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# DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA

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Indonesia Update Series

# DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA

FROM STAGNATION TO REGRESSION?

EDITED BY

**THOMAS POWER**

**EVE WARBURTON**

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*Cover photo:* Supporters of presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto protest outside the Constitutional Court during its confirmation of Joko Widodo’s election victory, 21 August 2014. Photo by Ray Yen.

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# Foreword

## Is Indonesian democracy in decline?

---

Verily, along with every hardship is relief

*Qur'an 94:6*

There is a growing consensus among scholars that Indonesia's democracy is in decline, although, in fairness, many new and established democracies around the world are suffering the same fate. I am not going to challenge the consensus. Democracy in Indonesia is indeed declining.

The Australian National University appropriately picked democracy as the main theme for its Indonesia Update conference in September 2019. Since Indonesia had just held a general election in April, it was important to reflect on how far the country had come in its march to democracy these past two decades. These were the fifth democratic, free and fair legislative elections in post-Suharto Indonesia, and the fourth direct presidential election, and were widely recognised as remarkable achievements for a nation with a large and diverse population. Indonesia shines when compared to many of its neighbours, including Thailand and the Philippines.

But is Indonesia's democracy following the same path taken by many other democracies in Southeast Asia and beyond? The next few years will tell.

I did have some reservations to the title of the Indonesia Update 2019 'From stagnation to regression? Indonesian democracy after twenty years' and I made my feeling known in an opinion article I wrote for the *Jakarta Post* in July. Based on my own reading, the title suggested there was only one other possible course for Indonesia's democracy, besides stagnation: regression. Although the title is framed as a question, it stills portrays a bleak future and allows little, if any, possibility for democracy in Indonesia to go in the other direction: progression. This may be true and

indeed many analyses, some of which were highlighted in this conference, suggest things are likely to get worse.

The optimist in me, however, refuses to believe that this is the case. As a journalist who has reported and written about Indonesia's political development over the past 36 years, I cannot accept that this backsliding of democracy is irreversible. Over the course of time, going back to the last decade of the Suharto years, I have seen many setbacks to democracy; but the overall trajectory has always been to move forward.

Like the one-time popular Indonesian poco-poco dance, democracy has been a case of two steps forward and one step back. Looking at the situation today, someone may have improvised the dance and forced democracy to take five huge steps back. But as long as we keep on dancing, we shall recover. I certainly hope so.

Underlining my optimism is not just my own bias. The majority of Indonesians have strong faith in democracy. They showed this when they thronged the polling stations in April. The turnout surpassed everyone's expectation: more than 81 per cent of the 193 million registered voters cast their ballots for the presidential and legislative elections. Relative to other countries with non-compulsory voting, electoral turnout is remarkably high in Indonesia.

More than reflecting that electoral democracy is functioning, this is testament to the faith that many Indonesians put in their democracy. There are many reasons to explain why the turnout was high, and enthusiasm is one of them. I saw this first hand when I volunteered to run the polling station in my neighbourhood. Voters came in the belief their votes mattered in determining Indonesia's future.

Two huge protests in September 2019 further highlighted this participatory democracy. Demonstrators opposed the House of Representatives decision to rush through a new law that weakens the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK), and its plans to pass a new more draconian Penal Code. People not only vote for their leaders and representatives during elections, but people will also protest from time to time when they feel the need. The protests suggested that people's participation in democracy remains high even between elections.

Indonesia certainly needs to move from being just an electoral democracy to a full-fledged one with stronger guarantees for various freedoms and basic rights. Democracy remains a work in progress, as it has been and will always be.

The problems facing Indonesia's democracy are immense and many of these were thoroughly explored and discussed at the Indonesia Update. The excellent papers from various scholars are published in this volume.

Topics include the growing polarisation of society; the rise of Islamism, vigilantism and violence; and the faith people have in democracy. Some speakers highlighted bright spots as well as solutions, raising hopes that the current decline is not irreversible.

Allow me to comment on some of the topics raised, drawing from my observations as a journalist rather than from studies or surveys.

On polarisation, most elections by definition have that impact and this is even more so in a two-party electoral system, or in the two-horse presidential races Indonesia experienced in 2014 and 2019. In both elections, the former furniture salesman Joko Widodo ran against former army general Prabowo Subianto—polarisation became more pronounced in the last election. Both camps used social media effectively, with their supporters weaponising fake news, to make the divide even deeper. The results of the two elections showed how the nation has become divided almost down the middle, with splits of 53/47 in 2014 and 56/44 in 2019, both times in Widodo's favour.

