The Disorientation of the Political Capacity of Indonesian Pro-Democracy Activists

Willy Purna Samadhi[1]

Received: November 25th 2022 | **Accepted:** January 24th 2023 | **Published:** April 13th 2023

ABSTRACT

This study examines the political performance of pro-democracy activists in Indonesia after the end of the New Order. Using a democratic transformative politics approach, this study confronts aspects of the political capacity of pro-democracy activists with the need for popular control to work effectively. It finds that activists have been disoriented towards the development of political capacity and popular control. This study contributes to the study of Indonesian democracy by placing the issue of political capacity for building popular control as an integral part of the problem of democracy. The problems of democratisation are not only caused by the domination of political elites who have established oligarchies, but also by pro-democracy activists themselves ignoring the importance of developing collective political capacity as a means of advancing popular control. This study urges pro-democracy activists to re-orient their political capacity building and work with an agenda of consolidating the demos for civic democracy. Pro-democracy activists need to develop a systematic strategy of politicisation to strengthen citizens' collective power through civic associations as a substitute for constituents and voters.

Keywords: *democratisation, pro-democracy activists, political capacity, popular control*

1 Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia. Email: willypurnasamadhi@upnvj.ac.id.

Introduction

This study discusses the collective political capacity of Indonesian activists in the country's democratisation since 1998. More specifically, this article focuses on the political capacity to develop and expand popular control. Its main argument is that, together with other causal factors, the democratisation of Indonesia has been influenced by pro-democracy activists' disorientation when actualising their political capacity to realise popular control.

The arguments presented in this article differ from those offered by other studies of the factors behind elite determinism. The issue of elite determinism has been explored through transitional and structural approaches, investigating factors such as oligarchy (Robison & Hadiz, 2004; Winters, 2013), political cartels (Ambardi, 2009), anti-reform elites (Mietzner, 2012), and new despotism (Kusman & Istiqomah, 2021). In brief, previous studies have argued that the problems of Indonesian democracy have emerged because elites have dominated and monopolised political processes. The question is, is it true that elites are the sole cause of these problems? If this is true, how could Indonesian democracy escape the current paradoxes (Priyono, 2014) that have caused stagnation (Mietzner, 2012) or even regression (Warburton & Aspinall, 2019; Power & Warburton, 2020)? If political elites are that determinant, is it possible for them to "repent" and tear down the structures that have supported them, promote institutional reform, and ultimately allow democracy to promote popular interests? Such questions cannot be avoided if elite determinism is considered the sole factor.

To navigate beyond this trap, this study employs the transformative democracy perspective offered by Stokke and Törnquist (2013a). This perspective, unlike the transitional one, focuses on how actors formulate their agendas and democracy development strategies to achieve their political goals and advance public interests through existing democratic interests (Stokke & Törnquist, 2013a: p. 6). Stokke and Törnquist define democracy following Beetham (1999), i.e., popular control of public affairs built on the principle of political equality. It is thus possible to understand democratisation in two ways. First, non-elite actors—such as pro-democracy activists—are also important to consider when understanding democratisation. Why have pro-democracy activists not emerged as dominant actors? Second, if democracy is understood as popular control, can the political capacity of pro-democracy activists be used to reinforce popular control through available political institutions?

Framework

Political Capacity

Because it is closely associated with political agendas, strategies, and alliances—all of which are used to improve popular control of public affairs—transformative political democracy may be defined as "the ability to formulate alternative agendas and strategies, as well as develop the political alliances necessary to apply democratic principals in a manner that advances political and policy frameworks that advance effective popular control."

In applying Törnquist's basic framework, this study will explore transformative political capacity

through five aspects, i.e.: (1) the capacity to develop inclusive politics (and oppose exclusion); (2) the capacity for activists to develop their authority and legitimacy; (3) the capacity for activists to develop public and political agendas; (4) the capacity for activists to mobilise support; and (5) the capacity for activists to utilise existing channels for participation and democratic representation.

Popular Control

In what conditions can popular control be effective? Beetham makes this argument by linking popular control with political equality, holding that these are two sides of the same coin. Popular control and political equality, Beetham argues, are fundamental principles of democracy that must serve as the basis for a democratic political framework. Political equality is necessary to ensure that all citizens are included in political processes and that all residents—including their interests—are accommodated, assuming they are not excluded by certain legal requirements.

Inclusive (rather than exclusive) politics enables democracy to be rooted in *collective power*. Ober (2008) describes collectivity as "the original meaning of democracy", i.e., "the regime in which the demos gains a collective capacity to effect change in the public realm… [I]t is not just a matter of control of a public realm but the collective strength and ability to act within that realm and, indeed, to reconstitute the public realm through action."

