

Indonesian Democracy: Democracy without the Public

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Abstract: Since its independence, the Republic of Indonesia has been a democratic and unitary state. However, democracy has had its ups and downs and been influenced by the characteristics of the leaders from the era of President Soekarno, New Order, to the reform era. This study employed the reflective method to analyse the political phenomena of contemporary Indonesia, based on empirical facts and academic information. This study discusses the issue of democracy. Instead of the role of the middle class or global political constellation, it focuses on the failure of the political process to shape the public, a prerequisite for implementing democracy. This research reveals that three strategic social institutions in the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian politics, namely religion, bureaucracy, and educational institutions also fail to shape the public. It leads to formal, procedural, and less substantive democracy in Indonesia. Therefore, the people need a democracy literacy movement through various strategic social and political institutions.

Keywords: democracy, social institutions, public.

1. Introduction

When Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, the founding fathers obsessed about a political system reflecting this country's politics, society, and culture. After a series of debates, they chose democracy. However, it is neither Western liberal democracy nor proletarian democracy in Marxism. Instead, they chose Pancasila democracy, closer to democratic socialism. Soekarno, one of the founding fathers, states that socialism, communism, and social democracy represent ideologies in opposition to capitalism.¹ His notion of socio-nationalism is the antithesis of reactive nationalism.² The nationalist struggle promoted social emancipation, progressive collectivism, and interaction with internationalism and humanity.

The democracy promoted by Indonesia's founding fathers, which tended to the characteristic of democratic socialism, was clearly influenced by the global political constellation at that time, characterised by various political movements of colonised countries against colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. It is therefore not surprising that the leaders of the independence movement had a tendency to refer to leftist thoughts and then combined them with nationalism. At that time, the world was in the grip of colonial powers that exploited their colonies, mostly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

At the beginning of the independence, democracy saw the rise of nationalism, in which the revolutionary spirit was kept alive. However, the year 1959 witnessed President Soekarno's decree reinstating the 1945 Constitution, which heralded the beginning of guided democracy. His issuing the decree immediately led democratic values to decline as he became more powerful. In addition, he tried to stay in power. The notion of a president for life was reinforced. It was a political design from the pro-establishment group. It is not clear whether Soekarno was involved in the design scenario. However, in political logic, at least he was aware of the plan.

Despite Soekarno's strengths and weaknesses in the dynamics of Indonesian politics in the independence movement era, since issuing the decree, he began to be authoritarian. In other words, Soekarno was an egalitarian, proposing the notion of marhaenism. Nonetheless, he was anti-democratic. In contrast to egalitarianism, Soekarno promoted guided democracy. On the one hand, it allowed public participation. On the other hand, it controlled public participation.

After Soekarno had been ousted, Indonesia moved into the New Order era. During this period, Soeharto used the military to impose his authoritarian rule. The state was powerful and controlled all political forces, mass organisations, professional organisations, and religious mass organisations. When the New Order was in power, democracy suffered a decline due to Soeharto's conscious choice of authoritarianism with political power centralised in the executive branch. All legal aspects were made to legitimise the centralisation of power vested in the president. With the politics of centralisation, Soeharto strictly controlled all organised social forces, including

1 Kumparan. "Sosialisme-Demokrat Dalam Pandangan Soekarno Dan Tjokroaminoto," August 19, 2018. <https://kumparan.com/hijab-lifestyle/sosialis-demokrat-dalam-pandangan-soekarno-dan-tjokroaminoto-1534681286682415695>.

2 Pribadi, Airlangga. "Politik Sosio-Nasionalisme Soekarno Dan Kebangsaan Progresif." *Jurnal Pancasila* 3, no. 2 (2022): 65-79. <https://journal.ugm.ac.id/pancasila/article/download/79636/pdf>.

political parties. Soeharto's strategy for political party fusion, based on the single ideology of Pancasila, was gradually and successfully implemented. The state was so powerful that it politically controlled and permitted the socio-political activities of communities; no alternative force was capable of balancing the executive power.³

According to theorists, such a phenomenon reflects a corporatist state. Stepan says that a corporatist state controls all components of political power, in all state institutions and social groups.⁴ Under Soeharto, Indonesia was a corporatist state. The state played a dominant role during the New Order in all aspects of life and effectively controlled the people. Therefore, it had a detrimental impact on democracy. Through political control, the state intervened in various public areas. It gradually managed to paralyse various pro-democracy forces, such as political parties, mass organisations, legislature, the press, professional organisations, students, and other social groups.

