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Introduction: Indonesia and Critical Democracy

INDONESIA'S DEMOCRATIC HISTORY

Democratic participation by Indonesian citizens in choosing members of Parliament, provincial and local legislatures, the president and regional executives is still a rare event in modern Indonesian history. The first parliamentary election was held in 1955, about ten years after the proclamation of Indonesian independence, and was judged democratic by observers (Feith 1957). When Parliament was dissolved in 1959 by decree of Indonesia's founding father, President Sukarno, returning the country to its Revolution-era 1945 Constitution, the era of parliamentary democracy was over.

Under the 1945 Constitution, the formal governmental system combined elements of parliamentarism and presidentialism. In this mixed system, sovereign authority was held by a People's Consultative Assembly (MPR, Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat). The president as head of state and government was selected by and responsible to the Assembly. After dissolving parliamentary democracy, President Sukarno labeled the mixed governmental system Guided Democracy, but it was in fact a form of authoritarianism. During Guided Democracy, there were no elections.

President Sukarno was removed from power in 1966 by Army General Suharto, whose authoritarian New Order government ruled for the following thirty-two years. A second parliamentary election was held in 1971. Elections were then held quinquennially under Suharto's New Order regime until 1997, but did not fulfill basic democratic conditions (Anderson 1996; Liddle 1996a, 1996b). They were instead a mechanism

for political mobilization and legitimation by which the New Order sought to justify its own continuation. Through the electoral domination of the state party Golkar (Golongan Karya, Functional Groups), the Suharto government tried to demonstrate that its authoritarianism was supported by a popular majority. Because the New Order manipulated these elections, however, we cannot use the results to measure regime support or to assess the characteristics of the Indonesian voter.

Suharto resigned in May 1998 and was succeeded, following the Constitution, by his vice president, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie. A top priority of the Habibie government was to hold, within a short time, a new general election that fulfilled genuine democratic norms. Just over one year later, in June 1999, this demand was realized. Most observers and participants agreed that this election was conducted democratically. Political rights to hold opinions and to associate were recognized and protected for all citizens. Indonesians were free to form, join, and support the political parties of their choice. There was freedom for party leaders to campaign, mobilize, and influence citizens. Like mushrooms in the rainy season, hundreds of new parties were born, though in the end only 48 were awarded a place on the ballot by the independent General Election Commission (KPU, Komisi Pemilihan Umum).

The parliamentary elections of 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and the 2004, 2009, and 2014 direct presidential elections, like the parliamentary election of 1955, can be used to measure the extent to which the government was supported by the people. Unlike Suharto's manipulated New Order elections, all of these post-Suharto elections have been genuinely democratic and thus suitable for examination by political scientists who study comparative modern democratic voting behavior (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 1999, 2005, 2010, 2015; National Democratic Institute 1999, 2004).

CRITICAL DEMOCRATS

Indonesian democracy is less than two decades old and still in the process of consolidation (Liddle and Mujani 2013; Linz and Stepan 1996). Constitutionally, the preconditions of democracy were achieved by a series of amendments to the Constitution adopted between 1999 and 2002. Attitudinally, as measured by public opinion polls, most Indonesians quickly came to regard democracy as the best form of government for themselves. Behaviorally, most conflicts among citizens are now resolved through the democratic process.

It is true that within Indonesia some have questioned the democraticness of post-New Order elections as well. The 1999 election was marred by the failure of the General Election Commission to officially confirm its results. Then-President B. J. Habibie took over the process, declaring that the election was over and confirming that its results were legitimate. Habibie's action, in accordance with the election law, saved the country from uncertainty, even though at the time his own party, Partai Golkar (Functional Groups Party), the old state party under the authoritarian New Order, had been soundly defeated by PDIP (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, Indonesian Democracy Party of Struggle), the main opposition party at the time, led by Megawati Sukarnoputri. In so doing, Habibie performed a considerable service for a democratizing Indonesia.