The explanations offered by Beetham and Ober bring us to the first criterion for developing popular control, i.e., the demos

or citizenry who wield power collectively to influence the public sphere and articulate their interests and desires.

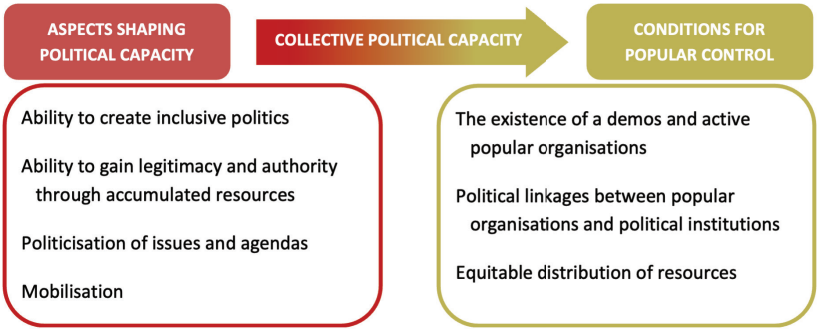
This first condition for realising effective popular control must be supported by other factors. As such, this study draws on the framework for reinforcing popular representation—an operationalisation of popular control—offered by Törnquist (2009; 2013): political linkages between civil society and political society, the transformation of resources for structural change, and the application of appropriate democratisation agendas and strategies.

In brief, four elements are required to develop effective popular control:

1) A demos, or people who wield power collectively, and thus have the ability to influence the public agenda and articulate their interests and desires;
2) Political linkages between popular organisations and political institutions, as these provide the basis for creating democratic political representation;
3) Relatively equitable accumulation and distribution of power relations, which makes structural change possible;
4) Clear and appropriate agendas and strategies for reinforcing collective capacity.

These four elements are used here to explore the extent to which Indonesian pro-democracy activists' political capacity building has contributed to democratisation and created popular control since 19998. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Assessment framework for political capacity-based popular control



Indonesian pro-democracy activists' development of political capacity since 1998

This study employs data on pro-democracy activists' development of political capacity collected through three national assessments, conducted by Demos and the University of Oslo in 2003 (Priyono, Samadhi, & Törnquist, 2007) and 2007 (Samadhi & Warouw, 2009), and by Universitas Gadjah Mada and the University of Oslo through the Power, Welfare, and Democracy (PWD) Project in 2013 (Savirani & Törnquist, 2015). Following the above framework, this study uses available data to examine the factors required to reinforce popular control that have gone unexplored by previous studies.

This study's review of relevant data has shown several general tendencies:

Exclusivity, or at least a lack of orientation toward inclusive politics

In creating political inclusivity, pro-democracy activists have shown a willingness to be

inclusive and accommodate others in the political sphere. This, in turn, has made more opportunities for political participation available. However, the inclusiveness advanced by pro-democracy activists has not been actively realised through active acts of mass organisation. Instead, these activists have emphasised the distribution of discourses through mass media, public mobilisation through demonstrations, and persuasive actions. Consequently, these alternative actors have positioned themselves as patrons of the masses through their control of public discourses. This implies the exclusion of the masses from organised politics and other activities.

Many activists take positions as short-term responses to emergent issues. Due to the direct influence of activists on politics, this tendency contributes to populism, which is often practised (for example) by candidates when contesting local executive elections. Positions are taken to buttress individuals' positions and ensure their continued presence in political spaces, rather than advance the common good and ensure popular control. Populist issues are used to accumulate support and other resources, while a continued reliance on donors—as shown by Lassa and Li (2015)—has resulted in the emergence of "resource centres" that are integrally networked with donor institutions that provide access to economic resources. Due to such factors, pro-democracy activists (as a group) have become increasingly exclusive and hesitant to promote inclusivity. Such actors have also relied increasingly on populist approaches, such as patronage. This, in turn, has exacerbated fragmentation, as such

practices do not lend themselves to ensuring the continued integration and solidarity of the movement as a whole.

The increased prominence of identity politics in Indonesia's macropolitical landscape likewise cannot be separated from activists' failure to promote political inclusivity. Looking at the issues and interests being contested in public arenas, the question of political inclusivity is seldom raised. Attention is dedicated primarily to "classical" issues such as human rights and good governance. Corruption eradication could potentially provide activists and civil society actors with a reconciliatory issue; however, it has primarily been presented as a technocratic and moral matter. Activists rarely discuss corruption as a serious problem affecting the realisation of welfare-oriented democracy. As such, unlike in India, where an anti-corruption movement transformed itself into a political party and successfully contested an election (Djani, Törnquist, Tanjung, & Tjandra, 2017), Indonesia's anti-corruption movements have become increasingly exclusive and elitist—even though, at times, they have been able to attract the attention of the public.

