

THE FUTURE OF ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA

Between Hope and History

By M. Syafi'i Anwar

Since its independence in 1945 until present, Indonesia has experienced democracy, albeit it has also plunged into authoritarianism in some junctions of its bloody history. The fall of the New Order regime in 1998 with its ensuing euphoric introduction to democracy has given fresh air to the debate of the compatibility of Islam and democracy in Indonesia. The mushrooming of both national and religious parties has somehow surprised foreign observers that Indonesia, at least at the surface level, appeared to have been able to finely adjust itself to the dynamics of democracy. This has also been significantly marked by the vibrant press freedom which saw how high-ranking officials have been painfully adjusting themselves to the new atmosphere where accountability is a buzzword.

Most importantly, though, the successful direct presidential election which led to the election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2004 and 2009 has been regarded as the culmination of Indonesia's experiment in democratization. These two elections were internationally regarded as an enlightening example that should be intently followed by many other Muslim countries, particularly those in the Middle East, which are still deeply ingrained with religious authoritarianism. Due to the success of these general elections, Indonesia has been regarded as the third largest democracy in the world.

Notwithstanding the Indonesian democracy also faces challenges and obstacles that need to be taken into consideration. The rise of radical conservative Islam (RCI) groups, the growing influence of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), the increasing religious persecution, the lack of law enforcement, and the rampant corruption are serious challenges and obstacles to the fledging democracy since the collapse of Soeharto's New Order regime in 1998.

This article will discuss the development of democracy in Indonesia since the collapse of Soeharto's New Order regime until present. It will demonstrate the progress

and challenges to Indonesian democracy based on socio-historical perspectives. Finally, it will also discuss about the prospect of democracy under Indonesia's current president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

The Socio-Historical Development of Democracy in Post-Soeharto Indonesia

Sociologically speaking, Indonesia is a plural society which comprises more than 17,000 islands, 400 ethnic groups, as well as various customs, religions, and beliefs. Currently, the total population of Indonesia is around 225 millions. From this total population, Muslims represent a majority of the Indonesian populace (87.5 per cent Muslims, 7 percent Protestant, 2.5 percent Catholic, 1.5 percent Hindu, 0.5 percent Buddhist, and 1 percent other belief/animism). Despite the fact that the majority of the Indonesian populace are Muslims, it is clear that Indonesia is not an Islamic state. Indonesia's state ideology is not Islam, but is based on the *Pancasila* (Five Principles). The first principle of Pancasila is "*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*" (Belief in the One Supreme God). In this regard, Indonesia's founding fathers agreed that Indonesia is neither a secular nor theocratic state. The Indonesian constitution, *Undang-Undang Dasar 1945* (The 1945 Constitution), is not based on shari'a. History also shows that from Indonesian independence in 1945 to today, the agenda of imposing shari'a within the state constitution has failed.

Like their fellow Muslims in the Middle East and other Muslim communities, Indonesian Muslims are mostly Sunni and associated with Shafi'i's school of thought (*madzab*). It is said that Islam came to Indonesia in the 13th century and was spread by traders and preachers who disseminated Islamic teachings throughout the archipelago. Yet the key to the success of Islamic propagation in the Indonesian archipelago was not conquest. Rather, it was the ability of Islamic preachers to adopt a cultural approach to the local traditions, beliefs, and wisdom dominated by Hinduism and Buddhism prior to the coming of Islam. Instead of pushing shari'a (Islamic law) on the community, the preachers of Islam or *wali* (saints), especially in Java developed an Islamic cultural approach by accommodating certain aspects from those local traditions, beliefs, and wisdom. As a result, there was a process of indigenization of Islam in Indonesia. In this regard, Islam had to respect the other faiths that existed before it in Indonesia.

Throughout the process of history and development, Muslims were able to develop mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance toward others. Having experienced this, the development of Islam in Indonesian is in this sense different to that in the Middle East.

