



Post-Reform Governance in Indonesia: Democratic Transformation, Institutional Dynamics, and The Challenges of Good Governance

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Abstract. This paper seeks to explore the issues surrounding the process of governance in Indonesia in the era of post-reform through the discussion on democratization, institutional development, and good governance challenges. From 1998 onwards, the reform period in Indonesia saw several important political and institutional developments through decentralization, democratization process, and active involvement of public in the governance process. Through qualitative and descriptive research methods, this paper explores how the issue of democratization impacts the performance and efficiency of the institutions in Indonesia. It is found that although the democratization process has opened up the process of governance in Indonesia, yet some major problems still persist in ensuring transparency and efficiency in public sectors institutions.

Keywords: Post-Reform Governance, Democracy, Institutional Dynamics, Good Governance, Indonesia.

1 Introduction

The change in the politics and governance of Indonesia in the aftermath of the end of the New Order regime in 1998 was a significant moment in the development of democracy in the country. The political reform process referred to as Reformasi (English: Reformation) put an end to over three decades of authoritarian government headed by Suharto and started the process of political liberalization, institutional reorganization, and governance reforms. This change came about due to popular demands for democratization, openness, and accountability at a time when there had been a long period of centralization and lack of public involvement [1].

After the late 1990s, Indonesia has been making institutional changes with the objective of improving democratic governance. The changes to the constitution of the

country between 1999 and 2002 led to changes in the architecture of the state institutions through direct elections of presidents, empowerment of the parliament and introduction of checks and balances. These changes have been complemented by substantial decentralization policies that have led to delegation of power from the central government to regional governments [2, 3].

Indeed, scholars agree that Indonesia is one of the leading case studies of democratic transitions within the Global South. In line with this, according to Aspinall (2010) [4], the Reformation process led to the creation of competitive elections, civil society organizations, and increased participation in politics. Additionally, according to Mietzner (2013) [5], Indonesia is regarded as having more stable democracy as compared to most other post-authoritarian states. This progress has led to Indonesia being considered one of the biggest democracies of the world.

Nevertheless, even though there has been progress, the consolidation of democratic governance in Indonesia still poses a number of challenges. The mere presence of transformation of institutions does not ensure proper functioning of governance structures. There are a number of governance issues in Indonesia including bureaucracy, corruption, political patronage, and lack of institutional capability in certain regions [2, 6, 7].

Among the prominent reforms in the governance structure during the post-Reform era is that of political decentralization. The concept of decentralization was meant to enhance local governance by giving more freedom in policymaking and service provision to regional governments. Nevertheless, according to Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison's study on decentralization, the process may have had an effect of reinforcing the already existing power structures rather than changing them. Oligarchic politics is one of the problems in the governance system in Indonesia.

According to Jeffrey A. Winters (2011) [7], oligarchic politics are still a factor affecting the decision-making and economic policies in the country. It makes it difficult for the processes of making the public administration more transparent and accountable. This means that democracy usually exists alongside patronage politics in Indonesia.

One other vital issue in post-Reform governance reforms is the need to build up institutions for accountability and anti-corruption. Indeed, the creation of the Corruption Eradication Commission was an institutional innovation intended to fight against corruption and improve good governance. Even though the commission has been very successful in the fight against corruption cases, there are still many debates about its institutional independence and effectiveness in the long run [5, 8].

Public participation has also become an increasingly relevant dimension of governance reforms in Indonesia. There are various civil society organizations, non-state institutions, and technology which increase the participation of citizens in policy making. Public governance initiatives try to improve the responsiveness of government and democratic accountability [9, 10]. However, the effectiveness of participation mechanisms depends largely on institutional capacity and political willingness.

In the wider scope of theory on governance, the notion of good governance refers to principles like transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, and efficient administration. For example, the UNDP (1997) [11] states that good governance is necessary for developing democratic institutions, supporting sustainable development, and

delivering high-quality public services. Likewise, scholars working on governance believe that it is important to have institutional integrity and inclusive decision-making processes in order to achieve successful governance outcomes [12, 13].

Even though there has been plenty of research on political reform in Indonesia, much of it concentrates on the issues of democratization, decentralization, or corruption rather than on their combination within one analytical framework. In other words, few studies look at political reforms from the perspective of how they affect governance institutions and how political change impacts governance challenges.

