

Refereed article

Civil-society Support — A Decisive Factor in the Indonesian Presidential Elections in 2014

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Summary

This paper argues that the enormous support of civil-society organizations was a major reason for Joko Widodo's victory in the Indonesian presidential elections in 2014. Social-science theories generally assign civil-society organizations a leading role in strengthening a democratic political order and improving the quality of democracy in it. The authors' assessment of Joko Widodo's election campaign reveals that the involvement of volunteer groups (*relawan*) with pro-democratic goals was an important component. The remarkable commitment of these civil-society organizations, which provided support in a variety of ways, can be interpreted as a positive sign that democracy is deepening in Indonesia.

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Introduction

The presidential election of 2014 marked a decisive parting of ways for democracy in Indonesia. The people in the third-largest democracy worldwide had the choice between General Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo (commonly known as Jokowi) — or as some political observers noted, between a return to an autocratic order and a democratic future (Pongsudhirak 2014, Mietzner 2014) between a return to an autocratic order and a democratic future.

Prabowo presented himself as a strong nationalistic leader with little sympathy for democratic procedures, and made comments that could be interpreted as if he intended to abolish direct presidential elections if he was elected. He also stated that Indonesia should return to the authoritarian, president-centered constitution of 1945. Jokowi, in contrast, had the reputation of being a clean and hard-working local politician, and soon became the bearer of hope for those who dreamed of an open-minded, tolerant, and uncorrupt Indonesia. While Prabowo was perceived as a firm and decisive leader, Jokowi tended to have the image of a pragmatic problem-solver who directly interacted with the people (McRae 2013: 293).

Both candidates have very different backgrounds. Prabowo comes from an influential and wealthy family well connected with the elites in Jakarta, particularly the clan of former dictator Soeharto, whose daughter he married. His brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, is one of the richest people in Indonesia and sponsored his election campaign. Additionally, he was supported by Aburizal Bakrie, one of the most powerful businessmen in the country, who controls various TV stations and dozens of conglomerates.

In stark contrast to Prabowo, we have Jokowi, who grew up in a middle-class family in Central Java with virtually no political networks and financial resources to help him initially. Until a few years ago, he was only known as a local politician in his home town, Solo, in Central Java, where he was elected as mayor twice. To gain this office, he had to join a political party and chose the nationalist-secular PDI-P (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan*, Democratic Party of Indonesia-Struggle), but he was not considered to be very powerful within the party until he won the election. Aside from media tycoon Surya Paloh, he did not have any major business sponsors to help him finance his election campaign.

Jokowi's declared personal wealth recently amounted to \$2.5 million, while Prabowo's was about \$147 million (Aspinall and Mietzner 2014: 352). Most of the political parties (PPP, PAN, Golkar, Gerindra, PD, and PKS) pledged their alliance to Prabowo, whereas Jokowi was only supported by his own PDI-P and PKB, Hanura, and NasDem. In the parliamentary elections in April 2014, the coalition formed by Prabowo gained more than 60 percent of the votes submitted by the Indonesian electorate.

In short, under normal election conditions in Indonesia, Prabowo would have won the presidential elections in 2014, since he had far more financial resources and more support from the political and economic elites. As we all know, however, this did not happen. What are the reasons for Jokowi's success? Many factors will have played a role, of course, but in this article, we argue that the enormous support by democratic and progressive civil-society organizations was the decisive factor in his election victory. In a hard and often uncivil competition with other civil-society organizations ("CSOs"), the democratic and progressive CSOs succeeded in persuading more Indonesian citizens to vote for Jokowi's democratic ideas. His election victory prevented Indonesian democracy from moving in a more authoritarian direction or even collapsing. Our research questions are therefore the following: What kind of civil-society support did Jokowi enjoy, and why was the attitude of civil society so exceptional in this particular election? Can civil society's support of Jokowi be interpreted as a sign of democracy deepening in Indonesia?

We will start our article with a short overview of social-science theories about the connections between civil society and democracy. We will then take a closer look at the structure, the forms, and the intensity of the civil-society support for Jokowi in the 2014 presidential elections in Indonesia. Finally, we will connect these findings with their effects on the overall quality of democracy in Indonesia.

In terms of our methodology, we gained some of our insights from reviewing literature written in English and Indonesian, while others were gained from numerous interviews and personal experiences from within the Jokowi support community during the election campaign in 2014. Ririn Sefsani worked as a volunteer for a political organization named *Seknas Jokowi* throughout the presidential election campaign. She interviewed more than 25 people from several volunteer organizations in different cities in Indonesia between April and August 2014. All her interviews were held in Indonesian and later translated into English by Patrick Ziegenhain.

Civil society and the deepening of democracy

Civil society is a concept that generally refers to the "realm of organized life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules" (Diamond 1994: 5). It is not a unified body, however, but a highly diverse entity full of competing ideas, ideologies, and visions; it can best be understood as a public arena where different political and social principles are contested and debated. Depending on the features and the strength of the different social groups involved, "civil society can have both democratic and anti-democratic effects" (Alagappa 2004: 40).