Discussing the socio-historical development of Islam and democracy in Indonesia, one could discuss briefly about Soekarno's policy in implementing "*Demokrasi Terpimpin*" (Guided Democracy) in late 1950s. Accordingly, this founding father and then the first president of Republic of Indonesia considerably shifted his political orientation from nationalistic and democratic visions to be authoritarian and dictatorship. Moreover, Soekarno finally became closer with the PKI (The Indonesian Communist Party), creating major difficulties for Indonesian Muslims in expressing their aspirations for political Islam. In fact, under Soekarno's Guided Democracy Indonesia slipped into a quasi-dictatorship, with communist party support and domination. The era of ideological despotism finally ended when the PKI was eliminated, following the bloodshed and tragedy of 30 September 1965. The era of Guided Democracy was dramatically ended when neither the military nor Muslims supported Soekarno. General Soeharto then took over Soekarno's position, declaring that the "New Order" regime was now to rule the nation.

In mid 1960s until early 1970s, president Soeharto was widely regarded for his repressive approach on political Islam. Himself a Javanese Muslim, Soeharto considered that political Islam was a serious threat and hazardous to his power, both ideologically and politically. Consequently, Islam was seen as "political enemy number two" (after Communism) and was often grouped as the "*ekstrim kanan*" (the right extreme). This was a deliberate ploy to equate Islam with Communism as "*ekstrim kiri*" (the left extreme). This situation led to mutual distrust and hostility between the Islamic group and the New Order regime. Although the Islamic group had contributed to the fight against communism and the establishment of the New Order regime, this group was then marginalized in the political arena. In the words of M. Natsir, former prime minister and former chairman of the modernist Muslims party, Masyumi, the New Order regime "treated us like a cat with ringworm".¹

¹ See, Ruth McVey, "Faith as the Outsider: Islam in Indonesian Politics," in James Piscatori, ed., *Islam in the Political Process*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.199.

There is no doubt to state here that Soeharto's approach to Islam was too coercive in the early years of his administration. However, despite his coercive approach, Soeharto accommodated some Muslim religio-cultural aspirations in the late 1970s. This shift appeared to be part of a "political balancing act" that aimed to increase his political image and support of Indonesian Muslims. This balancing act led to further shifts in the late 1980s, when Soeharto began to fully develop the politics of accommodation, beginning his embracement to political Islam. After cautiously starting with the accommodation of cultural Islam, Soeharto's New Order regime later also formally institutionalized political Islam. One of the most important forms of institutionalizing political Islam was the establishment of ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*, The Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals), which was to play a significant role in the discourse on political Islam in the late New Order regime. Having succeeded in embodying political Islam into the state politics, Soeharto moved on to implement the politics of co-optation in the mid 1990s. Soeharto's politics of co-optation led to the conversion of a state-sponsored political Islam in the late years of his regime. Consequently, the state was neither in favor with the spirit of legal-exclusive model nor substantive-inclusive model of political Islam. Rather, it fully accommodated political Islam based on the logic of Soeharto's power interest and state hegemony.²

Nevertheless, the conversion to state-sponsored political Islam occurred due to the support and pragmatic alliance between the state and "regimist" Muslim leaders, especially from the "militant-scripturalist" of certain modernist Muslim leaders associated with KISDI (*Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam*, The Indonesian Committee for Muslims Word Solidarity), DDII (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*, The Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation), Muhammadiyah, ICMI, and others. Along with the worsening of economic crisis, bureaucratic corruption, state violence,

² M. Syafi'i Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi Islam Indonesia: Studi tentang Cendekiawan Muslims Orde Baru, 1966-1993*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995. I have discussed political history of Soeharto's New Order Islamic Politics in my dissertation writing which was submitted to the University of Melbourne (December 2004) with the title, "The State and Political Islam in Indonesia: A Study of the State Politics and Modernist Muslim Leaders' Political Behavior, 1966-1998".

and the withdrawal of critical Muslims support to the New Order authoritarian regime, Soeharto's administration was finally collapse on 21 May 1998.³

