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Does a Country's Politics Reflect the Design of Its Culture?: The Case of Indonesia

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Abstract

It is commonly believed that a country's politics shall reflect the design of its culture. However, sufficient support for this statement has not been found. This study employs the development of political party system of Indonesia to examine how true the statement is. Since the independence, Indonesia's party system has transformed from the multiparty system to the one-party system and then again back to the multiparty system. By conducting a historical-comparative study, it is found that in Indonesia, the transformation of the form of the party system has nothing to do with her political culture. In fact, political culture was more like a convenient mean manipulated by the rulers to secure their political position or to realize their political ambition.

Keywords: Indonesia, political culture, political institution, party system

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Introduction

Clifford Geertz (1972: 319) asks an interesting question:

> One of the things that everyone knows but no one can quite think how to demonstrate is that a country's politics reflect the design of its culture. On one level, the proposition is indubitable — where else could French politics exist but France? Yet, merely to state it is to raise doubts. Since 1945, Indonesia has seen revolution, parliamentary democracy, civil war, presidential autocracy, mass murder, and military rule. Where is the design on that?

At the end of Indonesia's military rule in 1998, a multiparty system of parliamentary democracy was reestablished. How were Indonesia's different forms of government (between 1945 and 1998) a reflection of the "design" or makeup of its "political culture"?[1] Has political culture changed radically at different times to accommodate those historically different changes in its government? To answer that question, this study will explore how "political culture" has been manipulated by Indonesian political elites to support "de-politicization politics" in the past 50 years. This study will further discuss if the re-adoption of a multiparty system at the end of the 1990s was a result of a sudden transformation in political culture or not.

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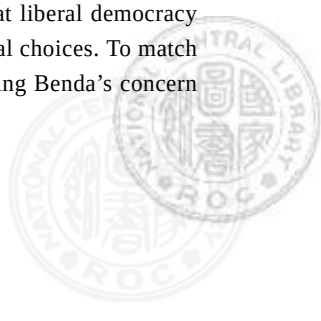
[1] In the real world, culture is the combination of values, beliefs, and customs. According to F. G. Bailey, values correspond with "how the world should be," beliefs with "how the world is," customs with "how one conducts oneself under the guidance of a particular set of values and beliefs" (Liddle, 1996: 143, 173). Political culture in this study refers to the culture of values, customs, and beliefs that people hold while dealing with the political system. This definition is ambiguous per se. However, it is in line with the concept of political culture proposed by political scientists, for examples, Pye and Verba (1965: 3-7); Rosenbaum (1975: 3-5). In addition, Rosenbaum (1975: 4) proposes that political culture can be divided into collective and individual entities. In this study, political culture refers to collective political culture only.

At the dawn of its independence in 1947, Indonesia adopted a multiparty system of parliamentary democracy. During this period, inter-party competition appeared ideal in promoting the democratic process. Some Indonesian scholars honor that period as "the most democratic era of Indonesia." However, high turnover in the cabinet created political instability. Arguing that this instability lead to chaos in the government, Sukarno attempted to persuade Indonesians that a multiparty system was a "western import" and therefore not compatible with Indonesia's political culture. According to Sukarno, Indonesian political culture emphasized consensus, consultation, and mutual help. A multiparty system, however, emphasized competition and conflict. Sukarno attempted to make the incompatibility between those two systems appear obvious to the public. Sukarno announced that Indonesia's liberal democratic system had "failed" and that Indonesia should abandon all political parties.[2]

During Suharto's New Order regime, the multiparty system (as in Sukarno's government) was eliminated. Suharto grouped the existing 9 political parties into 3 parties, and no new party was allowed to form, thus severely curtailing party competition. However, when Suharto was forced to resign, Habibie (his former vice-president) reinstated a multiparty system allowing new political parties to form. The number of new, highly competitive political parties has continued to increase since the election of 1998. Within the span of 50 years, the "failed" multiparty system was abandoned and readopted by Indonesian political leaders.