Following the end of the New Order, Indonesia entered a new era, called the reform era. At that time, Indonesia made the transition to democracy.⁵ It is the result of a democratic transition allowing ethnic and religious groups to express their views.⁶ Various solidarity groups gained freedom of expression after they had been under the tremendous pressure of by the New Order. Therefore, democracy was on the rise at the beginning of the reform era.

Then, however, the democracy in Indonesia significantly declined, especially from the perspective of substantive democracy. Indonesia's democracy tends to slow down, even stagnate.⁷ Nonetheless, Jokowi's victory in the 2014 presidential election seemed to allow substantive change. Citing Diamond and Horowitz, Tornquist says that Indonesia is often praised for showing 'new democracy'. Unlike other Global South countries which have not been able to implement democratic political systems after the 1970s, Indonesia shows that it is the freest country in Southeast Asia. Despite prevalent social inequality, the effect of the New Order's dictatorship, anti-leftist massacre, and capitalist growth relying solely on natural resources, Indonesia is deemed to successfully combine dynamic elections with sustainable political and economic stability.

However, during Joko Widodo's administration, democracy has been stagnant. It results from, among others, Jokowi's developmentalism to promote people's welfare. As noted by Warburton, Jokowi is a new developmentalist extremely open to foreign investment to boost economic growth.⁸ Therefore, his administration tends to be authoritarian, resulting in the decline of democracy. Even two years before his

3 Wahyono, Sugeng. "Kejawanan Dan Keislaman: Suatu Pertarungan Identitas." *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik, Fisipol UGM*, 2012. <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/jsp/article/view/11107>.

4 Alfred Stepan, "Alfred Stepan. The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1978," *Politics & Society* 10, no. 1 (January 1980): 120–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003232928001000120>.

5 Anggoro, Kusnanto. "Gagasan Militer Mengenai Demokrasi, Masyarakat Madani Dan Transisi Demokratik." Rizal Sukma and J. Kristiadi (Ed), *Hubungan Sipil-Militer Dan Transisi Demokrasi Di Indonesia: Perspektif Sipil Dan Militer*, 1999.

6 Klinken, Gerry. *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

7 Tornquist, Olle. "Stagnation or Transformation in Indonesia? ." *Journal Economic & Weekly* 49, no. 50 (December 13, 2014).

8 Warburton, Eve. "Indonesian Politics in 2016: Jokowi and the New Developmentalism." *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 52, no. 3 (2016): 297–320.

term ends, the democracy in Indonesia has been further undermined by oligarchy, his intervention in law enforcement institutions, and his nepotism.

After the New Order had fallen, Indonesia made the transition to democracy, and political processes that reflected the characteristics of a democracy. For instance, the general elections were more democratic, particularly especially the 1999 general elections. In addition, laws and regulations on the public were amended to allow citizen participation, and DPR managed to make laws containing democratic values with involvement of civil society in the drafting process. Post-New Order Indonesia was relatively successful in stopping the military from being involved in any political activity, allowing democracy to flourish.

Nevertheless, Indonesia then failed to make the democratic transition, or at least its democracy is often deemed to be procedural democracy and pseudo-democracy, instead of substantive democracy. According to Hiariej and Stokke, two reasons for Indonesia's failure to move towards substantive democracy are ignoring citizen power and people's welfare.⁹ The ongoing political process ignores the issue of power, and most citizens have been objects, instead of political subjects. Thus, they are largely absent from debates among academics and activists, and they are almost never involved in the making of substantive democracy. Electoralism plays a central role as democracy is increasingly treated as merely a method and procedure for electing leaders. Despite the significant improvement in civil liberty and political freedom, it has done little for social and economic welfare. For this reason, cynicism grows among citizens, and they think that they are more prosperous under the New Order. Therefore, the people think that authoritarianism promoting people's welfare is better than democracy which does not improve people's welfare.

