From Authoritarian to Democracy in Indonesia: A Costly Fiction of Sustainable Human Security?

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Abstract

Empirically successful stories of both authoritarianism and democracy in materializing economic achievement as well as securing political stability may make some people confused in evaluating the two systems, whether they are suitable for humanism or not. There have been contested views on their virtues related to the preservation of human security as one of the most critical aspects of humanism. This study investigates which one of the two existing political regimes is more suitable for the sustainability of secured human security. Relying on the case of Indonesia, which experienced in adopting the two different political regimes, I argue that in the long run democracy is better and conducive for securing sustainable human security than authoritarianism. This study used a qualitative method enriched by diachronic approach.

Keywords: authoritarianism; democracy; human security.

Abbreviations:

LSI	:	Lembaga Survey Nasional
ABS	:	Asian Barometer Survey
UNDP	:	United Nation

1. Introduction

One day in 2014, I had a special guest, a Malaysian scholar who spent three months in my university on sabbatical leave. He stayed at the university guest house which provides, among other facilities, a television. After residing there for three days, he asked me about something which he found unusual in comparison with his own country: 'I am wondering why conflicts and communal violence tidings dominate the TV news reports here [in Indonesia]?'. This question made me speechless for a moment without any definite answer. This short fragment prompted me to wonder why the recently installed democracy, following the collapse of the authoritarian New Order regime; made people insecure, while there is a general assumption that democracy is more promising in ensuring human security when compared with authoritarianism. Some further questions can be raised here: Why has social disorder regularly occurred in Indonesia although democracy has been installed for more than a decade since the collapse of the authoritarian New Order? Under what kind of political regime could sustainable human security be best-guaranteed?

Historically, democracy has been discussed and practised since the ancient Greeks with many interruptions. However, the general understandings and practices ironically often lead to a disagreement about its meaning and practices at different times and between different peoples (Dahl, 1998:3). Nevertheless, democracy has continued to be widely perceived as a relevant and beneficial concept to embrace. Moreover, different from what happened in previous times, entering the 21st-century democracy steadily reached the peak of its significance in a sense that the concept has become a universal value which should be imperatively adopted by any country. Amartya K. Sen said that if in the nineteenth century the issue of democracy was "whether one country or another was 'fit for democracy'", in the twentieth century the focus had been changed to how a country "has to become fit through democracy" (Sen, 1999:3). As such, democracy is widely considered to be, at least morally, a compulsory concept to implement worldwide.

In line with the widespread installed democracy, there has been optimism that the sustainability of human security would also be well-guaranteed. There are many studies on the linkage between the two concepts: democracy and human security. They are primarily based on the assumption that the principles of democracy–particularly the progress of human rights–match with the concept of human security (Lark and Sisk, 2006:2). However, the available analyses so far mostly rely on a short-term perspective. Such studies, I argue, suffer from at least two weaknesses. First, they are likely to be trapped in a 'simple', so therefore uncritical, investigation as they only hope to observe the convergence of the two concepts' tenets. Second, and more substantively, any expectation of fulfilled-human security has been limited to the availability of a regime, or government, which is friendly to it. Hence, any tenable human security is merely assigned to government policy, and for that reason, it tends to neglect the role of non-state actors, especially society at large.

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This article focuses on investigating human security but from a different angle. It uses diachronic analyses rather than synchronic analysis. Different from the latter, which analyses phenomena in a particular moment in time, the approach taken here explains phenomena that change across a long period of time. This study 'employs a chronological, historical, or longitudinal perspective' (Beck, Bryman, and Tim, 2004). In other words, the investigation makes use of long-term dimensions of human security. As such, the analysis not only deals explicitly with any state's policy in the particular regime but also includes its far-reaching social impact on society, in which it, in turn, contributes to determining the quality of human security. Empirically, it scrutinizes the performance of human security under different political regimes in Indonesia since the 1950s. As it applies a qualitative methodology, data are mostly extracted from interviews supported by various relevant literature.

