

Struggle to Gain Representation: Mixed Politics in Democratising Indonesia

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Abstract

Democratisation in post-Suharto Indonesia has significantly improved political participation, lifting expectation of bringing better political representation. However, various studies prove that such representation is unable to be immediately achieved since the existing democratic institutions remain dominated by oligarchic groups. The societal struggle to gain representation, therefore, is increasingly becoming a critical issue in contemporary Indonesian politics. This article discusses the dynamics of such struggle through the strategy that we have developed and called 'mixed politics'. This refers to the blurring of borders between civil and political society, as well as formal and informal institutions.

Introduction

The failure of Suharto's centralised and authoritarian government to bring peace and prosperity has raised public demand for a better future for Indonesia through democratisation. Following the popular movement which, in 1998, forced Suharto to step down as president, the gate for democratisation has opened. The trajectory toward democracy is clearly shown in the liberalisation policies passed by the government in the initial period of political reform. Ranging from freedom of expression, freedom to organise and the staging of free and fair election, the policies have made it possible for Indonesians to gain a wider space in which to have their say and opinions heard. Mass media is more critical and free to publish or broadcast any matters concerning governance processes. Meanwhile, independent societal organisations have also popped

up in many areas. Of the most significant achievements in the development of Indonesian democracy has been the development of freer and fairer elections held in 1999, and subsequently followed in 2004 and 2009.

Indeed, procedural democracy in Indonesia has been strongly developed. Post-1998 elections have become important devices in Indonesian politics, allowing the people to get involved. Political parties and the legislature have also played a central role in influencing public policy and politics at both the national and local levels. Significant interest toward this growing new phenomenon has been dedicated by political researchers and commentators. Many recent works on democratic transitions in Indonesia have focused on the issues of procedural democracy and societal movements. We can see that studies on intermediary institutions, such as political parties, elections and civil society organisations, have mushroomed. Those works pay much attention to the emergence of competitive elections and the strengthening of societal organisations.

Some studies conclude that Indonesian democracy is becoming more stable than in the initial stage of the reform, as demonstrated by the fact that the majority of voters have come down strongly on the side of the reform-oriented forces (Douglas, 2006). Some observers also believe that Indonesia has done exceptionally well in consolidating democracy (MacIntyre and Ramage, 2008 as cited by Aspinall and Mietzner, 2010). Other works, however, contend that Indonesia's new procedural democracy is now less consolidated and is not guided by effective government nor rule of law (Freedman, 2007), stemming from its recent history as an authoritarian state (Chadwick, 2006). Moreover, some scholars see that despite important institutional reforms, democratic change has been superficial. They argue that core structures of power have remained unchanged, with old oligarchic elites continuing to use the state and electoral processes for rent-seeking purposes (Robison and Hadiz, 2004).

Other studies also show that political reform provides fertile ground in which civil society can develop. Civil society organisations are now more active and dynamic in channeling societal interests. They have been effective in scrutinising government budgets, uncovering corruption scandals, and advocating urgently needed policies (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2010). In addition, civil society, especially non-government organisations (NGOs), has been seen mostly as a catalyst for democratisation (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2010).

Despite the growing attention toward intermediary institutions as well as societal movements in post-1998 studies, studies on the role and dynamics of the state have also grown. This is due to the fact that the state has altered from being a single, atomic, and

closed actor, to being immersed in an arena where any actor can compete to gain control over it. The political reform has opened up the state and made it a contested arena. Consequently, this has blurred the separation between state, civil society, political society, and economic society. It is now difficult to clearly define the borders between these entities as they now all enter into the same arena – that of the state.

In terms of democratisation, the recent liberalisation of the Indonesian political system has raised another question: how do the under-represented groups gain political access? Recent years have seen a growing phenomenon in which political space and opportunities are dominated by elites while, at the same time, under-represented groups are left politically marginalised. Moreover, political institutions and systems are still poor and ineffective (Pratikno, 2009a). This situation has forced many political actors to expand their strategies in an effort to achieve wider and deeper representation.

This article argues that the struggle of political actors to gain representation by expanding their strategies has blurred the boundaries between state, civil society and political society. Civil society activists do not limit themselves on using civil society way in influencing the state, instead try to support their political candidate or even to run on election. While this indicate the expansion of strategies to gain representation, these efforts may bring both positive and negative implications for Indonesian democracy. On the one hand, the expansion of these strategies can be viewed as a way for political actors to deal with poor political representation and improve the quality of democracy. On the other hand, this approach could potentially lead to more complicated problems for Indonesian democracy, especially by opening up the possibility of non-democratic actors to hijack democratic institutions.