An intense debate has been taking place in the social sciences since at least the late 1980s on the connection between civil society and democracy. Western liberal-democracy theorists such as Robert D. Putnam (1993) and Francis Fukuyama (2000)

agree on Tocqueville's nineteenth-century finding that the stability of a democracy depends on the structure, attitudes, and strength of the various associations within a given political order (Tocqueville 1969). The more active and democratic these civil-society actors are, the better this is for the deepening of democracy. Philosopher and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner even went as far as stating "no civil society, no democracy" (quoted in Fukuyama 2000: 7).

American scholar Larry Diamond identified the following ways in which civil-society organizations strengthen democracy: checking and limiting the state's power, disseminating democratic ideas and values, empowering the people, promoting equality and change from clientelism to citizenship, stimulating political participation, and recruiting and training political leaders (Diamond, quoted in Beittinger-Lee 2009: 33). In most cases, the agenda of civil-society organizations has a "clear elite-critical and anti-status quo impetus, aiming at a more egalitarian and less discriminatory society" (Mietzner 2013: 30).

However, not all civil-society organizations have these attributes; some of them are decidedly undemocratic and pursue different objectives. These "uncivil society groups" "undermine democracy through their racism, secrecy, and frequent resort to violence" (Alagappa 2004: 46). Fundamentalist religious organizations and groups advocating ethnic or racial superiority are just a few examples. Civil organizations of this kind will obviously have a negative effect on the deepening of democracy in any political order.

Hence it is necessary to distinguish between various forms of civil-society organizations. In the context of Indonesian democracy today, a variety of academic works deal with civil society's contributions to democracy. Most studies underline the fact that an active and pro-democratic civil society would be highly beneficial for removing remnants of the authoritarian New Order (*Orde Baru*) and creating more transparency and accountability in Indonesian democracy. However, Indonesia's civil society can be described as fragmented into diverse issue-based groupings, which are not efficiently organized and lack coherence (Nyman 2009: 269). Additionally, most analysts concede that Indonesia's vibrant civil society is not totally supportive of democracy (Hadiwinata 2009: 291), since the political goals that some organizations pursue are not in accordance with democratic principles.

As Hans Antlöv and Anna Wetterberg have observed, the pattern of civil-society engagement has changed in recent years. Instead of organizing public-advocacy campaigns and mass demonstrations outside government offices, CSOs have become more active in negotiating with government officials, particularly in participatory planning and budgeting processes (Antlöv and Wetterberg 2011: 5f.). Another rather recent feature of Indonesia's civil-society groups is that quite a number of civil-society activists joined various mainstream political parties without giving up their civil-society networks (Mietzner 2013: 47). Partisan support for certain politicians and political parties by civil-society organizations has tended to

be the exception rather than the rule, however. As Suaedy says, the phenomenon of the electoral support for Jokowi shown by progressive and democratic civil-society organizations was a break with the

tradition of social movements in Indonesia, which have so far remained separated from political parties or candidates in an attempt to cause radical change and uphold claims of being non-partisan (Suaedy 2014: 112).

Civil-society support for Jokowi prior to the 2014 elections

During the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (or “SBY” for short; 2004–2014), Indonesia witnessed a period of relative political stability. However, the longer his presidency continued, the more the President turned into a lame duck — surrounded by powerful oligarchs in his cabinet, he did not initiate any further reforms to deepen Indonesia’s fragile democracy. Instead, the country witnessed the rise of “uncivil” organizations stemming from radical Islamist groups. Intolerant and often violent groups such as the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI, Islam Defenders’ Front) and *Hizbut Tahrir* gained more and more support and actively promoted their version of a more conservative Islamic society. During the presidency of SBY, the radical religious groups mentioned above not only became prominent, but were permitted to continue with the provocative and violent action they had been taking against religious minorities such as Christians, Shiites, and the Ahmadiyyah group; the SBY administration did not directly support these undemocratic and intolerant civil-society groups, but it let them carry on and in some cases even justified their actions (KontraS 2013).

SBY also initiated the controversial Mass Organization Law (*UU Ormas*), which was passed in 2013 and put civil-society organizations under the control of the Ministry of the Interior. Since then, CSOs have needed a license and have had to stick to the national *Pancasila* ideology. Prior to that, a government regulation from December 2008 required NGOs to seek state approval for foreign funding.

Despite all these hindrances, many progressive civil-society organizations continued the work they had started in the transition period. However, the NGO scene was diverse and lacked a feeling of togetherness, or as Hendrik Sirait, one of the chairmen of the volunteer organization *Almisbat*, put it, the organizations lacked a common enemy like the one they had had in previous times — the authoritarian government under President Suharto.

Before 2014, many pro-democracy civil-society organizations focused on local issues such as land grabbing and often worked on their own. At the national level, non-profit interests groups had some difficulty making themselves heard, since parts of the national administration still resented their work. Even now, bureaucrats often regard them as being sponsored by foreign donor organizations and not representing the interests of ordinary Indonesians.

The introduction of direct presidential elections in 2004 provided new opportunities for civil-society organizations reluctant to support political parties to support individual candidates whom they thought were capable of promoting a reform agenda. In 2004 and 2009, however, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was claimed to be the clear leader in all the opinion polls and did not have to rely on support from civil-society organizations. The latter therefore did not play a major role in campaigning for one of the candidates. Some local elections offered more opportunities for their political engagement, however. In Central Java, for example, Ganjar Pranowo was elected as the new governor in 2013, helped by a great deal of support from pro-democratic civil society. Ridwan Kamil was also elected mayor of Bandung in 2014 with their help.