2. Human Security under Authoritarianism and Democracy: Contested Views

The notion of human security is relatively new. Conceptually, it started entering academic discourse in the 1990s. However, substantively, it has long been close to everyday human life, even has become person daily needs. Some of its main features involve both the object and aspect. In respect of the object, it reflects the antithesis of traditional security, which is exclusively oriented towards state-centred security. The emergence of the human security concept starts from a fundamental question of 'security for whom', reflecting a shifting of security reference from the state to the individual. This reference shifting was prompted by at least two factors (Amouyel, 2006:10-23). First is the changes in international politics. The end of the cold war, which removed the threat of nuclear confrontation, in turn, allowed other threats wrapped up in human security issues to come up. Second, globalization, followed by the widespread democratization across many countries, has facilitated non-state security proponents to raise their voices in the international arena. In line with this, it is unsurprising therefore, that human security is adjacent to people's day-to-day life.

Human security is a multifaceted concept because it involves many aspects. It has two levels of definition: the narrow and broad definitions (Amouyel, 2006: 10-23). The core components of the two definitions embark from the question of security from "security from what". The narrow definition emphasizes that to be secured means 'freedom from fear', pointing to the protection of an individual from any posing threat of intra-state violence. Canada is one country that mainly articulates the narrow definition with its various human security centres. On the other side, the broad definition was extracted from the 1994 United Nation Development Project (UNDP) Human Development Report, which stressed encompassing aspects beyond the threat of violence. It alternatively focuses on "freedom from want", which refers to protection from any threat which endangers the existence of human life, such as environmental, health, economic, food, and personal securities. Another middle-power country, namely Japan, pronounce this latter definition.

In discussing human security issues, this paper is mostly centred on the narrow definition, focusing on the subject of violent threats on society. As is well-known, the disappearing cold war has changed the character of conflict from 'inter' to 'intra' state conflict. There are several arguments about why this happens. However, the main idea is that conflict emerges because of 'the poor level of governance and the disrupted state of institutions' (Human Security Centre, 2005). Nevertheless, as will be elaborated further below, poor governance and disrupted state institutions are not the sole reasons. There is an additional factor behind intensifying horizontal conflict and violence. To find it, we need to trace back to the political arrangement of the previous authoritarian regimes. The settled authoritarian regimes for decades, I argue, was mainly responsible for the condition in which people are suffering from a lack of skills needed to manage social and political differences.

As indicated, democracy has been assumed to be closely related to human security. If human security wants to remove any threat to people's life, any consolidated democracy would be perceived to be able to secure it through institutional protection, implementation of the principle of equality before the law and the enactment of human rights (Large and Sisk, 2006:2). However, there have been debates in relation to this, particularly from economic critics. Referring to the economic miracle of several East Asian countries (China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore), there had been a belief that authoritarianism was better for promoting economic development, at least for faster economic growth (Sen, 1999:6-7). This view implies a hypothesis saying that authoritarian regimes would be conducive for human security, especially in warranting 'freedom from want' aspects. Such a belief, however, faces severe challenges. Amartya Sen argues that there is no strong general evidence that authoritarianism is more beneficial for better economic growth rather than democracy. Referring to some systematic empirical studies, he continues to dispute that there is "no real support to the claim that there is a general conflict between political rights and economic performance" (Sen, 1999:6-7). Therefore, back to the central issue of whether authoritarianism or democracy is superior in assuring human security, it is apparent that it is still contested. This contestation brings us to another question: What kind of political development can guarantee sustainable human security?

As explored below, the issue of sustainable human security can be associated with sustainable development. As known, the latter concept has become the world's agenda because it aims to preserve human life. The idea of development has been revised over time. Initially, it merely

focussed on the economic aspect, but from the late 1980`s through to the 2002 World Summit which clearly suggested the three pillars of sustainable development comprising environmental, social, and economic elements (Kates, Paris, Leiserowitz, 2005). Although the discussion of human security will mostly engage a political perspective, in a broader context, the issue of sustainable human security is arguably closely related to sustainable development. Under the framework of Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs), the new definition of sustainable development is "Development that meets the needs of the present while safeguarding Earth's life-support system, on which the welfare of current and future generations depends.", and explicitly includes "security of the people and planet" (Griggs, 2013:305).

