IN THE NAME OF DEMOCRACY
Commoditization of Religions by Political Parties in Indonesia[1]

Purwo Santoso

Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta - Indonesia

Abstract: Religion plays an important but problematic role in complying with the prevailing global standard of liberal democracy. The root of the problem is actually the shortcut in institutionalizing political party as a modern set up for individual participation in public affairs. Despite its institutional defect, political parties officially serve as the only legitimate channel to enter the state through open competition. Hence, the need to win election resulted in mobilization of religious-based support, and religion serves more as commodity for solidarity making, rather than set of fundamental values. This paper examines the political pactices in bringing the principles of both democracy and religion into daily real life. It particularly focuses on the exercises of commoditizing religion by political parties. This commoditization of religion can be taken as clear evidence, the paper argues, that religion is ill-treated by the underperforming political parties.

Keywords: Institutionalization, political party, commoditization, general election.

Introduction

Democracy has been accepted as worldwide aspiration. Democratic practices, however, is always context specific. The ways people express democratic values are culturally bound. For this reason,

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those who advocate democracy should prepare to see the diversity of institutionalizing democracy, including diversity in emphasizing particular value within the banner of democracy. Commitment to democracy should go hand in hand with commitment to establish context-specific democratic institution. Otherwise, democracy is refused simply because of the difficulty in institutionalizing the core values contained within the notion of democracy.

This paper examines the political pactices in bringing the principles of both democracy and religion into daily real-life. It particularly focuses on the exercises of commoditizing religion by political parties. It argues that the prevalence of commoditization of religion by political parties can be taken as clear evidence that religion is ill-treated by the underperforming political parties.

Institutionalization of Democracy

Institutionalization of democracy is not taking place in a vacuum. It takes place along with institutionalization of religion, although, the value of democracy is not always compatible with the value of a particular religion.[2] Understanding this situation obviously makes institutionalization of democracy even more complicated. The point I want to make here is that, democratization in the country where religion has already well-institutionalized, inevitably brings conflicting situation. People are bound to respond democratization agenda by making reference to their religion.

There are two complications I want to address here. First, institutionalization of democracy in Indonesia was with pretention that has not been performing its role in governing the public. Unlike American whose constitution forbids religious in the formal political life, turning them into a pressure group that moves from outside parliament, religion has been the starting point to participate in public life (running the state). Consequently, choice of political parties is not determined by religious background. Their choice is influenced by social class, and hence their choices are difficult to predict.[3] The role of

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[2] Nancy L Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Identitiy, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 6, No 1 (March 2003): pp. 23-53.

[3] Luke Ebersole, "Religion and Politics," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 332 (1960): 101-111.

religion and other primordial sentiment in Indonesia has been known politics of *aliran* ('stream').[4]

Second, there is complexity in bringing the principles of both democracy and religion into daily real-life. Both religious and democratic values are subject to distortion in their process of institutionalization. There are problems internal to religion and liberal democracy. The complexity is deniable due to the fact that those two ideas shall reach daily real life of the same individual, the same community and the same country.

This complication has been deeply discussed in the literature within the banner of religion and politics. In a country like Indonesia, where most of the population is Moslem, the debate platform is the relationship between Islam and the state.[5] The issue being debated is how to make democracy (namely democratic nation-state) compatible with Islam and vice versa.

Some factions advocate Islamic state, namely codifying Islamic law *(shari>ah)* as constitution of the nation state. This route of institutionalization is called confessional politic. Institutionalization is sought by setting up formal rule. The assumption is that, state apparatus is reliable instrument to impose the rule. In Indonesia, the debate about the abolition of phrase in the first precepts of Pancasila, *Ketuhanan dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya* (the deity with the obligation to run for the adherents of Islamic law), is still a controversy.

Other factions suggest that institutionalization should begin with enhancing Islamic ethic *(akhlaq)*. Proponents of this faction believe that actual commitment to Islam would eventually create various conventions and the prevalence of such convention would eventually bring about Islam in a cultural feature. To them, this route of institutionalization does not violate the teaching of Islam. Islam, according to their understanding, does not oblige establishing particular state. This line of argument is known as deconfessional politic of Islam.

