

# Personal Networks and Elections in a Divided Society: Women Candidates' Strategies during the 2019 Legislative Election in Ambon, Indonesia

Desi Rahmawati<sup>1</sup>, Wegik Prasetyo<sup>2</sup>, Elvira Marlien Marantika<sup>3</sup>

**Received:** 31 January 2022 | **Accepted:** 12 April 2022 | **Published:** 16 May 2022

## Abstract

*Research on electoral politics in post-conflict societies tends to understand religious primordiality as a key factor driving voters' electoral preferences and voting behaviour. Such studies, despite their ability to explain fragmentation, ignore the role of personal networks in electoral consolidation. Those studies that do consider personal networks, at least in a Southeast Asian context, tend to highlight patronage and kinship politics. This paper aims to underscore the importance of personal networks within the context of a post-conflict society while also enriching studies of women and elections. Using the 2019 legislative elections in Ambon, Indonesia, as its case study, this article discusses the reasons, forms, and effectiveness of candidates' use of their personal networks. Although it rarely results in electoral victory, this strategy goes beyond the mere consolidation of constituents and votes. Women candidates' personal networks, which stem from their social, economic, and political activities, provide them with important avenues to approach unfamiliar communities and penetrate psychological barriers. In a divided society, where candidates prioritise offline campaign activities targeting particular communities, the presence of personal networks is crucial. In this sense, the strategies of electoral democracy—including personal networks—can contribute to peacekeeping.*

**Keywords:** *divided society, election, peacekeeping, personal networks, winning strategies, women candidates.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Research Centre for Politics and Government (PolGov), Universitas Gadjah Mada. Email: [desirahma2@ugm.ac.id](mailto:desirahma2@ugm.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> Research Centre for Politics and Government (PolGov), Universitas Gadjah Mada. Email: [wegikprasetyo21@gmail.com](mailto:wegikprasetyo21@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Moluccas Humanity for Society (Humanum). Email: [vivi31elvira@gmail.com](mailto:vivi31elvira@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The literature on electoral politics in divided societies has been dominated by a perspective that places primordialism as an important driver of voting behaviour. Previous studies show that, by exploiting primordial allegiances such as religion, candidates have a great opportunity to win votes (Pariela, 2007; Tomsa, 2009a; Brown & Diprose, 2009; Ernas, 2015; Arjon, 2018; Lamerkel & Lattu, 2018; Mietzner, 2019)—especially in areas that have recently experienced or are currently experiencing social conflict and segregation (Van Klinken, 2006; Tomsa, 2009b). While politicians use this strategy to consolidate their power (Hamayotsu, 2011; Haryanto, Sukmajati, & Lay, 2019), voters consider religious identity to be more important than parties' or candidates' programmes (Liddle & Mujani, 2007; Higashikata & Kawamura, 2015). Religious identity often strengthens in areas where voters come from diverse religious, ethnic, and/or racial backgrounds (Fernandes, 2018).

Bucking this trend, the current article aims to analyse women candidates' efforts to gain votes from constituents from different sociological backgrounds. Using Ambon, Indonesia, as a case study, this paper aims to answer several questions: Why do women candidates use personal networks to cross religious boundaries? What forms of personal networks are used, and how effective are these personal networks in helping women candidates win elections?

Discussions of personal networks in Indonesia often frame them as part of patronage and clientelistic practices (see for example Erb & Sulistiyanto, 2009; Choi, 2011), including the distribution of club

goods/pork barrels (Aspinall & Sukmajati 2014; Aspinall & As'ad 2018). Similarly, in the Philippines, personal networks are also associated with the clientelistic networks of parties (Croissant, 2003: 81) and politicians' independent ability to enjoy and generate their own resources and support bases (Croissant, Bruns, & John, 2002: 349).

In this article, however, personal networks refer to the social networks of candidates themselves, rather than those of political parties. They can potentially overlap with kinship, friendship, family-based, and other clientelistic networks, so long as they emerge as by-products of candidates' social interactions (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998). Individuals within candidates' personal networks do not necessarily have long-term clientelistic relationships with candidates. They can be anyone that help candidates approach groups that may potentially reject candidates' campaign visits.

Questions of religion in politics are highly relevant in Ambon, the capital of Indonesia's Maluku Province. After the city experienced severe inter-religious conflict between 1999 and 2002, its population was firmly segregated along religious lines. Although this segregation has contributed to lasting peace, during elections it significantly informs the electoral strategies and political configurations used by candidates. For example, during the local executive elections, pairs of candidates generally consist of one Muslim and one non-Muslim (i.e. Christian/Catholic) politician (Tomsa, 2014). In legislative elections, meanwhile, candidates tend to approach communities that practice the same religion as them. Even during presidential elections,

candidates who are politically associated with particular religious groups tend to receive the support of the related religious communities (Mietzner, 2019).

Candidates' political machines likewise tend to approach constituents or communities who adhere to the same religion. They may employ various strategies and platforms to mobilise voters from these communities, including religious institutions (Tomsa, 2009; Ndukwe, 2015), issues (Aspinall, Dettman, & Warburton, 2011; Hosen, 2016), and pulpits. In gubernatorial elections, candidates often combine religious issues with the Second Malino Peace Agreement, which was signed in 2002. Those who have the opportunity tend to use balance and interfaith harmony within Ambon to highlight the importance of Muslims and Christians "taking turns" in the leadership. This last issue is a proposed article that is not included in the signed peace agreement. However, candidates can manipulate this issue in a means of maintaining peace. Such issues seem commonplace in Ambon as, for the past two decades, religious groups have generally devoted most of their energies towards promoting social reconciliation, and this, in turn, has encouraged political parties and candidates to approach religious groups to advance their electoral goals (Karim, 2018).

This study deals specifically with women candidates in Ambon, as there are indications that they have applied innovative strategies to obtain votes and

---

<sup>4</sup> Similar to a municipality, a *kabupaten* (translated into English variously as *regency* and *district*) is an administrative division at the sub-provincial level. While the term

contest elections. Indonesia's 2019 elections were designed as simultaneous multi-level elections, during which voters across the country elected not only the president but also members of parliament at the national, provincial, and municipal/*kabupaten*<sup>4</sup> levels. Due to this situation, the competition of candidates at the lowest legislative level received the least attention. Political parties, already regarded as inefficient political engines, were involved in four different arenas, and most chose to focus on their biggest agenda: winning the presidential election. This situation encouraged lower-level legislative candidates to reach voters using creative means, such as by entering unfamiliar areas. In Ambon, the presence of interfaith personal networks was key to entering these areas, as these networks functioned as bridges that connected women candidates with potential voters from different religious enclaves.