Soon after the collapse of the Soeharto regime, Indonesia was marked by the so-called "euphoria *reformasi*" (reform euphoria). Soeharto was replaced by Habibie who was previously chairman of ICMI and then Vice President. Under the reformasi era, people were too enthusiastic in celebrating freedom after being ruled by Soeharto's authoritarian regime for more than 30 years. Indeed, from one perspective the reform euphoria had given opportunity to the people to express freely their political demand and protest against state policies. In other words, people were able to convey freedom of expression without feeling fear. Under Soeharto's authoritarian regime, such a situation was never tolerated because the state used to implement repressive measures to deal with people's protest against its policies. Contrary to Soeharto's regime, under Habibie's administration press freedom and civil rights were growing up as well as strengthening civil society movements. Unfortunately, Habibie's administration was unable to set up good governance and control the corrupt bureaucracy as the legacies of the New Order regime. Worse, his administration was even accused of being involved in a corrupt bank scandal. As a result, Habibie failed to gain a greater political legitimacy from the people. This condition led to the uncertain condition which created political and social instability.

This situation was changing little bit when Abdurrahman Wahid, a prominent cleric and former chairman of leading Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) replaced Habibie as a president in late 1999. At the beginning of his presidency, the new hope for Wahid's leadership was rising. This was due to the fact that Wahid was the first democratically elected president. He was expected by Indonesian Muslims to develop a new political openness for Indonesia. Indeed, Wahid has been widely known as a noted Muslim intellectual, charismatic leader, and had ever been called as "the guardian of the Indonesian civil society". Most importantly, many scholars regarded Wahid as one of the

³ *Ibid.* For a useful account of "regimists Islam", see Robert W. Hefner's thoughtful work, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp.149-150.

most prominent Muslim intellectuals representing “liberal Islamic thought”, although his social base is traditionalist NU.⁴

Ironically, Wahid’s presidency was still unable to control the political instability. Wahid’s lack of experience in state bureaucracy and complaints about his erratic behavior in ruling the country had weakened his administration. Despite his concern for political openness, Wahid’s controversial statements concerning sensitive issues often created problems and misunderstandings among the people. Again, this situation had increased people’s distrust towards his capability to manage the country. Such a situation was worsened by religious and communal bloody conflicts in several Indonesian provinces, especially between Muslims and Christians, in eastern regions such as Ambon, Palu, Poso, Ternate, and others. Ironically, Wahid was forced to end his presidency through an impeachment of parliament. As a result, Megawati Sukarnoputri took over Wahid’s presidency and became the first woman president of Indonesia.

At the beginning of her administration, Megawati was steadily able to manage the country. This was not only because of her silence and lack of controversy, but also due to her ability to develop a better and solid cabinet formation, including to recruit professional economic ministers. However, she was still unable to uphold a better law enforcement and fight against corruption, collusion, and nepotism. Under Megawati’s presidency, corruption was still rampant. Instead of prosecuting big corruptors, Megawati forgave them with special treatment. Clearly, under Megawati’s presidency, law enforcement was too weak and yet it created unjust policies. In terms of foreign policy, Megawati was often criticized by her opponents for being too soft in dealing with the Western countries, most specifically the US and its extended policy on “war against terror”. As a result, all these problems worsened president Megawati’s performance despite her solid cabinet teamwork.

Surprisingly, prior to the 2004 general election, Coordinator Minister for Defense and Security under President Megawati administration, General (ret) Susilo Bambang

⁴ For a more detail account on Abdurrahman Wahid’s thought, see Greg Baton, *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia: Pemikiran Neo-Modernisme Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, dan Abdurahmabn Wahid*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999, especially pp. 325-429 and pp.488-501; Greg Barton, *Gus Dur : The Authorized Biography of Abdurrahman Wahid*, Jakarta: Equinox, 2002.

Yudhoyono (SBY), resigned from the cabinet due to the internal conflict between the two leaders. SBY then decided to run for president and he was able to defeat Megawati by gaining significant vote. As a result, when SBY became president and ruled the country (September 2004-October 2009), Megawati and her party, PDI (The Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party) became opposition group challenging SBY's administration.