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[4] Herberth Feith and Lance Castel, *Pemikiran Politik Indonesia 1945-1965* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1988).

[5] For further reading see, Erwien Kusuma and Khairul (eds), *Pancasila dan Islam; Perdebatan antara Parpol dalam Penyusunan Dasar Negara di Dewan Konsituante* (Jakarta: Baur Publishing, 2008).

Such debate leads us to an understanding that first, advocacy for particular institutional set up for establishing democratic governance in Indonesia has triggered volatile, and so far unfinished and becomes controversy. Second, the effort to understand particular context in democratizing a country potentially undermine commitment to democracy has failed. Why is that so? Those who advocate democracy potentially, and typically, present the idea along with its institutional setup. This is not out from western domination. Studies from Simon Philpott showed that there is a relationship between power and the formation of knowledge about Indonesia, which is produced by the imagination of western hegemonic ideology. West thought that they are have the authorty to represent East base on their knowledge.[6]

The insistence on bringing a particular institutional setup would potentially compromise the main value of democracy that they are committed to bring about. Institutional setup which potentially hampers democratization process is the one inspired by the liberal philosophy. For the proponents of liberal philosophy, refusal to the liberal form of democracy means ultimately refusal to the whole idea of democracy.

No one would be able to deny that many countries share historical journey to reach prosperity. They call themselves developed or industrial countries. They indeed are successful in designing institution for expressing the principle of democracy for the liberals. Yet, they are lacking of experience to design political institution for those who refuse liberalism.

In the developed countries, where liberal ideology inspires most of individuals, institutions devoted to express democracy are deep rooted in the principle of liberalism. To them, democracy essentially is the consequence of respecting individual potentials and individual rights. Democratic institution is developed out of the need to protect individual rights, and protection of such rights is important because each individual should responsible to his or her own life. Unless each individual right and potential are protected, institution would collapse. This kind of discourse, namely the line of thinking based on the premise that individual determines collectivity, has been very prevalent in the industrialized societies.

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[6] Simon Philpott, *Rethinking Indonesia: Postcolonial Theory, Authoritarianism and Identity* (New York: McMillan Press, 2000).

Institutionalization of Political Party

Political parties are permanent organizations which contest elections, usually because they seek to occupy the decisive positions of authority within the state.[7] A political party is a modern institution being set up as pillar of democratic governance in a particular nation-state. It serves as organizing unit to channel the society with the government, particularly in the representative body. In Indonesia, during the pre-Independent era, the representative body *(Volksraat)* was set up and tightly controlled by the Colonial Government. Driven by a need to represent the people, the member of *volksraat* strived to form political parties. The rise of political parties took place later on, after the declaration of Independence in 1945 by Soekarno and Hatta. The point I want to make here is that political parties is western-based idea which was transplanted into Indonesian political landscape. It has been accepted as the most legitimate institution to represent diversity of societal identity and interest given the prevalence of thought. Institutional design we currently know is based on this line of though. It is the chosen institution to express well-known saying: 'government from the people' and 'government by the people.' Presumably, political party would automatically being institutionalized in its three domains: within the government, within its very organization, and within the community.[8]

The logic of political representation is the following. People are assembling among themselves to form political party, and the winning political party will send someone to sit in representative body. The chosen people are granted with authority and privilege in order to apply the principle of 'government by the people' in order to take responsibility in governing common interest and running policy making process. Simply put, political party is the avenue for democratic governance.

Suppose that we agree on establishing political party to serve that scenario, there are some operational questions on how to form political party, and how to make sure that those political parties

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[7] R Hague, Harrop M., and Breslin S., *Political Science: a Comparative Introduction* (New York: Worth Publishers, 1998).

[8] John F. Bibby, *Politics, Parties and Elections in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1992).

dedicate themselves to serve the people they represent. This issue is important to address for many reasons.

First, institutionalization of political party, once again, is not taking place in a political vacuum. Prior to establishing political party, each individual has already engaged in various network, group affiliation and even organization. Decision to establish or join political party is made based on this. Obviously, decision to establish political party is based on calculation that the party will be supported by the majority of population. Those who disregard this point would be eliminated in the following political process.