By analysing the Ambon case, we aim to contribute to the literature on the use of personal networks to attract voters. Recognising the limited discussion of personal networks and electoral candidacies, this article has been encouraged to explore various forms of personal network politics. This will enrich the understanding of candidates' use of personal networks during elections in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia.

Previously, personal networks have been discussed primarily outside the realms of women and peacekeeping. Identified as patronage and clientelism,

municipality refers primarily to urban areas, *kabupaten* tends to refer to less urban areas.



personal networks in Indonesia are often identified with political dynasties, kinship politics (Prihatini, 2019), local leaders or bosses (Buehler, 2007; Tomsa, 2009c & 2014; Aspinnall, 2013; Allen, 2014), ineffective political party machines (Aspinnall, 2005), and open list electoral systems (Aspinnall, 2005). 2014a). As a consequence, few scholars have considered the role of personal networks in bridging candidates (especially women) with voters in divided societies. Within the context of Myanmar, they are even placed in a complicated relationship between elections and informal social movements, thereby highlighting tensions between identity groups (van Klinken & Aung, 2017).

In exploring candidates' strategies for crossing religious barriers, this article identifies factors that facilitate this process. It analyses electoral strategies that ensure the sustainability of peace without necessarily contributing to the perpetuation of social division—which remains worrisome to those who recognise that the lack of intense interaction between religious communities can undermine social cohesion.

This article's exploration of how women candidates use their networks to break through religious barriers uses data collected in Ambon between April and June 2019, during the legislative election. Data collection involved observation and in-depth interviews with thirteen women candidates and three officials with the dominant parties (Golkar, PDI-P, and Gerindra). The process also involved discussions with academics, religious/community leaders, and CSO activists, as well as informal chats with randomly selected voters. Women candidates who were interviewed included

those who competed for seats in the municipal/*kabupaten*, provincial, and national parliaments. Candidates were selected based on their specific backgrounds (as newcomers/incumbents, having/not having a role in the peace and reconciliation process, and knowledge of Ambon as a post-conflict society).

To present its findings systematically, this article is structured as follows. First, it will discuss personal networks along with women's strategies for penetrating social barriers. The social context of Ambon, including its divided settlements, electoral system, and the implications of these factors for candidates' activities, will also be discussed. Afterwards, the discussion will focus on personal networks and their role in crossing religious boundaries. Finally, this paper will conclude by discussing the intertwined issues of elections, peacekeeping, and democracy.

## Results

### 1. Personal networks and the penetration of social barriers

Research linking personal networks, women candidates, and peacekeeping is quite rare, even though Asia is home to numerous post-conflict areas. What little research exists relates more to women's increased interest in electoral politics, as seen in Cambodia (Kraynanski, 2007), or their use of gender attributes to target women voters (Larson, 2001; Herrnson, Lay & Stokes, 2003).

Women tend to be associated with gender stereotypes, even when (as seen in Myanmar) they offer new hope for improved governance and service delivery

while reducing conflict and discord (Minoletti, 2014). In India, discussion of women candidates and personal networks reflect kinship politics, wherein successful women candidates are associated with powerful family members (Basu, 2016). In Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, women candidates and their personal networks are seen through the lenses of party system institutionalisation, electoral competitiveness, legal enforcement, and social-cultural attitudes toward women (Tan, 2016).

Personal and social networks are, in fact, important for women in the "middle pathways", especially in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines. Choi (2009) details that women benefit from family ties and personal connections. These include not only the wives, sisters, or daughters of elected/retired politicians, but also women with roles in the public sphere such as academics, lawyers, advocates, small-business owners, university students, and civil-society activists.

Candidates establish personal networks outside the structure of their political parties, thereby obtaining influence in formal and informal grassroots institutions (Buehler, 2009). Personal networks may appear in layers, involving local leaders who are connected to voters through paternalistic and non-paternalistic interactions. Nonetheless, risks can also be involved. In some cases, voters position themselves as brokers, also working for potential competitors and betraying their benefactors to gain material advantages (Aspinall, 2014b). In Thailand, many "vote screeners" act as election brokers and rely on candidates for resources. "They are more likely to provide their canvassing

services for transactional arrangements and personal gain" (Chattharakul, 2010: 9).

In Indonesia, issues reach beyond the economic. The country is currently seeing a surge in identity politics and religion-based populism (Hadiz, 2014, 2016, 2018; Hadiz & Robison, 2017), and various practices have become evident. These include the comprehensive networking activities of key organisational stakeholders in Ambon's divided society (Tomsa, 2009). In this context, discourses not only deal with the particular issues being debated but also the importance of cross-communal communication in peacekeeping.

Lastly, while many studies have discussed the role of women in the peace process and social reconciliation (Sudjatmiko, 2019, 2008; PolGov, 2018; UNDP, 2016; Soegijono, 2015; Al Qurtuby, 2014; Asyathri, Sukesi, & Yuliati, 2014), very few have linked this role to women's electoral activities—even though Maluku had the highest percentage of women candidates in the 2004 election (Margret, et.al, 2018). In fact, this achievement is very likely related to the prominence of women in the peace process. Between 1999 and 2002, peace was initiated not only by women religious leaders and activists but also by traditional traders—known as *papalele*—who crossed religious barriers for economic and kinship reasons. In this manner, they contributed to reconciliation and social cohesion at the grassroots level.