The contribution of the efforts to deepen democracy is still difficult to assess. Nevertheless, more attention should be paid to the ways in which societal groups access the state – particularly those groups located on the blurred border between civil society, economic society, political society – as well as the implications for democratisation. Institutionalisation of this strategy may lead to posing a methodological question of how political science treats the separation of civil and political societies.

From closed to open state

Attention on the state has been the focus of Indonesian political studies for a long time. Studies on the centralised and authoritarian Suharto regime have been dominated discussions on the state as an atomic and closed institution. The New Order state has, therefore, been regarded as a powerful actor which determined political and economic trajectories.

A range of labels have been given to the regime – from, but not limited to, a ‘bureaucratic polity’, ‘bureaucratic authoritarianism’, and to ‘corporatist state’. One of the most popular labels for the New Order state was that of bureaucratic polity, which was developed in the work of Karl Jackson (1978). Bureaucratic polity refers to a system in which a limited group of senior bureaucrats, technocrats, and military officers participate in authoritative decision making. The policy outcome tends to reflect the interests and values of this relatively closed and elite group. According to this view, competition for real political power in Jakarta was restricted to the top bureaucratic and military echelons.

The concept of bureaucratic authoritarianism, which was initially introduced by Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, sought to explain authoritarianism in Latin America. According to Mochtar Mas’oed (1989), Indonesia’s bureaucratic authoritarianism was characterised by: (1) a government strongly controlled by a military which cooperated with civilian technocrats; (2) support for this system by oligopolistic entrepreneurs in cooperation with international business; (3) policy making dominated by bureaucratic and technocratic approaches to avoid a long bargaining process among interest groups; (4) depolitized masses; (5) use of violence and control of opposition by the government.

The centrality of the state in studies of the New Order is also shown through the idea of state corporatism (MacIntyre, 1994; Reeve, 1990). State corporatism was conducted through the channeling of political forces and interests into government-sponsored and government-controlled organisations. This was shown by the domination of the Golkar Party – the ruling party. Similarly, most of the official interest organisations had to be organised under the governmental umbrella. Through such arrangements, the New Order state could easily control societal organisations in order to maintain its domination. In Reeve’s study (1990), corporatist representation in modern Indonesia was seen as growing out of an integralist conception of the state and the ‘family principle’, or *kekeluargaan*. He argued that such principles were part of traditional Indonesian political thinking in which society was conceived as an organic entity under the integrating and benevolent leadership of the state.

All those labels – bureaucratic polity, bureaucratic authoritarianism, corporatist state, etc – provide a clear picture of how political scientists emphasised the role of the state in Indonesian politics. However, the strengthening of social movements in the mid 1990s had influenced a switch in the attention of many Indonesianists to instead focus on societal dynamics. We can witness how the academic discussions on civil society and social movement grew rapidly in this period. Among those who immersed

themselves in these studies were A.S. Hikam (1997), Phillip Eldridge (1989), Mansour Fakhri (1994), and Arief Budiman (1990). Their works have depicted the greater concerns of society at that time.

Open state, but oligarchic and hijacked

The peak in the attention toward society, especially political society and civil society, took place in the early stages of democratisation after 1998. The fall of Suharto marked the initial reform stage in Indonesian, in which political society and civil society were allowed to play a more significant role in politics. Following Suharto's fall, a strong determination to reform the ruling class structure was demonstrated through the establishment of a competitive multi-party system, as well as the implementation of decentralisation policy.

Political reform has brought a crucial transformation to Indonesia. And this, of course, is effecting change in the nature of Indonesian political study. Decentralisation, as well as elections and party-system reform, has altered the features of the state from being single, solid, and closed, to instead being more pluralistic, fluid, and open. The state can be accessed – or contested – by various actors. Interestingly, the field is not solely located at the national level, but is also dispersed at the local level where it involves more societal actors. Not surprisingly, as a result, more attention in the study of Indonesian politics after 1998 has been directed toward society.