Elitism and reliance on elite knowledge and networks

Since 1998, pro-democracy activists have relied heavily on cultural resources, i.e., knowledge, information, and data, using these to present themselves as democratic actors with the legitimacy to give voice to public interests in the political arena. In so doing, activists rely heavily on other resources—particularly networks with fellow activists, informal leaders, and formal political powerholders, which provide activists with instrumental "vehicles". In other

words, activists' efforts to be recognised as legitimate and authoritative representatives of the public have positioned them, consciously or not, as civil society elites who are distinct from their constituents and ordinary citizens.

Elitism is also evident within organisations themselves, a fact that cannot be separated from the fragmentation of the pro-democracy movement since 1998—which was identified in the first assessment (Priyono, Subono, & Samadhi, 2007). Fragmentation led to competition and contestation between pro-democracy actors, and as a result, few civil society actors have been able to access the required resources. Generally, those actors who maintained access to resources were those who had gained a reputation for activism during the New Order regime. These actors enjoyed strong networks with donor institutions and political organisations, and they thus maintained access to funding and were able to influence (or even intervene in) formal political processes. Such elites also benefitted from media coverage of their activities, through which they were granted legitimacy as "representatives" of civil society. They also benefitted from cultural resources, the deep knowledge that they had acquired through their education and lengthy experience (Priyono, Pradjasto, Samadhi, & Törnquist, 2007; Samadhi & Warouw, 2009; Savirani & Törnquist, 2015; Samadhi, 2016a).

Another tendency since 1998 has been for activists to expand their networks with political parties and leaders, rather than limit themselves to fellow civil society activists. Throughout Indonesia, these connections with political parties and leaders have enabled activists to enter the realm of formal political

power and gain positions wherein they could more readily influence public discourse. Such activists are no longer marginalised or excluded, instead having gained a degree of power through their networks.

Due to such elitism, pro-democracy activists have been increasingly separated from their support bases. For activists, elitism does not refer merely to reliance on economic resources for personal interests or the maintenance of political power; it more broadly illustrates how activists become co-opted within the oligarchic power structure (Hiariej, 2015; 2017b). This is not, by any means, a new phenomenon, as elements of elitism were already becoming evident in the highly-centralised and urbanised activism of yesteryear, wherein (predominantly middle-class) activists were negligent in ideological and organisational development (Antlöv, Ibrahim, & van Tuijl, 2006).

Elite-oriented with a populist image

As elite activists are the most influential in the pro-democracy movement, there has emerged within movements the view that activists must orient themselves toward achieving elite status. For example, networks with donors and administrative skills are viewed as necessary to become recognised as an organisational "elite". Such a situation does not mean that pro-democracy activists and movements have lost their role in the politics of democratisation; rather, activists have been limited in their efforts to become agents of political change. Activists who have participated actively in political spaces have become trapped and co-opted by their situation.

Being reliant on donors, activists are thus vulnerable to these stakeholders' ever-changing agenda priorities. Likewise, movement members who conduct activism from abroad can do little, as they lack the social support and economic basis for establishing a movement. Meanwhile, activists who rely on conventional forms of activism—i.e., the provision of non-political support to communities—are heavily dependent on donor support and receive little media coverage; consequently, they are unable to obtain broad public support.

Such tendencies are also evident in the issues and interests advanced by activists. In their activism, activists highlight clearly-defined singular issues that are associated with cases that have captured the public imagination or that resonate with specific ideologies. Issue selection is of great importance to activists, as they lack the economic capital necessary to develop their own political agendas. It is simplest and most pragmatic for activists to choose hot-button issues, as these receive greater media coverage and can be used on social media to quickly mobilise broad public support. However, a study by the Public Virtue Institute (PVI) finds that social media discourse on particular issues is short-lived, as new issues are certain to emerge shortly thereafter (Priyono, Hamid, Obrigadoz, & Ariane, 2014). It is therefore necessary to recognise that, although social media provides a powerful instrument for rapid and far-reaching political communication, the frequency with which hot-button issues change makes it difficult to create a consolidated political agenda.