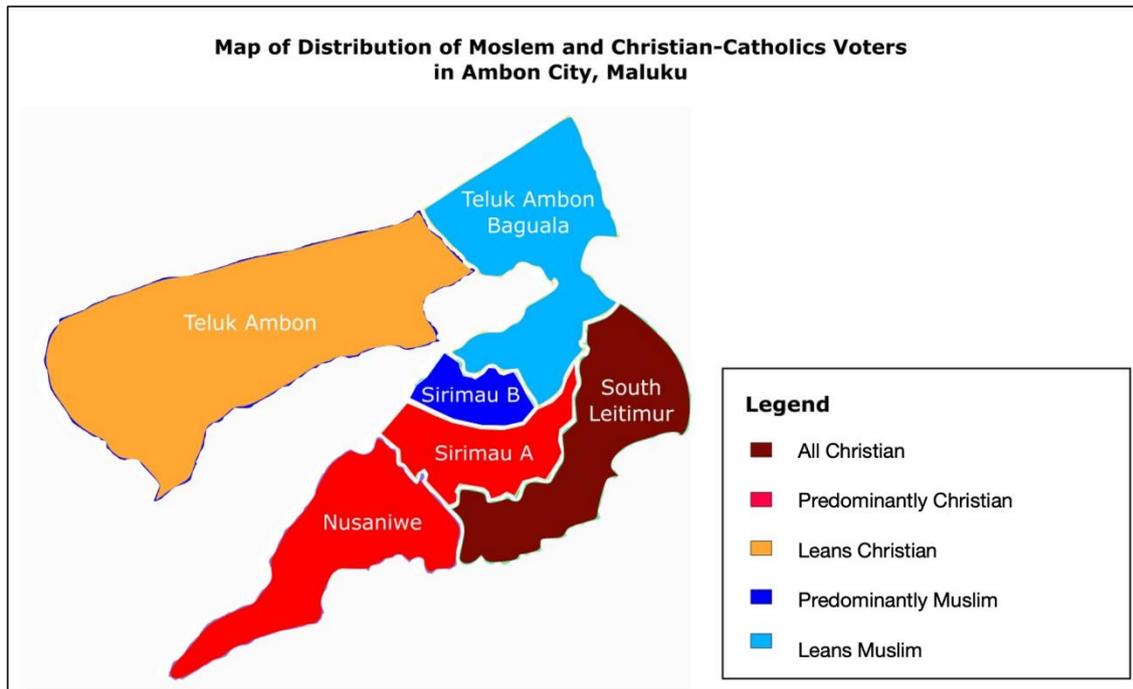
## 2. The Social Context of Ambon: Challenges of Election in a Divided Settlements

After it experienced several years of religious conflict (1999–2002), Ambon—the main island in Indonesia's Maluku

Province—saw an extensive rearrangement of demographic and spatial patterns (Ansori et al. 2014). Ultimately, the island became highly segregated, with Muslim and Christian/Catholic inhabitants occupying different locations. Such

adjustments, common as communities seek security in post-identity conflict areas (Cox & Sisk, 2017), reaffirmed the role of religious identity in Ambonese social and political life (PolGov 2018, Gaspersz 2016).

**Figure 1. Distribution of Muslim and Christian/Catholic Voters in Ambon**



Source: Interpreted from demographic data (Statistics Indonesia, 2019a). See also Table 1.

Demographically, Ambonese settlements can be easily identified as having particular socio-religious characteristics. Overall, the island's population is 49.7 per cent Muslim, 44.2 per cent Christian, and 6 per cent Catholic (Department of Population and Civil Registration, Ambon City, 2019). These religious communities are concentrated in their own particular enclaves, as seen in Figure 1 above as well as Table 1 below. These facilitate our understanding of how the Ambonese, especially candidates and their supporters, interpreted the socio-religious characteristics of particular electoral districts.

In the above figure and below table, the label "All Christian" refers to electoral districts which, according to statistics and general interpretations, are inhabited entirely by Christians/Catholics. "Predominantly Christian" refers to electoral districts which, while inhabited mostly by Christians/Catholics, are also home to small Muslim enclaves. "Leans Christian" refers to electoral districts where the population is almost evenly divided, but Christian/Catholic residents have a slight majority. "Predominantly Muslim" refers to electoral districts that are primarily inhabited by Muslims, though some areas are considered to be Christian/Catholic. Finally, "Leans Muslim" refers to electoral

districts that are inhabited by both Muslims and Christians/Catholics, wherein the Muslim residents have a slight majority.

This settlement pattern is supported by the hilly landscape that provides natural barriers between communities. Concerns about the lasting effects of social division on social cohesion have encouraged both the provincial and municipal governments to support the continued practice of traditional forms of brotherhood between communities (*pela gandong*). Similarly, civil society activists have continued to pursue means of intensifying interactions between religious communities. Finally, political elites have continued to pair politicians from different religious backgrounds in elections.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these efforts, however, electoral arrangements have reinforced barriers. The Indonesian electoral system uses a standardised principle for establishing electoral districts, one that does not necessarily consider the special needs of post-conflict areas. Law No. 16 of 2017 regarding the General Organization of Elections identifies several principles, including cohesiveness, but prioritises the

consideration of population, administrative boundaries, and electoral level. Ultimately, the creation of electoral districts is a purely technical and administrative process rather than a democratic effort to support social cohesion.

Electoral districts vary between elections. In Ambon, however, there are always overlapping electoral districts, and this creates challenges and complexities for candidates' efforts to reach voters. In their political strategies, candidates tend to be practical and target voters who share the same religion as them (Tomsa 2009). In so doing, they draw on the painful memories of those who experienced the conflict; in the 2019 election, it was estimated that 82 per cent of voters were more than 25 years of age<sup>6</sup>—and thus old enough to remember the conflict.

Therefore, when developing campaign strategies, it is relevant to consider the social-demographic character of each electoral district. To obtain this information, candidates generally combine an analysis of demographic data with their own general knowledge. The following table offers an illustration.

---

<sup>5</sup> Pairs should ideally consist of one Muslim and one Christian/Catholic politician (Tomsa, 2009a). Political forces determine whether a Muslim or a Christian runs for the main

executive office (i.e., governor, mayor) or the deputy position.

<sup>6</sup> Calculated from national statistics: Statistics Indonesia (2019).