The 1999 election was closely watched from abroad because it marked the first general election since the overthrow of Suharto's authoritarianism. Foreign observers and commentators generally agreed that the 1999 election was conducted democratically. The democraticness of subsequent parliamentary and presidential elections has been more problematic, certainly in the view of defeated parties and politicians, but also to nonpartisan observers, especially Indonesians. Much of their criticism has been aimed at the General Election Commission, though they have failed to provide enough evidence to convince the respected Mahkamah Konstitusi (Constitutional Court) (Samadhi and Warouw 2009; Aspinall and Mietzner 2010; Hadiz 2010; Winters 2011).

Less disputed has been the concern, which the authors share, that in terms of civil liberties, especially the freedom to hold and practice religious beliefs, Indonesia is not yet fully free. In this Muslim-majority country, the Muslim world's largest and its longest established democracy, "National and local governments have repeatedly failed to protect religious minorities from violence and discrimination, and exhibited bias in investigations and prosecutions" (Freedom House 2016). The lack of religious freedom has become one of the most important sources of citizen dissatisfaction not with democracy itself as a principle but with its practice. The Constitution clearly guarantees freedom of religion but state authorities have often failed to implement it.

In addition to the religious issue, prodemocracy Indonesian citizens have many other concerns about democratic performance, which will be described and analyzed in the chapters to follow. It is these individuals whom we label critical democrats.

A POLITICAL ECONOMY EXPLANATION

What are the sources of the emergence of critical democrats? In *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited* (2011), Pippa Norris begins by asking if contemporary democratic states are "experiencing a major legitimacy crisis?" (p. 3). The question arises because of extensive empirical evidence, from the United States and other postindustrial societies, of low or falling voter turnout and declining party loyalties, widely accepted indicators of civic disengagement. Indonesia, though only a democracy since 1999, is also experiencing falling turnout and declining loyalties.

Norris' answer, based on the analysis of fifty countries worldwide, is measured. She begins by showing that, "contrary to the prevalent view, *public support for the political system has not eroded consistently across a wide range of countries around the world* . . . " (her italics, here and below). Nonetheless, "*in many countries today, satisfaction with the performance of democracy diverges from public aspirations*," a condition that she labels a "democratic deficit."

In her earlier work, *Critical Citizens* (1999), Norris had identified "the phenomenon of 'critical citizens.' This group aspires to democracy as their ideal form of government, yet at the same time they remain deeply skeptical when evaluating how democracy works in their own country" (p. 5). In the Indonesian case, we have also found significant evidence for a democratic deficit and for critical citizens, whom we label "critical democrats."

Finally, "*The most plausible potential explanations for the democratic deficit suggest that this phenomenon arises from some combination of growing public expectations, negative news, and/or falling government performance*" (p. 5).

In the Indonesian case, we believe that a political economy explanation, based on voters' evaluations of government performance in an era of growing public expectations, best fits our data. It is superior to the two main alternatives in comparative electoral behavior theory, the sociological and psychological models, whose variables we also include in our surveys and analysis in this book. According to the sociological model, voting behavior is determined by such characteristics as social class, religion, and ethnic/regional/linguistic affiliation. In the case of Indonesia, these variables have changed little in the nearly two decades of democracy, but support for democracy has been relatively dynamic and the partisan map has changed dramatically. Every national election has

given birth to new parties with significant support, indeed to the extent that the dominant party has changed every time! In 1999 PDIP was the top vote-getter, while five years later it was Golkar, supplanted by Partai Demokrat in 2009, and finally PDIP again in 2014. The same is true for presidential candidates. The social background of successful presidential candidates has varied from election to election, while the social factors themselves have remained relatively constant.

Psychological factors, especially those connected with party identification or party ID, are also poor explainers of Indonesian behavior. In the literature, the concept of party ID was conceived to explain why patterns of party support were relatively stable over long periods of time as had been experienced in the US (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960), not to explain rapid changes in party voting as has occurred in democratic Indonesia.