Indeed, democracy without improvement in people's social and economic welfare will lead to its low quality and destruction. The failure of democracy is caused by money politics and transactional politics. Even, the transactional politics has been prevalent among the lower class. The general public have been pragmatic due to money politics by the political elite during national and local political moments, such as the presidential election, regional elections, and general elections. Even in the 2024 presidential election, according to the analyses conducted by many political observers, Prabowo-Gibran won due to, among others, the politics of social assistance enthusiastically received by the lower class. They can all be said to be the logical consequences of the failure of Indonesia's democracy, which ignores people's welfare.

Meanwhile, as noted by Aspinall, the democracy in Indonesia is "successful" and ironic.¹⁰ Indonesia is appreciated as one of the most successful developing countries in terms of political democratisation. However, at the same time, it is mocked as a country with low-quality democracy. According to Aspinall, the survival of Indonesia's democracy depends on the ability to control three factors which can undermine it: the military, Islamism, and ethnic unrest in regions. Aspinall advances the thesis that the weakness and resilience of Indonesian democracy are not

9 Hiariej, Eric, and Kristian Stokke. "Introduction: Politics of Citizenship in Indonesia." *The Politics of Citizenship in Indonesia*, January 1, 2022, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7955-1_1.

10 Aspinall, Edward. "The Irony of Success." *Journal of Democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press 21, no. 2 (April 2010): 20-34.

fundamental conflict, but two sides of the same coin.

Until the current phase of its development, Indonesian democracy still poses a fundamental problem, namely the gap between procedural and substantive democracy as reflected in political processes so far. Indonesia's democracy has been superficial, but it has not dealt with the essential aspect, i.e., the engagement of the public, particularly the lower class. It is therefore important to look at how Indonesia's democracy is entangled between the interests of the political elite who are not enthusiastic about creating democracy and citizens who are increasingly pragmatic. This article analyses the absence of the public from Indonesia's democracy, even though they are the basic prerequisite for creating substantive democracy. Those involved in the democratic process so far have not been the public, but *servants*, followers, and *ordinary people*, and the socio-political elite exploit them through strategic social institutions, namely religion, bureaucracy, and education.

In other words, this paper will analyse the phenomenon of democracy in the dynamics of Indonesian politics after the fall of the New Order. Offering a critical perspective, it tends to be pessimistic or at least sceptical about a more substantial democratic process which can take place. It looks at the problem of democracy in Indonesia not from the failure of the middle class as the locomotive of democracy. In addition, it does not analyse external factors such as the West. During the Cold War, Western countries did not want Indonesia to be undemocratic. After the war had ended, they wanted Indonesia to make the transition to democracy. Instead, it focuses on the fact that the democratic process has not been more substantial as the basic prerequisite has not been met. It is the public, the main basis for civil society or *citizenship*.

2. Methodology

The reflective method was employed, following the footsteps of Henry Giroux, who reflected on the post-Cold War educational phenomenon and managed to recognise and identify feudalistic educational praxis with its various complexities.¹¹ The method was used to critically analyse empirical phenomena and academic information from theorists to determine, identify, and analyse trends in societal development related to socio-political issues. In this article, it was used to find out, identify and analyse several phenomena, such as empirical facts and opinions from academics and activists related to the problem facing Indonesia's democracy after the New Order fell.

3. Democracy in the Reform Era

After the New Order had collapsed, Indonesia underwent the transition to democracy. Citizens obtained considerable freedom to express and articulate their political interests without state control imposed on them during the New Order period. There was even a euphoria of freedom leading to destructive and excessive democracy, in which the rule of law and the rule of the game were not observed.

¹¹ Giroux, Henry. *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling*. 1997. S.L.: Routledge, n.d.

The excessive democracy was used to exploit differences, resulting in primordial conflicts, such inter-religious, inter-ethnic, and racial conflicts.