Sukarno and Suharto emphasized Indonesia's "political culture" as

[2] About Indonesia's liberal democracy in the 1950s, the most critical texts have been: Feith (1962); Benda (1964: 449-56); Lev (1966). Using the word "failed" to describe the nascent development of liberal democracy may indicate Sukarno's inadvertent or conscious commitment of one or more of the "unhistorical sins" mentioned by Benda (1964). Sukarno's argument is "unhistorical" because "failed" per se implies that liberal democracy was the only alternative that Indonesia had, irrespective of other historical choices. To match the tone of Sukarno's message, I use "failed" in my paper. But considering Benda's concern for accuracy, I use quotation marks around "failed."



culturally unique in order to rationalize the elimination of a multiparty system. What, then, is the implication of the re-adoption of a multiparty system in Indonesia at the end of the 1990s? Does the reemergence of a multiparty system in Indonesia indicate the birth of a new political culture at the end of that decade? Had political culture changed radically to accommodate a multiparty system, which was still viewed as a "western" product?

"Political culture" is an ambiguous concept that was interpreted in many ways. The interpretations of political culture emphasized by Sukarno and Suharto during their presidencies were designed to keep the ruling presidents in power. Sukarno and Suharto took advantage of the ambiguity of political culture to effect a ban on political parties and therefore eliminate opposition to their leadership. In the 1990s, the readoption of a multiparty system by Habibie was not the result of a radical transformation in political culture, as one might assume. Rather, it was the outcome of a new political ruler's (Habibie's) strategy to legitimize his own power. When Habibie's legitimacy as president was strongly criticized, he adopted a multiparty system as a political reform to distinguish his leadership from that of Suharto's and to strengthen his political image. In the context of Indonesia's political and historical development, it is interesting to note that few Indonesians ever questioned Habibie's (re)establishment of a multiparty system, which was formerly promoted by Sukarno and Suharto, and subsequently viewed by the public, as a "western" product potentially detrimental to Indonesian governance.

Did a multiparty system in the 1950s truly "fail"? Was the abandonment of the multiparty system in both the Sukarno and Suharto eras an outcome[3] of that system's incompatibility with Indonesian "political culture"? Did a transformation in political culture per se allow for the readoption of a multiparty system at the end of the 1990s? By examining these questions, this paper will argue the (ir)relevance of political culture to the development of

[3] Suharto allowed for the formation of three political parties, but without actual elections two were powerless. That condition did not appear to support the spirit of a multiparty system.

Indonesia's party politics from 1950 to 1999.

Indonesia's Multiparty System in the 1950s: A Mask for Democracy?

Indonesia's multiparty system was rooted in the "political openness" in the late 1940s and the early 1950s (Liddle & Hill, 1987: 503). In 1955, 46 political parties were allowed to participate in the general election. Inter-party competition at that time was very high. However, there were debates about that phenomenon.[4] Many believed that party electoral engagement was a political mask designed to legitimize an underlying autocracy as a true form of democracy. This paper has no intention of joining that debate; but will discuss the factors that lead to the abandonment of the multiparty system at that time.

The adoption of a competitive multiparty system did not receive unanimous support from political leaders. Two major opposition groups struggled with the issue. One group, who supported a multiparty system, was led by Sjahrir; the other group, against a multiparty system, was led by Sukarno. The conflict between those two plus Sukarno's personal desire for supreme executive power influenced the development of partisan politics during that time.

In 1945, Sukarno suggested the establishment of a single national party for Indonesia. The idea, however, was rejected by other political leaders. An institutionalized multiparty system (including a number of political parties) had already been established in the wake of Indonesia's independence movement. But Sukarno would soon eliminate the multiparty system. On August 29, 1945, Sukarno dismissed the Committee to Prepare Indonesian Independence (*Panitya Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*—PPK) and formed the Central Indonesian National Committee (Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat, KNIP). The KNIP

[4] For the debates, please see Anderson and Kahin (1982: 13-53).



became the Parliament of the Republic. Sukarno formed the Republic's very first cabinet, which responded to his complete authority under the Constitution (Legge, 1972: 192, 208-209). The cabinet was composed of older and established leaders, many of whom had held political office during the Japanese Occupation. For example, Subardjo was appointed to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs; Ki Hadjar Dewantoro to the position of Minister of Education. At that time, those who had held office during the Occupation were seen as colonial sympathizers and were not trusted by student groups and others in support of revolution. However, Sukarno took advantage of the newly formed committee and cabinet to ensure his own political power.

Soon after the development of the new government, however, Sukarno's authority was challenged. The Vice-Presidential Decree of 16 October forced the KNIP to delegate its new power to a "Working Committee" which remained responsible to the larger government body. The Working Committee was chaired by Sjahrir and became, as Kahin had described it, "the dynamic heart of the government" (Kahin, 1952: 153). From this point of view, no one would doubt the importance of the Working Committee and Sjahrir.