Observation on period where people is granted with freedom to form political party shows interesting similarity. There were 130 political parties being established prior to 1955 general election. Formal and administrative scrutiny allowed 118 of them to contest. It turned out that only 28 of them gained seat in the parliament. Given the plurality of the ethnic and religious background, leaders are eager to set up their own political parties, as political liberalization takes place in 1999. Following Suharto's step down from presidency, opportunity to establish political party was once again opened up. As many as 148 of political parties attempted to run for general election and only 48 of them were qualified. Interestingly, only 21 political parties managed to gain seat in the parliament. The same experience shown in the 2009 election, where from 66 political parties that want to follow the 2009 election, only 34 national parties and 6 local parties that can participate in elections.

From time to time most of the vote goes to four political parties. This finding will be further elaborated later on. For now, it is suffice to suggest that establishing political parties is not merely legal-administrative process where each individual is granted with equal right to establish political party. Political party in fact is representation of social forces. Those who succeed in running political party are the ones who have social power. In politics, to establish political party must be done by consolidating and repackaging the existing social institution. This implies that we have no basis to expect that political party serves as a strong basis for democracy, particularly in expressing individual interest of the citizen.

Second, liberal spirit of institutionalizing democracy meant minimizing barrier to establish political party. The real barrier, according to the liberals, is competition. As long as a political party

gains popular support, it is qualified to govern the nation. For this reason, qualification to compete for a political party in general election is formalistic. So, what is wrong with this? In institutionalizing democracy, the liberals pretend not to bother with the role and the importance of informal institution. They pretend that what really goes on is merely individual-based engagement, as opposed to competition among cultural or religious group. This pretension is then "rewarded" with the discovery that political party in Indonesia has a shallow rooting.

> A 2002 urban poll suggests strong levels of dissatisfaction with the parties. The LP3ES/CESDA survey, released in February 2002, asked respondents which party put the people's interests first. While no overall breakdown was given on the responses to tells question, the responses as broken down by party affiliation are telling. Among those affiliated with PDI-P, 44% said no party puts the people's interest first. Among those affiliated with Golkar, 62% said no party puts the people's first and so on down the line: PPP 67%, PKB 37%, PAN 57%, PBB 31%, PK 35%. Those that chose the party to which they were affiliated as most representing the people's interest were relatively few: PDI-P 39%, Golkar 11 %, PPP 17%, PKJ3 48%, PAN 22%, PBB 38%, and PK 35%. The 2003 IFES poll, a national survey, showed declines in the trust with which individual parties were regarded. From 2002-2003, PDI-P dropped from a trust figure of 72% to 50%, PPP from 67% to 52%. The other parties also experienced declines: PAN 61 % to 47%, PKB 61% to 50%, PBB 56% to 50%, and Golkar 50% to 48%. Fatigue with democracy's inability to provide governing solutions appears to have set in.[9]

Third, political parties are expected to be a reliable agent for channeling popular support and including livelihood, into policy-making process. Political parties are expected to perform well in representing collective identity as well as collective interest. Observation on Indonesian policy-making process leads us to believe that many political parties are more interested in representing the

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[9] Paige Johnson Tan, "Party Rooting, Political Operators, and Instability in Indonesia: A Consideration of Party System Institutionalization in a Communally Charged Society" (A Paper Presented to the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 10, 2004).

collective identity rather that representing the collective interest or policy substance. Bearing this in mind, we cannot expect that political party is a reliable institutional basis for policymaking. What triggers them most to campaign in the general election for example is a public support and not policy substance.

Apart from this, the problems of many political parties lie in their vision that ideology is a source of conflict, and that ideology-based conflict is difficult to reconcile.[10] For so long, particularly during more than three decade of Suharto presidency, political community in Indonesia has been driven to pragmatism in which governance and policy-making were conducted with marginal involvement of political party.

The Dynamic of Political Party

The institutionalization of political parties was very slow in Indonesia. Indonesian political party has no experience in competing one another in general election in 1955. As much as 77 percent of the seat was taken by four largest political parties. Interestingly, during the post-Suharto era, when free-election process was taking place again, about the same proportion was taken by the biggest-four political parties.