At the beginning of the reform era, nevertheless, many laws and regulations on politics etc. reflected democratic values. For instance, Law Number 12 of 2003 on General Elections is more democratic than the Election Law made by the New Order. There are four periods in terms of the relation between laws and regulations and political dynamics in Indonesia. The first period was from 1945 to 1959 during the national revolution and liberal democracy era. The political configuration at that time was democratic, resulting in responsive laws and regulations. Over the period, political parties and the parliament played a prominent role. During the second period from 1959 to 1966, the Old Order adopted Guided Democracy. However, it made orthodox laws and regulations, deviating from constitutional democracy as people's democracy. The third period from 1966 to 1998 was under the New Order. The authoritarian regime adopted the so-called Pancasila democracy which was deemed to constitutional and made orthodox laws and regulations, while the president played a dominant role. Since the fourth period, also known as the reform era, commenced in 1998, Indonesian constitutional democracy has had a democratic political configuration, in which responsive laws and regulations are made. The people expect a democratic system of political freedom to be established.¹²

Pillars of democracy, such as the press, non-governmental organisations, political parties, legislature, and mass organisations are bold enough to openly criticise the government. For instance, the mass media are guaranteed by law to continue their critical function of voicing people's aspirations for how the government make strategic decisions. Meanwhile, political parties replace each other in the election held every five years. Indonesian democracy has been more liberal since the first presidential election with the "one man, one vote" system took place in 2004. In other words, democracy was on the rise again at that time.

When President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) was in power, democratisation was relatively good. The government made all policies and programmes through political mechanisms in the parliament. He did not abuse his power as he obeyed each law. Therefore, during SBY's administration, there was no proposal for impeachment from lawmakers or those outside the parliament. SBY always emphasised that protests against the government are allowed as part of the dynamics of democracy, but they must adhere to the rule of law and the rule of the game.

Nonetheless, during his presidency, the number of corruption cases saw a significant increase. Several young politicians of the Democratic Party, such as Anas Urbaningrum, Angelina Sondakh, and Andi Mallarangeng were implicated in the Hambalang case. Another politician, Sutan Bhatoegana, was also found guilty of corruption. These cases drew public attention. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali, was also arrested for corruption. On the other hand, the President of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), Luthfi Hassan Ishaq, was charged with being involved in a beef import scandal. Several corruption cases during SBY's term of office implicated cadres of the Democratic Party, who had been advertised as anti-

¹² Efyanti, Martunus, and Helmiadi. "Konfigurasi Politik Pemerintahan Pada Masa Reformasi Dan Karakter Produk Hukumnya." Accessed August 29, 2024. <https://repository.iainkerinci.ac.id/upload/592>.

corruption during the campaign.

Under President Joko Widodo a.k.a Jokowi, Indonesia has seen the rise of cyber democracy, in which social media play a vital role in political competition. Nonetheless, less democratic political practices began to emerge when primordial sentiments were expressed in the political battles of the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. Various efforts to gain the support of voters were made through offline campaigns and the media, particularly social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. Black campaigns were frequently waged by both candidate pairs on social media and online media, deviating from democratic values.¹³

In this era of democracy, such conflicts over power are not always fair. Therefore, professionalism and the merit system are not prioritised. In many cases, political contests at these various levels show primordial conflicts. To illustrate, not all the people often elect their representatives, regional heads, or national leaders based on the capacity of those running for office. Instead, they frequently consider primordialism. In other words, voting behaviour tends to be influenced by emotion, instead of reason. In legislative elections at various levels, particularly DPRD (regional house of representatives) many candidates take advantage of political families. Meanwhile, in regional elections, primordialism is prevalent. Consequently, the people talk about whether candidates are natives and migrants. Ethnic sentiments or ethnocentrism tainted regional elections in several provinces, such as Central Kalimantan and Papua.

However, it is worth noting that large-scale infrastructure development has always been prioritised in the policies and work programmes of Jokowi's administration. The policies and work programmes tend to be pragmatic and oriented towards economic growth. It is similar to developmentalism during the New Order era. As noted by Warburton, Jokowi's era reflects *new developmentalism*.¹⁴ A new developmentalist, he is mainly fond of development as Soeharto was. Soeharto formulated his Repelita (five-year development plan) based on Rostow's take-off model. The fundamental prerequisite for smooth development is political stability. If necessary, authoritarian rule is imposed. Therefore, democracy is not deemed to be important. For this reason, Jokowi has issued several government regulations in lieu of law (Perpu) because it is the only way to avoid any uproar in the parliament when making strategic policies. Second, Jokowi despises political uproar and overregulations as they are deemed to hinder development. A developmentalist thesis is that political stability, deregulation, and debureaucratisation are the main prerequisites for steady development, even though it is driven by foreign investors. It is consistent with what Huntington says that third-world countries do not need democracy; the important thing is political stability. The United States used this doctrine to control Indonesia during the New Order era with its motto of "politics no, economy yes".