Not surprisingly, Sukarno and Sjahrir did not get along. Their political views regarding the newly formed Republic were not aligned. Sukarno, as mentioned earlier, supported a one-party system.[5] Sjahrir and the Working Committee preferred a multiparty system (Legge, 1972: 211). On November 11, 1945, Sjahrir led the Working Committee to propose the adoption of a Parliamentary system. Under this system Indonesian people were allowed to establish political parties. Sukarno accepted this proposal.[6] As a result of this change, the cabinet was no longer responsible to Sukarno but to the Working Committee. Sukarno became a "figurehead President" with no supreme executive powers (Legge, 1972: 213-14).

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5 Sukarno suggested the name of the Indonesian National Party/ PNI. He described the PNI as "the motor of the people's struggle" (Legge, 1972: 211).

6 The reasons why Sukarno accepted this change are complex, see Legge (1972: 213-15).

Although a multiparty system had been implemented, it had not worked well by 1956. On average, the term of each cabinet member was less than two years (Feith, 1962). This leads to political instability which in part allowed Sukarno to regain supreme power over the Working Committee. On October 16, 1956, Sukarno returned to Indonesia from a foreign visit to Russia. He feigned a lack of interest in the conflict that arose between the cabinet and parliament, a conflict which he had helped cause in directing the West Irian issue[7] and by coercing Foreign Minister Roeslan Abdulgani's to sign the Indonesian-Soviet joint communiqué.[8] In fact, Ganis Harsono, who accompanied Sukarno during his Russian visit, noted, "from the Kremlin in the Russian heartland he [Sukarno] began his grand design that brought him finally to the apex of absolute power" (Harsono, 1977b: 147). On October 28, in a s`peech to youth leaders, Sukarno proposed "burying all parties." Sukarno argued that a multiparty system had been a great mistake; and he spoke of a dream that "leaders of [different parties] would deliberate together and then come to a decision" (Legge, 1972: 271).

Sukarno's "Indonesian Way"

As an alternative to a parliamentary democracy, Sukarno proposed a concept termed "Guided Democracy."[9] He attacked what he observed to be the inefficiencies of a parliamentary democracy. He also reminded the public that Indonesia once had a culturally unique form of government in the past. Indonesia's inheritance of a centuries-old national form of democracy practiced

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7 About the West Irian issue, please see Goldberg (1956); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1954); Department of Information (1962). Some believed that the West Irian issue was a Sukarno strategy to diffuse public discontent regarding domestic issues, see Feith (1962) and Weinstein (1976).

8 It was believed that Foreign Minister Roeslan Abdulgani's signature on the joint communiqué lead to his resignation six months later. About this story, please see Legge (1972) and Harsono (1977a: 169-206).

9 About Sukarno's Guided Democracy, please see The Department of Information (1960: 85-122).

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in villages, incorporating *Musjawarah*, or "consultation", and *gotong royong*, or "collective and mutual help", will, Sukarno said, prove to be an important consideration in the redesign of Indonesia's new democracy (Harsono, 1977a: 180).

Promoting his *konsepsi* (concept) or Guided Democracy, Sukarno strongly rejected the idea of a liberal democracy on the grounds that it was a Western import and that it allowed for the coercion of minority groups by a majority. He believed that liberal democracy was not the "Indonesian way". Only Indonesia's traditional decision making mode, in which decisions were made after prolonged and careful consideration, was considered acceptable. Within that practice, as long as a substantial minority remained unconvinced by a proposal, deliberation would continue until, at length, under the guidance of a leader, a consensus was reached (Legge, 1972: 283). To enforce that kind of decision making, Sukarno formed the National Advisory Council. Curtailing party politics, the Council collectively represented functional groups, consisting of workers, peasants, the intelligentsia, entrepreneurs, religious sects, the armed forces, youth organizations, women's organizations and others around the country. Under that kind of broad representation, Sukarno emphasized that government and Council would be able to make decisions based not on the overriding of a minority group by a majority but by general consent, thus, in effect or by proxy, giving a voice to all represented groups (Legge, 1972: 284). But in his concern for unity, Sukarno underestimated the deep divisions among and within those groups (Legge, 1972: 284).