Jokowi's rise from being a Central Javan mayor to a highly popular national political figure brought about a revitalization of the pro-democratic civil-society movement. In the second half of 2012, he started as an outsider in the Jakarta gubernatorial elections and was able to beat the incumbent governor, Fauzi Bowo, with the support of civil-society organizations and the media. The phenomenon of massive volunteer (*relawan*) support for Jokowi became visible in this election (Suaedy 2014). *Relawan* can be described as active citizens who do not belong to any specific party, but are politically active, promoting a certain person who they believe is best for society as a whole (Samah and Susanti 2014: 24). After his election victory in Jakarta, Jokowi became a nationally known politician, and intensive media coverage about his personality and leadership style brought him widespread popularity.

Jokowi soon became the most popular politician in Indonesia and was even discussed as a candidate for the 2014 presidential elections. However, in accordance with Indonesian electoral regulations, presidential candidates must be proposed by political parties. His own party, PDI-P (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan*, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), hesitated to nominate him for a long time, preferring to propose party chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri. Here again, progressive civil-society organizations became active and put PDI-P under pressure to nominate Jokowi as its presidential candidate. In January 2014, for example, the former members of SMID (*Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi*, Indonesian Student Solidarity for Democracy), PRD (*Partai Rakyat Demokrasi*, Democratic People's Party), and HMI (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, Islamic Student Associations) declared their support for Jokowi and developed a new group named *Jokowi untuk Indonesia Baru* (JUIB, Jokowi for a New Indonesia). This group sent a public message to PDI-P and encouraged them to nominate Jokowi because he was seen as the only alternative figure among old-style politicians.

About a year before the presidential elections in July 2014, many new progressive civil-society organizations were founded that supported Jokowi. This was

remarkable, because many ordinary Indonesian people were getting involved in elections

not just to position themselves outside and in contrast to government (NGO vs. Government), but in support of the candidate of their liking, affiliating themselves and volunteering to campaign actively (Lancée 2014).

The initiators of the volunteer organizations in support of Jokowi were usually people who had already been active in previous civil-society groups, such as the anti-Suharto and the *pro-reformasi* movements. They founded electoral support organizations, since the traditional NGOs did not usually openly declare their support of one of the candidates. Most of these outsourced groups comprising volunteers did not have a legal status and could thus be regarded as rather informal organizations, albeit with a high rate of participation. Usually, they started off as a forum of discussion with only a few members. Soon after that, more people joined and others were invited to do so. Most groups first developed their own position with regard to the presidential elections in July 2014. They initially adopted a program and then identified Jokowi as the presidential candidate with whom their program could be implemented.

It is impossible to name all the volunteer organizations that actively supported Jokowi in the 2014 presidential elections, but a few of the more important ones will be presented in the following. One volunteer group was Almisbat (*Aliansi Masyakat untuk Indonesia Hebat*, the People's Alliance for a Superb Indonesia). This group relied on an activist network named FAMI (*Front Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia*, the Indonesian Students' Action Front), which is a student group that became well known due to its activities in the first decade of this century when it demanded the punishment of human-rights violations committed by the authoritarian New Order and former dictator Suharto. Another important volunteer group is *Projo* (Pro Jokowi), which is composed of people close to PDI-P and uses PDI-P's organizational setup around the country.

Duta Jokowi (Jokowi's Envoys) has many activists from the 1998 democracy movements among its members. Their campaign strategy relied on door-to-door discussions with citizens in about 100 cities all over Indonesia. *Duta Jokowi* extended its territorial activities by using the network of Christian activists united in the KWI (*Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia*, Indonesian Prelates' Conference). Another organization, *Seknas Jokowi* (*Sekretariat Nasional Jaringan Organisasi dan Komunitas Warga Indonesia*, National Secretariat of the Organization Network and Indonesian Citizen Community), is composed of activists from various NGOs which were already active in the authoritarian New Order, academics, and several members of political parties. Members of *Seknas Jokowi* are also Indonesians who live in Australia, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, and the United States of America. *Bara JP* (*Barisan Relawan Jokowi Presiden*) is another volunteer organization that has branches in 19 Indonesian provinces. Its members come from

very different segments of society, being journalists, politicians, actors, artists, lawyers, and students, for example.

The following table provides an overview of some important volunteer organizations during the 2014 presidential elections:

Table 1: Overview of key volunteer organizations

Name	Founding Date	Territorial Base	Background	Agenda
Almisbat	April 6, 2014	40 districts in 7 provinces	Related to <i>Forum Mahasiswa Indonesia Menggungat</i> (FAMI) based on student activism from 1998	No Revival of the <i>Orde Baru</i> Refusal of Prabowo as President Support for Jokowi
Projo	April 2014	33 provinces	Student activists from the 1980s, PDI-P, members, students	Support for Jokowi
Duta Jokowi	March 2014	About 100 districts / cities	Student activists, workers, and Christian network (KWI)	Refusal of Prabowo as President Support for Jokowi as President
Seknas Jokowi	December 15, 2013	33 provinces, 267 districts / cities	Democracy activists from 1980, 1990 and 1998, various CSOs (AMAN, Serikat Nelayan, Serikat Petani, Seknas Muda, Seknas Perempuan, Seknas Muda)	Struggle to continue with the reform agenda Make sure that Indonesia does not return to the New Order Use Jokowi as a strategy to build up a more democratic Indonesia Support for Jokowi as President
Bara JP	June 15, 2013	19 provinces and 7 states	Network of Jokowi volunteers from various professional backgrounds	Crisis of trust regarding the political elite Criticism of neo-liberal economic system in Indonesia Support for Jokowi as President