13 Abdullah, Irwan, Sugeng Bayu Wahyono, and Pratama Dahlian Persadha. "AUDIENCE CULTURE in the RECEPTION of TEXT: BLACK CAMPAIGNS on ONLINE MEDIA during INDONESIA'S 2014 and 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS." *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* 7, no. 1 (August 23, 2019): 493-500. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.7156>.

14 Warburton, Eve. "Indonesian Politics in 2016: Jokowi and the New Developmentalism." *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 52, no. 3 (2016): 297-320

Embracing developmentalism, Jokowi has gained support from anyone, including his political opponents, such as Prabowo Subianto, after the 2019 presidential election. He did it all to prevent political uproar he had experienced in the parliament during his first term of office from occurring again. In his second term, he formed a grand coalition. Thus, he issued few Perpu. Due to his tendency for developmentalism and obsession with the vision of Onward Indonesia 2045, he becomes authoritarian and does not believe in anyone else. He wanted to follow Lee Kuan Yew's footsteps, but it is impossible because Indonesia is democratic. As he does not believe in anybody else and is obsessed with his vision of Indonesia, he appointed Gibran Rakabuming Raka as his successor.

To stay in power, at the end of his term of office, Jokowi continued his political manoeuvres by controlling strategic state institutions that deal with law enforcement, such as the National Police, the Attorney General's Office, and the Constitutional Court. Jokowi blatantly made democracy powerless by appointing his son as a leader at regional and national levels. He even did political engineering when amending several regulations on elections and local elections. As a result, Gibran was elected as the Vice President. When Jokowi's term is about to end, the democracy in Indonesia has significantly declined.

4. Democracy in the Digital Age

In the reform era, particularly during President Jokowi's administration, mediated politics began to thrive. In this respect, social media play a more significant role in political competitions, particularly regional elections, general elections, and presidential election. This phenomenon is known as politics in the digital transformation age. Several new terms, such as cyber democracy, digital democracy, and internet-based democracy, started to emerge.

One of the definitions of *cyberdemocracy* is given by David Bell, who refers to the term *cyberculture* as an environment saturated by electronic technology.¹⁵ Due to allowing interactive communication, internet-mediated democracy is different from democracy in *offline* communities. For example, *anonymity* allows the public to express their aspirations more freely, including anarchic words and sarcasm.

In media and cultural studies, *cyberdemocracy* is comprehended in relation to the public sphere, as noted by Mark Poster, particularly regarding the relation between the public sphere and the internet.¹⁶ Diana Saco shares the same view, despite different terminology. While Poster uses *public sphere*, Saco uses *public space*. These two terms have no difference in meaning as they refer to a virtual public sphere, a term influenced by Habermas' concept of *public sphere*.¹⁷ Last Moyo, on the other hand, problematises *cyberdemocracy* as a medium for improving the public sphere, using the term *digital democracy*.¹⁸

15 Bell, David, Brian D Loader, Nicholas Pleace, and Douglas Schuler. *Cyberculture*. Psychology Press, 2004.

16 Poster, Mark. "Cyber Democracy: The Internet and the Public Sphere." David Trend (Ed.), *Reading Digital Culture*, 2001.

17 Hill, David; and Krishna. "The Internet in Indonesia's New Democracy." *Democratization* 7, no. 1 (2000): 119-36.

18 Moyo, L. "Digital Democracy: Enhancing the Public Sphere." Glen Creeber and Roystone Martin (Ed.), *Digital*

The public sphere can be promoted by, among others, the decentralised communication system on the internet. Therefore, the creation of *cyberdemocracy* can be driven. As noted by Poster, “*The internet is above all a decentralized communication system.*”¹⁹ In the communication system, the internet facilitates equality among subjects in communication. Hence, there are no hierarchy, social distance, and control centralisation in communication via the internet.²⁰ Even, despite its weakness, anonymity allows users to freely criticise anyone.²¹

However, digital democracy has not led to better political processes in Indonesian democracy. In contrast, democracy is becoming increasingly excessive as hoaxes, hate speech, and justification for people’s political preferences. Therefore, digital democracy is expected to be a new era in which the greatest access to political decision-making is provided for the public. Nonetheless, it is merely political noise and gossip. Perhaps, it is indeed a manifestation of the existing political culture, and it is more obvious when facilitated by social media. The political culture is violent, showing primordialism. In the culture, competitors eliminate each other. It has existed and been latent in *offline* communities. Then, it becomes even more prevalent due to the digital world, where anyone is free to express their interests and will to damage. People now just need a tap on their device screens to destabilise the political situation as political *buzzers* spread disinformation.