Unfortunately, however, among the three pillars, the social-political aspects have received little attention. Human security, indeed, is part of human life which must be guaranteed; because it determines the community's future life. Moreover, the issues of democracy have been acknowledged as part of development, especially political development. Based on the case of Indonesia, therefore, this study may provide a review of sustainable development concepts as well.

3. Indonesia: A Bumpy Road to Democracy

Indonesia is known to be the third-largest democracy in the world, behind India and the United States of America. But different from its two democratic counterparts, Indonesia has several unique characteristics. First, Indonesia is a complicated country. Demographically, its population had reached more than 260 million people who are geographically scattered across more than seventeen thousand separated islands. In terms of socio-economic aspects, it comprises hundreds of ethnic groups, with their distinctive languages, traditions and different economic levels in which millions are still impoverished. Unsurprisingly, therefore, in 2013, Nubuo Fukuda, a Japanese scholar, stressed that if it is seen from the perspective of modernization theory, especially dealing with preconditions of democracy, "Indonesia is not conducive for functioning democracy" (Woodrow Wilson Centre, 2013).

Second, Indonesia's democracy is seen to be exceptional because of being able to blend the principles of democracy and Islam. In 2015, the former Palestinian Ambassador for Indonesia, Fariz Mehdawi, insisted that Indonesia can be an example for other countries due to its ability to reconcile 'democracy' and 'Islam'. The two factors have been generally perceived, particularly for most Western observers, as hard to combine. He said: "Islam and democracy in Indonesia can go hand in hand and complete each other" (ICMI Bulletin, 2015). The other admiration of Indonesia's democracy came from Anwar Ibrahim, then Malaysian opposition leader. He insisted: ".. [i]ts successful transition is the single most significant development in the recent history of democracy (Ibrahim, 2006:7).

However, all this praise is not the entire story. What Indonesian people feel, as I can also observe and sense the real democracy, particularly in the initial period, was uneasy and even painful. During the political transition and the following commencement period of the installed democracy, conflicts and communal violence were widespread. As reported (Bertrand, 2004:1), from 1997 through 2002, the ethnic strife killed 1,000 people throughout the country. In Kalimantan island itself, two violent ethnic conflicts in 1996-1997 and 2001 between Dayak and Madurese led to at least 1,000 deaths, and hundreds of thousands of Madurese were displaced. The local war between Muslims and Christians in Maluku in 1999 and during the subsequent three years killed at least 5,000 people. Another study also noted that there was "a significant upward trend in the number of incidents and the number of fatalities due to social violence during the transition period, reaching their peaks in 1999–2000" (Tadjoeddin, 2002:58).

The number of victims, including those who died, was too high. In 1997, the death rate caused by social violence reached 131 deaths, and then rose to 1,343 in 1998 and 1,813 in 1999, then in 2000 declined to 1,617 and in 2001 to 1,065 people (Tadjoeddin, 2002:58). Moreover, interestingly, these local conflicts were also geographically scattered. The 2002 conflict mapping across all of Indonesia's 69,000 villages and neighbourhoods showed that local conflict leading to violence occurred across the country and not exclusively concentrated in a few areas (Bannon, 2004:1). The reported victims and losses were also astonishingly huge. Approximately one-quarter of the conflicts resulted in death, which reached 4,869 people, about one-half injuries, numbered at 9,832 people; and one-third suffered from material damage which summed to US$ 91.4 million in total (Bannon, 2004:1). The high death toll, injuries, and material damage caused by horizontal conflict reflected a severe human tragedy.

Notwithstanding the trend decline in the following years, these figures might be a sign of some underlying causes. One of them is the indication that under Indonesia's newly installed democracy, there had been a severe or even dangerous threat to human security, particularly "freedom from fear". The impression I obtained of social milieu, particularly across rural areas, was precisely akin to this. The scattered social disorders led to violent conflict, and in turn, revealed the public memory of the New Order's well-established social order. However, this kind of order appeared through the implementation of the government's repressive policies.

