

Election Rules and Identity Politics: Understanding the Success of Multiethnic Parties in Indonesia

Geoffrey Macdonald

IFES Hybl Democracy Studies Fellowship Paper



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Abstract

In 1998, Indonesia – one of the world’s most ethnically diverse countries – transitioned into its second democratic period after 31 years under a dictatorship. Suharto’s fall unleashed long-simmering ethnic tensions that killed at least 10,000 people between 1997 and 2002. This combination of ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict during democratic transition often portends the formation of ethnic political parties around particularistic and chauvinistic group identity. However, Indonesia’s political system remains dominated by multiethnic parties. This paper focuses narrowly on the influence of election rules in preventing the rise of ethnic parties in Indonesia. In short, the country’s newly consolidated candidate-centered electoral system combines with strict party regulations to encourage broad-based, inclusive politics and will likely solidify Indonesia’s strongly multiethnic political system for future elections.

Introduction

Indonesia emerged from authoritarian rule in 1998 and quickly descended into widespread chaos. Deadly violence escalated as ethnic, religious and regional groups clashed. At the time, observers predicted the sprawling archipelago would spiral in the direction of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (Mietzner and Aspinall 2010, 2). Indonesia's subsequent transition into stable, plural and democratic politics is itself remarkable. Democracy think tank Freedom House now rates Indonesia as fully free, a designation it has held since 2007. But just as remarkable is the nature of the party system that has developed in this transitioning democracy. Rather than ethnic parties forming around conflict-prone identity groups, inclusive multiethnic parties solidified support and won elections.¹

Understanding election rules – specifically party regulations and electoral system design – helps explain the persistent success of these accommodative political parties under hostile conditions. Indonesia's party regulations force each political party to establish a nationwide organization; win a minimum percentage of the vote to obtain a single seat; and gain a high number of parliamentary seats in order to nominate a presidential candidate. These rules, among others, effectively prohibit small, particularistic parties and also compel politicians to compete for broad-based support from across the country.

Electoral system design also shapes the ethnic character of parties. Ethnic political parties present unified messages to the electorate. Each of these parties openly claims to represent one particular group, often using divisive rhetoric to rally support. These efforts require strong parties that can maintain party unity and mobilize an electorally significant number of voters. The strength of political parties, however, is influenced by electoral system design, which can empower centralized party structures. For example, closed-list proportional representation allows party elites to fill their lists with whomever they choose, ensuring pliant, ideologically consistent candidates and strong party control. This type of electoral system produces “party-centered” elections in which voters select parties instead of individual candidates on the ballot.

Over time, changes to Indonesia's complex and multidimensional electoral system have created the opposite dynamic. Now using multidistrict, single, nontransferable vote and fully open-list proportional representation for the country's parliamentary elections and two-round majoritarianism for its presidential elections, Indonesia's electoral system generates “candidate-centered” elections (voters pick candidates not parties) in which parties must field diverse groups of politicians that can appeal to geographically, ethnically and ideologically divergent constituents. Coupled with party rules mandating high thresholds and nationwide support, this system forces parties to employ broad-based, unifying rhetoric and support candidates with local appeal. Each party's political power, therefore, is not rooted in an ethnic group but rather in the local community (or elite) that elects its candidates. This discourages particularistic appeals that would alienate the broader electorate.

¹ This paper will use two definitions of “ethnicity.” References to “ethnic parties” or “ethnic politics” use the academic definition of “ethnic,” which incorporates culture, language, race, region and other ascriptive characteristics (Chandra 2011; Chandra 2007). This can be read as synonymous with “identity.” However, when referring to Indonesian ethnic groups, such as Javanese, “ethnic” should be read as a distinct cultural group. In context, the meaning of the term should be clear.

While Indonesia's strongly rooted syncretism can partly explain the limited popularity of ethnic – particularly Islamic – politics, the nation's election rules have also empowered broad-based, inclusive parties and have shifted the mobilization strategies of nominally Islamic parties. This paper considers the influence of Indonesia's election rules on identity politics, focusing especially on the newly solidified candidate-centered electoral system. It argues that stringent party regulations coupled with multidistrict, candidate-centered elections discourage ethnic politics by empowering candidates who must respond to local demands. This paper first outlines Indonesia's demographics and cleavage structure, demonstrating the presence of both crosscutting cleavages and ethnic violence. Second, it presents Indonesia's multifaceted election rules at the national and provincial levels. Finally, it shows that these election rules create incentives for inclusive politics, which explains, in part, the counterintuitive dominance of multiethnic parties in this deeply divided nation.²

Background: Ethnic Cleavages and Violence in Indonesia

The three most salient identity cleavages in Indonesia are ethnicity, religion and region. Indonesia's population is split into hundreds of ethnic groups but is almost entirely Muslim. This ethnic heterogeneity and religious homogeneity create intersecting cleavages that should theoretically reduce conflict and incentivize multiethnic political parties. However, the outbreak of ethnic violence after the fall of Suharto demonstrates the social and political salience of identity cleavages in Indonesia. Despite survey data indicating widespread allegiance to Indonesian nationalism, subnational identities emerged during this transition period. As the new democratic political system developed, many expected to see ethnic political parties emerge in conjunction with the ongoing ethnic violence. Democracy scholar Benjamin Reilly notes, "The interplay between social cleavage and processes of democratization can unleash powerful political pressures for segmental politics, presenting aspiring political entrepreneurs with the temptation to exploit ethno-political divisions in their quest for electoral success" (Reilly 2007a, 44). Yet despite these hostile conditions, multiethnic political parties have increasingly dominated the country's electoral politics.