The four largest political parties came out from the 1955 are: (1) PNI (the nationalist) with 22 % seat, (2) PKI (the communist), and (3) Masyumi (alliance of modernist Islam) and (4) NU (the traditionalist Islam). See Figure 1.[11] Despite the fact that every citizen are granted withpolitical right to establish political parties, it turned out that only those who managed to consolidate loyalty manage to gain seat in the parliaments.

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[10] President Sukarno offered his concept *nasakom* (abbreviation of *nationalisme, agama dan komunis)* in his attempted to manage the most popular ideology: nationalism, religion and communist. He attempted to keep the balance among them, but it turned out that he has lost his power due to his inability to control the balance of power the proponent of that ideology. Having learned this lesson, his successor, President Suhalto decided to ban communism and discredit nationalist and religious group and pursuing his pragmatic orientation.

[11] Herbert Feith, *Pemilihan Umum 1955 di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1999).

Figure 1: Composition of Political Parties in Parliament (1955)
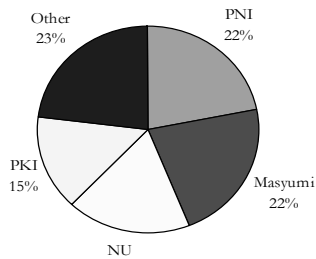
Source: Feith, *Pemilihan Umum.*

The 1955 general election also shows us that Islam as religion embraced by the majority of Indonesia plays the uniting role in managing the religious affiliation. Two Islamic-based political parties (NU and Masyumi) gain only 30% of the seat in the parliament. This means that religion, particularly Islam, serves as important basis for political parties, despite the fact that significant proportion of Moslem choose not to support these parties.

Even though Islam-based political parties failed to form the majority in the parliament, let alone dominate, the potential of Islam as power-base should not be underestimated. In fact, from time to time Indonesian government is bound to take Islam into account simply because it serves not only as a power-base of political parties but also as the very ground for the public trust to the government.

In the elections held during the New Order area, once again, the votes were mostly given to four major political parties. They are (1) PDI-P (the nationalist), (2) GOLKAR (government officer-based), (3) PPP (Islam-based) and (4) PKB (traditional-Islam Based). (See figure 2). The only different was that the grouping was due to government pressure.

Figure 2: Composition of Political Parties in Parliament (1999)
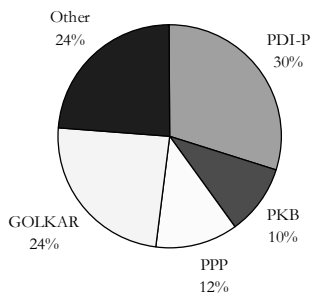
People's freedom in general election made societal diversity is consistently represented. To a large extent, general election consistently reveals the role of Islam as political identity. The two largest Islam-based political parties (PPP and PKB) share 28 percent of seats in the parliament. In additions to these two parties there are many other Islam-based political parties. For practical reason they fall under 'other' category.

What do Figure 1 and Figure 2 reveal? Recent political history of Indonesia shows that transformation has been taking place, yet a number of prominent features remain intact. First, communist party has no longer existed in Indonesia since it was banned at the end of Sukarno presidency. Since then, GOLKAR was established by the New Order Government. GOLKAR has been employing catch-all strategy in order to marginalize Islam-based political party. During the New Order era (1967-1998) this party managed to dominate vote in every general election. Prior to 1999 general election, it managed to gain 62-73 percent of seats in the parliament. In the 1999 election it retained 24 of them.

Election in 2009 does not provide significant change. Democrat party (PD) obtained 20.85% of the vote, followed by Golkar with 14.45%. PDIP as a nationalist party got 14.03% of the vote. Remaining votes are obtained Islamist party: PKS (7.88%), PAN (6.01%), PPP (5.32%) and PKB (4.94%).