In contrast, the political economy model claims that political attitudes and behavior such as democratic support, voting, and partisan choice are much affected by the dynamism of political economy factors. We believe this model best explains the very dynamic patterns of change in regime support and performance, voting, and partisan choice that we have observed.

Support for democracy is influenced by evaluations of democratic performance that are in turn shaped by governmental performance, especially connected to the economy. Voting is affected by voter calculation, and partisan choice is explained by the assessment of incumbent performance and current economic condition.[1] We see these evaluations as the best explanation for the emergence of critical democrats in Indonesia, which take the form of critical assessments of democratic performance, declining voter turnout, and openness to change in partisan choice.

Why has voting turnout declined, why has identification with parties or party ID not strengthened, why is party choice not stable, why are there more and more parties, and why are presidential candidates only loosely associated with parties? These are the questions that this book answers with the argument that Indonesians are critical democrats, an argument that depends heavily on a political economy or rational choice explanation.

[1] The classic rational choice theorists are Downs (1957), Olson (1965), and Riker and Ordeshook (1968). More recently, Fiorina (1981), Kiewiet (1984), and Lewis-Beck (1998) have introduced measures for voters to evaluate their own and the national economic condition, both retrospectively and prospectively.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 offers citizen evaluations of Indonesian democracy in general, introducing the argument that in the fifteen years between democratization and our most recent surveys, Indonesians have become critical democrats. This chapter constitutes the foundation for the following chapters, assessing whether the elections held to date are or are not accorded democratic legitimacy by the citizenry. In addition, we offer in this chapter an analysis of the prospects for Indonesian democracy, seen from the citizens' point of view. Factors that may help strengthen or weaken democracy are explored through analysis of the attitudes and behavior of the citizens themselves.

Chapter 3 presents the historical context of Indonesian voting behavior, covering both the level of participation in parliamentary and presidential elections and the choice of parties and candidates for Parliament and candidates for the presidency. Our examination of this behavior is placed in comparative party theory, macroinstitutional political, and historical contexts.

Chapter 4 offers an analysis of the extent to which sociological factors influence Indonesian voting behavior. Principal attention is given to three factors: religion, ethnicity and regionalism, and social class. These three factors have long been regarded as highly significant, if not central, to understanding Indonesian voting behavior by most scholars as well as political practitioners. We attempt to evaluate their importance in a more systematic way. At the end of this chapter we discuss the limitations of the model for explaining the behavior of a relatively dynamic electorate in a sociologically relatively stable country.

Chapter 5 analyzes how rational or political economy factors help explain the relatively rapid changes in Indonesian voting patterns. Attention is focused on perceptions: concerning participation in elections as an obligation, concerning the purpose of participating in elections, concerning the probability that the party or candidate of one's choice is likely to win or lose, and concerning the probability that others will not participate in elections. All these perceptions are evaluated as to the extent to which they can explain citizens' choices to vote in a parliamentary or presidential election. To explain party or candidate choice, we look at evaluations of the condition of the economy and the performance of the government. To what extent do these factors explain political choices in the parliamentary and presidential elections?

At the end of Chapter 5 we raise the possibility that voters' rationality is shaped by psychological factors. Chapter 6 presents the results of our research on these factors. We focus on the exposure of the voter to political advertising through the mass media, the level of identification of the voter with a political party (party ID) and his or her evaluation of the personal qualities of party leaders and presidential candidates. The results of our multivariate analysis, incorporating sociological, psychological, and rational factors, are reported in this chapter to demonstrate the extent to which the influence of those factors remains significant, allowing us to reach some conclusions about which are more or less important and more or less directly influence voting behavior.

Chapter 7 recapitulates our most important findings and discusses their significance for our understanding of Indonesian voting behavior and Indonesia's place in the literature on comparative voting behavior. Hopefully, the study also has practical value, providing input to policy makers concerned to improve the quality of democratic life in Indonesia and in democracies elsewhere.