**Table 1. Characteristics of Electoral Districts, by Religion**

Electoral District	Administrative Lines	Total Population	General Identification	
			Features	Sub-Areas
I	South Leitimur	10,302	All Christian	All areas
II	Sirimau A	166,397	Predominantly Christian	<u>Christian Areas:</u> Soya, Waihoka, Karang Panjang, Batu Meja, Batu Gajah, Ahusen, Uritetu, Amantelu <u>Mixed Areas:</u> Rijali, Honipopu
	Sirimau B		Predominantly Muslim	<u>Muslim Areas:</u> Batu Merah <u>Mixed Areas:</u> Pandan Kasturi, Hative Kecil,
III	Nusaniwe	98,417	Predominantly Christian	<u>Christian Areas:</u> Latulahat, Seilale, Nusaniwe, Urimesing, Kudamati, Wainitu, Manggadua <u>Mixed Areas:</u> Waihaong
IV	Teluk Ambon	47,358	Leans Christian	<u>Christian Areas:</u> Besar <u>Mixed Areas:</u> Rumah Tiga, Tihu, Tawiri, Laha**, Wayame***, Poka**, Hunuth*
	Teluk Ambon Baguala	61,658	Leans Muslim	<u>Muslim Areas:</u> Waiheru <u>Mixed Areas:</u> Latta, Passo, Nania**, Nageri Lama*, Lateri*, Halong*

Source: Statistics Indonesia (2019b) and NN (woman supporter of DPD candidate, interview, December 2019). \*: tend to be Christian dominant. \*\*: tend to be Muslim dominant. \*\*\*: Christians and Muslims approximately equivalent in number

As seen in this table, it is possible to identify the dominant character of each area within each electoral district. Candidates' support teams can even reach further, such that it is possible to target voters based on their socio-religious characteristics—even in mixed areas.

Such mapping is also important for political parties, as it helps them

strategically compose their candidate lists. "If an electoral district is 90 per cent Muslim and 10 per cent Christian, the political parties will make a candidate list with the same composition; or vice versa" (D.P. Latuconsina, interview, 9 April 2019).

To deal with Indonesia's open proportional electoral system, which uses

the Sainte-Laguë method,<sup>7</sup> political parties focus on maximizing the number of votes received. They rarely back candidates in electoral districts with different socio-religious characteristics, doing so only for candidates who are perceived as capable of handling interfaith communities. For example, the Golkar Party continued to back Elly Toisutta (a Muslim) in the predominantly Christian Nusaniwe Electoral District due to her ability to mobilise loyalists of different religious backgrounds.

Nevertheless, political parties sometimes back women candidates in areas characterised by different socio-religious backgrounds. For example, the Berkarya Party supported Debi Puspita Latuconsina (a Muslim) at Sirimau A Electoral District, which was identified as predominantly Christian. In this experiment, the party targeted voters from the small but densely populated Muslim area around the Al Fatah Grand Mosque in Honipopu. Likewise, the Golkar Party ran Margaretha Siahay (a Christian) in Sirimau B Electoral District, a predominantly Muslim area, to target voters in Galala—a small but densely populated Christian area. PDI-P experimented by placing Oliva Lasol (a Catholic) in the predominantly Muslim Sirimau B Electoral District. Lasol, known as a peace activist and party official, was used to reach voters in her area of residence: Batu Merah. After the conflict, this area had been one of the strongest support bases for Muslim parties in Ambon. PDI-P, long identified by Muslim

voters as a "Christian" party, had never made inroads with this community.

Owing to their limited ability to provide support, political parties encouraged candidates to independently develop their campaign strategies. Ambon, the capital city of Maluku, was hotly contested as it was home to 18 per cent of the province's voters (KPU Act, 2019). Cost was also a consideration; it would be prohibitively expensive to travel to the thousands of islands in the area (dpmptsp-Maluku.com, 2018), but much cheaper to reach the provincial capital (A. Latuconsina, interview, 7 April 2019).

This situation is exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of clans, which had previously been known as important voting machines in the region (van Klinken, 2006). Simultaneous elections make them split their support for member-candidates, including those who usually provided solid support to clan members (O.C. Latuconsina, interview, 2 April 2019).

The situation forced women candidates, both those with and without strong political resources, to consider the right strategy to approach grassroots communities. In post-conflict Ambon, all candidates used direct-offline ("door-to-door") interactions within small communities. By forsaking rallies and online campaigns in favour of more personal interactions, they were able to avoid clashes between religious groups. Here, personal networks played a crucial role, as presented in the following section.

---

<sup>7</sup> This method was proposed by the strongest political parties in Indonesia's parliament. In this system, the number of votes for political

parties is calculated based on the number of seats available in each electoral district.

### **3. Personal Networks: Cornerstones of Crossing Religious Boundaries**

The analysis in this section is based on interviews with thirteen women candidates, each of whom had a background (in activism, business, and/or other social activities) that facilitated their efforts to cross religious boundaries. Generally, these women candidates admitted that they crossed religious boundaries to gain voter support. However, as elaborated below, this did not guarantee their electoral success. Winning an election requires a rich combination of various political resources and strategies; personal networks, thus, are not sufficient in and of themselves, serving more as a strategy to approach other religious communities. As the main theme of the paper, this section elaborates more on how women candidates in Ambon's 2019 election used personal networks to break religious barriers in the city's divided society.

Respondents' experiences show that variations in their use of personal networks affect the number of votes received. The table shows that those who used various networks received significantly more votes than those who relied on a single type of network (mainly existing activism networks).

**Table 2. Women Candidates Identified as Using Personal Networks (Informants)**

No.	Candidate (Political Party)	Religion	District	Personal Networks	Votes
<u>Municipal Election</u>					
1	Debi Puspita Latuconsina (Berkarya)	Muslim	Ambon I	Various networks	880
2	Hilda Rolobessy (PKB)	Muslim	Ambon II	Activism and other networks	428
3	Oliva Lasol (PDIP)	Catholic	Ambon II	Activism and party networks	112
4	Elly Toisutta* (Golkar)	Muslim	Ambon III	Various networks	1,548
<u>Provincial Election</u>					
5	Olivia Chadijah Latuconsina (Golkar)	Muslim	Maluku I. Ambon	Activism and other networks	2,053
6	Sr Brigitina "Brigitta" Renyaan (Gerindra)	Catholic	Maluku I. Ambon	Mainly activism networks	316
7	Jaqueline Margareth Sahetapy (Demokrat)	Christian	Maluku I. Ambon	Mainly business networks	6,105
8	Rostina* (PKS)	Muslim	Maluku I. Ambon	Various networks	4,035
9	Cherly C. Patty Laisina (PDIP)	Christian	Maluku I. Ambon	Mainly activism networks	461
10	R Ayu Hindun Suhita Hasanusi* (Berkarya)	Muslim	Maluku I. Ambon	Various networks	5,269
<u>National Election (DPR/ Parliament)</u>					
11	Habiba Pelu (PKB)	Muslim	Maluku	Various networks	35,423
<u>National Election (DPD)</u>					
12	Novita Anakotta* (no party)	Christian	Maluku	Various networks, inc. activism	85,869
13	Anna Latuconsina* (no party)	Muslim	Maluku	Various networks, inc. activism	119,091

Source: Certificate of Recapitulation/Vote Count Results, 2019.