It remains to be seen whether this polarisation will be a permanent feature of the political landscape. Much depends on who will run in the 2024 presidential race, and how many candidates are contesting. We can take cue that there was little polarisation in 2004 and 2009 when the presidential races involved five and three candidates, respectively.

Much has been said about the inroads Islamism—defined here as the aspirations to turn Indonesia into an Islamic state, and/or to see Indonesia embrace the sharia as the law of the land—is making, but I don't see this moving any further. Indonesia is nowhere near becoming an Islamic state.

I believe election results are still the best indication of how much or how little support Islamism enjoys. The political parties with an Islamic identity—the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP) and to a lesser extent the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional, PAN) and the Crescent Moon and Star Party (Partai Bulan Bintang, PBB)—together polled just over 20 per cent of the total votes in April. This is a decline from the 22 per cent they won in 2014.

This low figure has been consistent throughout all five post-Suharto elections. There is always a segment of voters, around one-fifth, who cast their ballots for Islamic parties, that in post-Suharto Indonesia are free to contest on this platform. These parties try to capture, in part, the votes of Muslims with Islamist aspirations and win representation in the House and even in the coalition government. But they remain a minority. The majority of Indonesian voters, including the majority of Muslims, give their vote to the pluralist parties, and in 2019 the three top winners

were the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDI-P), Gerindra and Golkar.

The fear of Islamism has been compounded by the rise of radicalism (including vigilantism in the name of Islam). But arguably more concerning is the rise of conservatism, which is not the same as radicalism. Following the global trend, Indonesian society has become more conservative. The sharia by-laws now in place in some provinces and districts, and the more strict Islamic codes in the draft Penal Code, are proposed not just by Islamist parties, but by the more conservative politicians within pluralist parties.

There is an ongoing culture war in Indonesia that seems to have escaped the analyses of Indonesianists more focused on Islamism and radicalism. The religious conservatives, present in almost every political party and in Widodo's government, are advancing their agenda with little pushback from the more progressive and liberal segments of society.

While we are concerned about the rise of religious radicalism, our failure to distinguish it from the rise of conservatism could lead to wrong conclusions and wrong policy prescriptions. Framing Indonesia in terms of the emerging conservative/liberal divide could be an alternative to the old *santri-abangan* divide.

Radicalism and vigilantism are issues for the police to deal with, and there is a huge problem in the capability of Indonesia's law enforcement agency, which partly explains the declining quality of democracy. But how do you stop the rise of conservatism, which also undermines democracy? This is something that the liberal and progressive segments of the political spectrum have to answer, not the government or the police.

By international standards, Indonesia today remains an illiberal democracy. The discussions at the Indonesia Update, and the papers presented in this volume, are food for thought, not just for scholars and Indonesianists, but also for decision-makers about how to strengthen, or at least sustain, democracy. The 2019 general election has given Indonesia another five-year lease for democracy. Whether it regresses or progresses ultimately depends on the people, and if they have faith in democracy as they showed in April, they should participate to ensure its continuation and success.

Endy Bayuni  
June 2020

## Acknowledgments

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The majority of contributions to this volume, with the exception of those by Marcus Mietzner, Ross Tapsell and Thomas Power, were developed out of papers presented at the 37th annual Indonesia Update conference, held at the Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, on 6–7 September 2019.

At each of the annual ANU Indonesia Updates since 2014, authors of the political update papers expressed growing concern about the downhill trajectory of Indonesia’s democracy. The 2019 Update took stock of this trend by posing a question: had Indonesian democracy shifted from a state of *stagnation*, as proposed at the same venue five years previously, to one of *regression*? The excellent array of papers presented by the contributors to this book revealed an overwhelming, and profoundly troubling, answer.

We wish to express our thanks to each of the authors represented in this volume for being part of this endeavour. Not only did the contributors travel to Canberra to share their expert analyses, but in the months that followed they gave much of their time to our editorial process. The result is, we believe, an important and comprehensive evaluation of Indonesia’s democratic decline at the outset of President Joko Widodo’s second term.

We are immensely grateful to the organiser and host of the Indonesia Update, the ANU Indonesia Project, and to all the people who made the conference possible in 2019. As director of the Indonesia Project, Blane Lewis was a constant source of support throughout—from the initial planning and preparation of the conference to the subsequent editorial process. We are also thankful to the staff at the Indonesia Project who worked tirelessly to ensure a successful event. Special thanks go to Nurkemala Muliani, Lydia Napitupulu, Olivia Cable and Kate McLinton. As is the case every year, the 2019 Update relied on the effort and dedication of a large team of volunteers, too numerous to list individually, but invaluable in guaranteeing the smooth running of the conference.