Public frustration with the newly installed democracy also started to grow, mainly with regards to the economic performance. The 2003 Lembaga Survey Nasional (LSI) national survey showed that of the total respondents, 40.2% perceived the economic condition under the democratic regime had worsened from the New Order's one, 36.9 % saw it as similar, and only 22.9% noticed it as being better.

Meanwhile, in terms of economic management, the trend of public perception seemed to be opposite. 60.3% of the respondents thought that the democratic-formed government handled the economy better than the previous authoritarian New Order government, compared to only 25.2 % who perceived that the New Order government was managing it better. In comparison, 14.5% of respondents had no idea (Lembaga Survey Indonesia, 2003).

After almost a decade, such perception seems not to have improved. There are many Indonesians who still view the *reformasi* with scepticism, perceiving that their condition is worse off than in the New Order period. Popular support for democracy is not exceptionally high. According to the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), in 2011, 58.6% of respondents preferred democracy to any other political regime type. Additionally, those who believed that democracy can solve national problems declined from 76.2% in 2006 to 68% in 2011, while only 9.8% of respondents perceived democracy as necessary, or more important, than economic development, the lowest rate among the 11 surveyed countries (Croissant and Lorenz, 2018:99). Given all these parameters, Indonesia's democracy seems to still be far from being well-established.

4. Two Democracies Compared: Eroded Social Capital

The negative indicators of Indonesia's recently installed democracy, such as social disorder and a worsening economy, seemed to be part of decaying democratic practices following the collapse of the authoritarian New Order regime in 1998. Some other negative characteristics were, indeed, seen empirically embedded in Indonesia's democracy. Robison and Hadiz described it as follows:

> "... the essential new patterns and dynamics of social, economic and political power have now been established. From this point of view, the violence, money politics and alleged political kidnappings that routinely take place in Indonesia ..... is increasingly well-entrenched...is a form of democracy driven increasingly by the logic of money politics and political intimidation". (Robison and Hadiz, 2004:256)

These empirical practices reflect how the newly installed Indonesian democracy was far from being consolidated. Such democratic practices are thus not conducive for human security as some primary conditions, such trust and tolerance of differences did not exist. Having this, one might argue that human security is insecure because Indonesia was not ready for, or does not comply with, democracy yet.

However, I cannot entirely agree with such an argument given the fact that previously Indonesia experienced a workable democracy. Hence, it is worthwhile to compare

the Post-New Order democracy, which can be classified into Huntington's 'third wave democracy', with the 1950s 'second wave' of democracy practised in Indonesia. Following the Dutch recognition of its independence, in the 1950s Indonesia adopted a liberal democracy, organizing its first general election in 1955. More than 100 political parties, organizations and individuals participated in the election (Ratnawati and Haris, 2008:3). In terms of participant numbers, the 1955 election was far more than that of recent elections. In the 1999 election, for example, 48 parties were running in the election, which decreased to only 14 parties in the 2004 election.

Interestingly, even though the number of participants was higher, the competition went remarkably well, almost without conflict. Anderson said that "there is not much evidence that the electoral regime (of the 1950s) created, in itself, intense conflict, but the evidence abounds that an electionless Guided Democracy did" (Anderson, 1995:31). A further report from the local level, democracy was described to be workable though the political competition was mobilized along with ideological, religious, and ethnic divisions. Liddle cogently insisted:

> The political party system organized along ethnic and religious lines had worked reasonably well during the democratic 1950s. It had accurately represented local sentiments without at the same time creating an insuperable obstacle to resolving differences among parties in the local legislatures. Indeed, I concluded that the chief danger to national unity, at least seen from a micro-level perspective, was nor representative democracy but Guided democracy. (Liddle, 1996:5)

It seems that such evaluation is valid across the country. Although political campaigns took place more than once a year, "the campaigns generally were done intensively, but they went on peacefully", another witness from the local level in East Java said (Ichlasul Amal, interview: 9 November 2018). Additionally significant is the fact that some fundamental democratic values, such as mutual social relationships, trust and tolerance of social and political differences empirically prevailed. It was reported that "there were many friendships, there was a little inter-religious tension, I know of no church burnings....The Chinese minority was effectively protected against racist violence" (Feith, 1994:21). Given all this, it is therefore unsurprising that the 1955 election has been claimed to be the fairest Indonesian election ever held.