\*: elected

Candidates' personal networks stemmed from their experience and involvement in peace activism, business, politics, friendships, and clans. Overall, women candidates relied on, combined, or neglected certain types of networks when approaching diverse religious communities.

As indicated earlier, women candidates generally ignored primordial strategies (such as clans). Due to the high level of competition, clans with members of different religions (such as the Kei, Toisutta, Anakotta, Salampessy, and Patty clans) were divided in their support. Only candidates with strong political networks and resources, such as the incumbent Novita Anakotta, used these networks. Others, such as Sister Brigittina "Brigitta" Renyaan and Oliva Lasol (both Kei) and Cheryl C. Laisina (also known as Othe Patty, having become a member of the Patty clan through marriage) relied more on activism networks to reach other religious communities.

Clan networks were not always viable for women candidates, especially those with a known political vision and image. Olivia C. Latuconsina, who was born into the Salampessy clan, relied more on her reputation as Ambon's deputy mayor during the reconciliation era (2006–2011) and her party's nationalist profile. She targeted young voters, who constituted 18 per cent of total registered voters and were expected to be more open to religious differences (O.C. Latuconsina, interview, 2 April 2019). With the help of her children, she established Tamang Bae Olivia, a small group of young people that worked for preparing and consolidating venues, coordinating gatherings, and handling other technical matters.

Similarly, women candidates who were involved in non-clan organisations relied more on personal networks derived from their organisational interactions. Hilda Rolobessy (a Muslim) had established personal networks through Tifa Damai (Tifa Institute for Peaceful Maluku /ITDM), an NGO involved in peace activism, as well as the Integrated Service Centre for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (P2TP2A), a service unit for women and children. Her involvement in these two organisations offered her opportunities to establish interfaith networks. However, competition also occurred. In P2TP2A, for example, she competed for attention with the organisation's leader—who was running in the national election, as discussed elsewhere in this article.

Furthermore, the usage of personal networks did not necessarily correlate with electoral victory. As shown in Table 2, only five of the interviewed candidates were elected: Elly Toisutta (Ambon City parliament), Rostina and R. Ayu Hindun Suhita Hasanusi (provincial parliament), and Novita Anakotta and Anna Latuconsina as senators/members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI).

Of these five candidates, four were incumbents. Rostina was the only newcomer to win the position she was seeking. In 2019, her party (PKS) received about 11 per cent of the seats in the provincial parliament, with an estimated 400 votes having come from the Christian areas of Galala and Lateri. This was quite a significant amount for a politician from an Islamic party (interview, Rostina's husband/member of her campaign team, 5 April 2019).

The most successful woman candidate amongst voters of diverse religious backgrounds was Elly Toisutta (Golkar). As in the 2014 election, she became the only Muslim candidate to receive the majority of votes in a Christian-majority district (in this case, Nusaniwe). According to her political party, in 2019 she received more than 1,000 votes from those communities (Golkar Party official, interview, 5 April 2019).

To reach these communities areas, Toisutta relied heavily on community and religious leaders who managed small gatherings. In one meeting in Amahusu in 2019, a community leader highlighted Toisutta's eligibility. In this community, where she had received 600 votes in 2014, Toisutta was invited to speak at a pulpit bearing a large Christian religious symbol. The community's leader emphasised Toisutta's role in securing the community's interests, including those related to its religious and basic needs. Similarly, a Christian religious leader played a crucial role by inserting Toisutta's name in the prayer with which she closed the meeting. These personal networks not only connected Toisutta with the community at an emotional level but also effectively mobilised voters. Toisutta's victory, however, was also supported by the distribution of resources. As an incumbent and as an entrepreneur, she was known to have provided the community with government-funded programmes. Nevertheless, her ability to approach key figures and speak before different communities successfully convinced voters that she was a politician who cared about the interests of the majority.

The efficacy of diverse personal networks, including business and political

networks, was also demonstrated by R Ayu Hindun Suhita Hasanusi (a Muslim). In 2019, this businesswoman and senior politician ran with the backing of the Berkarya Party, which she had joined after leaving Hanura in the wake of disruptions within that party's national leadership. Her successful bid, even with a new political party, suggests that she did not rely on the party machine but rather on her personal networks (as supported by her political and economic resources) to reach diverse religious communities (Hasanusi, interview, 7 April 2019).

Although the use of personal networks was not always effective in ensuring women candidates' victory, successful efforts to cross religious boundaries were necessary to bolster candidates' political profile as individuals capable of representing a divided society. For this purpose, expanding the reach of their campaigns enabled them to reach more voters. For those running for national positions, such efforts required significant financial capital, given the high cost of transportation and accommodation within the Moluccas. Therefore, this approach was only available to those with significant financial support. Novita Anakotta (a Christian), an incumbent senator (DPD member), had previous experience as an activist, businesswoman, and politician. She received 1,899 votes from Buru Regency, located on a large island outside Ambon, which had a population that was approximately 94 per cent Muslim. Although these votes represented less than 5 per cent of the total votes cast for Anakotta, they were nevertheless significant in ensuring her electoral victory.

Similarly, Anna Latuconsina (a Muslim), received 833 votes from

Southwest Maluku. This archipelagic regency, which is predominantly Christian (94 per cent) and Catholic (nearly 4 per cent) was identified as contributing the most interfaith votes for her. Although these votes represented less than 1 per cent of the total votes cast for Latuconsina, they supported her profile as a senator (DPD member) representing all of the people of Maluku.

In reaching the people of Southwest Maluku, Anna Latuconsina combined her personal networks with her business and political networks as well as her economic capital. The local resort entrepreneur had access to strong and diverse networks, including those of her husband—who had held strategic positions in the province's bureaucracy and politics for decades. Latuconsina herself was known as a woman activist who worked to promote economic development. In 2019, during her candidacy, she was serving as the local chair of the P2TP2A, an organisation that consists of women activists from diverse religious backgrounds. In this capacity, she was able to maintain individual channels that helped her enter different religious communities. For example, she was able to approach activists who were directly connected to the Women's Service Branch of the Maluku Protestant Church, the largest Christian church in Ambon. She also maintained networks at the grassroots level, especially amongst those she had employed to maintain her assets during the conflict as well as beneficiaries of the women's economic empowerment programmes in which she had been involved.