Identity Groups and Crosscutting Cleavages

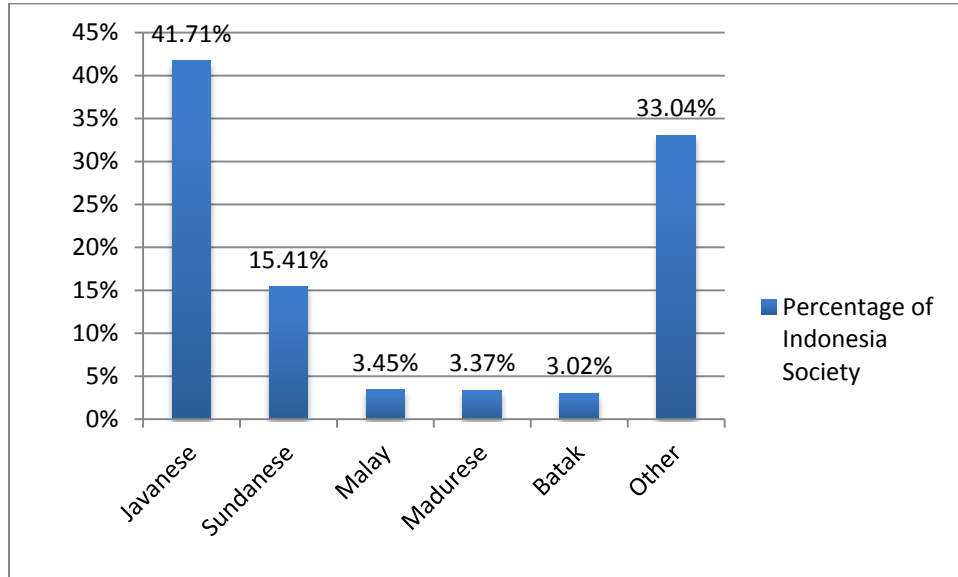
Indonesia is composed of an extraordinary multitude of ethnic groups. Over one thousand ethnic and subethnic segments make Indonesia one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. However, only 15 of these groups have over 1 million members (Suryadinata, Arifin and Ananta 2003).³ The largest ethnic group in Indonesia, the Javanese, total over 83 million and constitute 41.71 percent of the population. The second largest group, the Sundanese, total almost 31 million and constitute 15.41 percent of the population. The 13 next largest groups range from approximately 1.7 million to 6.9 million members and constitute between 0.86 percent and 3.45 percent of the population. The remaining 75 ethnic groups outlined by

² Indonesia is termed "deeply divided" because of the high level of ethnic fractionalization (Fearon 2003) and the presence of violent conflict among multiple identity groups.

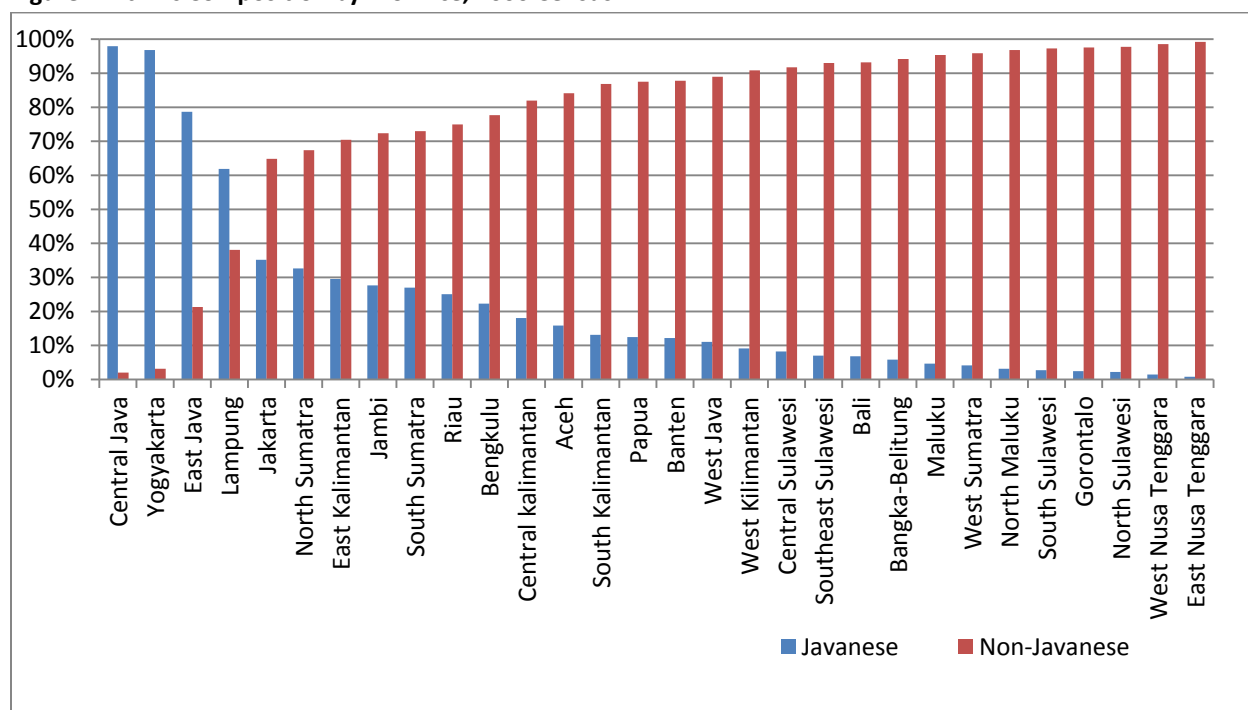
³ This study, though a decade old, remains the most authoritative account of Indonesia's ethnic and religious demographics. It is based on the 2000 Population Census, which was the first to include ethnic background.