But one curious question remains: why did the excellent democratic practices worsen? I have argued elsewhere that it occurred, at least partly, due to the undermined social capital over the last four decades (Patriadi, 2010).

There are likely conjunctures of historical, social and political processes which gradually ground down the existing fundamental values of democracy. To be sure, the termination of the liberal democracy in 1958, following the

adoption of the authoritarian Guided democracy, was the starting point of the process. As shown later, the erosion of social capital likely continued to occur even more profoundly after the installation of the authoritarian New Order in 1965 in which the regime lasted for more than three decades. In his study of democracy in America, Tocqueville found that 'the art of associating together' was crucial in facilitating democracy taking root (Tocqueville, 2000: 118). Nevertheless, the general problem of developing countries is the fact that the growth of the "the art of associating together" lags behind the advancement of political participation (Huntington, 1973:5). Consequently, any form of social disorder and political stability is hard to achieve.

As indicated before, Indonesia's democracy installed in the 1950s was remarkably workable due to the prevailing fundamental values including tolerance, mutual understanding, trust and democratic cooperation. However, those fundamental values seemed to be seriously undermined when democracy was re-installed in 1998 following the collapse of the New Order regime. Arguably, the authoritarian regimes, which had lasted more than three decades, were responsible for the vanishing of these values. In order to recognize this, we need to be reflective on the dynamics of state-society relations over the years. In it, we need to pay attention to 'the habits of the heart', which include consciousness, culture and daily practices of life; because they facilitate us to have an understanding of the state of society including its long-term viability (Bellah, *et al.*, 1986:275). Dealing with the case of Indonesia, Fukuyama's reminder of the role of the state in eroding social capital is relevant to consider. He urged:

> States can have a severe negative impact on social capital when they start to undertake activities that are better left to the private sector or civil society. The ability to co-operate is based on habit and practice; if the state gets into the business of organizing everything, people will become dependent on it and lose their intuitive ability to work with one another. (Fukuyama, 1995:18)

Fukuyama's notion seemed to happen in Indonesia. Four decades of authoritarianism had enabled the state to be notoriously predatory. The two authoritarian rules, especially the New Order, had been socially and politically very penetrating and repressive. Through the military organization and its networks, the state used to undertake political operations for securing its power. For the stated reasosns of upholding political stability to achieve intended economic growth, the ruler took various measures ranging from extensive military involvement in social activities, extensive intimidation, and rigorous surveillance, including overt extra-judicial operations' (Heryanto, 1990:291). These actions systematically took place at all levels. A former intelligence officer bluntly told me:

> During the New Order period, the military-backed *Kantor Sosial Politik* [*Kansospol* - the district office of social and political affairs] used to perform intelligence operations to ensure political gain, including Golkar's [the ruling party] victory. The methods varied, ranging from delicate ones called 'to suppress with laughing'. It included offering money to pacify political opposition, intimidation, and even repression. Our operational targets were all kinds of organizations (interview, 27 June 2004)

These various penetrating political manoeuvrings had, in turn, seriously weakened society both socially and politically vis-a-vis the state. The process of "disempowerment of 'nation' or 'civil society' had gradually taken place (Heryanto, 1990: 291). At the grassroots level, the impact of the systematic state actions went even deeper. They made people feel threatened and made them politically apathetic. A local politician described it as follows:

> At the grassroots level, people generally were worried to talk about politics, let alone to mention opposition against the government. This fearful climate has actually been established since 1965 event where many suspected PKI [Indonesian Communist Party] supporters were chased and detained by the military. It had traumatized people from being involved in any political activity. Additionally, the government's slogan 'development yes, politics no' which then materialized in the implementation of the floating mass concept had also discouraged them even further. (interview, 20 January 2004)

The long-term frightening political environment had acute social and political effects. Avoidance of any political-related activities, in turn, hindered people from having the skills to manage social and political affairs. Given this, we may expect that for 40 years, or around two generations, under the authoritarian rule was more than enough to enable the traditions of democratic cooperation and social trust of the society to be wiped away. As such, the large part of the community became unable to manage their social and political differences well. Hence, it can be somewhat reasonable to say that during the time the state had destroyed any kind element of social capital, such as tolerance, mutual understanding, trust, and democratic cooperation.