By the time it had been implemented, Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" had gained little to no support. Some groups tried to organize public "spontaneous" support for Sukarno's idea.[10] Opposing groups, however, led a

[10] Before implementing "Guided Democracy", Sukarno gave parties a week to consider it. The intervening week saw much organized public support for the Concept. Across the country, meetings of trade unionists, students, and political groups endorsed the president's plan. In Djakarta, slogans in paint and tar appeared on the walls of office buildings, shop windows and telegraph poles. "*Laksanakan Konsepsi Presiden Soekarno*" ("Implement President

revolutionary-type of revolt (Legge, 1972: 286). Those developments diminished Sukarno's claim that "consultation-consensus" and "mutual help" were widely accepted values of Indonesia's traditional political culture. One might question the efficacy of "consultation-consensus" in the legislation of political affairs. As Legge argues,

> Such procedures made for flexibility in individual attitudes. So long as a person was not committed by public vote he might still be persuaded to give ground a little without loss of face, in the interests of an acceptable compromise. On the debit side was the fact that important and controversial issues were often shelved because of the difficulty of securing general agreement about them (Legge, 1972: 286).

Legge suggests that "consultation and consensus" and "mutual help" may not have been the most effective ways of making political decisions. Other ways may have been more ideal, especially in Indonesia's case.

Sukarno's Intention Uncovered

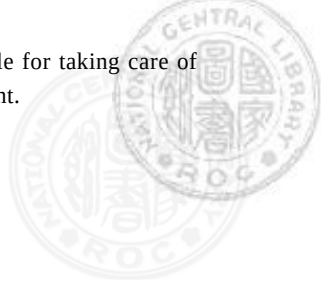
Many political elites were aware of Sukarno's intention to take control of the political leadership of the country through his proposition of "Guided Democracy."[11] Ganis Harsono, who meet with Sukarno during his overseas visit to Russia,[12] comments:

> In August, as he [Sukarno] began his Russian journey in the wake of new political crises at home, he deliberately demonstrated attitudes and actions that were unwarranted for a constitutional president. With the confidence of a top executive he began his political moves which, at first

Sukarno's Concept") was painted on the parliament building (Legge, 1972: 285).

11 This argument is based on Ganis Harsono's statement that Mohammad Hatta was aware of Sukarno's intention. See Harsono (1977a: 177).

12 During Sukarno's intensive oversea visit, Ganis Harsono was responsible for taking care of public relations and foreign press. He had intimiate access to the President.



> glance, seemed to be directed to the Soviet Union and the United States, but if closely scrutinized were mainly intended to add fuel to the already heated political atmosphere in Jakarta. So, from the Kremlin in the Russian heartland he began his grand design that brought him finally to the apex of absolute power (Harsono, 1977b: 147).

Two events support what Harsono said above. Firstly, without any proper authority as a figurehead president, Sukarno had coerced Foreign Minister Roeslan Abdulgani to sign the Indonesian-Soviet joint communique. Sukarno had not consulted with anyone about his decision, despite the presence of several political party leaders on tour with him at the time. Having been criticized for his decision, Sukarno showed no regret (Harsono, 1977b: 151-55).

Secondly, opposition parties used non-parliamentary tactics (like what?) to undermine and embarrass the cabinet of Ali Sastroamijoyo. To some observers, that indicated "that Western parliamentary democracy in Indonesia was only a fashionable mode and not a reality in the country's political life" (Harsono, 1977b: 147). Sukarno recognized the motives and tactics of opposition parties to ditch the Ali cabinet but Sukarno had made no effort to help Ali out. On the contrary, one of the three themes of his speeches during his extensive tour throughout the Soviet Union was that "Western democracy was not the right course for Indonesia to follow."[13] As Harsono indicates, Sukarno had developed and promoted ideas about democracy similar to those of the opposition parties "not to break Ali Sastroamijoyo personally, but perhaps to break the existing political system of 'free for all' democracy" (Harsono, 1977b: 147).

In July 1959, Sukarno dismissed Parliament by Presidential decree and attempted to revert back to the 1945 Constitution, under which he would retain

[13] The three main themes were: (1) a condemnation of Dutch colonialism; (2) allegations that Western democracy was not the right course for Indonesia to follow; (3) a tribute to the Soviet Union for its unswerving task of creating world peace by way of peaceful co-existence. See, Ganis Harsono (1977b: 148).

the highest executive power. He emphasized that returning to the 1945 Constitution would be in the best interest of the country. Under the 1945 constitution, the President could employ a "Presidential Decree" to forestall potentially damaging legislation made by Parliament. He argued that demeaning and embarrassing acts of legislation like "the Linggadjati Agreement" and "the Renville Agreement" should not have been signed by Parliament. At that time, it was difficult to find a systemic way to propose any ideas that were against Sukarno's (Feith & Castles, 1970: 99).