The primacy of the society dimension in contemporary Indonesian studies is, in fact, influenced by increasing anti-state sentiment among citizens. The domination of the state for such a long time in everyday life has encouraged people to be more active in politics in order to minimise or even weaken the state. This sentiment has also been strengthened by the growing development of programmes by international donors which aim to reduce the state's roles and to empower society. The most apparent programme area is good governance, which primarily targets reforming of the state. This situation has, of course, created a tendency in post-1998 studies putting the state at the opposite side of the society. It also sets borders between them, earmarking them as different actors and in different arenas. This tendency is mirrored by the growing work on political participation, social movement, and civil society.

Despite of the growing attention of scholars toward societal factors, analysts who regard the state as an arena and those who consider it as a prominent actor hold a shared awareness that the state's role remains significant. Recent studies on Indonesian politics have treated the state as not merely an actor – in the like of the New Order period – but as an arena in which various actors

can get enter. For some observers, the importance of analysing the state can be traced from the elections and party-system reforms, and also decentralisation policies (see Robison and Hadiz, 2004; van Klinken, 2002). These reforms are seen as providing crucial entry points for political actors to transform the state.

In fact, those reforms have decentralised power horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, the policies aim to empower legislative bodies at the expense of the executive. Vertically, the central government is required to share its authority with local governments. These reforms have resulted in serious implications for political transformation within Indonesia. Political parties, competitive elections and parliaments have become vehicles, as well as arenas, for competing power among new and old political actors aiming to gain control over state. At the same time, decentralisation has spatially dispersed the field of contestation to the local level, where local elites play a more significant role in dragging power and resources. Such transformation makes the local scene a new and promising political field. Will this transformation result in Indonesia becoming more democratic?

A shared belief among many observers and agencies holds that there is a natural correlation between decentralisation and democracy. This is, for instance, propagated the World Bank and USAID. They argue that decentralisation will positively effect democratic development. It is an argument based on the belief that decentralisation offers the prospect of increased accountability to citizens and taxpayers through greater accessibility to decision making (World Bank, 2000 as cited by Devas, 2005: 1). Some scholars, including Smith (1985) and Wolman (1990), believe that decentralisation can enhance local democracy because it promotes: (1) *political values* through political education, political stability, enhanced quality of politicians, and political equality; (2) *governance values* through enhanced accountability, government responsiveness, improved decision making and inter-organisational coordination); (3) *efficiency values* through the promotion of competition derived from institutional pluralism (Smith and Wolman, as cited by Kulipossa, 2004). This argument, however, is debatable.

In fact, we can see that there is on occasion a problematic correlation between decentralisation and democratisation. In the case of Indonesia, political liberalisation has, to some extent, created problems of representation and access. Instead of creating a more democratic and representative politics at the local level, decentralisation provides a new arena of power for oligarchic alliances. Decentralisation is hijacked and manipulated by elites, hampering the development of substantive democracy, prosperity, and wide representation.

The dynamics of local politics in the era of decentralisation have mirrored those at the national level, both in terms of the essential predatory logic and in the appropriation of the institutions of democracy primarily by interests nurtured by the New Order (Hadiz, 2004). While important changes have occurred within local power structures, New Order-era bureaucrats have succeeded in re-establishing themselves as local chief executives. Indonesia's decentralisation is producing local governments that are more likely to be captured by elites than held accountable to local voters (Malley, 2003).

This article shows that even though the state has become more open and accessible, political liberalisation has allowed for old and new elites to capture new institutions and procedures. This has enabled them to maintain their power and gain political and economic influence. However, liberalisation has produced a difference in the nature of the old and recent oligarchy – that is in terms of its plurality. While in the New Order era the oligarchy was solid and singular in character, it is now more dispersed and combined with new actors/elites. Either at national or local level, the old elites and oligarchs are entering into all possible ways of maintaining their involvement in political processes (Robison and Hadiz, 2004).

Looking at the local level, these oligarchic elites can often be seen making use of local identity and violence to gain power. Local elites have used the opening of democratic space to dominate public discourse – especially when it comes to local pride. Van Klinken's work (2001) on the emerging role of local elites in post-authoritarian Indonesia has showed that post-New Order local politics as highly influenced by anti-democratic elites who have taken benefit from liberalisation. Local elites are at home in their surroundings because they are patrons to many poor clients. They exercise hegemony through numerous religious, political, regional, and occupational organisations (van Klinken, 2009). Borrowing a term used by Kanchan Chandra in India, Indonesian politics can be seen as *patronage democracy*.