Source: authors' own compilation

Social scientist Ariel Heryanto recently observed that “like Jokowi, his supporters are inclined to soft power, such as puns, visual arts and music. Women are reportedly overrepresented. Mostly apolitical in their daily lives, they belong to none of the contesting political parties” (Heryanto 2014). The question why so many

ordinary Indonesians became volunteers wanting to play an active part in the presidential campaign for Jokowi is not very easy to answer and needs a thorough empirical survey. Drawing on our own experiences and interviews, however, the following three reasons for providing voluntary support for Jokowi in the 2014 election campaign were mentioned most frequently. It is striking that all of them are related to the question of the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

(i) Support of Jokowi was a refusal of Prabowo

Many Indonesians regarded Prabowo as a symbol of the old authoritarian Indonesia (Keller 2014: 1). They refused to accept him as their new president, because they feared he would turn Indonesia into a new *Orde Baru* with limited civil rights and restricted liberties. In view of his military background and track record of human-rights violations, Prabowo was widely regarded as undemocratic. He reminded many members of progressive civil-society organizations of their experiences under the New Order regime, and they decided to act in order to avoid a recurrence of such a situation. Hendrik Sirait, chairman of Almisbat, said:

I still feel the trauma the people endured during the Suharto government, where not only critical voices were suppressed, but we were also arrested and jailed when we defended the rights of the people. I don't want this to happen again. There is no place here for the Suharto monster to return to power.

Activists who had witnessed the authoritarian New Order were encouraged even more when symbols and figures of the authoritarian past appeared during Prabowo's presidential campaign. Many pictures of the former dictator Suharto bearing the slogan "*enak jamanku tho*" (better in my era) were widely distributed on posters, stickers, and T-shirts. The public appearance of Suharto's daughter, Titik Soeharto (the former wife of presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto) as a candidate for the legislative election for the Golkar party and the statement that she wanted to restore the glory of the *Orde Baru* added to the distrust of those who had bad memories of Indonesia's authoritarian past. Many of the volunteers believed they saw a danger to democracy in Indonesia and declared the 2014 presidential elections to be the "final battle" between the New Order and the Reform Era.

(ii) Support of Jokowi was due to his personality and track record

Jokowi was widely seen as a new type of leader who, unlike other prominent politicians in Indonesia, was still down to earth and close to ordinary citizens. The language he speaks and the way he interacts in public is that of an ordinary citizen, which is why he has often been described as "everybody's neighbor" (Eep Saefulloh Fatah, quoted in: The Economist Online 2013). People from the lower classes can identify with Jokowi. Fisherman Jamaludin Amir from the Gorontalo district in North Sulawesi, for example, explained his own reasoning as follows:

I support Jokowi because he is like us. He is simple, close to the people, and I'm not afraid of him when I meet him. So far, I have never been to the regent's office or the local parliament because they are so high up and distant. But Jokowi allows the people to be close to their leader.

As the first presidential front-runner in Indonesian history not to come from the country's elite, Joko Widodo embodied the desire of ordinary voters to be ruled by one of their own (Mietzner 2014: 124). Joko Widodo particularly emphasized that he was both approachable and personally known, and his frequent *blusukan*, or low-key visits to mingle amongst the voters, became an effective campaign strategy (Weiss 2014: 9).

Support for Jokowi also stemmed from his image as a progressive leader, however. Irene Shanty Parhusip, the chairwoman of Seknas Perempuan, explained:

Our greatest hope is that Jokowi can bring about justice and gender equality as well as the protection of ethnic and religious minorities.

What was more important, however, was his good track record as mayor of Solo and (for a much shorter time) governor of Jakarta. In both positions, Jokowi impressed the citizens with his decisive and yet transparent and accountable leadership style free of corruption and close to society. Although he only held his respective positions for a short time, he initiated health and education programs that were a positive step forward for many citizens, particularly the poorer segments of society.

What also mattered to many people was the fact that Jokowi never presented himself as a party politician. The reason is that these people often have a bad reputation in Indonesia, since they tend to be connected with dubious horse-trading agreements, self-enrichment, and corruption. Despite being a member of PDI-P, Jokowi always kept his distance to the party and made it clear that he was outside traditional party politics. Budi Ari Setiadi, chairman of Projo, said this about him:

We support Jokowi because he proved to be a good leader in Solo and Jakarta, but the most important thing is that he is not part of any political party structure.