Sukarno's actions in gaining executive control ironically recall the concepts of "conflict" and "competition." "Conflict" and "competition", Sukarno had stated, were core values rooted in "Western" political culture.

Yet Sukarno emphasized that only the principles of Guided Democracy, not Western democracy, were compatible with Indonesia's national spirit and character (Feith &Castles, 1970: 109). Few if any debates about that occurred. However, Guided Democracy was strongly questioned in light of two conditions: first, conflict and competition among political elites appeared firmly entrenched in the government;[14] and second, a variety of political cultures throughout the country existed in strong competition with each other.[15]

Sukarno's Guided Democracy was a political move or a tactic aimed at securing supreme executive power. Anderson says, "in spite of Sukarno's virtually autocratic powers, the Indonesian government has never been more helpless" (Anderson, 1965: 78). A successful coup in 1965 forced Sukarno to step down from office. However, Guided Democracy was adopted and implemented by Suharto's New Order government.

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[14] According to Ganis Harsono, political conflict occurred among elites who were stratified according to the concept of "The Five Layers of the Pyramid" (Harsono, 1977a: 169-95).

[15] For example, regional differences were associated with contrasting cultural patterns—the hierarchical rice-based civilization of inland Java compared to the more egalitarian, and perhaps more dynamic, commercial societies of West Sumatra or Sulawesi (Legge, 1972: 273).

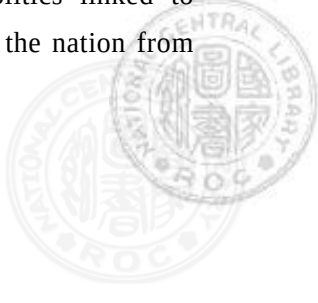
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Pancasila Democracy: A Reality in Indonesia's Political Life?

Suharto's Rationale

After he was inaugurated, Suharto publicly emphasized that Indonesian society valued strong state rule and national unity. Suharto asserted that the political choices available to Indonesia were not between authoritarianism and democracy; but, rather, between "Pancasila democracy"—or the status quo—and the chaos of Sukarno's former rule. Similar to the spirit of Sukarno's Guided Democracy, Suharto's Pancasila Democracy reiterated that Western liberalism was not in tune with Indonesia's *kepribadian bangsa* (national personality) (Schwarz, 1994: 42). Under Suharto's Pancasila Democracy, Indonesia's political party system was simplified. In 1973, Islamic-based political parties were forced to join together under the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party). The Protestant, Catholic, and nationalist parties were reorganized as the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI). It was stated by Suharto that this consolidation of parties would be more amenable to the practice of Pancasila democracy, and in particular, to the principles of consultation and consensus (Ramage, 1995: 29).

Like Sukarno, Suharto emphasized that political parties were the cause of chaos and instability in Indonesia's Old Order democracy (Ramage, 1995: 28). To avoid repeating that history, Suharto's New Order government sought to establish a system without opposition. As a result, the concept of the "Floating Mass" was proposed and implemented under the Political Parties Bill in 1975. The concept of the "floating mass" was an ideological statute designed to separate individual citizens, collectively referred to as a "floating mass" or as the masses, from participating in any kind of party activity. The law of the "Floating Mass" ensured that divisive party politics linked to communal, religious, and ideological issues could not distract the nation from development by slowing down the legislative process.



Behind Suharto's Rhetoric

The enforcement of the "simplified party system" and the concept of the "floating mass" was a New Order strategy designed to "de-politicize" or "de-ideologize" (Ramage, 1995: 29) mass politics in order to ensure political stability, thus eliminating opposition, which would in turn maintain Suharto's power. In order to gain public support for Suharto's new government, the New Order publicly stated that "consolidating political parties" and implementing the concept of the "floating mass" were ways of practicing Pancasila in its truest form, thus appealing to a popular notion of Indonesian political culture.

Also, there was no clear definition of Pancasila Democracy, except for its emphasis on the values of deliberation, consensus and mutual help, which were open to interpretation. By promoting those values, Suharto's government used Pancasila Democracy to prevent challenges to the Presidency. Under the Constitution, the MPR was empowered to select a new president among multiple candidates. In practice, however, Pancasila Democracy's consensus-driven political system shied away from making decisions by a vote. "Voting on issues [was] regarded as an invitation to political chaos…Preferably, the establishment reache[d] a unanimous decision on who will be the sole candidate for endorsement and acclamation by the MPR" (Vatikiotis, 2005: 148). Before 1998, Suharto had always been the sole candidate for the Presidency.