Another political action strategy commonly used by pro-democracy activists is fishing for

public support by developing and campaigning on populist issues—or even becoming recognised as a populist figure. Such a strategy is commonly used by activists who turn to electoral channels, becoming expert consultants, campaign staff, or even candidates themselves. Such a strategy may be considered a short-term option, one that serves—quite successfully—to help win elections. However, it has deleterious effects on long-term efforts to promote democratisation. First, such populist practices are commonly used by activists who rely on their personal charisma, and thus the populist issues they advocate are more reflective of their character rather than the issues they prioritised at the grassroots. As such, civil-society organisations' efforts to politicise issues are undermined by the short-term interests of political actors. Second, reliance on populist politics has exacerbated the fragmentation experienced by pro-democracy movements, not only due to the emphasis on distinct issues but also interest diversity. Third, pro-democracy activists recognise that they have not yet received adequate public support, and thus they combine populist strategies with religious and ethnic issues to cultivate public support and win elections.

"Suspended", rather than "floating", democrats

The tendency for activists to orient themselves toward elitist political activities has wrought another change: a state of "suspension". This differs from previous studies, which frequently described pro-democracy activists as "floating" democrats.

Data regarding activists' role in the political landscape shows that activists have a strong tendency to concentrate on

civil society. Recently, however, some activists have used their bonds with civil society elites and carefully cultivated networks with prominent political leaders. Such activists have thus become "suspended" democrats. Where previously they had been "floating" due to limited support bases and capacity to enter the political arena (Priyono, Prasetyo, & Törnquist, 2003), recent developments have shown that activists enter a state of suspension when breaking into the political arena, being heavily dependent on the political elites who ask them to join political parties or government institutions.

Reactivity and sporadicity

Another characteristic of Indonesian activists since 1998 is the tendency to work on singular issues and advance specific interests, which not only exacerbates fragmentation but also results in political movements prioritising short-term responses to emergent cases. Such short-term responses are possible because activists move within small circles (mostly within NGOs), which allows them to quickly discuss the issues related to current events. Although the accumulation of cultural resources (i.e., knowledge and data) enables them to prepare appropriate responses for various issues, such capacity is not rooted in the issues and interests that are important to grassroots organisations.

One classic example is the tendency for activists to become increasingly responsive before and during general elections. In 2003/2004, during the lead-up to the 2004 election, pro-democracy activists united in a movement against corrupt politicians. However, their activities ceased not long after the election and only renewed shortly before

the 2009 election. Such movements/campaigns have never resulted in a strategic political agenda for alternative approaches to reforming the electoral and party systems, nor have they stimulated serious initiatives from activists to create their own political parties.

Another example of the reactiveness and sporadicity of pro-democracy movements can be seen in the discourses related to the weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK). Such discourses always receive serious attention from the general public, who are thus responsive to pro-democracy activists' opposition campaigns. Such support, seen on social media and in street protests in front of the KPK headquarters, provides strong evidence that the organisation has enjoyed public trust. Through this support, the KPK has been able to survive continued efforts to neuter it (Muttaqin & Susanto, 2018, p. 136). However, pro-democracy activists' activities have always been temporary, ebbing and flowing with contemporary issues. Indeed, it appears that pro-democracy activists—particularly those involved in anti-corruption activities— have prioritised the KPK as an institution qua institution. Consequently, there have been few efforts to create broader awareness or implement strategic action to challenge corruption. Activists have spoken only when the integrity of the KPK has been threatened, time and again, as corrupt practices have continued unimpeded.

Disorientation of political capacity: Trapped by political elitism

The above analysis of data from three long-term assessments of Indonesian democracy

has shown that activists' political capacity has developed in a manner that does not promote the effective development and reinforcement of popular control. Rather, activists are trapped in a situation wherein they continuously anticipate contingent situations, endlessly reacting to democratic stagnation (even regression), oligarchies, and despotism. Capacity-building is aimless, lacking any systematic and integrated strategy for establishing linkages between popular organisations and progressive political forces. Likewise, political capacity building has failed to result in well-organised popular movements, instead driving the emergence of sporadic and short-term mobilisations responding to particular cases and issues. Meanwhile, in recent years, pro-democracy activists have entered the formal power structures of the state (or, at the very least, approached political leaders with populist ideals).

Such developments in political capacity-building have undermined the essential understanding of democracy as effective popular control. Instead, since 1998, Indonesia's pro-democracy activists have been characterised by exclusivity, elitism, populism, dependency, and reactiveness. None of these characteristics are suited to the creation and realisation of effective popular control. This is not to say that activists have not attempted to promote the growth of Indonesian democracy; rather, they lack a clear agenda and strategy for actualising popular control. Activists are swept along by the currents of a transitional democracy designed by political elites. Democratisation has led to a liberal democratic regime with accents of electoralism,

whereby the smooth and peaceful transition between political leaders after elections is considered the hallmark of a healthy democracy (Huntington, 1991). In such a political environment, pro-democracy activists and movements have been unable to do much, as they have lacked the political capacity for significant action as their activities have been oriented toward electoral matters. It is unsurprising, thus, that the dominant forces in formal politics are the elites who benefit from open political contestation and the oligarchs with access to significant (economic) resources.