Up till April 2014, Joko Widodo was not appointed the official candidate of PDI-P. Although he took the lead in public opinion surveys, the chairwoman of PDI-P, Megawati Soekarnoputri, still avoided naming him as their presidential candidate. Consequently, *relawan* groups such as Pro Jokowi put PDI-P under pressure. Budi Ari Setiadi explained the situation like this:

We support Jokowi because our strategy is to give the political parties a lesson in self-reflection and improvement of their organization to regain the support of the people. Jokowi is supported fully by non-partisan volunteers who don't want to be seen as party members. The majority of them are anti-party.

In the end, due to public pressure, the PDI-P leadership was forced to nominate Joko Widodo as their presidential candidate, but at a relatively late point in time (the middle of March 2014) and without the party leadership's full support.

(iii) Support of Jokowi was due to his program

Many volunteers also felt attracted by the programmatic issues that Joko Widodo covered during his election campaign. The social and economic plans, however, were not much different than those of his contender, Prabowo Subianto, since both candidates were proposing salary increases for public servants, the creation of new jobs, subsidies for poor families, and possibilities for land ownership for farmers.

What mattered more was Joko Widodo's credibility when it came to effectively reducing the amount of red tape and to restructuring the public administration. Joko Widodo stood for an improvement in Indonesian democracy by reforming it and for the fight against undemocratic features such as corruption and patronage. He introduced the slogan of "mental revolution" to describe his planned transformation of government work, but also that of Indonesian society in general. By "mental revolution," Joko Widodo meant the revival of values such as morality, honesty, mutual help (*gotong-royong*), tolerance, and work for society in general, not just for particular groups (Widodo 2014). In terms of governance, "mental revolution" can be translated as a kind of leadership that is clean, people-oriented, transparent, and open to civil-society demands.

Another important reason why Jokowi was able to attract the support of pro-democratic volunteers was that he stressed his support of ethnic and religious minorities in his election campaign, whereas his contender, Prabowo Subianto, included hard-line and conservative Muslim organizations in his support camp. Thus, equal treatment of the different religious groups in Indonesian society was better represented by Joko Widodo. Additionally, the subject of improving the human-rights situation in Indonesia was part of the Jokowi campaign. Prabowo Subianto, in contrast, was accused of having a negative track record on human rights during his period of service as an active military commander in the authoritarian New Order.

Most civil-society organizations from ethnic minorities were in Joko Widodo's camp. The Indigenous People's Alliance of the Archipelago (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*, AMAN), which has millions of members, stood behind Joko Widodo and actively supported him in the election campaign. The main reason for their support was his campaign program, in which he proposed a bill that would result in the official recognition of indigenous peoples and the creation of a representative board of indigenous people as an advisory council for the President. Most civil-society organizations supported Joko Widodo, since he credibly promised a continuous dialogue between civil-society organizations and the President in his election program. Accordingly, it was not only the person himself, but also some programmatic features that caused many people to join the volunteer organizations in support of Joko Widodo.

Forms of support for Joko Widodo

Nearly every volunteer organization that supported Jokowi's election campaign dealt with two different strategies: the "land campaign" (*kampanye darat*) and the "air campaign" (*kampanye udara*). Whereas volunteers were in direct personal contact with the voters and the general public in the land campaign, the air campaign was fought out on the radio, TV, and in social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Path, or via their own websites.

During the land campaign, volunteer organizations arranged public talks and discussions in several cities on "car-free Sundays," for example. They also distributed Jokowi's election materials personally by going from door to door or by putting up posters at strategic places. Since the presidential elections took place during the Islamic fasting month of Ramadhan, most *relawan* groups staged daily Islamic prayers (*pengajian*) and fast-breaking (*buka puasa*) events at their offices after sundown.

The volunteer organizations started a counter-campaign to defend Jokowi when the tabloid *Obor Rakyat* distorted his personal background by portraying him as a Chinese Catholic close to communist organizations. This blackening campaign made the volunteer organizations behind Jokowi even more creative in presenting their presidential candidate. Seknas Jokowi, for example, worked together with Jokowi's personal advisers to produce a tabloid named *Bejo* (short for *Berita Jokowi*) and the newspaper *Bhakti*, which published the program and profiles of the presidential candidate.

Seknas Jokowi organized a national poster competition under the motto of "*Presidenku Jokowi*" (My President, Jokowi), in which more than 700 posters from all parts of the country were sent to the Seknas headquarters in Jakarta. Prior to that, Seknas Jokowi started a campaign in which Jokowi supporters could add their names to a list. By December 2013, more than 230 people in Jakarta had signed the declaration prepared by the CSO.

Specific campaigns for certain social groups were designed by the various member organizations of Seknas. Their youth group focused on first-time voters and encouraged them to vote for a candidate rather than abstain. Their women's group, which was composed of housewives to a great extent, organized door-to-door campaigns, but also arranged communal discussion and information events. They additionally arranged to distribute coffee and sambal products bearing the slogan "*Presidenku Jokowi*" (My President Jokowi) and sold them in Jakarta.

Almisbat focused on youth groups and started the *opor ayam* movement. Although *opor ayam* is well known as a chicken-and-coconut dish, Almisbat used it as an acronym for *Obrolan Persatuan Ocehan Rakyat Akur Yakin Akan Menang* (People's public talk believing that we will win). Almisbat invited students to attend big public

meetings in which it not only encouraged them to vote for Jokowi, but also explained how they could improve their own lives.