Second, the nationalists retain and even add up their seat in the parliament. Previously, this group was largely represented by PNI and is currently represented by PDI-P. PNI was strongly associated with President Sukarno, and PDI-P is currently chaired by her daughter: Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Third, Islam-based political parties are getting more fragmented. The fact that majority of Indonesia are Moslem does not automatically make Islam-base political parties in aggregate control the state through the parliament.[12] In general Moslems are increasingly not interested in voting political party that sells Islam as a collective identity.[13] At the same time new form of Islam-based political parties emerged,

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[12] Nonetheless, coalition building among these parties popularly known as *poros tengah,* proven to be powerful bring Abdurahman Wahid to seize president post even though not for too long.

[13] Abdul Munir Mulkhan, *Politik Santri: Cara Menang Merebut Hati Rakyat* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009).

attempting to bring about Islam as a value manifested in the daily politic. This has been represented by Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS, Justice Prosperity Party). The fragmented feature of Islam-based political party is revealed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Composition of Political Parties in Parliament (2004)
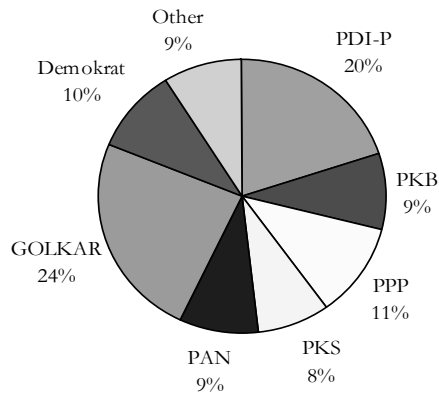
Religion and Its Commoditization

Prior to discussing the commoditization of religion by political parties, it is worthwhile to clarify the importance of religion in politics, particularly in party-related politic. Commoditization implies pragmatism in dealing with something, and therefore the critical question to ask is: what makes religion is politically useful. What sort of exchange do the politicians have to encounter with, and in what respect religion is relevant.

Religion is multidimensional entity, and there are many ways of revealing its dimensions. When people talk about Islam, some might refer to its theology *(tawḥīd),* some others to its law *(sharīʿah)*, and still others to its ethic *(akhlaq).* These are three aspects of Islamic teaching that each individual Moslem should be good at. Each Moslem is expected to be *kaffah,* making a whole commitment to Islamic teaching. When we talk about this issue, we actually talk about religion as a whole.

Commoditization is understandable from both macro analysis of political context, as well as micro analysis of the rationality of political actor. Given the importance of religion in people's life, delicate

analysis on this phenomenon is terribly in need. Let us start with the terminology, and then offer some analysis on it.

Commoditization

Politically speaking, commoditization is nothing unusual in daily political engagement. Doing politics is parallel to doing business. The way political activist pursue their goal is quite similar to the way the business man pursue theirs. They all have to establish, manage and develop some sort of enterprises. They have to start with something on hand, comprising both social and financial capital. Engaging in party politics is presupposing the ability to managing such enterprise. Both politician and businessman have to encounter the notion of exchanges, if not superficially called as trading. Politicians and businessman are operating within the same line of thinking. They maximize gains and minimize risks. To the large extent, the success of politicians is depending on tile skill in managing their political basis.

The notion of commoditization refers specifically to optimize a deal within the process of exchange. In a purely strict business situation, the party engaging in an exchange is expecting profit. In this analysis, commoditization necessarily refers to financial profit. Political actors are routinely structured to make a better use of their advantages as well as their political-base. They are willing to sacrifice some part of advantages in the light of gaining some things more valuable. It is obvious that both politicians and businessman are bound to make sure that their deal they are committed to eventually enhance their advantage or else prevent vulnerability.

Commoditization, so to speak, is a legitimate action.[14] The use of rational action approach in analyzing the way politicians engage in politics would allow us to uncover the fact that there are numerous things which are subject to commoditization. Nonetheless, it is important to bear several points in mind. First, commoditization is not always apparent. What makes commoditization looks apparent is not the activity itself. What illuminates the practice of commoditization is the deployment of rational, namely means-end rationality.

Second, the object of commoditization in this regard is not necessarily physical. It could be an abstract thing such as collective identity, primordial relationship and religious affiliation and so on.