The disinformation is prevalent in political battles on social media because of social media algorithms which promote “environments where the same opinions are echoed” (*echo chambers*), polarisation, and excessive support from the proponents of misinformation. Both have led to a new bias towards popularity and legitimacy in politics, political manipulation, the politics of targeting constituents through *micro-targeting*, and changes in political behaviour that adopt the logic of social media *virality* (with *trending topics* as *indicators*). Social media change the political landscape through personalisation, socmedisation, *influencers*, and political *buzzers*. With the internet, protests are moved from *streets to social media*; the role in shaping public opinion is moved from opinion leaders to *influencers*; and the voice is moved from horns to political *buzzers*.²²

Digital democracy also affirms the polarisation between the supporters of candidates. This fanaticism has also hindered the development of Indonesia’s civil society due to subjectivity. Is there any subject? No. There are many objects. The process is called subjectivation, in which there seem to be subjects, but they are merely objects. The main prerequisite for civil society is subjects with critical consciousness. However, there has been no critical consciousness despite the effort to make it. If there are no subjects, it is hard to create a civil society because the public should be critical or emancipatory and participatory subjects. There are only followers, servants, *wong cilik* (ordinary people), people, and inhabitants.

Culture: Understanding New Media, 2009.

19 Poster, Mark. “Cyber Democracy: The Internet and the Public Sphere.” David Trend (Ed.), Reading Digital Culture, 2001.

20 Stromer-Galley, Jennifer. Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age. New York, Ny: Oxford University Press, 2019.

21 Persadha, Pratama. “Resepsi Khalayak Terhadap Kampanye Hitam Dalam Media Massa Online Pada Pemilihan Presiden Tahun 2014.” 2018.

22 Purnama, Yuli. “Subjek Dalam Hegemony Wacana Populisme Kandidat Presiden 2019 Sebagai Penanda Mengambang Di Era Post-Truth.” 2021.

Nevertheless, there are no citizens. All those subjects are subjectivised. They seem to be subjects, but they become objects. There is no citizenship, therefore there is no civil society. As a result, there is no agency, and there is no democracy.

5. Democracy without the Public

There are at least three factors behind the absence of the public in Indonesia, namely religious structure, royalism, and the dominance of behaviourist paradigm in educational institutions. These three factors continue preserving conservative knowledge and therefore contribute to the establishment of hierarchical social structure. They also prevent the public from being active subjects with critical consciousness subjects who are able to become agents of emancipatory and participatory social change.

5.1. Religions Which Shape Their Followers

From the perspective of sociology, a religion is an organised social structure which can control its followers' social actions. According to Durkheim, religion is a non-material social fact: it is an external factor outside individuals, but it can force their social actions in social life. This thesis is still proven among Indonesians. In the last three decades, it has become stronger. Religionisation, particularly Islamisation, has been immense since the fall of the New Order.²³ Religious identity is strengthened as a symbol and in social practice. It is so prevalent in various cultural, social, economic, and political moments.

Religions continue to control their followers. As a consequence, they lose their critical consciousness. In other words, they are neither the public nor active subjects who probably have critical consciousness. Instead, they firmly adhere to the belief based on the holy book. At the same time, religions sociologically create social roles and hierarchical social structures, such as religious elites and followers. Such social structures are maintained because the asymmetrical relations allow the religious elites to take advantage of the immense influence of religions. It is highly unlikely that they make their followers have critical consciousness as it can change the hierarchical social structures and asymmetrical relations. For this reason, those religious elites continue to convey religious messages to control their followers, so the followers do not become the public and active subjects. To some extent, religions do not promote the democratic process because they do not shape the public; they merely create passive followers.