Concerning the air campaign (*kampanye udara*), most *relawan* organizations were very active in the social media. All of them ran their own websites on which they promoted their events, spread information about Jokowi's program, published press releases, and invited website visitors to comment. Many *relawan* were also very active in all forms of Indonesian news forums in the social media, so the subject of the presidential election was always a prominent topic.

One of the biggest support groups for Joko Widodo in the social media was *Jasmev* (the Jokowi-Ahok Social Media Volunteers). They were already active in the 2012 gubernatorial elections in Jakarta and took a vigorous interest in the 2014 presidential elections as well. Volunteers were able to register with the organization online. In 2014, about 30,000 people from various streams of society were active in this network alone. Jokowi was convinced that social media were an effective and important campaign instrument for reaching large segments of Indonesian society, particularly young people. He worked closely together with the founders of Jasmev, Kartika Djoemadi and Soni Sumarsono, and coordinated the social media campaign together with them, which relied on help from volunteers.

Most *relawan* organizations had also very close connections with the TV station Metro-TV owned by Surya Paloh from Jokowi's coalition. Very often, reports about *relawan* activities were broadcast during the news program of this widely known TV station. One of the volunteer organizations, Duta Jokowi (see above), also worked together with Nagaswara, the biggest music production company in Indonesia, and produced the campaign song "*Cari Presiden Baru*" (Looking for a New President), in which many artists under the Nagaswara label and Jokowi himself participated. The organization called Pro Jokowi ("Projo") focused on the production of T-shirts, flags, and stickers featuring Jokowi and the Projo logo. Thousands of these campaign materials were either distributed or used during campaign demonstrations and events.

Some of the *relawan* organizations had quite prominent members, such as local politicians, artists, and other celebrities. Due to their background, they attracted the attention of many potential voters and the media (Setiyowati and Adi 2014: 370). One of the biggest single election events was a huge concert organized by *relawan* organizations in cooperation with rock star Abdi Negara from the band *Slank*. Under the motto of "*Salam dua jari*" (Greeting with Two Fingers), which referred to Jokowi's running number, 2, more than 200 well-known musicians played for free in the Gelora-Bung-Karno Stadium in Jakarta just a week before the presidential election.¹ More than 100,000 visitors came to listen to the bands and an election

¹ On the ballot paper, presidential candidate no. 1 was Prabowo and presidential candidate no. 2 was Jokowi.

speech by Joko Widodo. Additionally, the whole concert was broadcast live on the national TV channel Metro-TV.

It is interesting to note that the *relawan* organizations took over functions which the political parties usually have in election campaigns. Jokowi's own party, PDI-P, organized an election campaign and often cooperated with *relawan* organizations, but the effects were rather limited according to many experts. Aspinall and Mietzner, for example, wrote that "Jokowi's presidential campaign was marked by organisational chaos, unclear messaging, conflicts with PDI-P, and funding problems" (Aspinall and Mietzner 2014: 358). Eva Sundari, a party politician and member of the National Parliament representing PDI-P until 2014, also joined *relawan* groups (Seknas and Almisbat) and said the following:

As a party member, I get a headache watching the intra-party dynamics during the election campaign for Jokowi. It would be better if we focused on the work of the *relawan* [and not that of the party].

What was even worse was the performance of the political parties that were Jokowi's coalition partners (PKB, Hanura, and NasDem), as they did not produce and distribute enough campaign material for Jokowi. There was also no real coordination between these parties and the network of volunteer organizations that were actively involved. Joko Widodo himself was aware of this fact and mentioned it at a meeting with *relawan* organizations:

I am the presidential candidate of the volunteers, but I am also supported by political parties. It would be good if they coordinated [their activities] better with the volunteer organizations.

Another remarkable feature of the 2014 presidential elections was citizens' eagerness to give individual donations to the presidential candidates to finance their election campaigns. According to the General Elections Commission (KPU) website, Joko Widodo was able to attract individual donations of about 2.76 million US dollars. The number of individuals donating money to Joko Widodo's election campaign (about 40,000 in all) was much higher than for any other person in the previous presidential elections in 2009 and 2004 (Margiono 2014). While the bulk of Jokowi's financing for the election came in the form of small donations, Prabowo profited from a few large-scale contributions from the elite (Shekhar 2014: 1). Jokowi was probably the first presidential candidate in Indonesian history to launch a significant community-based fundraising drive in contrast to the usual campaign-funding by oligarchs, interest groups, and candidates themselves (Mietzner 2014: 119).

Another crucial point to secure Joko Widodo's election victory was the high amount of participation by volunteers in the process of monitoring and checking the outcome of the presidential election. Since the race between Jokowi and Prabowo was a rather close one, manipulations in various parts of the vast archipelagic state could have changed the result. According to some estimations, more than two million volunteer witnesses were active in recording and transmitting the election

results from all 477,291 polling stations (*tempat pemungutan suara*, or TPS for short) to their organizations. They in turn compiled the incoming data and compared them with officially announced results from the National Election Commission, KPU (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*). The volunteer initiatives thus reduced the occurrence of irregularities in the presidential election in 2014, which can be considered a major step in stabilizing the democratic process (Lancée 2014). Those who guarded the election buildings and prevented fraud from occurring were not necessarily supporters of either camp, but in the end, their voluntary engagement benefitted the legitimacy of the election.

