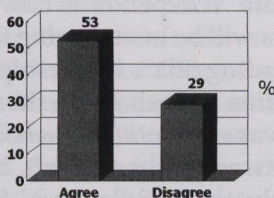


Detecting the people's mood:
 dream of a stronger leader
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Some people say, "This democratic govt. is too weak. We need a strong leader like Soeharto, who can make decisions and restore order, even if it reduces rights and freedoms." Would you agree or disagree? Strongly or somewhat?



The second reason for the dissatisfaction with Megawati is very important too. Here you see the figures from 2003 regarding the public's desire for a strong leader. This was as well a long-term trend, as we see here that over a year ago people felt they needed a stronger leader. This doesn't mean they want an autocratic leader or they want Soeharto again, but they wanted somebody more decisive, stronger, and more able to act. The question was: "some people say this democratic government is weak and we need a stronger leader like Soeharto who can make decisions and restore order even if it reduces rights and freedoms - would you agree or disagree?" 53% said they agree. Now of course the answers you get depend on how you pose the question, but to put this simply, people thought Megawati was weak, indecisive, and unable to communicate ideas clearly to people. This doesn't mean that people accept the "zero sum" game of politics; if you give them freedom, they will have a weak government, and if you give them a strong government, they will have less freedom. Well, freedom and democracy are not incompatible. In fact they strengthen each other. You can only have freedom if you have a strong government in the sense that the government should be able to enact and implement law.

So what's coming? The new politics? A fragmented Parliament, yes. Before there were only five major players, now there are seven. And there will be more complex interactions in the Parliament. And you have, perhaps I should call it, a super-minority government. Usually, if you have 30% support and you make up a government, you are called a minority government. But in this case, the party that supports the incoming president gained only 7% of the popular vote. Admittedly, he was also supported by PKS (8%) and PPP (2%), but