There have been numerous publications on the subject of governance reforms in Indonesia, especially regarding bureaucratic restructuring and performance of institutions. There have been several studies on bureaucratic reforms which show that despite successes in administrative restructuring in Indonesia, problems such as inefficiencies, overlaps in power, and bureaucracy inertia still affect the process of governance [14]. There are also some publications on dynamic governance according to which the reform process in Indonesia has not been able to reach its optimal stage of adaptability and administrative performance [15].

At the same time, another significant body of work has focused on exploring the importance of core governance principles of transparency, accountability, and public participation as a means of improving the quality of governance. Systematic literature reviews demonstrate that the application of these principles is crucial for the improvement of public sector efficiency, reduction of corruption, and increase in public trust [16]. The realization of the potential of these principles, however, faces barriers related to bureaucracy, lack of human resources, and fragmentation of institutions in different regions. In addition, recent works draw attention to the fact that these principles are usually regarded as independent areas in governance literature in spite of their interconnectedness [17].

The development of the concept of digital governance is another area of research into public administration that has emerged recently. Digital governance of bureaucracy in post-reform Indonesia has been linked to attempts to increase transparency, provide better services, and engage citizens more actively. However, the results of empirical research show that the efficiency of digital governance depends heavily on the readiness and governance capabilities of institutions and that technology alone is not enough to achieve positive outcomes [18]. Simultaneously, there have been studies on public participation which prove that although there have been attempts to engage citizens, those attempts were not always effective due to various socio-political disparities.

Even though there is abundant literature on the matter, several significant gaps have remained uncovered. First of all, the majority of prior literature tends to provide a fragmented analysis of transparency, accountability, and participation viewing these concepts separately and not as an integral part of a whole system of governance. Second, even though there are many publications on such particular issues as bureaucratic reforms, e-governance, or anti-corruption policy implementation in Indonesia, few attempts have been made to integrate these issues within the bigger picture of democratization process in Indonesia. Finally, most of existing researches tend to be either on macro-level or micro-level, but not both.

The present paper aims to fill in the research gap by providing an integrated analysis of post-reform governance in Indonesia. Unlike previous literature, which treats governance concepts as separate units of analysis, this study defines transparency, accountability, and participation as pillars of governance mechanism as a whole.

In addition, this research will contribute to the existing literature by positioning the governance framework in the wider context of democratic transformation and institutional change. In addition to discussing the governance frameworks, it will discuss the actual process and practice of implementing these frameworks, thus bridging the divide between governance framework and its administration.

Last but not least, this study will contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the issue of good governance in general by combining ideas of good governance from the perspectives of digital governance, participatory governance and institutional theory. This means that the issue of good governance in Indonesia today should be viewed as the matter of not only institutional reform but also integration of governance into one framework.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Democratic Transformation in Post-Reform Indonesia

There is much academic interest in the process of democratisation that Indonesia went through after the Reformasi movement. In 1998, Indonesia moved out of the era of authoritarianism and entered a new period of development of the country, which is connected with democratic processes taking place there now. According to Edward Aspinall (2010) [4], the democratisation of Indonesia is one of the most impressive cases in Southeast Asia due to its complicated social stratification and authoritarian history.

Studies of democratisation show the role of stability of the political institutions, competition and rule of law for the preservation of a democratic regime. In his research, Marcus Mietzner (2013) [5] states that Indonesia succeeded in creating relatively stable electoral democracy because of conducting competitive elections and smooth transfer of power in the country. It is also important to mention that democratic resilience is provided in the country by the growth of political freedoms and the creation of democratic institutions. However, it is still necessary to say that democratic consolidation is not completed and is connected with such problems as elite domination, patronage and lack of accountability.

A second element of democratic transformation in Indonesia is the new relationship between the state and civil society. The Reformasi period made it possible for civil society to become an active part of Indonesian life, and this civil society sector contributes greatly to making democracy functional and keeping the government accountable. Research indicates that civil society organizations, advocacy organizations, and the independent media have increased participation and debate in Indonesia [1, 10]. Still, the influence of civil society is highly dependent on its context.

2.2 Institutional Dynamics and Governance Reform

Institutional reform has been one of the major aspects of Indonesia's post-Reform governance reforms. Constitutional changes made in 1999 and 2002 have transformed the nature of the state by making it more democratic through establishing mechanisms of checks and balances of power between executive, legislative, and judicial branches in order to avoid the concentration of power characteristic of the New Order era.

