





Democracy in Indonesia: From Democratic Regression to Social Justice

Mi'rojul Huda^{1*} , Agus Satmoko Adi¹, Mochamad Arif Affandi,¹ , Eko Satriya Hermawan¹, Silkania Swarizona¹ , Imam Zarkachi¹, Adli Hazmi¹ 

¹ State University of Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia
mirojuhuda@unesa.ac.id

Abstract. For two decades, Indonesian democracy has experienced ups and downs. Indonesian democracy cannot be separated from 3 main factors supporting democracy: political stability, public satisfaction with economic development, and decentralization of power. However, in recent years Indonesian democracy has shown signs of decline. This article tries to identify the symptoms of democratic decline in Indonesia. By using a qualitative approach through observation, interviews and literature studies to read this phenomenon. The results of this paper show that the decline of democracy in Indonesia is marked by the strengthening of identity politics, the decline in the quality of elections, and the massive rise of dynastic politics.

Keywords: Indonesian Democracy, Stagnation, Decline of Democracy

1 Introduction

Democracy in Indonesia has been running for more than 20 years, according to William Liddle, this is even beyond the expectations of many observers. According to Liddle's notes, there are at least 3 things that have enabled democracy in Indonesia to survive to this day. First, the satisfaction of the majority of people with economic development in Indonesia. Second, political stability in Indonesia in the last 15 years. Third, there is decentralization of power, especially in districts/cities, which creates tens of thousands of new supporters of democracy who hold strategic roles[1]. Even in Verdi Hadiz's notes at the beginning of reform, Indonesia was hailed as a country whose democratization was successful. Unfortunately, democracy in Indonesia has stagnated in recent years. There are even those who think that Indonesian democracy has entered a backsliding phase, this is shown by data from 3 institutions measuring the quality of democracy in the world, namely: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Freedom House, and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), which has been measuring democracy in countries around the world for decades. These three institutions unanimously stated that Indonesian democracy experienced a setback after reaching the highest score in 2006 [2]–[4]. The EIU Democracy Index consists of five categories, namely electoral processes, civil liberties, government functions, political participation and political culture. Each category has indicators that are used to measure the country's performance

in certain aspects. Each indicator is given a score between 0 and 10. The highest score, namely 10, indicates a very democratic country, while the lowest score, namely 0, indicates a very authoritarian country. The average score of the five categories is then calculated to produce an overall score for the democracy index. In 2021 Indonesia's score is 6.71 and is ranked 52nd in the world. Meanwhile, in 2022 Indonesia's score will still remain the same at 6.71 but Indonesia's ranking will drop to 54th in the world. This is because the scores of other countries have increased compared to Indonesia. Indonesia is still behind the Philippines which has a score of 6.73 (rank 52), Timor Leste with a score of 7.06 (rank 44), Malaysia with a score of 7.30 (rank 40). The symptoms of democratic decline in Indonesia are also unanimously agreed by Indonesian democracy researchers. At least from various books and scientific publications that have been released by scientists who have contributed to the perspective of the decline of democracy in Indonesia, including: "Defective Democracy" [5], [6], "Democratic Deconsolidation [7] "Democratic Setbacks" [8], "Democratic Regression" [9], [10], "Democratic Decline" [10], "Authoritarian Turn" [11], "Democratic Backsliding" [9], Apart from the above article, the LP3ES institution also published a book entitled "Democracy without Demos" which is a reflection from 100 social and political scientists about the decline of democracy in Indonesia. Approaching 2024, there are several developments that may affect the outlook for democracy in Indonesia. First, the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2024 will be a test for Indonesian democracy. This election will be an important test of integrity and transparency in the democratic process. Second, the increasing influence of social media and digital technology in politics can bring significant changes in the way of campaigning and political participation that can affect democracy in Indonesia. However, irresponsible use of social media can also be a threat to democracy, such as the spread of hoaxes and disinformation that can disrupt political stability. Third, stable economic growth and improving people's quality of life can have a positive impact on the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia. However, economic growth that is uneven and limited to certain segments can give rise to dissatisfaction and social injustice that can threaten political stability. Please note that the first paragraph of a section or subsection is not indented.