Vatikiotis (2005: 148) questions whether the New Order government could have elected a president as efficiently as it had if the MPR had actually exercised its constitutional authority to endorse a candidate other than Suharto (Vatikiotis, 2005: 148). Vatikiotis asserts an interesting perspective. As we have seen, at the end of Suharto's autocracy, the New Order practice to elect a



new president was completely abandoned.[16]

If the practice of voting by overwhelming cheers, shouts, and applause rather than by ballot was considered to be Indonesia's true political culture, why did that not appear to be the case after Suharto had stepped down? In July 1998, shortly after Suharto's resignation, Akbar Tanjung won the Golkar chairmanship by 17 votes to 10, the first time that a vote had been taken in Golkar's history (Anwar, 1999: 45). In light of that change, one might ask if Indonesia's political culture per se had also changed in the short months between Suharto's resignation and Golkar's first election; or were "consultation and consensus" not as widely accepted as Suharto's government had promoted them?

At the time, the government's "propaganda" of Pancasila was constant and at times overwheleming (Abdulgani, 1992; Ramage, 1995: 48). Many Indonesians grew cynical about the use and meaning of "consultation and consensus." Mochtar Lubis, a distinguished Indonesian writer and social commentator, remarked that he was "fed up" with Pancasila because of the way it had been used to justify everything (Ramage, 1995: 48). Roeslan Abdulgani, who was instrumental in the implementation of Pancasila under Sukarno and Suharto, wrote that Indonesians felt "saturated" with Pancasila because of its unnecessarily heavy-handed promotion (Ramage, 1995: 48).

It was argued by Suharto's government that the practice of Pancasila, driven by consultation and consensus, protected the interests of minority parties. However, in its implementation, the DPR and the government did not appear to uphold the spirit of Pancasila (Ramage, 1995: 48). Minority PDI and PPP party members, who were eligible under the Constitution to serve as Cabinet Ministers, were not elected to the Cabinet (Ramage, 1995: 179). Furthermore, because Pancasila promoted consultation and consensus over oppositional voting, formal opposition was not allowed, though opposing voices were often heard (Ramage, 1995: 179).

[16] This issue will be discussed later in the paper.



The compatibility between Pancasila Democracy and Indonesia's "national personality," expressed by Suharto's government, remains debatable. One may argue that a "national personality" and a "political culture" were concepts created by ideological rhetoric to keep Suharto in power. As a result, Suharto's government eliminated opposition groups (through a consolidation of political parties) and de-politicized Indonesian society (by banning new political parties and implementing the concept of the "floating mass").

The Re-adoption of the Multiparty System: The Birth of a New Political Culture?

In May 1998, Habibie assumed the office of the Presidency after Suharto was forced to resign. Immediately after his inauguration, Habibie announced that "In principle, we do not want to restrict the number of political party, and anyone can set up a new party."(*Jakarta Post*, 1998, May 30) By June 1998, after a series of new political reforms, more than one hundred political parties were created. Among them, 49 parties competed in the 1998 general election. Indonesia, again, had adopted a "multiparty system" of government. For decades, the multiparty system was viewed as a "Western" product and therefore not compatible with Indonesia's political culture. It had always been considered the cause of the political chaos in the 1950s. Ironically, however, Habibie was "applauded" for adopting that "western" system, which raises the following questions: Did Indonesian political culture radically change in two months? Or, was a new "westernized" political culture suddenly born after a change in leadership? And, are the principles of a multiparty system compatible with that new political culture?

Habibie, and other political leaders supported the constitutional right to establish political parties, which lead some leaders to establish their own parties. While political elites argued that "too many parties might render opposition movements ineffective," others believed that "'natural selection' will sort out

new parties" and that "small parties which aren't appealing will eventually fade by themselves" (*Jakarta Post*, 1998, May 30). Those statements suggest that a multiparty system was not as incompatible with Indonesian political culture as many had believed. Even those who had criticized the multiparty system as incompatible supported its readoption. Arbi Sanit, a political scientist at the University of Indonesia, expressed his support by stating that "conflicts can be avoided, considering that Indonesia has experience in dealing with liberal democracy 40 years ago" (Sanit, 1998: 1). He also stated that Indonesia's experience in managing mass organizations and other non-organizations may help the country avoid severe social conflicts (Sanit, 1998: 1). Arbi Sanit's comments suggested a strong faith in Indonesia's new multiparty system.