It is worth noting that at the level of praxis, according to Gregory Baum, religions are Janus-faced; they are *liberating* and *enslaving*.²⁴ Accordingly, a hypothesis can be drawn: the more normative and scriptural a religion is, the more subjugating it is. On the contrary, as Wahyono argues, if religions are

23 Hefner, Robert. "Where Have All the Abangan Gone? Religionization and the Decline of Non-Standard Islam in Contemporary Indonesia." Michel Picard and Remy Madinier (Ed.) *the Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, Orthodoxy, and Religious Contention in Java and Bali*, no. 1 (2011).

24 Baum, Gregory. *Agama Dalam Bayang-Bayang Relativisme: Sebuah Analisis Sosiologi Pengetahuan Karl Mannheim Tentang Sintesa Kebenaran Historis-Normatif*. Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana., 1999.

more open to historical understanding from the perspective of science, they are more liberating.²⁵

5.2. Bureaucracy and Servant

Even though Indonesia is a republic, the mentality of its people reflects monarchy. Centuries before Indonesia declared its independence, there had been several states with absolute monarchy. In each state, the king was the head of government. The king exercised executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The king and his people were engaged in asymmetric relations without democratic values. The people showed servant mentality, instead of citizen mentality. As a result, they were totally subservient to the king in terms of behaviour and way of thinking.

The further mentality was further strengthened during the Dutch colonial era. Later, the colonial government recognised the indigenous people as the third-class citizens. Soekarno said that there were several kingdoms, the people were part of a nation of coolies, and they had no critical consciousness. As result, they were unable to repel the colonisers. This colonial and servant mentality continued after the independence, particularly in the bureaucracy. To date, those working in the bureaucracy merely follow instructions. In addition, they cannot ask questions to their superiors, and they only obey their leaders. To make matters worse, the culture of “asal bapak senang” (whatever pleases the boss) is still prevalent. The characteristic indicates the absence of the public as the basic prerequisite for democracy.

Through the lens of sociology, the members of society have yet to prioritise rationality due to their communality. It is hard for bureaucracy to promote professionalism due to rampant nepotism, cronyism, *alma materism*, religious sentiment, ethnocentrism, and racism. Then, career paths are based on communalism, instead of rational considerations. As a consequence, it is hard to promote professionalism. As a consequence, bureaucracy cannot serve the public based on the principle of public services. To date, bureaucracy has not been able to shape the public as civil servants still have the servant mentality, instead of promoting democracy.

5.3. Educational Institution and Object

Educational institutions have not been able to produce these outcomes: active subjects, critical consciousness, and agents of change. Why? Educational institutions across Indonesia still favour the behaviorist paradigm. The dominant theme is learning design at school and formal education. In pedagogy, the issue of learning effectiveness at schools or formal education is still deemed to be crucial. The discussion is centred on how to transfer knowledge from learning resources, such as teachers, media, etc., to the learners to achieve the goal. Similarly, learning evaluation is also limited to technical issues, such as tools to measure how the learners recall learning materials which have been delivered to them. There has never been any discussion about evaluation as a socio-cultural problem and even an

25 Wahyono, Sugeng. “Disintegration from within and Open Indonesian Identity. *Jurnal Antropologi UI*,” 2020.

issue of power relations.

In the praxis of education at schools, students remain the objects of the knowledge production by their teachers. Teachers, if the constructivist learning approach is adopted, are still dominant. They can control their students' *mental models* in such a discursive control process effectively. Eventually, the students do not think that they are hegemonised by their teachers. As a result, the teachers become trusted figures in the production of knowledge and beliefs. The one-way communication in the learning process has an impact on the formation of student identity. In this regard, students blindly obey their teachers. Through the strategy of controlling the communicative situation and mind, all the knowledge given by the teachers will stick in the students' mental structure and become *mental models*. It is hard for the students to refute any knowledge from their teachers. They even agree and continue to be engaged in the approval process without reserve. In other words, such a process of educational discourse is hegemonised. Hence, the students are subjugated, but they approve and celebrate it. They always robustly defend the truth of the knowledge provided by their teachers. Therefore, in many cases, even though the method or knowledge given by teachers is not necessarily correct, it is justified by parents in the learning process in their family and students often do not want to accept it. Thus, teachers are the source of knowledge and truth in whom their students most strongly believe.