We also wish to express our gratitude to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose ongoing support for the Indonesia Project ensures that the ANU remains a leading centre for independent and cutting-edge research on Indonesia's politics, economy and society. This support made both our conference and this volume possible.

At the ANU we wish to thank the director of the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Professor Toni Erskine, as well as Professor Michael Wesley, former dean of the College of Asia and the Pacific, who launched the conference with thoughtful and generous opening remarks. We want to also acknowledge the support of the Department of Political and Social Change (PSC), headed by Paul Kenny, for its longstanding and vital contribution to the Update. Within PSC, we extend particular thanks to Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner and Greg Fealy for their support and guidance throughout the conference and editorial process.

The 2019 Update was followed with two additional events ('mini updates'), at the Lowy Institute in Sydney and at the Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, Brisbane. Our particular thanks to Ben Bland at the Lowy Institute, and Ian Hall and Carrie Zhang at the Griffith Asia Institute, for putting together these opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration.

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Thomas Power and Eve Warburton  
*June 2020*

# Glossary

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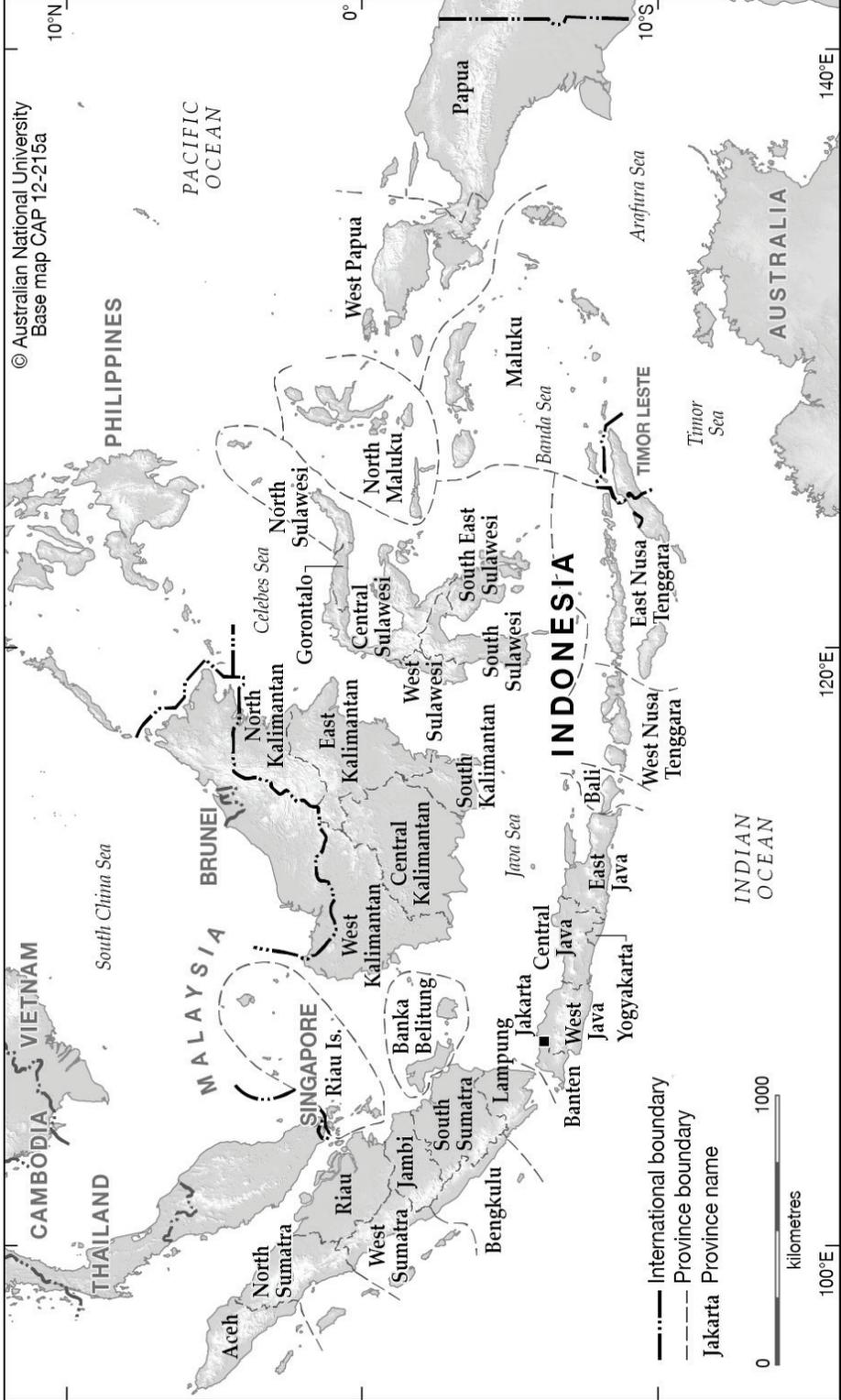
|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 212 movement         | union of hardline Islamic groups named for the date of an anti-Ahok rally on 2 December 2016   |
| <i>abangan</i>       | nominal Javanese Muslim whose syncretic beliefs include mystical animist, Hindu and Buddhist elements (or the outlook of this group) |
| ABRI                 | Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia)   |
| AGO                  | Kejaksaan Agung (Attorney General's Office)  |
| Ahmadiyah            | Islamic sect (seen as unorthodox by some Indonesian Islamic groups) whose members venerate the teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad       |
| Ahok                 | Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (former governor of Jakarta)  |
| AJI                  | Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (Alliance of Independent Journalists)  |
| Aksi Bela Islam      | Defence of Islam movement  |
| Ansor                | the young men's branch of Nahdlatul Ulama  |
| Apindo               | Asosiasi Pengusaha Indonesia (Indonesian Employers Association)  |
| Banser               | Barisan Ansor Serbaguna (Ansor Multipurpose Front; paramilitary youth wing of Nahdlatul Ulama)                                       |
| Bappenas             | Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (National Development Planning Agency)  |
| Bawaslu              | Badan Pengawas Pemilu (Elections Supervisory Agency)   |
| Bhinneka Tunggal Ika | 'Unity in Diversity', the official national motto of Indonesia   |
| BIN                  | Badan Intelijen Negara (State Intelligence Agency)   |
| BNPT                 | Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terrorisme (National Counterterrorism Agency)  |
| BPIP                 | Badan Pembinaan Ideologi Pancasila (Pancasila Ideology Development Agency)   |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| BPK             | Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan (National Audit Agency)   |
| BPS             | Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistics Indonesia)   |
| <i>bupati</i>   | head of a <i>kabupaten</i> (district)  |
| COVID-19        | coronavirus disease 2019   |
| DPRD            | Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (regional parliament)   |