The five tendencies exhibited by Indonesian pro-democracy activists since 1998 illustrate the contingencies they experience. Activists are particularly passionate about controlling the political processes of democratisation. Can the conditions necessary for realising effective popular control be created by activists with the capacities discussed above? The following section seeks to answer this question.

Creating demos and popular organisations

The first prerequisite for effective popular control is the demos, a citizenry with the collective capacity to create change. This condition is fundamental for realising popular control, and effective control cannot be created or practised without it. According to Beetham, political equality is characteristic of the demos, as all citizens have the right to political access; this, in turn, leads to the creation of inclusive political spaces. The demos must thus be the starting point for all democratic action, and it must always be considered when examining the situations experienced by pro-democracy activists.

Within the context of political capacity, the existence of the demos is integrally intertwined with the creation of political inclusivity. At the same time, it also demands other forms of political capacity, such as the ability to mobilise support for democratic agendas and create representative channels for realising said agendas.

Given that activists require an empowered demos and inclusive politics, in the current climate it would be difficult for activists to make effective popular control a reality. As pro-democracy activists have oriented themselves primarily towards securing their own positions in the political arena, few have shown concern for developing an empowered demos. At the same time, many lack the capacity to cultivate a solid support base, and thus even those who have successfully crossed into political spaces have found that their legitimacy and authority stem primarily from their activism.

In practice, the existence of a demos is marked by the rise of democratic popular organisations. Such popular organisations play an important role in aggregating and articulating the ideas and interests of citizens. Within the context of democratisation, such popular organisations must also adhere to the principles of democracy. As argued by Beetham, two of the most fundamental principles of democracy are popular control and equal membership. In other words, all members must have the same rights and opportunities to convey their ideas and interests through their organisational policies.

In their character, Indonesia's pro-democracy activists appear to lack the competencies necessary

to realise such principles. Most activists are not involved in popular organisations but are active in non-governmental organisations that are not membership based. Such organisations are professional ones, with issues and agendas that are informed by individual activists' knowledge. Neither organisations nor activists have the political capacity to accumulate economic resources through membership dues; consequently, there are no mechanisms for popular (member) control to be exercised within organisations. Such a situation is prohibitive to the development of inclusive politics.

Activists' tendency to rely primarily on cultural resources when formulating their issues and agendas does not mean that they are entirely removed from the anxieties and interests of the populace. At times, activists can prepare agendas that reflect the popular interest when dealing with particular issues (such as elections and corruption); however, in these cases, support is short-lived. Due to the dearth of popular organisations, activities and movements that combine activists' agendas with citizens' interests cannot expand into sustainable popular movements. Rather, movements emerge rapidly, generally in response to the same triggers, and quickly disappear as popular interest fades or is drawn to other issues. Consequently, such movements are sporadic and unable to instigate lasting change.

In Indonesia, the effectiveness of popular organisations as a pillar of popular control was evident in early efforts to promote minimum wage standards. Surya Tjandra (2019), for example, illustrated how Indonesian labour movements and unions successfully stimulated a shift from the economic paradigm to

the political. Through a lengthy and exhausting process, they ultimately realised important and strategic results, i.e., they helped labour unions identify political actors who could influence labour policy.

The problem of political linkages

The existence of political linkages between the demos/popular organisations and political/government institutions is the second prerequisite for the realisation of popular control. Such linkages are necessary to ensure that the interests of the demos and popular organisations are transformed into democratic political agendas. Available evidence shows that activists can establish linkages with political organisations; this capacity is particularly well supported by the second assessment, which was conducted in 2007. However, as explained above, the elitist character of pro-democracy shows that they have limited mass support. Activists' efforts to enter political arenas are supported primarily by their individual cultural resources, rather than a desire to make manifest the collective goals of an organised grassroots. The presence of activists in the political arena, thus, cannot be used in and of itself as evidence of popular control.

The frailty of the linkages between activists and political institutions is also evident in activists' tendency to give voice to public issues through civil society organisations and/or mass media institutions. Even then, activists are limited in their ability to access mass media, due to the cost of running opinion columns in newspapers and magazines. Few activists attempt to campaign through political parties.