In interviews, women candidates generally expressed that votes obtained from different religious communities

represented a long-term political investment. Rostina, for example, highlighted how her achievements in the 2014 election had greatly influenced her candidacy in the 2019 election. Rostina, who had received a total of 3,861 votes in the 2014 election, said that her victory in two polling stations had given her the confidence to enter communities that embraced a different religion than hers.

*"In one area that was inhabited entirely by non-Muslims, I got 117 votes. That was in Ahuru, over the mountain. ... For me that was extraordinary... It proved [that] PKS [party] was accepted by non-Muslim society..." (Rostina, interview, 5 April 2019).*

Her victory in 2014 gave her the confidence to deal with other groups of people. Her achievement in the Christian enclave of Ahuru, located in Karang Panjang District, encouraged her to expand her 2019 campaign to Galala and Lateri—also Christian-majority communities. Her campaign team estimated that 10 per cent of her 4,035 votes came from those three areas. This number contributed significantly to her electoral victory (Rostina, interview, 5 April 2019).

Rostina also benefited from the establishment of a local party branch. During her 2019 campaign, she took advantage of this situation to make a combination of strategic approaches to communities. In her efforts to consolidate votes, her husband played a key role. Over the years, her husband had gained prestige as a community leader as well as a local merchant who operated a business in a traditional market. As such, he provided Rostina with grassroots networks.

Furthermore, as a community leader of Southeast Sulawesi descent, he gave her access to a religiously diverse immigrant community interfaith membership. He also helped reach voters in Batu Merah, their area of business and residence, where a small number of non-Muslim voters lived. Rostina's victory in the 2019 election demonstrates the crucial role of individual networks.

Ultimately, however, the use of personal networks does not necessarily have to result in a fantastic number of votes. Any little achievement is ultimately a major one, as receiving votes from diverse supports proves candidates' competitiveness and supports their position within their party. As D.P. Latuconsina illustrated:

*"It is important [for a candidate to get votes from communities with different religious identities] because the competition in Ambon City is very tight... A difference of ten to twenty votes can determine whether or not a seat is won ... If every candidate gains 10 votes from other pockets [communities], it will accumulate and be a significant addition [for the party] (D.P. Latuconsina, interview, 9 April 2019).*

If varied personal networks, used in conjunction with extensive political resources, are key to success, then victory is difficult for those with less varied personal networks and limited political capital. Habiba Pelu, an activist and former member of Maluku's provincial parliament, relied on the personal networks she had established through Nahdlatul Ulama, one of Indonesia's largest Islamic organisations. She admitted that it was

difficult for her to obtain votes, as she was placed in an archipelagic electoral district that demanded significant economic capital to reach voters (Pelu, interview, 9 April 2019). Although she received numerous votes, her failure to win the intended seat could be attributed to the specific profile of the party and organisation that backed her rather than her interfaith networks.

A different case is offered by Cherly C. Patty Laisina (a Christian). During the conflict, this woman activist had spearheaded the establishment of a new settlement at the top of the mountain. Together with several people in her community, she advocated for the fulfilment of clean water and basic needs. However, her lack of political resources limited her ability to establish personal networks with Muslim-majority areas (Patty, interview, 6 April 2019). As with Lasol (discussed previously), her party's image also hindered her efforts to reach Muslim communities. PDI-P has historically had little success with Ambon's Muslim communities, and in 2019 this was exacerbated by the party's focus on the presidential election during which it sought the re-election of Joko "Jokowi" Widodo.

Jaqueline Margareth Sahetapy (a Christian) built an interfaith network through an organisation for youth entrepreneurs. As Chair of the Young Entrepreneurs Association of Maluku (HIPMI), she used individual channels within this organisation to identify opportunities to reach Muslim communities. Meanwhile, D.P. Latuconsina (a Muslim) used a network of school friends to enter South Leitimur, which was inhabited entirely by Christians. These two young women politicians seemed to use

less varied personal networks since they were less exposed to interfaith activism.

Even with more varied personal networks, a lack of political support—involving not only campaign financing but also institutional influence and efforts to combat societal stereotypes against women candidates—can lead to electoral defeat. Sister Brigitta Renyaan was acknowledged for her role as a peace pioneer who bridged religious communities and established interfaith networks during the conflict. Despite maintaining interfaith networks through her education and economic empowerment programmes at the grassroots level, she lost the church's support due to her "unprocedural" candidacy process. This senior nun believed that candidacy was necessary to advance her activism, but was perceived by the Church as violating the norms of the institution. She faced severe limitations in campaign financing, and thus had to rely on the interfaith personal networks that she established during and after the conflict (Renyaan, interview, 2 April 2019). However, as the dual issues of conflict and peace had given way to welfare issues, the public's memory of her role as a peacemaker had faded. She was further restricted by stereotypes; as a nun, she was expected to involve herself in social and religious activities rather than entering practical politics (informal interview, taxi driver, 2 April 2019).

The use of personal networks to cross religious divides was not intended to be the key to electoral success. While networks played important roles, they were intended predominantly to supplement votes from candidates' religious communities. In general, personal networks may be limited in their ability to

reach potential voters and ascertain the needs of the targeted communities. Whatever role they play, the power of personal networking allowed women candidates to approach others of diverse backgrounds, involving themselves in ways that are uncommon for male candidates.

## Conclusion

Studies of personal networks in Asian elections tend to associate said networks with patronage, kinship, party machines, and brokerage. Research about women candidates, meanwhile, tends to identify campaign strategies by relating them to traditional matters such as gender stereotyping and kinship politics. Although it does not eliminate all of those possibilities, the Ambon case offers an opportunity to explore the role of personal networks in a divided society and discuss the link between elections and peacekeeping. This case study explores the strategies used by women candidates to reach voters in diverse religious communities. Although their usage of personal networks does not always result in victory, it nonetheless emphasises women candidates' ability to identify and exploit non-primordial factors.

At the same time, this paper does not intend to present personal networks as complete strategies in and of themselves. Other factors, such as candidates' political resources (including incumbency, the image of political parties, and political financing) doubtlessly play a role, and it is clear that the use of personal networks can only produce victory when combined with strong political resources/modalities. However, as the main theme of this paper, it is interesting to observe the variations in

women candidates' personal networks. As shown in the above analysis, women candidates' personal networks come from their various activities and institutions, including activism, political parties, organisations (both social and professional), businesses, friendships, and family (clans and marriage). This offers opportunities for non-traditional explanations of candidates' electoral strategies.