Challenges to Democracy

Meanwhile, it is crucial to note here that democracy in post-Soeharto's New Order regime, Indonesia faces serious challenges due to the rise and spread of radical conservative Islamic (RCI) groups. Unlike moderate Muslim organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, the RCI groups pose that the government and Muslim communities need to enforce shari'a within the state constitution, law, and regulation. This agenda is not only controversial in terms of local-level consequences, but also threatens the future of Indonesia as a nation state and plural society, comprising ethnic, customary, religious and other diversities. In fact, the RCI groups define shari'a based on literal, strict, and exclusive interpretations. Moreover, those RCI groups also transform religio-political thoughts from the Middle East, particularly ideology of conservative and radical *salafism* to Indonesia. This fact can be observed from the ideology of radical conservative Islam (RCI) movements such as *Majelis Mujahiddin Indonesia*, *Hizbut Tahrir*, *Lasykar Hizbullah*, *Lasykar Jundullah*, *Darul Islam*, *Ikhwanul Muslimin Hammas*, and the like.⁵

By and large, there are two main characteristics of RCI groups in Indonesia. The first is related to RCI's strict, legal, and exclusive "shari'a minded" mindsets. In this regard, most RCI groups claim that shari'a is the only solution to solving Indonesia's multi-dimensional crisis. Thus, shari'a is perceived as a panacea that would be able to create a better Indonesia in the future. Problems arise as certain RCI groups justify the use of violence in demanding the implementation of shari'a, which sometimes victimizes their fellow Muslims or non-Muslims. As a result, this kind of agenda is not only upsetting the non-Muslims communities, but also worrying the majority of moderate Indonesian Muslims. There is also a tendency for the RCI to capitalize certain religio-

⁵ See Azyumardi Azra, "Militant Islam Movements in Southeast Asia : Socio-Political and Historical Context" *Kultur*, Vo.3, No.1, pp. 17-27.

political issues for the sake of their interests, including to undermine the rights of non-Muslims and minority groups. In fact, what is meant by RCI groups as “shari’a” is the interpretation on *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) based on strict, literal, and exclusive approaches. The problem is that such approaches tend to neglect the nature and flexibility of *fiqh* itself. More importantly, such approaches tend to promote the notion that *fiqh* is a state law. As a result, they often invite manipulation of *fiqh* for the sake of political interest, hegemony of meaning, and monopoly of the religious truth.⁶

The problem lies in the agenda of imposing shari’a, which often manipulates religious sentiment or politicizes issues in order to appeal to ordinary and public Muslims for support. Most importantly, such a tendency tends to neglect the fact that Indonesia is a pluralist society. Although Muslims account for the majority of the population, Indonesia is *de facto* a pluralist society which contains religious, ethnic, custom and cultural diversities. Therefore, any laws and regulations should be based on the recognition of pluralism, human rights, democracy, and respect for “the others” (non-Muslims groups).

Along with the rise and spread of RCI groups, democracy in Indonesia also faces challenge due to the growing influence of MUI (The Indonesian Muslim Council). Established by Soeharto in 1975, the MUI aimed to bridging government policy and Muslims religio-political aspiration. For more than three decades, the MUI did not have political power. However, since its congress in 2005, the MUI has become more powerful, particularly in influencing government policies related to religio-political issues. This is because MUI often release controversial *fatwa* (edict) which is contradiction with the spirit of democracy and human rights, such as prohibiting Ahmadiyah, a deviant sect within Muslim communities. The other MUI’s controversial fatwa is to condemn liberalism, secularism, and pluralism, declaring that those ideologies are against Islam and therefore they are judged as *haram* (forbidden) for Indonesian Muslims to implement them within living realities.

⁶ See M. Syafi’i Anwar, “Developing Social Fiqh : An Alternative to Counter “Creeping Shariahization”?, Words From The Editor, *ICIP’s Electronic Journal* (www.icipglobal.org), Vol. 1. No.1, January-April 2004.