Resource accumulation and disparate power relations

The third prerequisite for creating popular control is the equitable distribution of resources, which is necessary to achieve the legitimacy and authority necessary to advance the ideals and interests of the demos. Many studies have illustrated how disparate power relations stem from structural inequalities wherein a handful of politically and economically dominant actors exert power over others. In such situations, those in power act as though they themselves are the demos. They use resources freely, for various purposes and interests, as they strive to monopolise the formulation and management of popular interests. Conversely, pro-democracy activists seem to focus solely on accumulating cultural resources and establishing networks. Through their reliance on knowledge rather than mass support, these activists then become new elites. With their extensive knowledge and awareness, as well as social positions that are legitimised by said cultural resources, activists become politically empowered citizens. Frequently, they can identify and formulate issues that are subsequently politicised to draw public support and attention. Ironically, however, this very situation increases the exclusivity of activism. Lacking the support of mass organisations, these activists have very fluid relationships with the grassroots, whom they cannot readily organise.

Unfortunately, activists often fail to realise the importance of accumulating economic resources. As a result, pro-democracy actors frequently depend on agendas that

have been developed by others, rather than by activists themselves in close collaboration with the grassroots.

Problems with the political agenda of democratisation

The fourth prerequisite for establishing and maintaining popular control is a collective imagination of the means of and reasons for cultivating democracy. Recognising that popular control is defined as the collective capacity to realise change, it demands that movements take place under the umbrella of an organised political agenda that unites the diverse interests within the demos, thereby ensuring that activities in varied sectors and territories are undertaken to realise a shared goal or ideal.

Such a condition, likewise, has yet to be realised. Pro-democracy activists remain highly fragmented, as there exists no solidarity within specific sectors; likewise, there is no organisational basis for uniting the aspirations and interests of the demos at the local and national levels. As shown above, political activists tend to focus on short-lived issues and respond spontaneously to emergent political incidents. Available data do not suggest that the activists have created integrated long-term agendas that advance popular interests and democratisation.

Conclusion

Analysis of three democracy assessments, conducted over the long term, has shown that the development of activists' political capacity has not been oriented toward establishing and maintaining effective popular control. Instead, activists focus on anticipating the contingent situations that emerge in Indonesian democracy, and thus their capacity-building activities

have been aimless. They lack a systemic and integrated strategy for establishing linkages between popular organisations and progressive political elements. Likewise, capacity building has failed to promote the growth of popular organisations; instead, it has only resulted in the sporadic mobilisation of short-term responses to specific cases and issues.

Second, activists' failure to use their political capacity to realise popular control implies that the understanding of democracy as effective popular control has waned. The above discussion has shown that pro-democracy activists have been unable to create the conditions necessary to establish and maintain effective popular control. This is not to say that they have made no effort to promote the democratisation of Indonesia. Rather, they have lacked the necessary agendas and strategies. Pro-democracy activists are trapped within a democratisation process that was designed by political elites to realise the promises of a transitional democracy with shades of electoralism. In such an environment, pro-democracy activists and movements can do little as their capacity to contest elections is limited. It is thus unsurprising that the arena of formal politics remains dominated by elites who have benefitted from the expansion of political spaces and the oligarchs who retain access to extensive (economic) resources.

The political capacity of Indonesia's pro-democracy activists has been informed by the logic of power, of *-archy*: exclusiveness, elitism, dependence, sporadicity, and elite orientation. Such characteristics are ill-suited to the development of popular control. Consequently, pro-democracy activists have contributed little

to the reinforcement of popular control—the importance of which is underscored by the very roots of democracy itself, *demos* and *kratos*.

This discussion of political capacity and popular control leads to the question: where are Indonesian pro-democracy activists headed? This question recognises that the characteristics of activists' political capacity are ill-suited to creating the ideal conditions for making popular control a reality. Although activists have consistently sought new approaches, taken diverse initiatives, and worked intensively to make democracy manifest, they have had little success in promoting effective popular control. Such a conclusion is this study's contribution to the literature on the factors hindering the realisation of Indonesian democracy.

The failure of pro-democracy activists to realise popular control is not unique to Indonesia. Studies of civil society activists conducted by Houtzager et al. (2007) and Houtzager and Lavalle (2009) have found similar situations in Brazil and Mexico, respectively. They note that, although civil society and pro-democracy activists are expected to stimulate change, they claim unilaterally to represent the public. As in Indonesia, many civil society activists in Brazil have failed to establish broad support bases or utilise such bases for their activities. Most activists have been involved in non-membership organisations, and thus limited accountability is evident in their relations with ordinary citizens.