Decentralization is perhaps the most important institutional reform that took place in Indonesia. The process of decentralization has entailed a redistribution of political, administrative, and financial powers from the central to the regional governments. According to some scholars, decentralization was aimed at improving the quality of governance, promoting democracy, enhancing the effectiveness of governance through improving the provision of public services [2, 3].

Nevertheless, empirical research finds contradicting results concerning the effects of the process of decentralization reforms. According to research conducted by Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison, in some cases, decentralization proved to help consolidating local political elites rather than to democratize the governing system. Local elites succeeded in capturing political institutions and governmental resources in many areas. This example illustrates that mere reforming of institutions will not ensure the development of the proper governance system.

Institutional change involves the creation of new monitoring and accountability institutions as well. The creation of Corruption Eradication Commission is an important step towards the improvement of integrity and fight against corruption. As scholars note, the anti-corruption institutions are vital in ensuring the improvement of accountability and restoration of trust in government institutions [8]. However, the efficiency of these institutions largely depends on political backing, institutional independence and administration capacity.

2.3 Governance Challenges and Oligarchic Politics

Despite the introduction of many democratic reforms, the governance regime of Indonesia still faces several persistent problems related to the structure of political power and administrative capacity. One of the most important theories that deal with this issue focuses on the presence of oligarchy in the democratic setting. As stated by Winters (2011) [7], oligarchs continue to play an influential role in both political and economic decisions in Indonesia.

Similar results were reached by Robison and Hadiz (2004) [6] who state that post-authoritarian political system of Indonesia did not completely get rid of the power networks that existed in the time of New Order. On the contrary, many of them adjusted to democracy and now use new institutional means to keep their influence.

A second difficulty associated with the issue of governance is bureaucracy and administrative capability. Good governance entails the existence of professional civil service, clear decision-making procedures, and efficient provision of public services. Yet,

literature review has shown that most government bodies in Indonesia continue to experience difficulties with regard to bureaucracy fragmentation, poor administrative capability, and regulation inconsistency [12, 13].

2.4 Good Governance and Public Administration

Good governance has emerged as an important analytical paradigm when studying reform initiatives in public administration within transitioning democracies. The United Nations Development Programme (1997) [11] states that good governance consists of the processes and institutions through which governmental authority is exercised in managing economic, social, and political resources of a country. Important elements of good governance include transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, effectiveness, and equity.

Research literature suggests that the implementation of good governance elements is vital to ensuring better performance of public services and effective functioning of democratic institutions. Transparency helps the citizens gain access to information on government policies and decisions, thus promoting citizen monitoring. Accountability involves government officials being answerable for their conduct. Public participation provides the citizens with the opportunity to get involved in the process of policy-making and makes government policies more legitimate [9, 10].

With regard to Indonesia, the issue of improving the process of good governance has been associated with reforms in the area of public administration, anti-corruption policies, and innovations in digital governance. Transparency in governance programs, open government schemes, and processes of participatory decision-making have been used as means of increasing the quality of governance and building public trust in governance institutions. Yet, there are barriers that stand in the way of implementing these measures.

3 Methodology

In this research, the qualitative methodological research approach will be used to examine the processes associated with the transformation of the governance system in Indonesia in the aftermath of its democratic transition which was set in motion by the Reformasi 1998. The use of the qualitative methodology will be justified since it enables researchers to examine complicated social and institutional processes that determine governance systems and the practice of public administration. As pointed out by John W. Creswell (2014) [19], qualitative research offers a way to explore social and institutional phenomena via context-specific interpretation and in-depth analysis.

This research utilizes the descriptive analytic method to examine the impact of democratic transformation on institutional dynamics and the realization of good governance in Indonesia Robert K. Yin (2018) [20]. Since the fall of the authoritarian regime led by Suharto, Indonesia has witnessed significant institutional transformations.

Data for this study will mainly be derived from secondary sources and these will be gathered using a review of literature. The sources of data will consist of peer-reviewed

articles from journals, books, as well as documents on governance reform and democratic development in Indonesia. International documents from bodies such as the World Bank (1992) [21] and the United Nations Development Programme (1997) [11] will be considered to see how principles of good governance such as transparency, accountability, participation, and rule of law were applied.

Thematic analysis will be the method used to analyze the gathered data. This entails identification of key themes that exist in relation to issues of democratic transformation and governance.