Also, a large number of articles and stories appeared in the media advocating a need for new political parties. New parties "could provide genuine alternatives, genuine vehicles for those whose aspirations Golkar, the PDI and the PPP have been incapable of channeling" (Hadiz, 1998: 4). In short, "It's multiparty time" (Kusumah, 1998: 4)!

> The multiparty system in the 1955 election may have been chaotic and bordering on anarchy, but that was a small price to pay for learning and adopting democracy…In retrospect, the multiparty system did not fail us. It was never given the time and chance to work in the first place. We have tried, and miserably failed, to impose a restrictive ideology-free three-party system for 32 years. Now it's time to give the multiparty system, with all the risks that sectarian politics pose, another chance to work (Kusumah, 1998: 4).

Another form of support came from critics of Suharto's authoritarianism. For example, Mulyana W. Kusumah, a political observer, stated that because a "multiparty system did not exist in Suharto's regime [did] not mean that Indonesian people [did] not want it"; Indonesians were forced to give up the idea of a multiparty system because of policies like Suharto's "floating mass"

(Kusumah, 1998: 4). A multiparty system had always been sanctioned by the Constitution. However, Suharto's strategy to maintain control over the legislature lead to the functional elimination of that system.

In addition, individuals who once worked for Suharto's think-tank (e.g., CSIS; National Institute of Science) criticized Suharto's autocracy and publicly supported a multi-party system.[17] They expressed that the emergence of new political parties after Suharto's fall was a long needed release for people kept under tight political control for the past 32 years. Some observers suggested an immediate test of the new system. They argued that a "free poll is the only way to solve a political crisis" (Djiwandono, 1998: 1). "A fresh election is the best tool to restore the trust of the people in the government" (Lubis, 1998: 4), and "it is a test of a party's acceptability" (Kusumah, 1998: 4). Many similar sentiments and statements supported the readoption of a multiparty system.

As new parties formed, old parties like Golkar lost power and disbanded, unable to survive under a new leadership whose popular demand for new parties diminished the old. That process of elimination appeared to have been a familiar phenomenon or consequence of an older government's failure to serve or represent diverse people and groups. The political party system under Suharto's regime, which consisted of only three political parties, was engineered by the ruling elite to serve mainly its own interests. When the political system opened up after Habibie's reforms, a demand emerged for a "rational party system" reflecting the plurality of its constituents (Jemadu, 1998).

Perhaps the statements above imply that a plural society like Indonesia needs (or logically requires) a multiparty system. That view suggests an ideological affinity with the values of "open debate" and "competition", indicative of a liberal democracy.[18]

But will a new multiparty system lead to an instability similar to the

[17] See the relevant reports on *Jakarta Post*, 1998, June 1.

[18] For those values, see Schumpeter (1950).



political chaos experienced in the 1950s? In response to that question, an editorial in the *Jakarta Post* comments:

> Many Indonesians of the older generation who experienced the era of 'free-fight' parliamentary democracy in the early 1950s fear that the presence of so many parties might bring a repeat of the era of endless political bickering that made economic growth impossible. Such fears may be groundless. Having learned their lesson from history, few, if any, Indonesians have a desire to return to the political chaos of the 1950s. Ways could and should be found to balance freedom with responsibility. The process of natural selection will do its part in achieving a healthy balance in the longer term, possibly even immediately after a general election (*Jakarta Post*, 1998b, June 28, p. 4).

The editorial not only supports the new multiparty system, but it denies the association between a multiparty system and the political chaos in the 1950s. Whether that is true or not is not a concern of this paper. However, according to the discussion above, a multiparty system had been a popular trend in Indonesia. Compatibility between a multiparty system and Indonesia's political culture appears not to have been a deep concern to political leaders in their readoption of a multiparty system. That compatibility has not been seriously considered in the post-Suharto era. Perhaps one may argue that the values of "western" liberal democracy have had a historic and meaningful effect on Indonesia's political culture for many years.

Political Culture Is (Ir)relavent(?): A Conclusion

Was the multiparty system in the 1950s insignificant in Indonesia's political history? And was the readoption of the multiparty system at the end of the 1990s a reflection of Indonesia's political life? Or following Geertz question (stated at the beginning of this paper), is Indonesia's abandonment and

readoption of the multiparty system a reflection of the design of its culture?