2 Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand phenomena by exploring and understanding the meaning ascribed to social or humanitarian problems by a number of individuals or groups of people, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and others. The data collection methods used include observation, interviews and literature studies to obtain a comprehensive understanding [12]. The informants for this research are academics who study democracy issues, practitioners and social activists, political party administrators who are one of the main instruments of democracy, as well as civil society represented by community organizations and NGOs. Apart from that, this research also tracks literature in the form of books and articles related to democracy, especially in Indonesia. This research also analyzes research results from 3 world institutions (V-Dem, Freedom House, and EIU) to see trends in the rise and decline of democracy in Indonesia.

3 Discussion

3.1 Waves of Democratic Decline

Democracy is a system of government where power is in the hands of the people. Modern democracy has experienced significant development since it first appeared in ancient Greece. This development includes civil and political rights, women's empowerment, and political participation [13]. In its development, democracy has been able to make major contributions in various fields such as the economic sector [14], the health sector [15], human rights and freedom of expression as well as legal protection [16]. However, the implementation of democracy can only be carried out in countries that have political stability and political legitimacy [17], [18]. So that democracy becomes a system that cannot always be implemented and carry out its functions well in all countries [19].

This article will discuss democracy from the perspective of two great democratic thinkers, Samuel P. Huntington and Charles Tilly. Huntington in his work "The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century" [20] which explains the 3 waves of democracy. The first wave began in America (1828-1926) with the holding of elections and was followed by other countries in Europe. The first wave experienced a reverse flow of democracy with the emergence of the second world war and the presence of fascism and communism. The second wave occurred in the years until the end of 1962, namely after the second world war. There was decolonization in Asian and African countries as well as a democratic transition in European countries due to the defeat of the war. This wave also experienced a reverse flow where several countries returned to authoritarian regimes. The third wave occurred until the end of 1991, which is when Huntington's book was written. In that year there were many democratic transitions in countries in Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This latest wave is marked by many countries in the world adopting a democratic system.

Looking at the latest conditions regarding world democracy, in accordance with Huntington's theory, the 4th wave of democracy occurred with the emergence of the Arab Spring in the Middle East. The Arab Spring was a series of protests and uprisings that hit a number of countries in Africa and the Middle East. The countries involved are Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria. The Arab Spring aimed to replace authoritarian regimes with more democratic governments. And the return wave to democracy after the Arab Spring, namely the return of these countries to authoritarian regimes, either because of military coups or because of unstable socio-political conditions in those countries.

The decline of democracy in the wave of democracy can be read in various contexts and perspectives. Charles Tilly in his book "Democracy" [21] explains that historical factors, networks of trust, and inequality are comprehensive conditions in forming democratic and non-democratic regimes. Tilly also explained the concept of "Low-Capacity Democracy" which refers to a democratic regime where the state has a low capacity to enforce its political decisions. The state has democratic instruments and implements these processes such as: general elections, freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, but the state has limited capabilities in enforcing the law, maintaining public order, and providing optimal public services. Low capacity democracy is caused by

weak state institutions, corruption, and lack of resources. This concept will be used as an analytical tool in looking at the condition of democracy in Indonesia.

This article is inseparable from previous research on the decline of democracy in Indonesia. This is because after the collapse of the New Order regime and the birth of reform, many people doubted that Indonesia was capable of carrying out a democratic transition. This is due to the influence of the old regime which is still very strong and is still part of the reform order government [22]. Likewise, the effects of waves of reform have given rise to conflicts and episodes of communal violence in Jakarta and the regions [23].

Power believes [11] that democracy turns into authoritarianism if people are not active in the political process and government power is not strictly monitored. Indonesia faces a democratic paradox, where although there has been significant progress in strengthening democracy since the 1998 Reformation, democracy still faces serious challenges. One of the main challenges is democratic consolidation which has not been fully achieved [24]. Democratic consolidation does not only require the existence of formal institutions, but must also be filled with cultural norms and public awareness of democracy. The problems with our democracy are also caused by the existence of forces that try to hinder the consolidation of democracy, such as corrupt political elites [25].

3.2 The Decline of Indonesian Democracy

The threat of democratic backsliding does not only occur in Indonesia but also occurs throughout the world. In 2024, democracy in the world will be at stake with the holding of more than 50 elections in various countries, including large countries such as the United States, India, Indonesia and Russia. In 2024 it will be a gamble whether the political regime and leadership that is formed will be the savior of democracy or will actually prolong the crisis trend that has been going on in the last two decades [26].