4 Discussion

4.1 Democratic Transformation and the Expansion of Political Participation

Indeed, the research shows that there have been substantial changes in the democratic nature of Indonesia's governance regime, which is reflected in the increase in political participation, institutional accountability, and civic engagement after the Reformasi period. Transition from the authoritarian form of governance to democracy resulted in increased chances for people to take part in the political process through competitive elections, constitutional change, and enhanced civil liberties. Thus, the present research confirms the notion that post-authoritarian regime change could create new institutional spaces for participation and new dynamics between the state and society.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the existing literature on this topic, the present study offers a more sophisticated understanding of the process of political participation in the context of post-reform Indonesia. Contrary to the existing literature of Edward Aspinal (2010) [4] and Marcus Mietzner (2013) [5], who stress the achievements of Indonesia's democratic regime transition, especially its competitiveness and openness, this study reveals that the expansion in political participation and democratization processes do not necessarily imply any improvement in governance outcomes. Thus, the study enriches the existing literature by showing that the expansion of democratic institutions could coexist with such structural limitations as the dominance of elites and patronage systems.

To further elaborate on this process, the following research takes a more nuanced approach toward political participation and uses the theory of participatory governance put forward by Archon Fung (2015) [9]. According to this approach, participation should be seen not as an equal concept but as a scale which starts with symbolic participation and goes up to influencing decisions. Based on the results, it can be seen that despite the growing level of participation in Indonesia, especially when it comes to civil society organizations and internet usage, there still are issues with the quality of citizen participation, as it often remains merely consultative.

Moreover, the research reveals the increasingly important part played by digital platforms in transforming the practices of political participation. With the help of social media, citizens have an opportunity to become more involved in political discussion, control governmental performance, and coordinate collective actions. At the same time, this research draws attention to the ambivalent role of digital participation. While digital technologies have an ability to promote inclusiveness and transparency, they can

become the reason for fragmented public sphere, spread of disinformation, and polarized discussions. Therefore, digital participation does not necessarily contribute to deliberation. This finding is important for the development of existing literature since it proves that the connection between digital participation and good governance is not automatic.

What is important, the research contributes to the existing literature on the issue of participation and governance performance. In general, participatory democracy is considered normatively valuable for governance. At the same time, the research results prove that increase in political participation does not automatically mean better governance. According to Aspinall (2005) [1], the paradox of participatory processes in Indonesia can be explained by the presence of oligarchy and patronage politics.

The findings from this study contribute to the knowledge of post-reform governance in Indonesia in two key ways. The first is in that the study goes beyond merely a focus on institutions and the importance of the interplay between democracy structures and socio-political dynamics in achieving good governance results. Second, the research brings together macro analysis of democratic transitions and micro-level political participation in the process of governance. Thus, the study shows that not only the growth of participation contributes to effective governance but also its quality and embedding into institutions.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study do not fully reflect all of the aspects of democratic participation in Indonesia, as there are several studies which state that patronage networks can be present in a country even after the establishment of democracy (Aspinall, 2005) [1].

4.2 Institutional Reform and the Evolution of Governance Structures

Another significant result of this research concerns the institutional changes which have affected the governance system in Indonesia. In the post-Reformasi era, constitutional and administrative reforms were adopted in order to create the mechanisms of the separation of powers. Through those reforms, the functions of legislative and judicial branches have been strengthened whereas the power of the executive branch has been curtailed.

Decentralization policy which was introduced at the beginning of the 2000s is the most significant institutional change in Indonesia. The process of decentralization means the transfer of political and administrative powers from the center to the regions, thereby promoting local self-governance in the decision-making process. According to Vedi R. Hadiz (2010) [2], decentralization was supposed to democratize the governance process.

Based on the empirical research findings, decentralization has brought about varied effects. First of all, the local authorities have enjoyed more flexibility in managing the development projects. However, at the same time, there have been created certain chances for the local elite politicians to take control of the regional political institutions. According to Robison & Hadiz (2004) [6], the local political networks dominate regional political organizations, thus hindering the process of democratization due to decentralization.

In addition, the reforms initiated have led to the creation of some independent institutions monitoring the quality of the governance. The most vivid example in this regard is the emergence of the Corruption Eradication Commission. Anti-corruption bodies have become crucial in combating corruption in the public organizations (Butt, 2011) [8].

However, the performance of such organizations is very much dependent upon political will and the independence of the organization. The contemporary controversies surrounding the powers and independence of anti-corruption bodies prove that institutional reforms remain an unfinished agenda.