Suryadinata et al, as well as the hundreds more left unidentified, total 15 percent of the population (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Five Largest Ethnic Groups in Indonesia, 2000



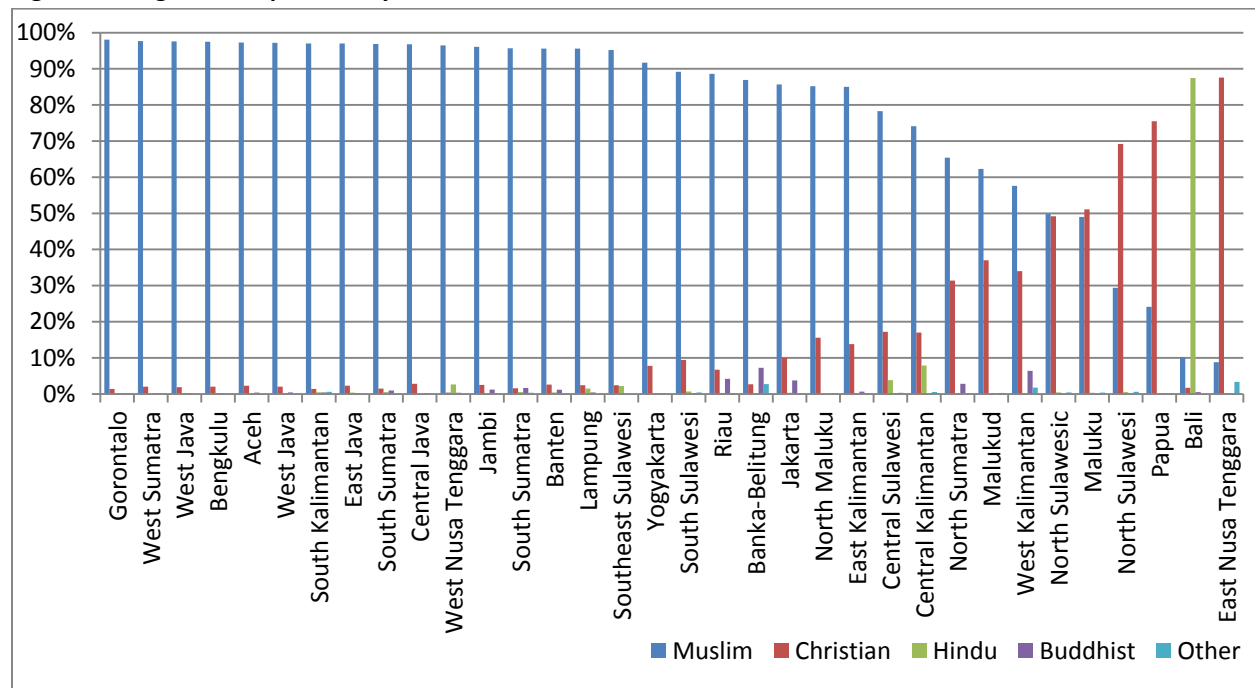
These ethnic groups are mostly dispersed across the archipelago. The Javanese, who are a plurality nationally, only constitute a majority or plurality in four provinces: Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java and Lampung. Indonesia's remaining provinces are a majority or plurality non-Javanese (a category divided into hundreds of other groups). The regional dispersion of Indonesia's largest ethnic group undermines its ability to operate as a cohesive political and social unit (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Ethnic Composition by Province, 2000 Census

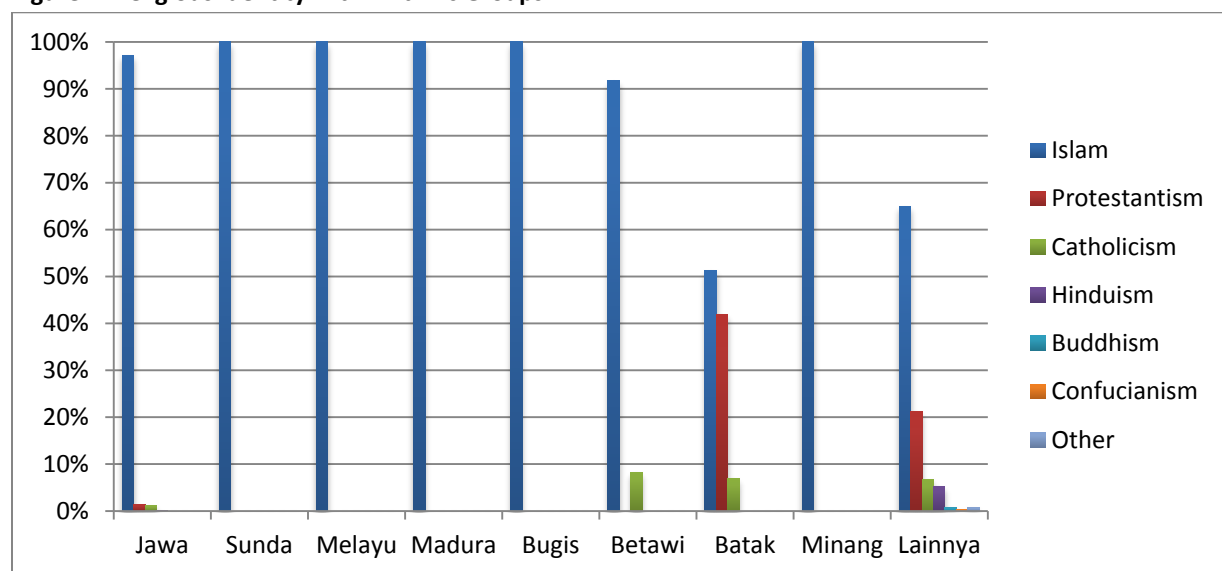
Adding to Indonesia's ethnic mosaic are the "ethnic Chinese," a group that includes those Chinese who migrated to, were born in or grew up in Indonesia, regardless of whether they are Indonesian citizens (Suryadinata, Arifin and Ananta 2003, 73). Though constituting a small percentage of the population, their political and economic power outweighs their demographic size. The Indonesian census counts Chinese by self-identification. However, this measurement is complicated by social pressure to assimilate, as well as historic violence against ethnic Chinese, which could make some of this population wary of openly identifying themselves. Using census data and estimates of purposeful nonidentification, the population of ethnic Chinese (including noncitizens, who constitute a small percentage of Chinese in Indonesia) is estimated at approximately 2 percent (approximately 2.9 million).