Several parallels between Joko Widodo's election victory and that of Barack Obama in the 2008 U.S. presidential election can be seen. Neither person was a political veteran at the time, and since they were relatively new to politics, they both chose more experienced senior politicians as their vice-presidential candidates. Jokowi and Obama both became victims of smear campaigns. While Jokowi was touted as being Christian or Chinese, Obama has had to face allegations that he was not a "real" American, but a Muslim. Another important parallel is that both men were perceived as political game-changers (Ong 2014) and won broad popular support in the social media and civil-society organizations. It is striking that similar methods of gathering support for the respective presidential candidate were employed in both elections, and both were used very effectively: volunteers for the "land" campaign, and social media activity for the "air" campaign.

The most noticeable difference of all between the Obama campaign and the Jokowi campaign, however, is that the latter took place in the young democracy of Indonesia, where such a phenomenon was very unusual at the time. In the political tradition of Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, the involvement of grassroots movements was limited to protests against those in power. The mass movements in the Philippines in 1986 (later called the People Power revolution) and the anti-Suharto movement in Indonesia in 1998 can be categorized as pro-democratic, but their main aim was to remove an authoritarian government, not to support a specific presidential candidate.

The attitude of Indonesian civil society in the 2014 presidential elections was also exceptional because the volunteer movement came from below and was not initiated or directed from above by Jokowi. Consequently, the grassroots organizations first organized themselves and then approached him. At a certain point in the election campaign, Jokowi worked together with the *relawan* movement, but he never actually orchestrated all the activities conducted by the various autonomous groups.

In all the democracies in Southeast Asia, electoral support is usually dependent on the political machines of the candidates or parties. The traditional way of garnering votes usually relies on political support networks and vote-canvassers, which are highly instrumental to voter mobilization at the village level. This also worked to some extent in the 2014 Indonesian presidential elections. Prabowo was able to win

in those areas where he was able to organize voter mobilization from his political allies, particularly from the Islamic political parties in his camp. However, this time, Jokowi's volunteer-driven grassroots campaign proved more successful in winning the majority of the votes than Prabowo's money-fueled political machine (Mietzner 2014: 119), an observation that underlines the distinctiveness of the 2014 elections compared to other elections in Southeast Asia.

Deepening democracy in Indonesia

The important role played by the *relawan* organizations in Joko Widodo's election victory demonstrates that "Indonesia's democracy has been revitalised from below" (Ambyo 2014). Besides the weakness of the political parties, two factors in particular can explain why so many pro-democratic civil-society organizations were active in the 2014 presidential elections. The first of these was the high level of political polarization in these elections: only two candidates were nominated by the party coalitions. If there had been more candidates than that, as in the 2009 or 2004 presidential elections, the support would probably have been split between a number of them. It was also extremely important for the civil-society groups to be able to support a person they trusted rather than a particular political party that they did not. The direct election of the President thus provides a high incentive for civil-society groups to actively participate in the democratic process. In this context, plans made by the Opposition to introduce an indirect election of the President by a national assembly or to introduce an indirect election of local leaders by the local parliament must be regarded with a critical eye. Indirect elections would reduce the influence of civil-society groups while strengthening that of political elites and parties.

Another reason for the high amount of voluntary political activity was that the two presidential candidates have very different characters. On the one hand, the background and personality of Prabowo Subianto encouraged many rather apolitical people to become more active in order to prevent him from becoming Indonesia's new president. On the other hand, these people could identify with the pragmatic and inclusive character of Joko Widodo's program, while other voters were attracted by his pro-democracy stance.

The volunteer organizations worked as pressure groups from below. They had a high degree of political awareness and made use of it by getting involved in politics (Samah and Susanti 2014: 26). The *relawan* groups took over many functions which political parties are usually expected to fulfill. During the Indonesian presidential campaign in 2014, they were partly responsible for bridging the gap between the individual and the state, for the aggregation and formulation of people's interest, and for disseminating political information, thereby playing a bigger role than the political parties. If the democratic civil-society groups had not been as active as they were, the 2014 presidential election "would have suffered from far less information, less vibrant debate on issues, less independent scrutiny, and less overall legitimacy"

(Hasanuddin 2014). In fact, their engagement and dedication made “the election a spectacular success” (Heryanto 2014) and set an example for younger people to become active in politics.

All the pro-democratic *relawan* organizations had an agenda to continue the *reformasi* movement, which had stagnated over the previous decade under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Their agenda included deepening democracy by fighting against corruption, strengthening the rule of law, and calling for more accountability on the part of the national government. As Hilmar Farid from Seknas explained:

We support Jokowi as a strategic and tactical step in the struggle for the reform agenda, which seemed to be nearly dead. We believe that the reform agenda will now be continued under the leadership of Jokowi.

