

Review

Reviewed Work(s): PARTY POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN INDONESIA: Golkar in the Post-Suharto Era by Dirk Tomsa

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addresses “second-image reversed” arguments by asking to what extent Malaysia’s policy goals were themselves pre-determined by global pressures. The studies show that Malaysia’s development agendas have indeed been influenced by global trends, but more clearly reflect a sometime conflicting range of regime interests and domestic political pressures. To the extent that Malaysia’s goals have broadly conformed to basic prescriptions of neoliberal globalization, it is significant that those goals were adopted well before global market forces and institutions are typically thought to have robbed developing countries of real choices. Nelson highlights the importance of these early choices, bolstered by an unusual degree of continuity in political leadership, in conferring important “early mover” benefits, if also creating an elective sort of path-dependence constraints. Malaysia thus appears as one of globalization’s winners inasmuch as it achieved sustained, rapid economic growth while preserving significant policy autonomy. The empirically rich policy analyses presented in this volume offer much food for thought about what types of developing countries might engage globalization in similarly empowering ways and how.

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**PARTY POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN INDONESIA:  
Golkar in the Post-Suharto Era.** *By Dirk Tomsa.* London and New York:  
Routledge, 2008. *xix*, 260 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$170.00, cloth. ISBN 978-  
0-415-46008-8.

This book takes up the ambitious task of systematically analyzing Indonesian party politics and its complex interplay with democratization in the post-Suharto era. The primary focus is on how and why Golkar (Golongan Karya), the former New Order political vehicle, was able to transform itself into the highly competitive Partai Golkar and retain its pre-eminent status in the new democratic system. A summarized comparison with the other main political parties then expands the analysis. Finally, the book considers the implications of its research findings for the future of Indonesian democracy.

Having gathered a wealth of empirical research, Dirk Tomsa sensibly utilizes a party institutionalization approach to investigate his subject of inquiry in a systematic manner. Equipped with a rigorous multi-dimensional conceptual framework, Tomsa is able to anatomize Golkar in terms of systemness, decisional autonomy, value infusion, party reification and its relationship with the mass media. He also successfully navigates the all-too-easy conflation of political party institutionalization and party-system institutionalization. This allows him to establish that Golkar, as a former hegemonic presence, displays formidable institutional strengths but its past has also imbued it with some distinctive and unmistakable weaknesses. In fact, Golkar’s electoral success in the post-Suharto

era seems to be more a product of uneven institutionalization rather than unequivocal institutional strength on its part.

To elaborate, Golkar developed a vast territorial reach throughout the New Order period because all civil servants and government officials were expected to become cadre. Its distinctive organizational structure and unrivalled access to state revenues meant that Golkar also dominated national and local legislatures. This allowed it to supervise the allocation of resources and patronage across the archipelago, something it did through an alliance of state officials, business interests and community elites, all the way down the chain to the village level. Yet, despite this territorial reach, Suharto simultaneously denied Golkar a strong leadership component. He actively promoted factionalism in a classic divide-and-rule strategy. Golkar also lacked a major policy formation role under Suharto's highly centralized form of rule. This meant that it essentially remained a functional apparatus. In fact, Suharto latterly used Golkar as a personal political vehicle to maintain his patrimonial authority.

Seemingly, Golkar's status as a leading political party in the post-Suharto era is not really based on the merits of strong programmatic initiatives but more by taking advantage of its hegemonic past. Electoral success has come almost by default with the other contenders' lack of professional party structure playing into Golkar's hands. For instance, despite initial success in the 1999 elections, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P) remained organizationally weak. It was simply unable to consolidate its huge popular appeal. Factor in the apparent naivety and stagnation of the Megawati Sukarnoputri presidency and we get a failure to counter Golkar's hegemony effectively. Consequently, PDI-P's waning popularity benefited the party that did so much to maintain Suharto in power. Golkar's distinctive organizational structure and patronage networks (systemness) and well-established symbolic identity (reification) allowed it to largely maintain its 1999 vote and, therefore, emerge as the dominant party organization in the new democratic system. Clearly, institutionalization matters.

Having said this, while Golkar is better institutionalized in terms of territorial reach and reification than that of the other main political parties there are flaws. A lack of charismatic leadership, compromised decisional autonomy, weak value infusion among its constituencies and complacency in the recruitment of party cadres point to electoral weakness if challenged. For Golkar to rely solely on other parties not improving may be a grave mistake. In fact, the stunning 2009 legislative election victory for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat is proof positive. On a more sombre note, however, a situation similar to the Philippines could arise where charismatic leaders and money politics hold sway.

For academics and students alike, this is an important and in-depth contribution to the increasingly influential literature on party institutionalization. It gives the reader a fine-grained account of the complex

dynamics at play both within and between political parties in Indonesia. The key statistical matrix in the conclusion also makes for a useful quick referent. Yet, one does get the impression that some judicious editing may have made this an even better book. This is not to detract from its commendable efforts in any way, as there is a clear demonstration of how and why institutionalization matters in the study of democratization. Overall, Tomsa provides us with an orderly and empirically accurate basis to generate discussion on the dynamics of Indonesia's post-authoritarian settlement and highlights the need for dialogue with proponents of social conflict theory.

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**GENDER, ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA.** By *Kathryn Robinson*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. x, 256 pp. US\$160.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-415-41583-5.

*Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia* is an overview of the subject from colonial times to the present written by a sympathetic scholar who has spent a life's work studying, interviewing and observing Indonesia's women. The book should be required reading for all those in Indonesian studies, as many of our fields are blind to the gender perspective Robinson effectively demonstrates is so vital in understanding the country's politics, policy, economics, society, law and religion—at least if one wants to understand the whole population.

Robinson's book starts with an important corrective to mainstream history. The fall of Suharto in May 1998 was precipitated by student protests, right? No, actually, it was the Voice of Concerned Mothers (Suara Ibu Peduli, SIP) protest in February 1998 that Robinson argues began the protest movement. The women of SIP turned a central feature of New Order ideology on its head, the idea that women are primarily wives and mothers and that the nation was like a family with Suharto the benevolent and wise father. Women's "counter-hegemonic use of the role of 'mother' is more significant as an act of resistance than critics give it credit for. If women can stand up as mothers against the fathers, the familist paradigm totters" (152). The women centred their protest on cost of living and women's role in feeding the family and the trial of those arrested as a way to showcase the "crisis in trust" in the government (1).

Robinson's book has many strengths. It brings together a wide variety of studies, drawing on the most prominent names in the study of Indonesian women, along with the author's own years of field research, consulting and study. I particularly enjoyed a section on how some women scholars are using Islam itself to critique those who would limit women's rights. Lily Munir uses the overarching push for egalitarianism and justice in Islam to critique