Overlaying Indonesia's extreme ethnic diversity is relative religious homogeneity.⁴ Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim country. Of approximately 240 million residents, 88.22 percent are Muslim, 8.92 percent are Christian, 1.81 percent are Hindu and 0.84 percent are Buddhist. Muslims are the dominant majority in most provinces. Christians constitute the majority in four provinces, with East Nusa Tenggara representing the largest concentration (87.67 percent). Hindus are the majority only in Bali (87.44 percent). Buddhists are less than 1 percent of the population in most provinces; West Kalimantan has the highest concentration of Buddhists (6.41 percent).

⁴ Indonesianists often divide Indonesia's Muslims into *aliran*, or "streams," which represent competing traditions of religious orthodoxy and syncretism in Indonesian society: The *abangan* are secular, while the *santri* are orthodox. The *santri* are organized into two Islamic organizations, the *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama*, which are closely linked to the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the National Awakening Party (PKB), respectively. The grounding of PAN and PKB in Islamic social organizations influences their positions during and after elections. However, given this paper's narrow focus on elections rules, *aliran* politics is not addressed.

Figure 3: Religious Composition by Province

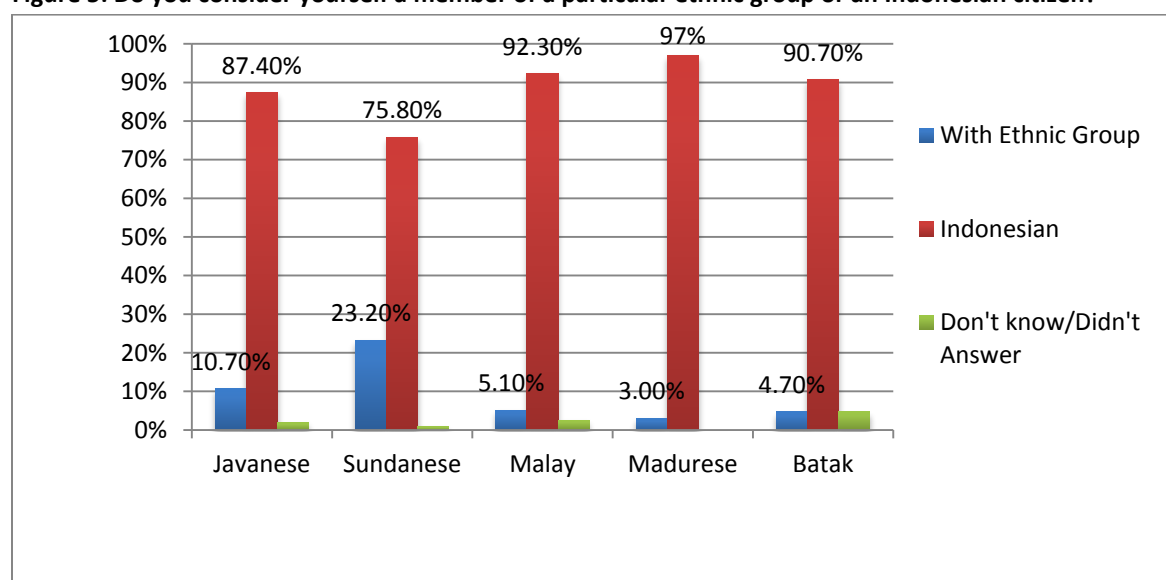
Indonesia's ethnic, religious and regional identity cleavages are overlapping rather than singular, and continue to be framed within a nationalist sentiment. Using the ethnic group categories surveyed by the 2004 Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP), we find large Islamic majorities within each ethnic group, except Batak, which is split evenly between Muslim and Christian identities. Javanese, Sundanese, Malay and Madurese are each over 97 percent Muslim (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Religious Identity within Ethnic Groups

Source: Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP), Indonesia, 2004

Additionally, when asked to identify with either an ethnic group or citizenship, 83.8 percent of Indonesians considered themselves first and foremost Indonesian citizens, while 13.1 percent identified with their ethnic groups. When broken down by ethnicity, over 87 percent of Javanese, Malay, Madurese and Batak reported a nationalist identity. Sundanese have the highest in-group association, with 23.2 percent. Nevertheless, over three-quarters of this group prioritized nationality over ethnicity (Figure 5). This is largely consistent with an IFES survey conducted in 1999, shortly after Suharto's fall, which asked Indonesians to indicate which they identified with most strongly: 81.6 percent said citizenship, while only 3.9 percent said ethnicity, and 13.2 percent said they were equally important.

Figure 5: Do you consider yourself a member of a particular ethnic group or an Indonesian citizen?