The tendency for activists to involve themselves in non-membership organisations has not only hindered their ability to establish strong ties with

constituents but also limited the sustainability of their movements. Meanwhile, the civil society organisations in which activists are involved cannot provide them with economic resources as they lack the backing of membership fees. Instead, these organisations rely heavily on the support of donor institutions, and as such they focus on activities designed by said institutions—as well as their broader agendas. For their part, donor institutions tend to limit their support to the agenda of strengthening democratic institutions; consequently, as argued by Mietzner, the emergence of more radical civil society organisations is stymied. The pro-democracy activists who work most closely with grassroots organisations have little support, and thus activists seek to "persevere" by promoting democratisation via issues such as elections, parliament, and political parties.

This study complements previous research into Indonesia's lengthy process of democratisation by highlighting the contributions of pro-democracy activists. Activists have failed to create alternative democratisation agendas or develop appropriate strategies for establishing popular control. Likewise, they have been unable to make democracy meaningful. It is not that pro-democracy activists have failed to undertake political activities intended to reinforce democracy. Rather, they have not prepared themselves for developing political capacities oriented toward popular control. This aspect is particularly important, given that the traditions and opportunities available for creating coherent and solid political power within civil society have disappeared with the political policies of the New Order (Kusman, 2017).

This study has also offered a strong justification for enriching the theories of democratisation with research that highlights actors other than the dominant elite—for instance, the pro-democracy activists active within civil society. The democratic transition is not wholly dependent on the elite actors involved in democratic institutions. Such institutions need not be "the only game in town"; public control is also necessary.

Studies of "new democracy" must be oriented more toward understanding whether the democratisation process has been oriented toward political transformation. The transformative approach used by this study has been shown to be able to understand the issues faced by and opportunities available to democratisation. It can show not only the actual situation but also the ideal means of improving the democratisation process.

Discussion of democracy must be returned to the universal principles of popular control, political equality, and the reinforcement of collective political capacity. Various approaches to democratisation may be viable, so long as popular control is reaffirmed. Conversely, leaving the institutions of liberal democracy to their own devices, with the hope that actors will adapt themselves to more democratic contexts—as assumed by transitional theories—cannot realise a truly democratic regime. Likewise, a "politics of order" approach that emphasises the rule of law cannot promote transformation, as it fails to consider the possibility that actors may abuse the freedoms available to them and conduct electoral violations.

Although good governance and the rule of law are indeed important, more foundational for successful democracy are effective popular control and the political capacity for citizens to be equally involved in the making and implementation of policy.

Pro-democracy activists must reconsider their agendas and strategies for strengthening democracy, with particular consideration of their political capacity, as only then can the conditions necessary for developing and implementing effective popular control. Realising effective popular control is necessary to counteract the dominance of elites and oligarchs. Without a balancing force from below, it is impossible to imagine that these powerful actors will abandon their continued manipulation of democracy.

Bibliography

Ambardi, K. (2009). *Mengungkap politik kartel: studi tentang sistem kepartaian di Indonesia era reformasi.* Jakarta: KPG.

Antlöv, H., Ibrahim, R., & van Tuijl, P. (2006). NGO governance and accountability in Indonesia: challenges in a newly democratizing country. In L. Jordan & P. van Tuijl (eds.), *NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles, and Innovations* (pp. 147–166). London: Earthscan.

Beetham, D. (1999). *Democracy and human rights.* Oxford: Polity Press.

Djani, L., Törnquist, O., Tanjung, O., & Tjandra, S. (2017). *Dilemmas of populist transactionalism: what are the prospects now for popular politics in Indonesia?* Yogyakarta: PolGov.

Hiariej, E. (2015). The rise of post-clientelism in Indonesia. In A. Savirani & O. Tornquist (eds.), *Reclaiming the state: overcoming problems of democracy in post-Soeharto Indonesia* (pp. 71–94). Yogyakarta: PolGov - PCD Press.

Hiariej, E. (2017b). Stagnated democracy: the rise of formal democracy in the wake of oligarchy rules and weak pro-democracy movements. In E. Hiariej & K. Stokke (eds.), *Politics of citizenship in Indonesia* (pp. 85–118). Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

Houtzager, P., & Lavalle, A. G. (2009). The paradox of civil society representation: constructing new forms of democratic legitimacy in Brazil. In O. Tornquist, N. Webster, & K. Stokke (eds.), *Rethinking popular representation* (pp. 39–58). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Houtzager, P., Acharya, A., & Lavalle, A. (2007). *Associations and the exercise of citizenship in new democracies evidence from Sao Paolo and Mexico City.* Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Huntington, S. (1991). *The third wave: democratization in the twentieth century.* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Kusman, A. P. (2017). Kuasa oligarki dan posisi masyarakat sipil. *Prisma, 36*(1): 148–160.

