning at all, except that we can buy more goods and services. And that, in itself, will not last long.

Building a prosperous nation means transforming the nation's outlook, mindset, spirit, and way of doing things. Business as usual will only give us mediocre performance.

Japan and the United States did not suddenly wake up and find their per capita income were among the highest in the world. It took the hard-work of the countries' citizens for centuries, or at least more than several decades, to reach their current level of development. In fact, the average growth rate of the US' per capita income is roughly 2 percent during the last century. We may dream of having \$18,000 per capita income in 2030, but for god's sake, that will require an average growth rate of per capita

income of roughly 8.6 percent per year for the next 21 years! It is a tough to impossible job, especially because we are not the only country competing in this world.

In fact, we live in the most competitive era of the world's history. Competition is the buzzword. In the business world, success is measured by how competitive a company in the market is. This is also true in sports, politics, and in the context of nations as well. In the latter, the trend is increasingly clear: A more intense competition among nations. Various global regulations that have been intensively promoted during the last few decades, from free trade to financial liberalization, are all aimed at enhancing competition among nations. We may choose to complain, blame other nations for our failure and refuse to partake in the competition at our peril. Or, we jump to the arena with well and confident preparations.

The economic activities that produce competitive societies are socially embedded in complex organizational contexts, which are called "firms." In other words, competitive firms will produce a competitive nation. Michael Porter, the well-known expert on the subject of competition argues that it is firms, not nations, that compete in the global market.<sup>iv</sup> It is Boeing vs. Airbus or Ford Motor vs. Toyota and other Japanese auto producers who compete. The US as a nation is not fighting against the nations of the European Union or Japan. Firms are the key actors that compete unrelentingly with each other to win markets for their products. This competition forces them to invest constantly in the development of new products or better production technologies. It is this unrelenting competition that has transformed the global economy.

Japan is a good example. Odagiri, the author of *Growth Through Competition, Competition Through Growth: Strategic Management and the Economy in Japan*, observed that competition is at the center of the Japanese economy and the core of Japanese

management is a growth pursuit by the intensive competition within and among Japanese firms.<sup>v</sup> This is also consistent with Porter's findings that vigorous domestic rivalry is one of the keys to the creation and persistence of competitive advantage in a nation's industry. In other words, competitive firms are the product of a competitive business environment.

Stable political, legal, and social institutions and sound macroeconomic policies create the potential for improving national prosperity; however, wealth is actually created at the microeconomic level. It is determined by the ability of firms to create valuable goods and services.

But firms are a combination of men, machine, and management, which center on men. It is the men (people), not machines that really matter. This implies something fundamental: competitive firms are created by competitive individuals. Microsoft was created by the competitive Bill Gates and Paul Allen. So was Apple by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. And those competitive individuals, just like the competitive firms, are likely to be found in a competitive environment or trained to be competitive.

As a nation is comprised by individual citizens, competitive citizens give birth to a competitive nation. Likewise, prosperous citizens produce a prosperous nation. If you put all star soccer players in one team, they will form a great and winning soccer team, provided that they have a solid teamwork. The approach in building a prosperous country is the same. We pay close attention to individuals, we support them, encourage them, and inculcate them with values and, in turn, those creative, confident, and competitive individuals will build their country. The United States is a classic example of a developed country built by individuals. Railroads, electricity, telephones, cars, airplanes, computers, and all kinds of things we currently use in our daily lives were all created by American individual inventors and innovators. Thomas

Edison, Alexander Bell, and Henry Ford are three names that come to mind.

Why are there so many poor and unemployed people in our country? Why is there so much crime? Why is there so much corruption, collusion, and nepotism? Why are we so suspicious of our fellow citizens who happen to have a different background from us? Is it because of our government? We can't blame the government for all bad things that happen to our nation unless we want the government to do everything for us. If we don't, then we can't have it both ways.

The point is, the government is made of people like you and me. To a large extent, the government is a representation of society. If government's officials are incompetent, maybe we are as well. If government's officials are corrupt, most likely we are living in a corrupt society as well. We must stop thinking that the government is the source and the solution to all of our nation's problems. Let's not be fooled by thinking that the nation's future is entirely at the government's hand. It is true that government remains the key enabler in creating a propitious business and economic environment. But the frontline of economic wealth creation lies with firms, which in turn, rely on individuals. And as individuals, there is so much more we can do for ourselves and our society.

While our individual contribution is minuscule and seemingly insignificant, each of us can actually make a difference. The tiny bit of hard-work we put in to it today may show up someday and somewhere for the good of ourselves and our country. We must strive to be competitive citizens who can cope creatively and effectively with the increasingly complex national and global problems. This is the subject of Chapter 10's *It's All in the Mind*.

How do we promote competitive citizens?

First, you cannot be a winner if you think you are a loser. Perception is a reality. So, we need individuals who possess

constructive and positive mindsets, the ones that don't always blame others for their failures; that think and believe that their actions significantly contribute to their success or failure; that have the mentality to fight and compete with others. The confident individuals. This is necessary. To be sufficient, we need them to be competitive, capable of thinking through complex problems and doing scientific discoveries. Here comes the knowledge. We need a society that is hungry for knowledge.

But, ours is still far from it—yet. Reading books has not yet been a main interest in our society, let alone writing. Even professors and teachers at universities and colleges have limited writing skills. The number of books published per year is very low. Most books in our bookstores are children books, comics, or “Chicken Soup-”type books. As a number of publishers told me, there is nothing they can do. Those are the books that can generate profits.

Our libraries are too few and their stocks of books are very limited. Our culture is not an expressive culture and our education does not really encourage students to write and express their thoughts systematically. The challenge is, how can we promote a learning and reading culture—a knowledgeable society? It is difficult to expect scientific discoveries without mastering advanced reading, thinking, and writing.

This challenge, discussed in Chapter 11 *Knowledgeable Society*, is even more imperative as we live in a virtual world today. When developed countries move from a printing knowledge to a virtual knowledge, there is only a little shock. Most of the information stored virtually on the Internet has been available in printing format. That's not the case with our country. When we are presented with virtual knowledge, we experience a significant shock. We need to find our way to overcome this deficit while improving other areas substantially. For instance, there is a need to launch a continual, national campaign to promote reading

culture and book publishing. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese translated numerous books to absorb and learn the western advancements. By combining the western advancements with their traditional "eastern" values, their goal was to promote a strong Japan.

Our prosperity is not merely about wealth and number. More importantly, it is about people. We strive to promote competitive and confident individuals—people. Unfortunately, when we talk about subjects of economic development, we often talk about numbers—investment capital, savings, exports, imports, and GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Human beings, who in fact are also the planners of development, become a mere abstraction and we tend to treat these as almost residual elements. In the process, we forget the dictum that we cannot plan for something (people) if we start with imperfect knowledge about it (them).

We need to integrate people into our development programs. This should bring some fundamental implications into our economic plan. It would start with human accounting. What is the profile of our human resources: their education levels, skills, income distribution and health conditions? What are our cultural and social values that motivate people to pursue a better life—the Indonesian Dream? This is the subject of Chapter 12, *Men Matter Most*.

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## Introduction

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- <sup>iii</sup> [Democracy & Asian Values](http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1336/democracy-asian-values/#footnote-1336-1). <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/1336/democracy-asian-values/#footnote-1336-1>
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- <sup>v</sup> Hiroyuki Odagiri, 1997. *Growth through Competition, Competition through Growth: Strategic Management and the Economy in Japan*. Clarendon Press.