Source: CNEP, Indonesia, 2004

Ethnic Violence after the Fall of Suharto

These data indicate the presence of broadly crosscutting cleavages. Indonesia's 90 percent Muslim majority is fractured into hundreds of ethnic groups. Additionally, ethnic groups are relatively well dispersed across provinces, which makes regional identity difficult to cultivate. For example, the Javanese are a plurality of the population nationally, but constitute the majority or a substantial minority in many provinces across the expansive archipelago. This should weaken regionally or ethnically based appeals to Javanese voters because their salience is lessened by dual allegiance. Such crosscutting cleavages should theoretically mitigate ethnic

conflict and by extension ethnic parties by fragmenting identity groups into segments too small to be politically useful (Dahl 1972; Posner 2004).⁵

Yet persistent – though recently declining – ethnic conflict has marked the post-Suharto era. Deadly ethnic, communal and separatist violence broke out immediately after the fall of authoritarian rule. Between 1997 and 2002, at least 10,000 people were killed in ethnic violence, which is comparable to the number killed during South Africa's 1990-94 democratic transition from apartheid.⁶ Clashes between Dayaks and Madurese in West and Central Kalimantan killed at least 1,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands. Anti-Chinese riots in Jakarta in 1998 killed hundreds, and dozens of women were raped. Muslim-Christian violence killed at least 5,000 in Maluku over a three-year period starting in 1999.

Separatist violence between local populations and state forces also escalated: In Aceh, at least 1,800 were killed from 2000 to 2001; in East Timor, approximately 1,000 were killed and 200,000 displaced. Many were killed in Papua during the independence movement in 1999 and 2000. And in 2002, a radical Islamist organization, Jamaah Islamiyah, killed 200 people, mostly tourists, at a Bali resort in proclaimed retaliation for alleged anti-Muslim actions by the West (Bertrand 2004; Aspinall 2010).

The outbreak of relatively large-scale ethnic riots just as Indonesia transitioned from authoritarianism to multiparty democracy portended the rise of ethnic politics. Crosscutting cleavages and nationalist sentiment were unable to prevent ethnic conflict and were thus unlikely to prevent the formation of particularistic parties (Horowitz 1985; Horowitz 2001). Yet broad-based, secular-nationalist parties have increasingly dominated Indonesia's new democratic era. Regional parties do not exist at the national level, and Islamic parties are becoming increasingly moderate. The weakening of particularistic politics is at least partly explained by Indonesia's party rules and changing electoral system, which have progressively encouraged parties to target latent crosscutting cleavages instead of identity groups during elections.

⁵ The presence of separatist violence in Aceh and Papua exemplifies the counterfactual. In these provinces, regional and ethnic identity correspond, which has led to politically salient and violent ethnic identities.

⁶ According to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 14,000 people were killed during this period.

Electoral System Design and Party Rules

Indonesia's electoral system has undergone dramatic and complicated changes since its first post-Suharto election in 1999 (Figure 6).⁷ Its three national-level political institutions – the People's Representative Council (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD) and the presidency – now operate under three separate electoral system arrangements. The DPR, which is the lower house of Indonesia's legislative body, called the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), holds 560 representatives elected to five-year terms.⁸ Each representative is elected in one of 77 multimember districts, with the number of seats designated for each district dictated by its population size.⁹ These elections are conducted with open-list proportional representation, which allows individual voters to choose among the candidates selected by a party.¹⁰ Each party must surpass a 3.5 percent threshold (recently increased from 2.5 percent) in order to win a seat and must open party chapters 1) in all provinces, 2) in no less than 75 percent of all regencies/municipalities in each of the provinces and 3) in no less than 50 percent of all districts in each of the regencies/municipalities.¹¹

The DPD, which is the upper house of the MPR, holds 132 representatives elected to five-year terms. Using the same political boundaries as the DPR, these representatives are elected from 77 four-member districts using single nontransferable vote (SNTV). This electoral system gives each voter one vote, which he or she can use to select a single candidate. The top four vote getters win the seats. In contrast to the DPR and DPD, the president of Indonesia is selected with an absolute majority vote, using a second-round runoff between the top two candidates if necessary. The winning candidate must also obtain at least 20 percent of the vote in more than half of the provinces. Additionally, only a party or coalition of parties that wins at least 25 percent of the vote or 20 percent of the seats in the DPR can nominate a presidential ticket.¹² Presidential elections are held several months after the DPR/DPD elections and restrict presidents to a two-term limit.

Given the size and fragmented geography of Indonesia, provincial and local elections are extensive. Each of the 33 provinces has a provincial legislative assembly (DPRD), which holds between 35 and 100 members, depending on the population of the province. The representatives are elected through open-list proportional representation. Each provincial chief executive and his deputy, called a governor and vice governor, are elected through a minimum plurality vote of 30 percent, with a second-round runoff if necessary. Districts are the level of government beneath the provinces. Each district is called either a regency (*kabupaten*) or a city (*kota*) depending on whether it is rural or urban, respectively. Each district

⁷ The following narrative of Indonesian electoral rules and party laws comes from (Sherlock 2004; Sherlock 2009; IFES 2012). This summary includes the most recent laws passed on Indonesian election rules (as of August 2012).

⁸ The terminology of "upper" and "lower" houses is used for convenience. The MPR is not formally bicameral because the DPD is an institutionally weaker body.

⁹ In 2004, the number of seats per district ranged from 3 to 12. In 2009, it was reduced to a range of 3 to 10. This created an effective threshold of 10 percent in the largest districts.

¹⁰ In 2004, a voter had to choose both a candidate and a party; if he or she didn't, the ballot was ruled invalid.

¹¹ This is the updated version of the requirement, using Law 2/2011. There has been a party headquarter requirement in every election.