This study may answer Geertz's question partially. That is, (at least) in the case of Indonesia, culture had little to do with the adoption/abandonment of parliamentary democracy in the 1950s. This study also believes that in the case of Indonesia, political culture had little to do with the re-adoption of the multiparty system at the end of the 1990s. Those events were the result of a cycle of "oppression- and-openness" in Indonesia's political development. The end of 300 years of Dutch oppression created conditions conducive to the establishment of a multiparty system, at a time that Indonesia was on the verge of independence, which ushered in an era of political openness. Similarly, the dramatic end of Suharto's autocracy changed the political landscape inspiring government leaders to readopt the multiparty system at the end of the 1990s, which was considered another period of political openness for the country.

The relevance of political culture to Indonesia's party system has often been questioned by the existence of many voices and groups in Indonesian society and political life. Many interests, religious, geographic, ethnic, etc., have long made up Indonesia's political culture. Feith and Castles's book *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945-1965* states that plural and dynamic political thinking informed a variety of Indonesian political culture(s) in the years of the Old Order (Feith and Castles, 1970: 151-284). Their discussion of a 1938 novel, *Belenggu,* which presents differences and conflicts between traditional Javanese life and Western scientific thought, begs the question of whether or not a similar cultural association accounts for Indonesia's political life today (Liddle, 1996: 78, 102-103). During his presidency, Sukarno did not acknowledge the existence of cultural pluralism in political affairs. In fact, he legislated against it, thereby promoting for years a public fallacy that cultural pluralism was not a critical factor in Indonesian political culture.

At the end of the 1980s, a well-known retired Achnese politician employed a submissive Javanese bow to then President Suharto. Many Achenese found the gesture to be embarrassing and demeaning, demonstrating a cultural

difference that was not considered a cultural norm in Indonesian society at the time (Liddle, 1996: 104). The dissolution of Golkar tells us, at least, that a unified Golkar in the past was not able to represent varied interest groups. Before Suharto's fall, Golkar never had a problem using "consultation and consensus" to make decisions. Once Suharto fell, why did that traditional practice suddenly stop? Is political culture really a feasible and useful concept in explaining that change?

Ironically, the re-adoption of a multiparty system has been popularly supported by Indonesians. One might argue that the re-adoption of a multiparty system reflects a genuine opening-up of the political process (Liddle, 1996: 260). Furthermore, Indonesians have "used violence to force the ouster of their president" indicating "how little validity the 'Asian values' (or the 'Pancasila Democracy') theory really has" (Olaf, 1998). One might also argue that "using violence to force the ouster of their president is ironic to a people who emphasize that 'consultation-consensus' is their traditional way of solving differences"(Vatikiotis, 2005: 149).

In short, during those oppressive years, "consultation-consensus" was not the only culturally accepted method of making legislative decisions or solving problems. "Consultation-consensus" had been utilized because it could be manipulated by those in power to control political affairs.

This study concludes that political culture does not explain why Indonesia adopted a multiparty system in the 1950s, abandoned that system during the 1960s, and readopted it in 1998. The multiparty system was eliminated under Guided Democracy and Pancasila Democracy not because consultation-consensus was a widely accepted, traditionally based value of Indonesia's political culture, but rather, leaders opposed other methods of decision-making (such as "open debate" and "competition") because those methods threatened their authority. The re-adoption of the multiparty system at the end of the 1990s was not a result of the death of "consultation-consensus" in political culture per se, but rather it occurred as a result of an opening-up of the political

process in which different forms of political culture could compete in Indonesia's political arena.

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文化對政治制度演化的影響──印尼個案

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摘　要

一般認爲一個國家的政治結構所反映的正是這個國家的政治文化特質。但是，過去研究對於這樣的命題，缺少必要的檢視。本研究透過印尼的政黨體制發展作爲個案，檢視該命題。自國家獨立以來，印尼的政黨體系發展經歷了多黨競爭體系、一黨制體系、再重回多黨競爭體系。透過歷史比較研究，本研究探討印尼在不同政治發展時期，印尼政黨體系變遷背後的論述爲何，以及論述與官方定義的印尼政治文化間的動態關係。本研究發現，不同時期的不同體系並未真實反映政治文化，相反的，論述背後呈現的是文化經常被重新定義，透過定義的操弄，達至執政者統治控制的企圖。

關鍵字：印尼、政治文化、政治制度、政黨體系

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