Van Dijk calls it the role of contextual conditions in discourse control.²⁶ He argues that the discursive control of situation-specific models and general social representations, such as sociocultural knowledge, behaviour, and ideology, depends on the persuasive structures of texts and conversations and contextual conditions. As a result, people tend to receive and accept the beliefs, knowledge and ideas from authoritative and trusted individuals or institutions (their models) and credible sources, such as academics, experts, or professionals and trusted media.

Indeed, the current situation facilitates the learning process. There are now more paradigms in addition to the positivist one. In this regard, efforts have been made to develop pedagogy with those paradigms. Compared to the previous era, the constructivist paradigm has begun to draw attention during the reform era. According to Denzin and Lincoln, the constructivist paradigm presupposes a relativist ontology (in which there are many realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent create understandings together), and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures (in the real/natural world). Scientific findings are presented based on the criteria of *grounded theory* or *pattern theory*.²⁷ As attention is devoted to this constructivist paradigm, many themes of a shift from TCL to *Student Centred Learning* (SCL) in pedagogy have been explored. This new development is progress towards promoting the epistemology of education in Indonesia

²⁶ Van, Dijk. "Critical Discourse Analysis." Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, and Deborah Schiffrin (Ed.), the Handbook of Discourse Analysis, 2nd Edition., 2015.

²⁷ Denzin, Norman K, and Yvonna S Lincoln. The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2011.

because in many studies, learners are deemed to be active subjects.

There are, however, several cultural and structural barriers on the ground. In particular, teachers still think that they remain the determining factor in the learning process. Many teachers think that they should play an active role in actively conveying knowledge, attitudes, and skills to students as they wish. Through the lens of educational technology, teachers think that they have to play an active role in controlling the learning process, instead of facilitating it. This perception indicates that when teachers are required to play an active role, they must control the entire learning process, and they are the centre of anything.

It is also due to the sedimentation in teachers' cognitive structure. Therefore, they think that they have to become instructors and instruct their students. It is no coincidence, and it has existed since the era of the New Order. At that time, teachers were used to control students' mind. To control their students, teachers had to control those students' behaviour and thoughts. Meanwhile, the teachers also had to be controlled by the state, so that they could instruct their students. The state used the mechanism of education bureaucracy with the strategy of implementation guidelines (juklak) and technical guidelines (juknis). During the New Order era, schools were where citizens' mind were controlled, so that they participated in development designed by the government, employing the top-down approach. Therefore, in educational institutions, people were made obedient and submissive. In other words, schools were part of social order and established social structure. The sedimentation of thinking among teachers during the New Order era led to teachers who instructed and students who also instructed.

To some extent, such an educational process was a factor behind failure of educational institutions to produce outcomes as active subjects, critical consciousness, and agents of change. It merely made students obey, instruct, never ask questions, and always follow. In other words, educational institutions failed to shape the public. Further, educational institutions do not promote democracy.

To date, three strategic social institutions, i.e., religion, bureaucracy, and education, have been unable to promote the public as they fail to shape the public. Religions only create followers, and bureaucracy merely results in servants. To make matters worse, educational institutions have not been able to make active subjects who have critical consciousness. It shows that strategic social institutions failed to create the public as the main prerequisite of a political system with substantive democracy.

6. Conclusions

Democracy in the dynamics of Indonesian politics has had its ups and downs and been influenced by the characteristics of the leaders. Under President Soekarno, democracy had been on the rise before he issued his decree, which led to its decline.

During the New Order era under President Soeharto, democracy sank to its lowest point due to his authoritarian and military regime. During the reform, democracy was on the rise, but it significantly declined because President Jokowi chose new developmentalism and nepotism at the end of his term.

However, the ups and downs do not lead to better democracy. In the reform era, democracy is no more than lip service. It is not substantive democracy, and it is merely about procedures and formal aspects. It cannot be separated from the failure of strategic social institutions, such as religions, bureaucracy, political parties, and educational institutions, to make the public become active subjects and agents of social-political changes who have critical consciousness. Without the public as its essential prerequisite, the future of democracy in Indonesia remains unclear.

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