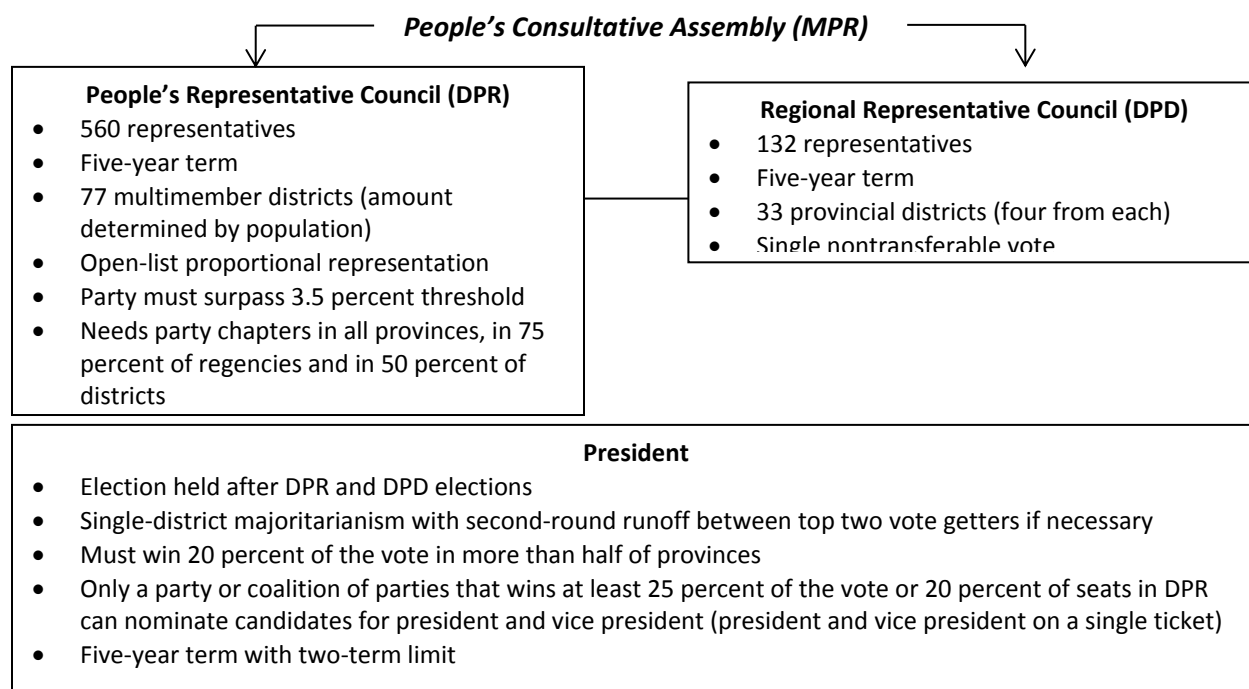
¹² In 2004, only parties that won 3 percent of the seats or 5 percent of votes in the DPR election could nominate a candidate.

has a House of Representatives consisting of 20 to 50 members, depending on population size, who are elected through open-list proportional representation during polls on the same day as national elections. The chief executive of each provincial parliament is elected directly through a minimum plurality of 30 percent. Each district is divided into subdistricts with an appointed head, which are themselves divided into administrative villages with either appointed or elected leaders. There are approximately 450 districts, 6,000 subdistricts and 73,000 administrative villages.

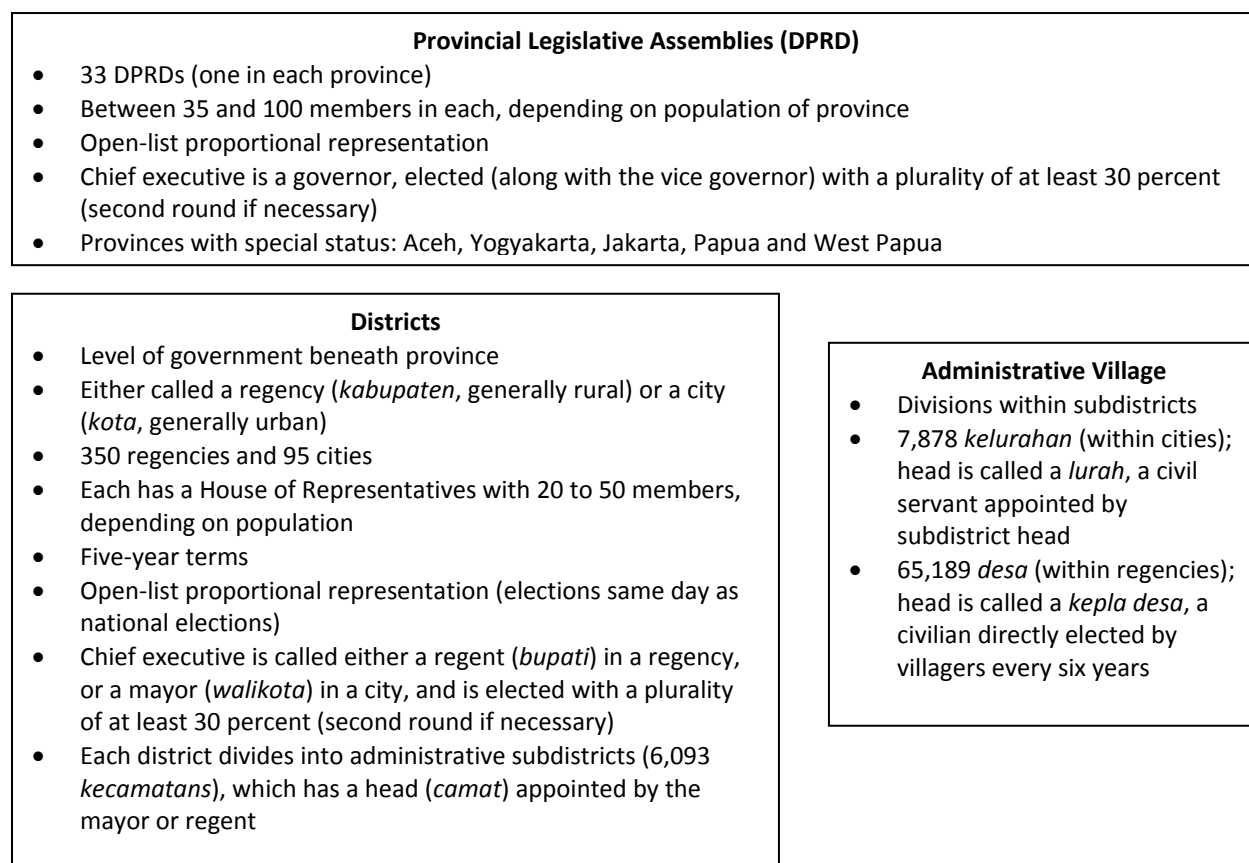
Coupling with this multidimensional electoral system, postauthoritarian Indonesia also implemented institutional reforms that dramatically decentralized political power. The Suharto regime was considered one of the most centralized and corrupt in the world. To change this, Indonesia transferred a substantial amount of power from Jakarta to other regions. Among the notable decentralization reforms were making regencies and cities, rather than governors, the focal points of provincial power; transferring a number of administrative and financial functions to regencies and cities; granting local parliaments control of their budgets; transferring personnel functions to local governments; introducing revenue sharing between central and regional governments in various issue areas, such as taxation, forestry and mining; and allowing local governments to secure loans from overseas sources (Hadiz 2010, 78-79). These reforms attempted to lessen the hold of the central government over provincial and local power and thus break the chains of patronage and corruption that bound the authoritarian system together.