5. Democracy: Inexpensive Sustainability for Human Security?

At the conceptual level, the linkage between authoritarianism or democracy and human security has been contested for a long time. As elaborated above, it has been assumed that democracy is more conducive for human security as such political regimes would enable human rights to be well-guaranteed. In other words, democracy is favourable for managing 'freedom from fear'. Yet, on another side, the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in many developing countries may not be followed by consolidated democracy, with this assumption then being questioned. The economic successes of several non-democratic countries, such as Singapore and China; had encouraged people to argue that authoritarianism at any level is favourable to 'freedom from want'. So far, these contending arguments continue to exist without any definite conclusion.

Against this background, through this research I have tried to make an academic evaluation of the relationship between authoritarianism or democracy and human security, particularly the narrow concept of human security namely 'freedom from fear'. It is true that under the unconsolidated democracy, like what happened in Indonesia after the 1998 regime change, there had been prevalent communal conflicts and violence in which human security became threatened. Yet, from the elaborated diachronic analysis, I argue that democracy undoubtedly was more advantageous for human security than authoritarianism.

Nevertheless, the unconsolidated democracy period, which seemed not friendly to human security; needs further elaboration. Conceptually, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan say that consolidated democracy is possible if democracy becomes "routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life, as well as in political calculations for achieving success." (Diamond, 1997: xxvii). As indicated before, democracy is more than a group of political institutions; as it also covers political, social, legal and economic values that exist in the hearts and minds of citizens. Consolidated democracy, therefore, involves attitudinal, behavioural, and constitutional dimensions.

In a democratization process, constitutional dimension, such as regulations and procedures, could be instantly installed. But attitudinal and behavioural aspects, such as respect for democratic norms, would take time to be well-internalized. Hence, conflicts and violence that occurred in the early days of democracy following the collapse of the authoritarian New Order, where democracy had not been well consolidated; does not necessarily mean that democracy is not friendly to human security. The conflicts which led to violence were very likely the legacy of the previous authoritarian arrangement. As elaborated before, the repressive New Order regime had degraded the citizens capabilities of coping with their social and political diversity.

There are at least two suggested findings here. The Indonesian case showed that the long-lasting authoritarian rule was even predatory to human security because it significantly eroded social capital elements, which closely relate to fundamental democratic values. Another related finding is that, in the long-term, democracy can grow social capital elements which are substantively friendly to human security; in which they would, in turn, enable sustainable human security to be secured.

Based on the findings above, any synchronic analysis of the linkage between the political regime–either authoritarianism or democracy–and human security would be inadequate. The main reason for that is the analyses at a particular point of time is potentially misleading to make any judgment because of the existing complexities of the relationships. Alternatively, to capture all occurring dynamics across the different political regimes, the usage of the diachronic approach seems to be more appropriate. Another implication deals with the existing sustainability concept which merely relies on the categorization of 'what is to be developed' and 'what is to be sustained' (Kates, Parris, Leiserowitz, 2005:11), and is thus simply no longer adequate. Against the background, I would suggest that two additional ideas, namely 'how to develop' and 'how to make it sustained', should be added to the existing dichotomous categories.

In a broader context, the findings underline that the concept of sustainable development needs to be more sensitive to socio-political issues. The reason for this, among others, is socio-political problems that are not handled well, in the long run, have the potential to be destructive to human life, especially human security. Referring to the Indonesian case, in the short run, authoritarianism facilitated good economic development. But, in the long run, authoritarianism made human security vulnerable. Tight political restrictions, which limit the fundamental political rights of the people, such as the right to gather and the right to express opinions, are very likely to have undermined the ability of the community to manage their different attributes. The differences with its various dimensions is a necessity within a plural society. Hence, democracy which guarantees political freedom provides adequate space for people to learn and manage diversity well. So, arguably, democracy can guarantee sustainable human security better than authoritarianism.

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