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[14] Kristen R Monroe, Anthony Downs, *The Economic Approach to Politics: a Critical Reassessment of the Theory of Rational Action* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

Third, commoditization is not merely derived from actors' rationality in coming to term with the emerging opportunities/risk, but also structured by the prevailing institutional arrangement. In this regard, commoditization does not require a systematic analysis and thorough calculation. The action is purposive only to the extent that they have some degree of understanding. Continuous exchange process that the actors are engaged with might prevent them to make detail account on what they are doing. A religious leader, for example, might be surprised to see that he has so many advantages, as soon as he is assigned as government official.

Fourth, Commoditization is closely associated with the prevailing competitive atmosphere and demanding situation. Commoditization is an exchange process. A pressing demand for reach minimum vote in general election makes religious leaders mobilizing popular support by the way of mobilizing primordial sentiment. In this regard, religious sentiment is traded with vote.

Fifth, Commoditization is not inherently immoral. What makes commoditization subject to public scrutiny is not the way the actors attempt to make a better use of their advantage or their political basis. Commoditization is problematic if we link it with the foundation of value such religion or statehood/citizenship or democracy.

Having said that, it is now clear that commoditization means making a better use of anything in one's disposal. The prevailing and even a deeper penetration of market into our life make commoditization becoming difficult to avoid.

Smart Strategy: Taking Advantage of Exiting Institutional Gap

Democracy is meaningless to the ordinary people unless it manifests in real and daily life. Commitment to democracy should be expressed into a particular institutional set up, particularly that of the state and the society. In this regard, state is expected to be the locus of policy-making which allows the society to participate in, and society is expected to be able to exercise control over the state's action through participatory process and airing demand for public accountability.

Within this set up, political parties are expected to play a strategic role: to mediate state-society relationship. This is the area where many political parties, particularly the religion-based party, play a strategic role in commoditizing religion. There are two domains of trading. First, trading for support. It involves the parties, particularly the ruling

elite and the mass. Secondly, trading for political position, which takes place within the state. Third, trading for policy.

Trading for support. Throughout current history, Islam-based political parties have never gained support from the entire Moslem voters. What does it means, roughly? See Table 1.

Table 1: Vote for Islam-based Political Parties

Year	Moslem voters	Aggregate vote for Islam-based political party	%
1955	32.910.995	16.642.924	50.5
1971	47.643.272	14.833.942	31.1
1977	61.270.211	18.743.591	30.6
1982	66.654.173	20.871.880	31.3
1987	76.030.020	13.701.428	18.0

Source: Din Syamsuddin, *Islam dan Politik Era Orde Baru* (Jakarta: Logos, 2001) Perolehan Suara Pemilu 1977, 1982, 1987

Tabel 2: Vote Islamic parties in elections 1992-2009

Year of election	PPP	PKB	PAN	PBB	PKS [15]	Total votes to all parties
1992	16.624.647	-	-	-	-	97.789.534
1997	23.340.028	-	-	-	-	112.991.150
1999	11.329.905	13.336.982	7.528.956	2.049.708	1.436.565	105.786.661
2004	9.248.764	11.989.564	7.303.324	2.970.487	8.325.020	113.462.414
2009	5.533.214	5.146.122	6.254.580	1.864.752	8.206.955	104.099.785

Source: Data processed from KPU.

Some Moslems would choose certain political party simply because its expresses their identity. Furthermore, there are many political parties to choose. Identity politics is important to a number of Moslem. And the hostility of the New Order government, followed by the marginalization of Islam-based political party stimulate more and more people to mobilize Islamic identity as basis for gaining popular support.

The emergence of PKS (formerly PK, Partai Keadilan*)* triggered new dynamic. This party offered new way of doing politics. The

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[15] In the 1999 elections, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) was named as Partai Keadlian (PK). PK changed its name to PKS in the 2004 elections.

instrumental aspect of politic has been sought systematically with extraordinary dedication. This party attracts new sympathy due to its ability to demonstrate it competence and commitment to religious (Islamic) ethic, as well as its ability to demonstrate the emotional link between the party and the voters.