Figure 6: Election Rules Governing Indonesian Elections (as of August 2012)

National Level



Provincial Level



Rule-Based Incentives for Multiethnic Politics

Within this byzantine electoral system lays one overarching effect: the consolidation of candidate-centered elections at the national level. The country began in 1999 with closed-list proportional representation in multiple districts and an indirect election for the president. Five years later, Indonesia changed its presidential elections to direct, two-round majoritarianism and created the DPD, which used single nontransferable vote. Both of these systems foster candidate-centered elections, but the main parliamentary body, the DPR, shifted to only weakly open lists. Voters were asked to vote for both the party list and a candidate, which made candidate choice largely irrelevant (Sherlock 2004). However, for the 2009 elections, the constitutional court mandated that voters must choose only candidates – and not parties – on the ballot. This ruling transformed DPR elections into a fully open-list system and synchronized candidate-centered elections across national-level institutions, creating a uniform incentive for multiethnic politics.

Candidate-Centered Elections and Their Impact on Presidential, DPR and DPD Campaigns

Candidate-centered elections create pressure for candidates to cultivate a base of support independent of party backing.¹³ These types of elections are expected under systems that cultivate intraparty competition – open-list proportional representation and single nontransferable vote being the most notable (Schaffer 2007; Reilly 2007b). Intraparty competition weakens the power of political parties and any distinct programmatic appeals they represent because “the party label is not a tool voters or candidates can use to separate one candidate from another, since there are multiple candidates from the same party in the race” (Schaffer 2007, 49). This produces candidates nominally connected to vaguely defined parties, but who campaign with localized voter appeals. This dynamic is seen during presidential, DPR and DPD elections.

During presidential elections, Indonesia’s majority run-off system coupled with additional nomination restrictions and geographical vote distribution rules create strong incentives for broad-based, inclusive and oftentimes coalitional presidential tickets. Majoritarian elections create strong centripetal effects that encourage parties to use catchall appeals to the electorate, particularly in societies where no one group constitutes a demographic majority (Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2005; Sisk 1996). Additionally, the system excludes small, extremist parties from the election, because their inability to approach 51 percent support makes their participation irrational (and makes voting for these parties irrational as well, thus, creating a spiral of declining support).

Indonesian constitutional designers undergirded these effects with additional centripetal mechanisms at the presidential level. First, only parties with substantial electoral support can nominate presidential candidates. This limits presidential competition to comparatively large, national parties. Additionally, because no single DPR party controls a majority of the vote, moderately sized and small parties are forced to align in order to nominate a single candidate, which inherently weakens ideological messages. For example, President Yudhoyono’s secular-nationalist Democrat Party aligned with several religious parties for the 2009 presidential election, including the Islamist United Development Party (PPP) and

¹³ This analysis of electoral incentives focuses solely on national-level institutions because local elections operate under the same electoral design and thus produce the same incentives.

Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). Second, requiring a winning presidential ticket to take in 20 percent of the vote in at least half of provinces forced candidates to compete in less populous and more diverse provinces, which encourages multiethnic appeals.

During the DPR's open-list proportional representation elections, parties retain the power to construct party lists; however, open lists give voters the opportunity to ignore the order and select candidates of their choosing.¹⁴ This creates pressure for candidates, who are competing against fellow party members, "to build a strong local profile in their districts in order to be reelected" (Sherlock 2010). This weakens centralized control over candidates and undermines party-based ethnic messaging. Party rules during DPR elections also hurt ethnic parties. First, a 3.5 percent party threshold precludes small, particularistic parties from winning seats. Second, every party must open party offices across the country, which demonstrates not only widespread geographic support but also requires a relatively large fundraising capacity – neither of which small parties have.¹⁵

The DPD's single nontransferable vote (SNTV) elections create incentives similar to open-list proportional representation, which both force intraparty competition between candidates. In SNTV, voters select individuals instead of parties to fill each province's four seats. Though these candidates run formally as independents, they often unofficially represent specific parties. Consequently, SNTV creates a significant coordination challenge for parties, which need to properly gauge their support within the district so as to not oversplit their vote. For example, within a four-seat district, any candidate who receives 25 percent of the vote will win a seat. If a party has 50 percent approval in the district, it should consequently run only two candidates; any more than this risks splitting its vote. Single nontransferable vote elections strongly push candidates and parties to cultivate local support rather than advocate party dogmatism based on ethnicity or specific issues.