At the national level, we can also see how political processes are dominated by both new and old elites. Having been the pillars of the New Order government, bureaucrats, military officers, and politicians have now re-organised their political and economic power within the new system. Two surveys conducted by Demos in 2004 and 2007 underlined this argument. By interviewing many pro-democracy actors in Indonesia, Demos' surveys found that those who were in power were mostly old and new elites from state and political society organisations – namely bureaucrats, public officials, politicians, and parliamentary members. The proportion counted for less than 60 per cent in the 2003-2004 survey and increased to 70 per cent in 2007 (See Samadhi and Warouw, eds., 2009).

Table 1. Composition of actors in power according to 2003/2004 and 2007 surveys

No	Category of actors in power based on their background	2003/2004 survey (n=1.795)	2007 survey (n=1.945)
		Percentage	
1.	Bureaucrats,government	40	46
2.	Political parties and members of parliaments (local and national)	17	23
3.	Religious, ethnic, indigenous groups	12	9
4.	Police and military, thugs and militia	16	7
5.	Business	12	6
6.	Professional	0	5
7.	Miscellaneous	2	5

Source: Samadhi and Warouw, eds., 2009. In each survey, respondents were asked to identify three actors in power who were regarded as actors who possessed actual and significant power.

This is evidence that the old actors at the national level have not been expelled from politics but, in fact, have maintained a role in and dominated the new politics through new political vehicles (Robison and Hadiz, 2004). This capture of the state is a perpetuating predatory logic, political corruption, and poor and ineffective performance of political institutions. It means that some crucial problems of previous regime, such as low representation and political corruption, may remain.

Nordholt (2004) called this phenomenon *disjunctive democracy*. This model is marked by the establishment of electoral democracy and characterised by political violence and criminalisation of the state and other political institutions (Nordholt, 2004). In decentralisation, for example, the absence of rule of law has made it possible for local strongmen to become involved in organised corruption, black economies, and crime by making use of democratic institutions. Close relations between bureaucrats, politicians, police, military, and criminals are also a feature of disjunctive democracy.

Recent studies have showed that although democratisation and decentralisation have provided new procedures and mechanisms to compete for power, the marginal groups have been unable to gain access to the new and open state. A democratising state remains the domain of oligarchic elites, hindering the potential for other political actors to improve their political representation. This situation causes people to become sceptical about democratic institutions. This desperation can be seen, for instance, by the resistance of grass-roots voters in local elections and through the

increasing rate of non-participation. Grass-roots voters have tried to find a way to limit the elite's domination of local elections (Pratikno, 2009). Based on this fact, it is then important to scrutinise how political actors are represented and gain access to the state in an oligarchic- and elite-dominated arena.

Expanding strategies (1):

Mixed politics between formal and informal institutions

In the most common conception, democracy is defined as the process of channeling a great amount and variety of public opinion into a smaller, more homogeneous number of elected representatives charged with carrying out the plurality's preferences (Luna and Zechmeister, 2005: 388). However, this idea is seen as problematic because, as in many cases, the formal representative institutions fail to channel, act for and represent public interest. This is because the institutions are driven by the logic of informality, leading to the growing concern about the role of informal institutions/channels in politics.

The struggle to gain political representation among actors in Indonesia has significantly increased. The state and other formal political institutions have become the target of political contestation for various actors seeking to access formal institutions such as political parties and parliament. A shared belief existed among people in the early years of reform, holding that political liberalisation would enhance opportunities for wider public participation and representation. In short, competition to gain power over the state, as well as formal institution, has been seen as a key to improve their political position.

A long list of cases of evidence can be proposed to support that argument. Previously noiseless and repressed individuals, groups, and communities are becoming outspoken, active and forthright political actors. Religious groups, customary institutions, regional political assemblies, and ethnic identity groups are combating state institutions and conflicting among each other. At the same time, modern and formal political institutions – originally state-established, state-sponsored or, at least, state-promoted institutions – are finding it difficult to develop political legitimacy. Political contestation is, therefore, becoming very complex, involving several agents internal of society, internal of the state, and between society and the state.

