

A Testimonial for Steering a Middle Course

By Dr Siti Nurbaya Bakar, Minister of the Environment and Forestry of Indonesia (2014–)

The period between 1948 and 1988 was noteworthy in the post-independence history of Indonesia, a period rife in political, economic and social upheavals. Examining the available literature on the period, we are presented with an array of opinions and interpretations on the expositions of great ideas for the nation and on those who carried them out.



This book is one such undertaking; narrated in a communicative way that truly evokes the atmosphere of the period described by Sarwono Kusumaatmadja, replete with acute observations and first-rate wit. What impressed me most was how Sarwono's childhood and teenage years—coupled with the family values instilled in him and the multitude of life's challenges overcome through perseverance, creativity and resolve—made him the man he is.

The journey of the republic between 1948 and 1988 was crucial in laying the foundation for the young nation-state. For Sarwono, who was born in 1943, the period was unique as it corresponded with his

own formative years and his growing maturity as an individual.

What is compelling about *Steering a Middle Course* is how the great events of national importance have been translated into how they affected the many, resulting in a very down-to-earth and tangible narrative. Another distinguishing factor is that not only was Sarwono a witness to the political events and the modern development of Indonesia but he was an active participant in them.

To date, even in retirement, Mas Sarwono continues to be in public service through, among other things, his role as chairman of the national Advisory Board on the Management of Climate Change. His role has shifted from being at the forefront to being in the background, encouraging and counselling the younger generations by interacting with them.

How Mas Sarwono has reached this milestone is also what this book is all about. It is my personal hope that, in time, *Steering a Middle Course* will be followed by another memoir covering the period between 1988 up to the present time. The great changes that have taken place in Indonesia since 1989 were no less interesting or less dramatic than the earlier period in our history. To Mas Sarwono, I convey my congratulations on the release of his memoir *Steering a Middle Course*.

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