In relation to the formalization of strict, legal, and exclusive shari'a posed by the RCI groups, it is important to note here that in certain Indonesian provinces, local administrations have been implementing the so-called shari'a-based bylaws (*Perda Syariah*) into their local district regulations. Currently, there are several regions and cities that have implemented certain aspect of shari'a: Pamekasan, Madura (East Java), Maros, Sinjai, Bulukumba, Gowa (South Sulawesi), Cianjur, Garut, Tasikmalaya, Indramayu (West Java), Banjarmasin (Kalimantan), Padang (West Sumatra), and others. It seems that those local administrations utilize the decision of the central government in Jakarta which allows them to have greater regional autonomy (*Otonomi Daerah*). These local administrations seemed to consider that such autonomy means an opportunity to implement certain aspect of Islamic shari'a, although the degree of conservatism is different one to other districts or regencies.

In fact, the inclusion of shari'a-based bylaws within the local administrations is mainly related to regulations concerning Muslims obligation to maintain their daily life such as wearing of Islamic dress, regulating collection and distribution of *zakat* (tithe), performing prayers and reciting Qur'an, and allocating more time for religious education to be taught in schools. However, there are also certain strict regulations that limit Muslim women's activities such as the obligation to wear the veil for Muslim and prohibition against them going outside after 9 pm without being accompanied by their *muhrim* (family/relatives). In fact, such regulations resulted several victims in Aceh, Padang, and Tangerang after the local RCI groups raided several women considered as offenders against the regulations. According to the data released by NGO institutions, in 2007 there were approximately 78 *Perda Syariah* in 52 Indonesian districts and municipalities.⁷

The Prospect of Indonesian Democracy

Despite offensive strategy of RCI groups in demanding the implementation of shari'a, it is clear that their agenda of imposing the shari'a has little prospect for the future. This is because Indonesian Muslims are more realistic in solving their problems

⁷ See Robin Bush, "Regional Shari'a Regulation: Anomaly or Symptom?" in Greg Fealy and Sally White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2008, p176. .

and for the most part disregard the shari'a imposed by the RCI groups. Contrary to the dream of RCI groups that the shari'a is a panacea, the majority of Indonesian Muslims consider that the shari'a would not be able to overcome Indonesia's multi dimensional crisis. More importantly, the Indonesian Muslims recognize that the extreme views of RCI groups have led to justifications for the use of violence which are not rooted within the traditions and existing condition of Indonesia. Consequently, demands for the implementation of shari'a and justifications for the use of violence are counterproductive for the future of Indonesia as a plural society. In this regard, noted historian M.C. Ricklefs rightly argues that the radical Islamic movements have no prospect of winning political power in Indonesia. In contrast, the spirit of moderate, tolerant, liberal, and pluralistic Islam is strongly institutionalized in Indonesia.⁸

In relation to the above discussion, it is important to note that since 2002 there are certain elites, conservative groups, and opportunist politicians who have enforced the implementation of the so-called *shari'a*-based bylaws (*Perda Syari'ah*) in certain Indonesian provinces, cities, and municipalities due to certain political interest and power struggle within local administrations. Interestingly enough, some regencies often claim a dramatic drop in crime and note that their regional income has increased significantly since the laws were implemented. Fortunately, moderate Muslim leaders from both Muhammadiyah and NU have warned the public about the implications of shari'a based bylaws for democratization. Syafi'i Maarif, former chairman of Muhammadiyah and leading Muslim intellectual, for instance, reminded Indonesian Muslims that shari'a based bylaws would weaken democracy and create national disintegration.⁹

Meanwhile, NU has stated its formal opposition to *shari'a*-based bylaws. In NU's *ulama* conference in Surabaya last July, Sahal Mahfudz, chief of the NU lawmaking body Syuriah, said that the NU needs to reaffirm its commitment to Indonesia's secular traditions as a way to repress movements that would use shari'a as a basis for drafting legislation. Mahfudz pointed out that the NU upholds pluralism in line with Pancasila as a state ideology: "We oppose the implementation of shari'a-based bylaws because this

⁸ M.C. Ricklefs, "Islamizing Indonesia: Religion and Politics in Singapore's Giant Neighbour", Public Lecture, Organized by Asia Research Institute, NUS, Singapore, 23 September 2004" pp.6-7.