Kusman, A. P., & Istiqomah, M. (2021, January). Indonesia's 'new despotism'. *Melbourne Asia Review*. DOI: 10.37839/MAR2652-550X5.13.

Lassa, J., & Li, D. (2015). *Jaringan LSM dan masa depan keberlanjutan LSM di Indonesia.* National NGO Study and Service Centre, DFAT. Retrieved from https://www.ksi-indonesia.org/assets/uploads/original/2020/02/ksi-1580491784.pdf

Mietzner, M. (2012). Indonesia's democratic stagnation: anti-reformist elites and resilient civil society. *Democratization, 19*(2): 209–229. DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2011.572620.

Muttaqin, L., & Susanto, M. (2018). Mengkaji serangan balik koruptor terhadap KPK dan strategi menghadapinya. *Integritas, 4*(1): 101–143. DOI: 10.32697/integritas.v4i1.146.

Ober, J. (2008). The original meaning of 'democracy': capacity to do things, not majority rule. *Constellations, 15*(1): 3-9. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8675.2008.00471.x.

Power, T., & Warburton, E. (2020). *Democracy in Indonesia: from stagnation to regression.* Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Priyono, A. E. (2014). Demokratisasi Indonesia dan paradoks-paradoks reformasi. In A. E. Priyono & U. Hamid (eds.), *Merancang arah baru demokrasi Indonesia pasca-reformasi* (pp. ix–li). Jakarta: KPG.

Priyono, A. E., Hamid, U., Obrigadoz, W., & Ariane, Z. (2014). *Media sosial alat gerakan sipil.* Jakarta: Public Virtue Institute.

Priyono, A. E., Pradjasto, A., Samadhi, W. P., & Törnquist, O. (2007). *Dari representasi elitis menuju representasi popular.* Integrated executive report on topical research, 2006–2007. Demos, Jakarta.

Priyono, A. E., Prasetyo, S. A., & Törnquist, O. (eds.). (2003). *Gerakan demokrasi di Indonesia pasca-Soeharto.* Jakarta: Demos.

Priyono, A. E., Samadhi, W. P., & Törnquist, O. (eds.). (2007). *Making democracy meaningful: problems and options in Indonesia* (Revised ed.). Jakarta-Yogyakarta: Demos-PCD Press.

Priyono, A. E., Subono, N. I., & Samadhi, W. P. (2007). The floating and marginalised democrats. In A. E. Priyono, W. P. Samadhi, & O. Törnquist (eds.), *Making democracy meaningful: problems and options in Indonesia* (Revised ed., pp. 93–116). Jakarta-Yogyakarta: Demos-PCD Press.

Robison, R., & Hadiz, V. R. (2004). *Reorganising power in Indonesia: the politics of oligarchy in an age of markets.* London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Samadhi, W. P. (2016a). *Blok politik kesejahteraan: merebut kembali demokrasi.* Yogyakarta: PolGov.

Samadhi, W. P., & Warouw, N. (eds.). (2009). *Building democracy on the sand.* Jakarta-Yogyakarta: Demos-PCD Press.

Savirani, A., & Törnquist, O. (Penyunt.). (2015). *Reclaiming the state: overcoming problems of democracy in post-Soeharto Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: PolGov-PCD Press.

Stokke, K., & Törnquist, O. (2013a). Transformative democratic politics. In K. Stokke & O. Tornquist (eds.), *Democratization in the global south: the importance of transformative politics* (pp. 3–20). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tjandra, S. (2019). Reformasi dan perjuangan serikat buruh untuk upah lebih baik. In W. Berenschot & G. van Klinken (eds.), *Citizenship in Indonesia: perjuangan atas hak, identitas, dan partisipasi* (pp. 145–184). Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.

Törnquist, O. (2009). "The problem is representation! Towards an analytical framework". In O. Törnquist, N. Webster, & K. Stokke (eds.), *Rethinking Popular Representation.* New York: Palgrave.

Törnquist, O. (2013). *Assessing dynamics of democratisation: Transformative politics, new institutions, and the case of Indonesia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Warburton, E., & Aspinall, E. (2019). Explaining Indonesia's democratic regression: structure, agency and popular opinion. *Contemporary Southeast Asia, 41*(2), 255-285.

Winters, J. A. (2013, October). Oligarchy and democracy in Indonesia. *Indonesia, special issue: wealth, power, and contemporary Indonesian politics*, *96*: 11–33. DOI: 10.5728/indonesia.96.0099.

-o0o-