Compounding the effects of this *electoral* decentralization is the *political* decentralization implemented since 1998, which weakened the political parties that had previously dominated the system. The reforms aimed to disempower those national elites involved in institutional corruption; instead, however, decentralized power and candidate-centered elections have only shifted corruption from the national parties to local power brokers. Indonesia scholar Vedi Hadiz writes, "Rather than inducing the kind of healthy competition between localities envisaged ... decentralization has produced local governments, armed with greater autonomy in various spheres, such as taxation, that provide sustenance for predatory interests" (Hadiz 2010, 37). Thus, individual candidates still cannot avoid money politics, but now turn for support to local elites rather than national party elites. This creates a political dynamic in which political loyalty is not tied to parties or ideologies, but to local power brokers who finance the campaign.

¹⁴ Indonesia incorporated open lists in 2009, which means that this alone cannot explain the persistence of multiethnic parties in the elections prior. However, open lists reinforced, rather than changed, the incentives already created by the electoral system. Additionally, Islamic parties declined further after the implementation of open lists.

¹⁵ Aceh's special status allows local parties to compete in the province.

In sum, Indonesia's election rules create broad-based, candidate-centered politics, which generate political parties that must control more than 3.5 percent of the vote and have party headquarters across the country, but are ideologically empty so as to allow for charismatic and ideologically diverse candidates. "It is not a matter of ideology," argued one party official explaining why candidates will join a particular party, they just "need a political party" in order to run.¹⁶ Thus, these internally atomistic parties cannot be outwardly ethnic, which would require a proactive and coordinated agenda, but are rather passively multiethnic, employing innocuous rhetoric designed not to inspire or to offend but instead to neutralize. Parties win with personalism not policy. As Bima Arya, deputy chairman of PAN (National Mandate Party), confirmed, the electoral system "tends to promote people with popularity" and not party loyalty.¹⁷

Though multiethnic parties dominated Indonesian elections prior to 2009, the full integration of candidate-centered elections will solidify their power and force continued moderation. PKS, the most prominent Islamic party, has slowly moderated its message in order to appeal to more of the electorate. A PKS strategist recognized after the 2009 election that "there's no future in PKS beyond 10 percent in an election if they try to be a political party on one hand and an Islamic movement on the other hand, simply because democracy has an instrument to force all political parties to behave in the same way." He also acknowledged the party's transition to more direct appeals to local concerns rather than to a broad ideological agenda: "PKS really wants to separate the political party from the movement. Islam should deal with moral issues, religion in some cases, but blend[ing] these together only creates problems. ...You cannot go to the mosque and make poverty disappear. You can't jihad for public infrastructure."¹⁸

Indonesia's election rules are likely to continue to weaken ethnic politics, which is positive for a deeply divided nation. Election specialist Timothy Meisburger argues that systems in which candidates run as individuals are beneficial for divided societies because "elections will not be party-based, each legislator will have equal power, and each will be free to form whatever alliances seem best for constituent interests" (Meisburger 2012, 159). Surveys show that Indonesian voters are increasingly concerned with secular policy issues (Mujani and Liddle 2009). Coupled with strict party regulations, candidate-centered elections force parties and their candidates to focus on these issues rather than stoke ethnic tension.

Conclusion

Election rules – constituted by electoral system design and party rules – impact the effectiveness of ethnic appeals during elections. However, political institutions are embedded in a historical and social setting that influences the way actors react to institutional rules. Indonesia has a strong nationalist history beginning with Sukarno's independence movement against the Dutch and, later, Japanese forces, which then continued under the unitary leadership of Suharto. These two strong and popular leaders pushed this fractured and religious nation into a unified secular state. While this provides a

¹⁶ Interview, November 6, 2011, Zulkieflimansyah, party strategist and former parliamentarian, PKS

¹⁷ Interview, November 4, 2011, Bima Arya, Deputy Chairman of PAN

¹⁸ Interview, November 6, 2011, Zulkieflimansyah, party strategist and former parliamentarian, PKS

historical foundation for multiethnic parties, the precipitous outbreak of ethnic, religious and regional violence suggests that these social factors alone cannot explain the current persistence of interethnic politics in Indonesia.

Indonesia's election rules force parties to target multiethnic constituencies by producing candidate-centered elections in multiple districts under strict party regulations. Given the identity-based conflict that ravaged the country after 1998, one could envisage ethnic parties emerging under different election rules: for example, closed-list proportional representation with a single national district and lax party regulations. In such a system, party-based elections would likely produce a proliferation a small ethnic parties along Islamist, regional and cultural lines. Instead, Indonesian parties are forced to nominate locally popular candidates in geographically dispersed and heterogeneous districts. Particularistic parties cannot generate enough support under such a system to remain electorally relevant. In 1999, elections rules were designed to weaken regional and Islamic parties. These rules were strengthened in 2009 and have been reinforced for the upcoming 2014 election. Consequently, as multiethnic parties have enhanced their support by mobilizing along crosscutting cleavages, Islamic parties have faded while shifting their strategy to inclusion in order to survive. We should expect this trend to continue.

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