⁹ Syafi'i Maarif, "Demi Keutuhan Bangsa", *Republika*, 6 July 2006.

will only lead to disintegration. Shari'a can be implemented without being formalized ... the NU should continue to be at the forefront in campaigning for the preservation of local values".¹⁰ NU chairman Hasyim Muzadi pointed out that "regions can make their own laws, but shari'a-based bylaws cannot be allowed...What is most important at the moment is not applying Islamic laws textually, but rather taking their essence and using them for common good."¹¹

Another positive trend that is also crucial to mention here that since 2006, there is a significant decline of imposing shari'a based bylaw from the local administrations in Indonesia. Data shows that in 2003, there was 23 shari'a bylaws issued by local administrations. In 2004, the number declined to 15, and only 5 in 2006 and none in 2007. Given this reality, Rubin Bush, a political analyst and Director of The Asia Foundation, Indonesia, argued that the agenda of RCI groups seeking to formalize shari'a within the legal system, including through *Perda Syariah*, is waning.¹²

Meanwhile, the result of the 2009 legislative general election also shows an interesting political phenomenon: the majority of Islamic parties did not gain significant support from the majority of the Indonesian populace. It seems that citizens evidently preferred to support secular-nationalist parties (Democratic Party, Golkar, The Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party, National Mandate Party, Gerindra, Hanura, and others) rather than Islamic ones (Justice and Prosperous Party (PKS), The United Development Party (PPP), The National Awakening Party (PKB), The Crescent and Star Party (PBB), and others. The only Islamic party which registered any gain in votes was PKS, from 7.2% (2004) to approximately 9% in 2009. However, this small increase is insignificant in comparison to PKS' previous ambitious target of reaching 20% in the 2009 general election.

The Current Development of Indonesian Politics

Having discussed the above political development, it seems that the future of Islam and democracy in post-Soeharto Indonesia is still a very complex and delicate

¹⁰ See, "NU States Opposition to Shari'a Based Bylaws," *The Jakarta Post*, 29 July 2006.

¹¹ See, "NU Menolak Perda Syari'ah," *Koran Tempo*, 29 July 2006.

¹² Robin Bush, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

issue. It is not only related to the issue of Islam and democracy *per se*, but it also deals with the leadership and economic problems. In this respect, it is save to argue that leadership and economic troubles would be crucial in contributing to the future of Islam and democracy in Indonesia.

It is hoped that the victory of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in the 2009 general election will be able to consolidate Indonesian democracy, particularly due to the fact that SBY gained 65% of the vote. Moreover, SBY is able to build strong support and a solid coalition with several leading political parties, including Islamic parties. He has also recruited several elites and leading figures of coalition parties to be members in his administration. Meanwhile, SBY's Democratic Party has gained a majority of seats in the parliament. SBY is also committed to the success of his administration and has issued what is now popularly known as the "100 Days Work Program". It seems that SBY would like to show the Indonesian people that his second administration is trustworthy and able to create a success story for Indonesia and a historical legacy to be recalled by the next generation.

Notwithstanding these achievements, current developments in Indonesian politics also show another trend: the decline of support for SBY's administration. SBY is now facing serious concerns over court mafia and rampant corruption. These threaten to devastate his image of a president committed to eradicating corruption, to conducting good governance and implementing law enforcement. In terms of court mafia, SBY is unable to control both the police and public prosecutor head offices, which many people suspect are involved in corruption and bribery scandals. Moreover, people are also disappointed with SBY for his indecisive standpoint concerning the ongoing conflict between KPK (The Commission for Eradicating Corruption), and the police and attorney general head offices. Facing this reality, civil society movements and the media are united to support KPK and they strongly criticize SBY's unclear standpoint and indecisive policy. Although SBY has finally decided to act, he also faces serious challenges due to the "Century Bank Scandal", which could weaken his administration and further the credibility of his stated commitment to the eradication of corruption.¹³

¹³ See, "Melacak Penjarah Century", *Tempo*, 30 November-6 December 2009.