Trading for position in government. This form of exchange is quite difficult to uncover. This issue is highly related to the electoral design and the skill of individual politician to gain political access. The most spectacular story in this regard is the alliance among Islam-based political party in the aftermath of the 1999 general election. Presidential election was marked by the emergence of two blocks which are equal in popular support. At one side there was the nationalist (PDI-P) which nominated Megawati Soekarnoputri, and at the other end there was Golkar which nominated BJ Habibie. Islam-based parties were not accommodated into both sides. Mobilization of Islamic solidarity at this was successfully preventing two candidates to come to power paving the way for Abdurrahman Wahid of the PKB to take the chance as the President. The mobilization was organized through an alliance which self-claiming as *poros tengah* (central axis).

In what sense these processes involve commoditization of religion? Abdurrahman Wahid was at the forefront of non confessional politic. He led various processes to prevent the mobilization of Islamic sentiment for political purpose. Ironically, he was the one who enjoys the advantage of betraying his own mission.

Trading for polity option. Apart from PKS, most of Islam-based political parties in Indonesia are highly pragmatic. Their ability to transform ideological aspect of Islam into policy option is difficult to pint point, simply because Islam was treated more as collective identity rather than ideological doctrine waiting to be executed. It is hardly possible to figure out the difference of policy orientation of each Islam based political party.

Conclusion

The importance political party in mediating state-society relationship for democratic governance is unquestionable. The important question is, what make political parties willing to perform such an important, and yet very difficult role. Is it realistic to expect that political party defines itself as altruistic agencies? Surely not. There should be some advantage of being political party activists. The most obvious reward for those who establish, develop and manage political

parties is that they could legitimately transform their status and role. Ordinary citizens are transformed into public officer or policy maker, providing that the parties are successful in reaping popular support in general election. In other words, political parties are legitimate enterprise for acquiring political power, particularly to control the state. The common wisdom being replicated throughout the world is that, political parties are set up deliberately to chase political power through competition.

Political parties are key agencies for ensuring democracy; they are there to make sure that society's interest corresponds to state's decision. There are huge tasks to be done and a lot of requirement needed to put democratic governance in place. This task, however, has not been satisfactorily conducted in Indonesia. The rule of the tomb is: the better the capacity of political parties to mediate state-society relationship, the better democratic governance would be.

My observation on Indonesian politics so far indicated that the lack of competence in policy-making, particularly in dealing with policy substance, has allowed other political actor taking control over the process. Bureaucrats and technocrats are currently retaining their dominant role in policy-making despite the fact that political authority has moved to politicians.

The prevalence of commoditization of religion by political parties implies that religion is ill-treated by the underperforming political parties.

> ... the negative effects of party rooting have been brought about by the exploitation of party roots by cost-conscious potential political leaders in the development of their political power bases. As rational actors, Indonesia's party leaders have perpetually used the least costly means available to reach their political goals.[16]

Practices of commoditizing religion by political parties are not always tangible. Yet, rigorous and careful scrutiny of their public engagement would allow us to uncover them. Commoditization of religion is embedded within the daily politics in a given institutional setup. In a sense, such a practice doe not necessarily become a concern of both the actor and the lay person who live within it. Critical

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[16] Tan, "Party Rooting, Political Operators."

assessment being attempted in this paper would, hopefully, lead us to a better understanding to such a phenomenon.

In the country with a dense religiosity, democratization requires a delicate process of dual and compatible process of institutionalization, namely institutionalization of religion and democracy. There is a good sign that Indonesia has leaned a lot of lesson in order to be able to combine that process. In assessing this process, Afred Stepan's insight is very important to bear in mind. Democratization in a religious country requires twin toleration. In this regard, "political authorities agree to allow free religious activities within broad and equally applied limits."[17] Philip J. Costopoulus further explain that the twin toleration is possible "while religious persons and bodies agree to relinguish claim to wield direct political power even as they remain free to use all available means of peaceful persuasion."[18] []

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[17] Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy and the Twin Toleration," in Marc. F. Platner and Philip I. Costopoulos (eds), *World Religions and Democracy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005).

[18] Ibid.

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