| fatwa           | religious ruling; pronouncement by a recognised Islamic religious authority                      |
| FPI             | Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front)  |
| FUI             | Forum Umat Islam (Forum of the Islamic Community)  |
| FUIB            | Forum Umat Islam Bersatu (United Muslims Forum)  |
| Gafatar         | Gerakan Fajar Nusantara  |
| GDP             | gross domestic product   |
| Gerindra        | Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia Movement)  |
| GITA            | Gerakan Kita Indonesia (Our Indonesia Movement)  |
| GNPF MUI        | Gerakan Nasional Pembela Fatwa MUI (National Movement to Guard the Fatwa of the MUI)             |
| GNPFU           | Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa Ulama (National Movement to Guard the Fatwa of Ulama)            |
| Golkar          | Golongan Karya (the state political party under the New Order, and a major post–New Order party) |
| Hanura          | Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat (People’s Conscience Party)  |
| <i>haram</i>    | forbidden, unclean (to Muslims)  |
| HTI             | Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (Indonesian Liberation Party)  |
| IDI             | Indonesia Democracy Index  |
| Indikator       | Indikator Politik Indonesia, an independent public opinion research institute                    |
| INDO-DAPOER     | Indonesia Database for Policy and Economic Research  |
| ISIS            | Islamic State in Iraq and Syria  |
| Islam Nusantara | Archipelagic Islam   |
| ISOMIL          | International Summit of Moderate Muslim Leaders  |
| ITE Law         | Law No. 11/2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions                                       |
| Jokowi          | (President) Joko Widodo  |
| Kadin           | Kamar Dagang dan Industri (Chamber of Commerce and Industry)                                     |
| <i>kafir</i>    | infidel  |
| Kemdagri        | Kementerian Dalam Negeri (Ministry of Home Affairs)  |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <i>kemerdekaan</i> | independence  |
| Kemkumham          | Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia (Ministry of Justice and Human Rights)  |
| <i>kiai</i>        | religious scholar or leader   |
| KMP                | Koalisi Merah Putih (Red and White Coalition)   |
| KPK                | Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (Corruption Eradication Commission)  |
| KPU                | Komisi Pemilihan Umum (General Elections Commission)  |
| LBH                | Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (Legal Aid Foundation)  |
| LGBT               | lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender  |
| LKPP               | Laporan Keuangan Pemerintah Pusat (Central Government Financial Report)   |
| LSI                | Lembaga Survei Indonesia (Indonesian Survey Institute)  |
| MD3 law            | Law No. 27/2009 on Legislative Institutions   |
| MK                 | Mahkamah Konstitusi (Constitutional Court)  |
| MPR                | Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People's Consultative Assembly)   |
| Muhammadiyah       | modernist Islamic organisation founded in 1912  |
| MUI                | Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholars)  |
| <i>muktamar</i>    | national congress of Nahdlatul Ulama, held every five years   |
| Muslimat NU        | Nahdlatul Ulama women's organisation, founded in 1946   |
| <i>nahdliyin</i>   | Nahdlatul Ulama members   |
| NasDem             | Partai Nasional Demokrat (National Democratic Party)  |
| New Order          | political regime under President Suharto, 1966–1998   |
| NKRI               | Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (Unitary Republic of Indonesia)  |
| NU                 | Nahdlatul Ulama (traditionalist Islamic organisation founded in 1926)   |
| NVMS               | National Violence Monitoring System (World Bank dataset of communal violence in Indonesia from 1997 to 2014)  |