Whatever the result, the use of personal networks in a divided society offers a pragmatic strategy for obtaining votes while simultaneously supporting social cohesion. Women candidates' efforts to cross religious barriers will gradually contribute to more intensive

interactions between demographically isolated groups. It is in this manner that democracy in a divided society can benefit from elections.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the "Women Candidates" research project, which was organised by PolGov Universitas Gadjah Mada in collaboration with the Australian National University. The authors would also like to thank the "Educational Strategies in Managing Radicalism and Hoax Spread" project, which was organised by PolGov Universitas Gadjah Mada in collaboration with the TIFA Foundation.

## Bibliography

- Al Qurtuby, S. (2014). Religious women for peace and reconciliation in contemporary Indonesia. *International Journal on World Peace* 31(1), 27–58.
- Allen, N. W. (2014). From patronage machine to partisan melee: subnational corruption and the evolution of the Indonesian party system. *Pacific Affairs* 87 (1), 221–245. DOI: 10.5509/2014872221.
- Ansori, M. H., Sukandar, R., Peranto, S., Karib, F., Cholid, S., & Rasyid, I. (2014). *Segregasi, kekerasan dan kebijakan rekonstruksi pasca konflik di Ambon [Segregation, violence and post-conflict reconstruction policies in Ambon]*. Jakarta: The Habibie Center.
- Arjon, S. (2018). Religious sentiments in local politics. *Jurnal Politik Universitas Indonesia* 3(2), 171–198.
- Aspinall, E. (2005). Elections and the normalization of politics in Indonesia. *South East Asia Research*, 13(2), 117–156. DOI: 10.5367/0000000054604515.
- Aspinall, E. (2013). A nation in fragments: patronage and neoliberalism in contemporary Indonesia. *Critical Asian Studies* 45(1), 27–54. DOI: 10.1080/14672715.2013.758820.
- Aspinall, E. (2014a). Indonesia's 2014 elections: parliament and patronage. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(4), 96–110. DOI: 10.1353/jod.2014.0070.
- Aspinall, E. (2014b). When brokers betray: clientelism, social networks, and electoral politics in Indonesia. *Critical Asian Studies* 46(4), 545–570. DOI: 10.1080/14672715.2014.960706.
- Aspinall, E., & As'ad, M. U. (2016). Understanding family politics: successes and failures of political dynasties in regional Indonesia. *South East Asia Research* 24(3), 420–435. DOI: 10.1177/0967828X16659571.
- Aspinall, E., & Sukmajati, M. (2015). *Politik uang di Indonesia: patronase dan klientilisme pada pemilu legislatif 2014 [Money politics in Indonesia: patronage and clientelism in the 2014 legislative elections]*. Yogyakarta: PolGov.
- Aspinall, E., Dettman, S., & Warburton, E. (2011). When religion trumps ethnicity: a regional election case study from Indonesia. *South East Asia Research* 19(1), 27–58. DOI: 10.5367/sear.2011.0034.
- Asyathri, H., Sukesu, K., & Yuliati, Y. (2014). Diplomasi hibrida: perempuan dalam resolusi konflik Maluku [Hybrid diplomacy: women in conflict resolution in the Moluccas]. *Indonesian Journal of Women's Studies* 2(1), 18–31.
- Basu, A. (2016). Women, dynasties and democracy in India. In K. Chandra (ed.), *Democratic dynasties: State, party and family in contemporary Indian politics* (pp. 136–172). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, G., & Diprose, R. (2009). The dynamics of local elections in a post-conflict region. In M. Erb & P. Sulistiyanto (eds.), *Deepening democracy in Indonesia?: Direct*

*elections for local leaders (pilkada)* (pp. 352–374). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