In such a situation, we cannot imagine that the installation of democracy will automatically make formal political institutions work as people expect. As demonstrated by some studies, most of the real political processes take place not in the formal institutions but through informal procedures, actors, and mechanisms. Modern formal institutions do exist but they are highly influenced

by informality – through, for instance, traditional and personal politics. Based on this fact, some scholars argue that it is vital to comprehend the informality of Indonesian politics. Nordholt (2004) proposes to understand the contemporary state as the product of continuities in patrimonial patterns and various arrangements linking formal institutions and informal networks.

The most apparent example of informality in Indonesian politics is the phenomenon of *pilkada*, or local election. In the New Order era local heads of government (governor, regent/mayor) were appointed by the central government, sometimes overlooking local aspirations. Political reform brought significant change. A regulation on local government was passed in 1999 allowing local people to elect their own heads of government through local regional parliamentary members. In 2004, this regulation was subsequently amended to allow the election of governor, regent/mayor by local people.

In many areas, one of the key successes for a candidate to win an election lies not only on their ability to mobilise support from political parties, but also traditional and primordial networks such as religious, ethnic, or mafia groups. Mixed politics – a combination of formal and informal ways – plays a significant role in *pilkada*. As a result, local elections have inevitably become political battlefields among dominant actors characterised by ethnic, religious and/or historical and cultural sentiments.

The mixed politics between formal and informal institutions can be clearly observed in the role of *Jawara* in Banten local elections, particularly in the case of the governor election. *Jawara* is a traditional group whose members are attached through their martial arts skills. During the colonial era, this traditional group established a network in society to fight against the colonial government. In modern times, following political reform, this group has re-organised its network of violence to enter into formal institutions. Some studies have found that the influence of *Jawara* in local politics is highly significant. Even crucial decisions and policies are being decided by *Jawara* bosses –known as *Abah*. According to Abdul Hamid (2006):

When asked by a journalist whether the Governor of Banten is under his shadow, *Abah* said: “No, not like that. I just say my opinion to him. If he does something wrong in managing government in Banten, I just ask him to go in the right direction. I supported him when he ran for the governor. If he does something wrong then it will affect me. It will be such a shame for me. If he is unable to manage the government, it is better for him to step down. For me, he is nothing.”

The remark shows that even though local heads of government are elected through formal channels, in fact personal and traditional politics still matter to some extent. The success of the incumbent governor in winning the position is highly influenced by the support of the *Jawara* network. Also, the leader of *Jawara* has much power in pressuring the governor.

In such situations, true political representation is remarkably difficult for most people to obtain because institutions remain dominated by traditional networks and local bosses. Consequently, formal democratic institutions cannot be expected to be an arena for political representation. Those who occupy these networks benefit, politically and economically, from the system, while the rest remain marginalised and under-represented.

Informality also occurs in the case of *pemekaran*. Though decentralisation, local governments have been allowed to split or merge their administration. In the recent years, the creation of new local administrations, or so called *pemekaran*, has taken place in many areas. This has led to the expansion and development of autonomous districts. Nordholt (2003) argued that the reason for the rapid increase of districts was primarily due to political ambitions of regional elites and the flow of funds they wanted to control, in combination with the interests of political parties at the national level.

This argument is in line with the finding of some research conducted by Master Program on Local Politics and Regional Autonomy, Universitas Gadjah Mada from 2006 to 2008. These finding argues that the demand for regional sub dividing in some districts occurred as a way for both traditional elites – local aristocracy, indigenous group leaders, etc – and local state actors – bureaucrats, local legislators, etc – to re-organise their economic and political power. *Pemekaran*, which ideally would be intended to create better government and public services, has been used instead as a political instrument for some local bureaucrats, ethnic groups, clans, or religious groups to gain political and economic resources from the state. The establishment of new districts or provinces has, to some extent, served both traditional and modern elites in expanding new political and economic arenas.

Expanding strategies (2):

Mixed politics between political society and civil society

In an elitist and oligarchic milieu, today's formal democracy does not work properly. Instead, it makes the struggle for political representation exceedingly difficult. Given what has happened recently, this situation raises the question of how ordinary people can gain access to the state while formal democracy is being 'hijacked' by national and local elites. The dysfunctional nature of formal democracy demands these inquiries into political representation.

Theoretically, when countries democratise opportunities arise for individuals and groups to become substantively more represented and involved in policy-making processes. However, the fact that democratisation can lead to less representation for some citizens and groups is, in principle, not terribly surprising (Shadlen, 2004). In his study on small industries in Mexico, Shadlen demonstrated that democratisation and the weakening of the corporatist state did not ensure better representation for everyone. For Shadlen (2004), democracy made representation important, but regime change itself could not ultimately guarantee representation.