Rumors have been spreading widely that SBY's Democratic Party has also received funding from government policy to "secure" the bankrupt Century bank through a bailout policy. Interestingly, the government's bailout policy was decided by former Governor of Central Bank Boediono (currently Vice President of Indonesia) and Sri Mulyani Indrawati (Minister of Finance). These two leading figures are the most trusted economic experts in SBY's team, and they are highly expected to propel Indonesia's economy to success in the years ahead. Speculation is now spreading that the Democratic Party utilized funding for the presidential election in July 2009, which led to the winning of SBY-Boediono as running mates. Political pressure is intensifying due to a document revealed by an NGO called *Bendera* (People's Democracy Defense), which declared that SBY's winning team and his son received significant funding from Century bank during the 2009 general election. President SBY has countered that such rumors and suspicions are baseless and are part of political conspiracy against him. Facing this reality, SBY allowed the authorities and parliament to openly investigate the Century bank scandal. Currently, the parliament has just established a special team to investigate the case, although many people are skeptical due to the fact that parliament is dominated by Democrat members and their political allies.¹⁴

Meanwhile, SBY is now facing growing opposition from civil society movements' demands for open disclosure regarding the Century bank scandal. Certain civil society movement groups, mostly NGOs, are also demanding that SBY resign from power. Other rumors also reveal speculation that the Century bank scandal is addressed to impeach SBY, although many political observers consider that such rumors are dubious and even absurd. In either case, it is clear that SBY is under political scrutiny and pressure due to the Century bank scandal.

With regard to the above political development, one may ask about the future of SBY's administration and its relation with the progress of Indonesian democracy in the years ahead. It is too early to predict that SBY will resign from power due to the Century bank scandal. I would suggest that there is no strong indication that the parliament could impeach SBY based on the Century bank scandal. Not only is parliament strongly dominated by those devoted to SBY; to date no single investigation set up by the

¹⁴ "House Oks Century Inquiry Team", *The Jakarta Post*, 2 December 2009.

parliament has been able to successfully challenge the government. Evidence shows that during the period 2004-09 (the first period of SBY's administration), parliament members were pragmatic and became involved with personal interests and political deals with the ruling party.

Meanwhile, there is also speculation that the Century bank scandal could lead to socio-economical unrest as well as political turmoil which are heading to the rise of a people's power movement. This kind of speculation is also dubious, considering that so far there is no indication that civil society movements are united and able to mobilize mass support. It must be noted that the media is currently showing strong support for civil society movements' criticisms of SBY's administration; however, it is also crucial to state here that the Indonesia military is still solid and in favor with SBY who is previously also a general and military man.

Concluding remarks

The central question is that, given the latest political developments, what might be the future of Indonesian democracy? To answer this question, one should realize that although SBY has been able to maintain his administration and secure his power, he is now facing a great many challenges and obstacles in the early months of his second term of rule. Ironically, SBY recently gained an overwhelming majority from the people in the democratic, fair, and transparent general election. The 2009 general election and the winning of SBY have indeed become benchmarks of democratization in post-Soeharto Indonesia. However, it is unfortunate that due to the Century bank scandal and the President's indecisiveness, democracy and political trust could receive a severe setback. More seriously, international media such as *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and *Asia Times* have also focused on what they call a "political scandal" which is seriously threatening SBY's economic reform agenda. In this regard, at this very moment corruption issues and political scandals are setting train a process of what is predicted by Azyumardi Azra, a noted Muslim scholar, as "de-legitimization of democracy in Indonesia"¹⁵.

¹⁵ See, Azyumardi Azra, "Delegitimasi Demokrasi", *Republika*, 32009.

Finally, it is safe to argue that the development of Indonesian politics create a paradox trend. In one side, there are positive trends which improve the quality of democracy. On the other side, it is clear that there are serious challenges to democracy that need to be taken into consideration. Meanwhile, despite civil society movements are now pressuring President SBY due to Century bank scandal, it is unlikely that people's power will be endangering the future of President SBY's administration. However, it is important that President SBY resolves the Century bank scandal and other national problems. Only then can we view the future of Indonesian with a firmly optimistic outlook.