Unity through Division

Indonesia, like many other countries around the world, is currently experiencing a process of democratic backsliding, marked by a toxic mix of religious sectarianism, polarization and executive overreach. Despite this trend, Indonesians have become more, rather than less, satisfied with their country's democratic practice. What accounts for this puzzle? *Unity through Division* examines an overlooked aspect of democracy in Indonesia: political representation. In this country, an ideological cleavage between pluralism and Islamism has long characterized political competition. This cleavage, while divisive, has been a strength of Indonesia's democracy, giving meaning to political participation and allowing a degree of representation not often observed in young democracies. While the recent resurgence of radical Islam and political polarization in Indonesian politics may have contributed to democratic erosion, these factors have simultaneously clarified political alternatives and improved perceptions of representation, in turn bolstering democratic participation and satisfaction. This compelling book effectively challenges the wisdom on the role of Islam in Indonesian political life and provides a fresh analysis for debates on democratic backsliding in Indonesia and beyond.

DIEGO FOSSATI is Assistant Professor in the Department of Public and International Affairs at City University of Hong Kong. He studies political behavior, accountability and representation, especially in the context of Southeast Asia.

Unity through Division

Political Islam, Representation and Democracy in Indonesia

DIEGO FOSSATI

City University of Hong Kong

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

A Rita

Contents

Contents

Contents   ix

Figures

xii   *List of Figures*

Tables

Acknowledgments

This book is the product of several years of research on Indonesian politics, and I have many to thank for their support. I owe my first debt of gratitude to the Department of Government at Cornell University, whose nurturing and supportive environment enabled me to develop as a scholar with a strong egalitarian ethos and a drive to produce meaningful social research. I am especially thankful to my advisor, Tom Pepinsky, for teaching me how to write and for his years of guidance and patience with my unsophisticated ideas. Ken Roberts and Nicolas Van de Walle were also exceptionally supportive and helpful, ensuring that I had the best possible experience as a graduate student. I feel immensely privileged to have been part of this community.

I started working on this book at the ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, where I was appointed as a visiting fellow shortly after graduating from Cornell. I am deeply grateful to ISEAS for generously funding the Indonesian National Survey Project and for trusting a young scholar like me to supervise the project's implementation. It was a pleasure to work alongside my colleagues in the Indonesia Study Group, especially Hui Yew-Foong and Siwage Dharma Negara, in designing the survey and drafting a report of its findings.

After leaving ISEAS, I found another welcoming community at the Centre for Governance and Public Policy (CGPP) at Griffith University, which provided crucial support for a number of survey projects, on which part of this book is based. At the CGPP, I was able to rely on a strong research culture and support from an outstanding group of like-minded colleagues, which made my time there a rewarding intellectual experience. Ferran Martinez i Coma, Duncan McDonnell, Lee Morgenbesser and

Annika Werner provided insightful guidance for my early analysis of substantive representation in Indonesia. My supervisor, Haig Patapan, gently but persistently encouraged me to write a book based on my research, something I wasn't sure I could ever accomplish.

During my time in Australia, I also had an opportunity to network and work with some exceptional scholars of Indonesian politics. Collaborating with Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, Burhan Muhtadi and Eve Warburton helped me develop a new research agenda based on political Islam and voting behavior. I am especially thankful to Eve for reading the introductory chapter of what would have otherwise been a very different book and for letting me know that it was terrible, and to Ed, without whose generosity this book would not exist.

I wrote the book while serving as an assistant professor in the Department of Asian and International Studies (AIS) at City University of Hong Kong. These last few years have been challenging for all, but I found that my department was the perfect place to write this book, thanks to colleagues and friends such as Toby Carroll, Renaud Egreteau, Claudia Kim, Dan Lynch, Tom Patton, Jaemin Shim, Mark Thompson, Linda Tjia, Brad Williams and Jun Zhang. This project was also supported by Hong Kong's University Grant Committee's Early Career Scheme (ECS) grant 21603520. I am grateful to Jenika Huang for her research assistance, which was funded by this ECS grant.

At Cambridge University Press, Sara Doskow recognized the potential of my project, and John Haslam, Rachel Blaifeder and Jadyn Fauconier-Herry helped to ensure its smooth implementation. I am very grateful to each of them. In addition, feedback from two anonymous reviewers was instrumental in improving my book.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the support that I received from my family while completing this project and throughout my academic career. I am most grateful to my wife, Junxiu, for filling my life with endless love and joy. She gave me the focus I needed to write this book, and her support and grace kept me motivated and sane during difficult times.

Lastly, I owe a long-standing debt of gratitude to Rita, Mariantonia and Eugenia, the women who raised me. They made sacrifices to enable me to grow and thrive, and it is only thanks to their support that I have been able to fulfill my professional aspirations. Above all, I am grateful to my mother, who taught me the value of education, the nobility of persevering despite adversity and the importance of being honest and kind. This book is for her.