This statement makes it clear that the *relawan* groups saw the presidency of Joko Widodo as a great chance to move ahead with democratic reforms. In this respect, the volunteer groups can be directly connected with the anti-status-quo attitude of progressive civil society that Mietzner (2013) attributed to them, among others. The volunteer organizations mentioned in this paper came from various backgrounds and had various reasons for playing a role in the election, but the uniting element was the wish to contribute to Joko Widodo’s election victory in order to improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

By being active and undertaking the election campaign activities mentioned previously, the voluntary groups fulfilled various functions of a civil society, which Diamond has identified as being supportive of democracy (Diamond 1994). By spreading information about Joko Widodo’s democratic reform agenda, volunteer groups disseminated democratic ideas and values. By being autonomous and voluntary, the volunteer organizations set an example, advocating a change from electoral support as a form of clientelism to self-directed and participatory citizenship. The activities of the *relawan* organizations were an example of active involvement in politics by normal citizens and empowered many people who had not taken an active interest in politics in the past, and thus stimulated political participation.

Many of the previously mentioned “uncivil organizations” were also active in the Indonesian election campaign of 2014, but the main difference to the volunteer organizations in support of Jokowi was their aim: they did not intend to improve the quality of democracy, but rather tried to reduce it by bringing Prabowo Subianto and his questionable allies to power.

In contrast, nearly all the pro-democratic and progressive political forces joined the Jokowi camp. Political analyst Wimar Witolaer put it as follows: Joko Widodo got “full support from the intellectuals, the academia, the civil society. In my term, all the good guys are on Jokowi’s side” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2014).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have shown that Joko Widodo enjoyed a huge amount of civil support from progressive voluntary organizations. Their efforts eventually proved to be successful. Joko Widodo's victory in the Indonesian presidential election in 2014, which was made possible by the enormous efforts of pro-democratic civil-society groups, could have a far-reaching impact on the development of democracy not only in the country itself, but also in other countries in the region. Thai political scientist Thitinan Pongsudhirak has even gone as far as saying "Jokowi's triumph may have saved the future of democratisation in Southeast Asia" (Pongsudhirak 2014). This view may seem rather exaggerated, but it can be explained by the fact that Jokowi's victory was in contrast to other rather negative events for democracy in Southeast Asia, such as the military coup in Thailand in May 2014.

It was not only the Indonesian example of a spectacular election victory of a democracy-oriented person who was not from the political elite that impressed political analysts in Southeast Asia, and, indeed, around the world, but also the way in which he was put in office by broad-based popular support from reform-minded civil-society organizations. Other democratic mass movements in Southeast Asia could mostly be found as protest movements opposed to authoritarian rulers and regimes, but not as a support movement for a politician with a democratic reform agenda. The Indonesian example of the enormous voluntary support provided by civil society is a remarkable exception in this respect compared to other Southeast Asian countries and a clear indication that democratic ideas are deeply rooted in Indonesian society.

Accordingly, the positive influence of pro-democratic civil-society organizations on the deepening of democracy, which most social-science theories assume, can be confirmed in the Indonesian case. Joko Widodo's election victory will not solve all the problematic issues of democracy in the country, but the "vibrant and active CSOs and [...] (the) growing spirit of volunteerism and individual activism" (Hasanuddin 2014) are a very positive sign for the future of democracy in Indonesia.

After his election victory in July/August, but before his official inauguration in October, Joko Widodo formed a transition team to prepare his policies and his cabinet nominations. Many volunteers (among them one of the authors, Ririn Sefsani) were included in this *Rumah Transisi* (Transitional Board) to deliberate on policy and personnel issues that the new president had identified; Joko Widodo seemed to be listening to the opinions and advice of civil-society groups.

As soon as he officially took office on October 20, 2014, however, many of the high hopes that the volunteer organizations and other NGOs had had were dashed. It might be somewhat premature to judge his political performance after only five months in office, but so far, Jokowi has rather disappointed his supporters. His political support of the execution of (foreign) drug smugglers, his failure to strengthen the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in its conflict with the

national police force, and his nomination of the allegedly corrupt Budi Gunawan as the new national police chief were all regarded very critically by pro-democracy groups. Since human rights and the fight against corruption are core issues in most progressive civil-society groups, it now seems clear that Joko Widodo listened to the advice of his supporter groups during the election campaign, but has chosen not to follow it as President. These organizations have criticized Jokowi in media releases and press conferences, reminding him of his election base, and called for more commitment to the task of advancing democracy in Indonesia.

In the first few months, it became increasingly clear that Jokowi had to accommodate strong pressure from his own party, PDI-P, as well as the other coalition partners. He therefore had to nominate questionable figures such as Ryamizard Ryacudu, Rini Soemarmo, and Puan Maharani as ministers. Additionally, he faced stiff resistance from the national parliament, which is dominated by Prabowo's Red-and-White Coalition of political parties.

Even so, all this fails to explain why he seems to have neglected the cooperation that existed with civil-society organizations since assuming his presidency. Since his inauguration in October 2014, only one meeting has been held with representatives of the *relawan* organizations (on March 18, 2015). Consequently, many social activists and political observers are now somewhat disillusioned with the impact that the Jokowi presidency is having on deepening democracy in Indonesia. Hopes that civil society could "effectively wrest[...] control of the political process from the hands of the political elite" (Shekhar 2014: 1) do not appear to reflect the political reality at the moment. However, the importance of the civil-society groups and volunteer organizations in the presidential elections in 2014 has shown that traditional elite politics does not work in the same way as it did in the past. A lesson that can be learned from the 2014 election and its immediate aftermath is that Indonesia's civil society has become more and more influential during the election process, but not necessarily in day-to-day politics.

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