| OPEC               | Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries   |
| <i>ormas</i>       | organisasi massa (mass organisation)  |
| PAN                | Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party)   |
| Pancasila          | the five guiding principles of the Indonesian state: belief in God, humanitarianism, nationalism, democracy and social justice; or, in another formulation: belief in one supreme God, just and civilised humanity, national unity, democracy led |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
|                   | by wisdom and prudence through consultation and representation, and social justice                         |
| PBB               | Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Moon and Star Party)  |
| PD                | Partai Demokrat (Democratic Party)   |
| PDI               | Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesian Democratic Party)   |
| PDI-P             | Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)                            |
| <i>penetapan</i>  | confirmation   |
| <i>perda</i>      | <i>peraturan daerah</i> (regional government regulation)   |
| Perindo           | Partai Persatuan Indonesia (Indonesian Unity Party)  |
| <i>perjuangan</i> | struggle   |
| Perppu Ormas      | Regulation in Lieu of Law (Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang Undang, Perppu) on Societal Organisations |
| <i>pesantren</i>  | Islamic boarding school  |
| <i>pilkada</i>    | local elections  |
| PK                | Partai Keadilan (Justice Party)  |
| PKB               | Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party)   |
| PKI               | Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)  |
| PKPI              | Partai Keadilan dan Persatuan Indonesia (Indonesian Justice and Unity Party)                               |
| PKPNU             | Pendidikan Kader Penggerak NU (Nahdlatul Ulama Activist Cadre Training)                                    |
| PKS               | Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)   |
| PLN               | Perusahaan Listrik Negara (the state electricity company)  |
| PNI               | Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Party)  |
| Polri             | Polisi Republik Indonesia (Indonesian National Police)   |
| PPP               | Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party)  |
| PSI               | Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (Indonesian Solidarity Party)   |
| PTIK              | Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Kepolisian (Police Higher Education Institute)                                       |
| <i>rakyat</i>     | the common people  |
| <i>reformasi</i>  | 'reform'; name for the post-Suharto period (since 1998)  |
| SAFEnet           | Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network   |
| <i>santri</i>     | devout Muslim students in Javanese society (or the outlook of these students)                              |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Sat Binmas   | Satuan Pembinaan Masyarakat (Community Guidance Unit)                            |
| Susenas      | Survei Sosio-Ekonomi Nasional (National Socioeconomic Survey)                    |
| TNI          | Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Army)                            |
| TVRI         | Televisi Republik Indonesia; state-owned, public broadcasting television network |
| UGM          | Universitas Gadjah Mada (Gadjah Mada University)                                 |
| UKSW         | Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (Satya Wacana Christian University)             |
| <i>ulama</i> | Islamic scholar  |
| <i>ummah</i> | the Islamic community  |
| UNDP         | United Nations Development Programme   |
| V-Dem        | Varieties of Democracy   |



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