- Buehler, M. (2007). Local elite reconfiguration in post–New Order Indonesia: the 2005 election of district government heads in South Sulawesi. *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 41(1), 119–147.
- Buehler, M. (2009). The rising importance of personal networks in Indonesian local politics: an analysis of the district government head elections in South Sulawesi in 2005. In M. Erb & P. Sulistiyani (eds.), *Deepening democracy in Indonesia? Direct elections for local leaders (pilkada)* (pp. 101–124). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Chattharakul, A. (2010). Thai electoral campaigning: vote-canvassing networks and hybrid voting. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 29(4), 67–95. DOI: 10.1177/186810341002900404.
- Choi, N. (2019). Women's political pathways in Southeast Asia. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21(2), 224–248. DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2018.1523683.
- Cox, F. D., & Sisk, T. D. (eds.). (2017). *Peacebuilding in deeply divided societies: toward social cohesion?*. New York: Springer.
- Croissant, A. (2003). Legislative powers, veto players, and the emergence of delegative democracy: a comparison of presidentialism in the Philippines and South Korea. *Democratization* 10(3), 68–98. DOI: 10.1080/13510340312331293937.
- Croissant, A., Bruns, G., & John, M. (2002). Electoral politics in Southeast and East Asia: a comparative perspective. *Electoral Politics in Southeast and East Asia*, 321–68.
- Erb, M., & Sulistiyanto, P. (2009). *Deepening democracy in Indonesia? Direct elections for local leaders (pilkada)*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Ernas, S. (2015). Dynamic social integration: social integration of religious followers in Ambon. *Al-Albab: Borneo Journal of Religious Studies (BJRS)* 4(2), 231–250.
- Fernandes, A. (2018). *Politik identitas dalam pemilu 2019: proyeksi dan efektivitas [Identity politics in the 2019 election: projections and effectiveness]*. Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies. [https://www.csis.or.id/uploaded\\_file/publications/politik\\_identitas\\_dalam\\_pemilu\\_2019\\_\\_proyeksi\\_dan\\_efektivitas.pdf](https://www.csis.or.id/uploaded_file/publications/politik_identitas_dalam_pemilu_2019__proyeksi_dan_efektivitas.pdf)
- Gaspersz, S. G. C. (2016). *Negotiating religious identities, cultural authorities and modernity in Leihitu, Ambon Island* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Gadjah Mada).
- Hadiz, V. R. (2014). A new Islamic populism and the contradictions of development. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 44(1), 125–143. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2013.832790.
- Hadiz, V. R. (2016). *Islamic populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Hadiz, V. R. (2018). Imagine all the people? Mobilising Islamic populism for right-wing politics in Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48(4), 566–583. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2018.1433225.
- Hadiz, V. R., & Robison, R. (2017). Competing populisms in post-authoritarian Indonesia. *International Political Science Review* 38(4), 488–502. DOI: 10.1177/0192512117697475.
- Hamayotsu, K. (2011). The political rise of the Prosperous Justice Party in post-authoritarian Indonesia: examining the political economy of Islamist mobilization in a Muslim democracy. *Asian Survey* 51(5), 971–992. DOI: 10.1525/as.2011.51.5.971.
- Haryanto, Sukmajati, M., & Lay, C. (2019). Territory, class, and kinship: a case study of an Indonesian regional election. *Asian Politics & Policy* 11(1), 43–61. DOI: 10.1111/aspp.12444.
- Herrnson, P. S., Lay, J. C., & Stokes, A. K. (2003). Women running "as women": candidate gender, campaign issues, and voter-targeting strategies. *The Journal of Politics* 65(1), 244–255. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2508.t01-1-00013.
- Higashikata, T., & Kawamura, K. (2015). Voting behavior in Indonesia from 1999 to 2014: religious cleavage or economic performance? *IDE Discussion Paper No. 512*, 1–47.
- Hosen, N. (2016). Race and religion in the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election: the case of Jokowi–Ahok. In T. Lindsey & H. Pausacker (eds.), *Religion, Law and Intolerance in Indonesia* (pp. 180–194). London and New York: Routledge.
- Karim, A. G. (2018). Ambon: a regime of pluralism and compromise. In L. N. Bayo et al., *In Search of Local Regime in Indonesia: Enhancing Democratisation in Indonesia* (pp. 261–287). Yogyakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Kraynanski, J. M. (2007). *Women walking silently: The emergence of Cambodian women into the public sphere* (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio University).
- La Due Lake, R., & Huckfeldt, R. (1998). Social capital, social networks, and political participation. *Political Psychology*, 19(3), 567–584. DOI: 10.1111/0162-895X.00118.
- Lamerkabel, D. T., & Lattu, I. (2018). Perilaku pemilih dalam konteks segregasi sosial paska konflik di Ambon [Voter behavior in the context of post-conflict social segregation in Ambon]. *Jurnal Analisa Sosiologi* 7(2), 181–200.
- Larson, S. G. (2001). "Running as women"? A comparison of women and male Pennsylvania assembly candidates' campaign brochures. *Women & Politics* 22(2), 107–124. DOI: 10.1300/J014v22n02\_04.
- Liddle, R. W., & Mujani, S. (2007). Leadership, party, and religion: explaining voting behavior in Indonesia. *Comparative Political Studies* 40(7), 832–857. DOI: 10.1177/0010414006292113.

- Margret, A., Panjaitan, Y., Novitasari, M., & Iksarana, J. (2018). *Menyoal data representasi perempuan di lima ranah [Questioning data on women's representation in five domains]*. Depok: Cakra Wikara Indonesia.
- Mietzner, M. (2019, 2 April). Indonesia's elections in the periphery: a view from Maluku. *New Mandala*. Retrieved from <https://www.newmandala.org/indonesias-elections-in-the-periphery-a-view-from-Maluku/>
- Minoletti, P. (2014). *Women's participation in the subnational governance of Myanmar*. San Francisco, CA: Asia Foundation.
- Ndukwe, T. C. (2015). The role of the church and mosque in the political mobilization of Black African immigrants in Finland at the municipal level. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 16(4), 391–410. DOI: 10.1080/21567689.2015.1132413.
- Pariela, T. D. (2007). Political process, public policy, and peace building process: Case of Ambon city, Maluku. In K. Matsui (ed.), *Regional Development Policy and Direct Local-head Election in Democratizing East Indonesia* (pp. 101–124). Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO).
- Prihatini, E. S. (2019, January). Women who win in Indonesia: the impact of age, experience, and list position. *Women's Studies International Forum* 72, 40–46. DOI: 10.1016/j.wsif.2018.10.003.
- Soegijono, S. P. (2015). Papalele: dangerous encounter and transaction in conflict. *Komunitas: International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture* 7(2), 297–306. DOI: 10.15294/komunitas.v7i2.4520.
- Statistics Indonesia (2019a). Population by sub-district and religion in Ambon Municipality. Retrieved from <https://ambonkota.bps.go.id/statictable/2020/05/19/165/jumlah-penduduk-menurut-kecamatan-dan-agama-yang-dianut-di-kota-ambon-2019.html>.
- Statistics Indonesia (2019b). Kota Ambon dalam angka [Ambon in figures]. Ambon City: Statistics Indonesia.
- Sudjatmiko, I. G. (2008). Communal conflict, state failure, and peacebuilding: the case of Ambon, Indonesia. In G. C. Purkayastha (ed.), *Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution: Sociological Perspectives* (pp. 349–363). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Tan, N. (2016). Gender reforms, electoral quotas, and women's political representation in Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore. *Pacific Affairs* 89(2), 309–323. DOI: 10.5509/2016892309.
- Tomsa, D. (2009a). Electoral democracy in a divided society: the 2008 gubernatorial election in Maluku, Indonesia. *South East Asia Research* 17(2), 229–259. DOI: 10.5367/000000009788745877.
- Tomsa, D. (2009b). Local elections and party politics in a post-conflict area: the pilkada in Maluku. *Indonesian Studies Working Papers*, 1-29.

Tomsa, D. (2009c). Uneven party institutionalization, protracted transition, and the remarkable resilience of Golkar. In M. Bünte, & A. Ufen (eds.), *Democratization in post-Suharto Indonesia* (pp. 176–198). Oxon: Routledge.

Tomsa, D. (2014). Party system fragmentation in Indonesia: the subnational dimension. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 14(2), 249–278. DOI: 10.1017/S1598240800008924.

UNDP. (2016). *The hidden pearls: heroic stories of women peacebuilders*. Jakarta: UNDP Indonesia.

Van Klinken, G. (2006). The Maluku wars: 'Communal contenders' in a failing state. In C. A. Coppel (ed.), *Violent Conflicts in Indonesia* (pp. 149-163). Oxon: Routledge.