Indonesian democratisation provides a similar case study. Many societal groups in the reform era have become marginalised and under-represented. For some groups, the remedy for this illness is found in some of the alternative political approaches which increasingly characterise Indonesian politics. When people are not in some way attached to the system, then they define politics in their own ways. An air of desperation can lead these actors to seek other ways of representation. These new ways are considered responses to the failure of formal democratic institutions in delivering a more substantive democracy.

We are now witnessing how civil society organisation can build pressure through political society in order to create wider and deeper political representation by involving themselves in political parties and running for political offices. They believe that entering formal politics – some activists use term ‘going politics’ – may improve political representation. By arguing that Indonesian NGOs have much experience in conducting political education and are viewed as populist and clean compared to existing political parties, activists such as Ivan Hadar have even proposed to transform NGOs into political parties (see *Sinar Harapan*, February 13th, 2006).

This proposal, of course, raises debate among activists as well as scholars. Boni Hargens, for instance, is against the idea. He believes that the boundaries between civil society, market, and state are clear, with these sectors having their own roles and functions. He wrote that NGOs should not become involved in formal politics. Instead, they should stand outside formal politics and play their role in criticising, supporting, or even fighting against government policies which were deemed to be not appropriate and not in keeping with community interests and aspirations (Hargens, in *Sinar Harapan*, February 13th, 2006).

To some extent Hargens’ argument is problematic because much of the evidence shows that the opposite is the case – the boundaries are, in fact, increasingly becoming blurred. The *Kompas* newspaper (January 22, 2003) wrote:

There are a lot of NGO activists who change their profession, beliefs, and political orientations. We can see how human rights activists turn into the advocates of the New Order’s

general who violated human rights and so on. However, the public still recognises them as NGO activists – apart from their effort to maintain their image as activists. There are also many newly made or partisan NGOs which are created to support political parties and rulers, as well as to fight against popular movements.

An example of the blurring of civil society, state, and political society can be found in the case of FPPB (*Forum Perjuangan Petani Batang* or Batang Peasants Movement Forum) (Kamajaya, 2007). During the New Order, the FPPB committed itself to being a civil society organisation by organising political movements at the local level. It was an underground movement in Batang, Central Java, which fought against the government to regain their land by conducting silent discussion as well as political education.

The FPPB continues its strategy today while combining it with an effort to gain political office. The organisation is a strong and influential one in terms of its social network and leadership. This has made FPPB confident in organising its cadres to obtain political office – roles including village executive leader, or *kades*, local parliamentarian, and district executive leader, or *pilkada*. In short, the organisation's members are now entering the state to influence and to democratise local politics. FPPB believes that democratisation can be achieved not only through the 'civil society way', but also 'political society way' and even 'state way'.

The strategy of civil society organisations and activists in 'going politics' can also be seen in the case of *Gerakan Pancur Kasih* in West Kalimantan (Iswari, 2010). This organisation was established to deal with poverty and economic problems of local people through a credit union. Membership has grown dramatically in the past two decades. Iswari's study (2010) showed that in 2005-2006 almost 60 per cent of voters in West Kalimantan had membership with the *Pancur Kasih* credit union. Seeing that this membership had the potential to be converted into political support, some prominent activists in the organisation tried to run for political office.

Both cases provide an illustration of how many civil society actors try to enter the state and political society. However, both cases also show that the results are far from what might be expected. In both cases, members of the FPPB and *Pancur Kasih* were unable to compete effectively in political society. In failing to win enough voter support, candidates from both organisations were eventually consumed by complicated internal conflicts. To some extent, this situation has weakened their legitimacy and influence in local politics.

The involvement of the activists in formal politics not only brings complications to civil society organisations, but also blurs the boundaries of pro- and anti-democracy actors. There are many

cases which show that former civil society activists have now mixed with old oligarchs and other elites. This has made for confusion in identifying pro and anti democrats. Some NGO activists may be part of the oligarchic groups, whilst some politicians in the state institutions may be originally part of the civil society movement (Priyono, et.al., 2007).

This argument is in line with Robison and Hadiz's study (2004) in North Sumatra. Their work showed how societal organisations could become involved in democratic institutions.