4.3 Persistent Governance Challenges

However, despite the extensive reforms made on democracy and institutions, Indonesia still suffers from various governance issues that hamper effective public administration. One of the main governance issues that have been highlighted in this study is the presence of oligarchic political institutions in a democratic environment.

Jeffrey A. Winters (2011) [7] suggests that oligarchic actors continue to play an influential role in political decision-making processes in Indonesia, especially in economic policies and resource distribution. In many cases, oligarchic actors can be associated with political parties, business organizations and governmental institutions that have considerable influence over the policy-making process.

The fact that oligarchic political institutions remain present demonstrates the limits of institution-based changes aimed at changing the political situation. As Robison and Hadiz (2004) [6] suggest, political elites were able to adapt to democratic institutions through electoral competition and decentralized governance institutions.

Another issue raised by this research in relation to governance is bureaucracy and its inefficiency. Effective governance depends on professional public administration, policy coordination, and transparency of decisions made by officials. Unfortunately, for now, many governmental agencies in Indonesia still face problems related to their bureaucratic capacity and coordination of regulations.

Research in public administration shows that the fragmentation of bureaucracy can negatively affect the implementation of policies and be a barrier to governance reform [12]. This is the case for Indonesia, where complicated administrative structures make governance difficult.

4.4 Transparency, Accountability, and Good Governance

In addition, the results of this study show that transparency and accountability are critical factors in improving the effectiveness of the governance process. Through transparency, citizens have access to information about the decisions made and expenditures of the government.

Transparency is seen as an essential factor in building trust between citizens and government institutions, according to governance experts. As noted by Albert Meijer (2013) [13], transparency is vital to building institutional legitimacy through visibility

and accessibility of government processes. In the case of Indonesia, transparency practices including open government policies and disclosure of public information have played a significant role in opening up institutions.

At the same time, accountability measures help government officials become accountable for their decisions and actions. Accountability of institutions can be ensured through oversight institutions, legislation, and citizen participation. The formation of anti-corruption and audit institutions is one of the ways of achieving accountability.

However, it is necessary to have the capacity and commitment from the institution to have effective accountability. In their absence, accountability measures will be purely symbolic and not substantive. This finding is consistent with studies on governance that advocate for a change in institutions together with political/administrative structures.

4.5 Public Participation and Inclusive Governance

Citizen involvement has grown to become one of the important parts of the governance reform process in Indonesia. Through the participatory governance mechanism, citizens get involved in the process of policymaking and making the governing institutions accountable for their activities.

The researches proved that through the participatory governance mechanism, the policies get more legitimacy and better services provision due to the use of local knowledge [9, 10]. In Indonesia, programs on participatory budgeting and mechanisms of public consultation have been implemented in different parts of the country in order to increase the level of citizen participation in governance.

Still, the efficiency of the participatory governance mechanisms is rather different in different parts of the country. The factors such as institutional capacity, political leadership, and level of civic engagement affect the efficiency of participatory process.

4.6 Implications for Governance Reform

Generally speaking, the results of this research imply that the post-Reform governance system in Indonesia is characterized by an intricate interplay between the processes of democratization, institutional reforms, and ongoing problems associated with governance. Even though the development of democratic institutions in the country has led to new possibilities for political participation and accountability, further efforts should be made in order to overcome the problems connected with elite power, bureaucracy, and coordination of institutions. Thus, good governance in Indonesia presupposes the necessity to combine institutional reforms, administrative capacity building, and governance practices.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

In summary, this study shows that the governance transition after Reformasi 1998 in Indonesia has been accompanied by substantial institutional changes such as decentralization, democratization of elections, and improvement in accountability mechanisms. These changes increased democracy and altered state-society relationship in Indonesia in the post-authoritarian period since the era of Suharto. It should be noted that the consolidation of good governance has been uneven because of some structural problems like inefficiency of bureaucracy, corruption, patronage, and unequal institutional capacities. From this point, it can be concluded that democratic transition cannot bring good governance without effective institutional capacities and accountability mechanisms.

For the purpose of improving governance, the government must give priority to strengthening bureaucratic professionalism and accountability mechanisms. Moreover, there is a need for the introduction of digital governance in order to increase efficiency. It is also necessary to make attempts to minimize institutional differences between regions. For future research, it is important to consider comparative analysis between regions and to examine the role of digital governance for accountability in decentralized governance system.

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