

***Indonesia at the Crossroads: Transformation and Challenges.***  
**Edited by Okamoto Masaaki and Jafar Suryomenggolo. Yogyakarta:**  
**UGM Press; Kyoto: Kyoto University Press; Tokyo: Trans Pacific**  
**Press, 2022. Paperback: 406pp.**

Since democratization in the late 1990s, Indonesia has transformed from a crisis-ridden decaying dictatorship into a middle-income electoral democracy. Numerous studies have explored the benefits and challenges of that process, and Okamoto Masaaki and Jafar Suryomenggolo's edited volume is the latest offering. But what sets this collection of essays apart from the rest of the literature is its coverage of multiple aspects of politics, economics and social life rather than a preoccupation with electoral dynamics.

The editors set the tone in their introduction, which provides a balanced overview of the country: a vibrant economy and democracy but with pressing challenges of inequality, rapid urbanization, cartel politics and religious conservatism. The contributors—a diverse collection of East Asian researchers and Indonesian scholars and activists—continue in that vein.

The book is divided into three sections: “Governance and Social Dynamics”, “Paths to Equality” and “Structural Challenges”. The first includes engaging chapters on multiculturalism, street art and urban spaces in Yogyakarta, anti-Shia violence in Madura and the peace process in Papua. These chapters offer fresh insights on their respective topics. Thung Ju Lan's analysis, for instance, moves beyond the trite idea of tolerance, as is rampant in the development sector, to explore how politics, history and socioeconomic class affect multiculturalism. The other three authors cover important case studies exploring local contestations over space, power, resources and social and political networks.

The second section discusses Indonesia's economic performance and challenges, including regional educational outcomes and poverty in the Greater Jakarta Area, as well as policy recommendations. Ernoiz Antriyandarti and Susi Wuri Ani, for example, propose farmland liquidation—the leasing of owned land—as a way of improving agricultural productivity and farmers' incomes, while Maxensius Tri Sambodo and Latif Adam explore the importance of public-private partnerships in financing infrastructure development.

Topics covered in this part are pertinent for academic analysis and policy. However, while empirically rich, the chapter on farmland liquidation is a little too technical and overlooks key studies on Indonesia's rural political economy from the tradition of agrarian studies, which offers insight on the links between class relations and rural welfare.

The final section focuses on Indonesia's structural problems, namely corruption, human rights, organized violence and intelligence and security sector reform. In his essay, Adnan Topan Husodo points out the obstacles to combating corruption, particularly collusive relationships between aspiring politicians, elected officials and business elites. Suh Jiwon explores Indonesia's various strategies of human rights promotion, ranging from ad hoc human rights courts to programmes in certain cities. These chapters address prominent issues, but their arguments could have been sharper if they had discussed ways of moving beyond niche civil society support to attract a broad cross-class consensus.

Linking together different studies from multiple perspectives is no easy editorial feat, yet in their concluding chapter Masaaki and Suryomenggolo artfully summarize the key takeaways from each chapter and reiterate that Indonesia's path towards equitable and pluralistic democracy is an ongoing process. Overall, this is an informative, comprehensive book.

Some improvements could be considered. The volume would have been stronger if there was more engagement with theoretical debates on issues such as oligarchic hijacking of democracy and de-industrialization. A more thorough exploration of trends in the cultural and social lives of Indonesians would have been welcomed. The inclusion of studies on recent pop culture, music and street language, for example, would provide readers with a glimpse into the enduring and fleeting trends of Indonesian culture.

Nonetheless, this volume is neat and well-researched. At 400 pages, readers might take some time to get through it, but the excellent research and diverse topics will compensate for that. Neither is it so much of a drawback that it only covers events up until the end of 2019, so issues such as the pro-reform *Reformasi Dikorupsi* protest movement and the COVID-19 pandemic are not discussed.

The book's publishing process is also a good example of slow, collaborative scholarship. The editors clearly made sure that the chapters engaged with societal and governmental shifts over two decades, while their attempts to bridge scholarly and activist perspectives, as well as to promote the work of Asia-based writers, is commendable. This is an accessible, far-reaching study on contemporary Indonesia for diverse audience.

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