In North Sumatera, however, protection rackets — as well as illegal gambling and prostitution — still appear to be the domain of old New Order-backed youth/gangster organisations like *Pemuda Pancasila*, and the powerful *Ikatan Pemuda Karya*. It is significant that a number of such organisations' members currently occupy local parliament seats. It is also significant that activists of these organisations, with historic links to both military and Golkar, have frequently migrated with ease to other parties, including PAN and PDI-P.

These gangster organisations re-organise their power by making use of democratic institutions. Political parties and parliaments consist of not only pro democrats, but also anti democrats. In such a context, real political representation for people is far from what is expected. Instead of improving representation, expanding strategies of political actors are captured by old and new elites to maintain their power as well as to gain political and economic influences.

Expanding strategies (3):

A solution for representation?

Contemporary Indonesian politics is marked by the blurring of boundaries and the expanding strategies of political actors. On the one hand, the expanding strategies are seen as a way for political actors to deal with poor political representation as well as to improve the quality of democracy. On the other hand, it potentially leads to more complicated problems for Indonesia's democracy because it opens up the possibility for non-democratic actors to hijack democratic institutions. The blurring of boundaries between state/society and formal/informal, therefore, generates more questions for those who wish to understand Indonesian politics deeply. How can this phenomenon be explained? Do the expanding strategies of political actors support democratisation? Do they provide a solution or result in new problems for political representation?

Recent studies on Indonesian politics have been strongly influenced by the logic of transition, in which all political phenomena in the post-New Order era are comprehended as the result of decentralisation and liberalisation. The existing political problems are seen as part of a transitional phase towards a more stable democracy. However, some criticise this perspective (see, for example, Nordholt and van Klinken, eds., 2005). The logic of transition overlooks the fact that what happens at the local and national levels of politics is, to some extent, influenced by so called path dependent processes. Historical processes, as well as social structures, matter in the development of recent Indonesian politics. History and local context cannot, therefore, be neglected – what happens today is the continuity of the past. Following this view, the mixed politics and blurred borders of Indonesian politics can also be traced in the localised histories. As asserted by Nordholt (2004), conventional distinctions between state and society, state and market, formal and informal relationships, and centre and periphery, should be reviewed critically.

The efforts of political actors to expand their strategies can be seen as a way to politicise opportunities. However, the expanding strategies are influenced by social structures and historical paths. In such situations, the efforts of political actors to deal with poor political representation and improve the quality of democracy, faces some obstacles – namely old oligarchic structures rooted in the history of Indonesian society. So far, the expanding strategies conducted by some political actors have not been successful in eliminating the old oligarchs from political processes. The old oligarchs continue to succeed in re-organising their power in new political contexts.

Even though the expansion of strategies can be problematic for the development of Indonesian democracy, many political actors still believe that it can be a better way for transformation of Indonesian politics to becoming more democratic. Their involvement in an oligarchic/formal politics may lead into gradual transformation from inside the system. It is believed this would improve political representation in the long term.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that contemporary Indonesian politics is more open and fragmented but remains dominated by oligarchic elites and leaves most societal groups substantively unrepresented. However, some societal groups have been pushing to open up this oligarchic system by entering the formal political arena. This has created the phenomenon of mixed politics in many aspects of Indonesian politics.

This article concludes that the struggle of political actors to gain representation by expanding their strategies has blurred the boundaries between state, civil society and political society. The effort to expand strategies, however, may bring both positive and negative implications for Indonesian democracy. On the one hand, the expansion of strategies can be seen as a strong effort of political actors to deal with poor political representation as well as to improve the quality of democracy. On the other hand, it can potentially lead to more complicated problems for Indonesian democracy by opening up the possibility for non-democratic oligarchs to hijack democratic institutions. Instead of proposing answers for the discussed problems, this article shows the complexity of contemporary Indonesian politics. Based on the descriptions, it is, therefore, important to carry out some further research on how mixed politics – the blurring of state, political society, and civil society – works. Has this brought significant change to Indonesia's political structure? Or, is it merely a common phenomenon which is taking place worldwide? What is its implication for the development of democracy in Indonesia?

This article agrees with Nordholt's assertion (2003) in which social structures and historical paths contribute to contemporary Indonesian politics and influence the way political actors develop democracy. It is also in line with Shadlen (2004) in that democracy makes representation important, but regime change itself cannot guarantee representation.

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