The third wave of democracy was clearly depicted in Indonesia with the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, replaced by the Reformation Order. This transition paved the way for political liberalization, democratic elections, and the birth of institutions that strengthen democratic institutions such as the Corruption Eradication Committee and the Constitutional Court. Even though the democratic transition is underway, Indonesia still faces challenges with many cases of corruption, weakening of the press, identity politics, weakening of law enforcement institutions, and political dynasties. This shows that the democratic transition did not proceed without obstacles. At least in this article we will briefly discuss the reasons for the decline of democracy in Indonesia. There are at least 3 things that can be used as a measure, namely: the strengthening of identity politics in Indonesia, the quality of elections, and also political dynasties.

In 2017, regional elections took place in Jakarta to elect the governor and deputy governor of DKI. That year there was a big fight between conservative Islam and reactionary nationalism [8] which was considered a major setback for democracy in Indonesia. Religious and political sentiments are very strong in DKI. there was an action to defend Islam which was triggered by the case of religious blasphemy by the Governor of DKI Jakarta at that time, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok). This shows that Indonesian democracy has not yet demonstrated strong democracy. The phenomenon of the action to defend Islam in the DKI Regional Election shows that religious identity

can be mobilized for political purposes, and the biggest impact is that there is quite a sharp division in society.

The second phenomenon is the continued strengthening of dynastic politics in Indonesia. Dynasties in politics do not just appear. This phenomenon has taken root in political practice in Indonesia from the lowest level to the tip of the iceberg with the appointment of President Jokowi's son Gibran Rakabuming Raka as vice presidential candidate to accompany Prabowo Subianto in the 2024 presidential election. If we look further, at the smallest level such as villages, there are many. It was found that leadership in the village (Village Head) was held by a dynasty from grandfather, to son, to grandson. In fact, there is a myth that we often hear in village communities that the person who can serve as village head is someone who is a descendant of the previous village head. At the Regency/City level we also find many Regents or Mayors who are products of political dynasties. In practice, the Regent/Mayor who serves two terms then carries out succession for his wife, children or relatives to step in to replace him. There was even a two-term Regent who nominated two of his wives (first and second wife) to run for regional elections to replace their husbands.

At a higher level, the Ratu Atut dynasty in Banten Province is very popular, which controls the government starting from the Governor, Regent, Mayor, DPRD, DPD and DPR-RI. Even though Ratu Atut was involved in a corruption case while serving as Governor of Banten, this did not break the chain of her political dynasty. Even his son who ran for DPD RI won more than 1 million votes [27].

Political parties in Indonesia are also not free from the practice of dynastic politics. Political figures seem unwilling that the party that made their name known must be handed over to someone other than their family or relatives. The PDI-P Party, Democratic Party, Gerindra Party, National Awakening Party, National Mandate Party are major parties whose management structure is very closely related to the family of the party leader. Apart from serving in the party management, the general chairman's family also holds executive and legislative positions. For example, Puan Maharani, the daughter of PDIP Chair Megawati, serves as Chair of the DPR-RI. Puan's daughter, Diah Pikantan Orissa Putri Haprani, is also confirmed to be heading to Senayan after winning a big vote in Central Java.

Political dynasties certainly no longer promote fair competition, access to political resources is limited by political elites by giving privileges to their families to be able to occupy certain political positions.

The mobilization of state power for the benefit of winning presidential and vice presidential candidates, gubernatorial candidates, and regent or mayor candidates shows the weakness of civil control over the state. Political parties that try to fight the regime will also experience disruption with the threat of the party leader being replaced. Press freedom is also under serious threat with the publication of the Press Bill which is considered controversial. The latest Corruption Eradication Committee Law, the Constitutional Court Bill, and the TNI Bill, show systematic efforts to reduce control over the executive, this results in weakening civilian control over the state. Filling the positions of acting regional heads by TNI and Polri also blurs the lines between civil and military. Social media and also electronic media, which ideally strengthen democracy, have become one of the main tools in the backflow of democracy in Indonesia. The presence of beyond the civics shows that the government has consolidated power by eroding the democratic traditions that have been guarded and

fought for.

4 Conclusion

Indonesia is a very interesting object in looking at democratic trends. The reform era began with a new spirit of democracy until 2006 when Indonesia was categorized as a country with full democracy. And in the following years there was democratic stagnation and democratic decline. This cannot be separated from the social and political structures that hinder democratic transition. Future challenges related to Indonesian democracy will be complex.

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