

***The Indonesian Presidency: The Shift from Personal toward Constitutional Rule.* By Angus McIntyre. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. Softcover: 303pp.**

Combining political history with political psychology, McIntyre analyses the presidential history of Indonesia. After the shift from parliamentary democracy to personal rule in the course of 1957–59 (pp. 29–31), McIntyre puts emphasis on the common characteristics of Guided Democracy and the New Order, in spite of the ideological contrast between Sukarno and Soeharto from the viewpoint of the presidential system — and characterizes it as the presidential regime of personal rule where constitutional constraints over the use of power by the presidents were reduced to a minimum. He suggests particularly high relevance of personal traits of these two long-term presidents on policies and politics under this system. The feeling of desolation is presented as a major personal preoccupation in the case of Sukarno, leading to the obsession to be central. The importance of composure for Soeharto, which was acquired through hardships of his childhood, is suggested to be relevant to his political style which was based on fear and favour.

McIntyre deals with Megawati most extensively in this book. Characterizing her political style as authoritarian populism (p. 136), he traces its roots to the difficulties and complications of her family during her childhood and to her interaction with her father. Megawati is also presented as a political leader whose commitment to rule of law is qualified, an aspect which the author traces to her struggle with Soeharto and to a New Order way of looking at the world.

McIntyre analyses the political history of Indonesia mainly by focusing on the interactions between these three personalities and political events with some observations of Habibie and Abdurrahman. Suggesting the broad historical trend as the shift from personal rule to constitutional rule, a shift which took place during the transition period of these two short-term presidents, he also warns that “presidential democracy, by enabling the narcissism of its leaders to proliferate, will eventually make itself hostage to the officeholder’s resulting hubris” (p. 257).

This book is indeed a good contribution to comparative politics and political science in general as well as to the political history of Indonesia. It can be a useful supplementary reading in various courses in universities as well as for the attentive public in the world community. However, in order to grasp the broad trend of the political system of Indonesia, it is important to add two more

dimensions to the analysis: the issue of presidential legitimacy and the important role played by civil society. The typical case of the lack of legitimacy was underscored by the manner in which Soeharto assumed power and became President — two factors which impacted upon his leadership style and on his eventual demise. The strong emphasis on development performance, and the associated politics of distributing favours arguably stemmed mainly from Soeharto's lack of legitimacy as president in the context of Indonesia's economic crisis in the mid-1960s. The stability of the New Order regime was largely based on reasonable performance of development efforts of the Soeharto presidency whose gradual increase in legitimacy depended heavily on economic performance. The development performance of Indonesia from the end of the 1960s to the mid-1990s was highly acclaimed by the world community, including a flexible policy change to recover from the reverse oil shocks of the early 1980s and the high economic growth from the latter half of the 1980s to the mid-1990s — which constituted an integral part of the so-called Asian miracle. International debates on Asian values took place in the first half of the 1990s against this excellent development performance of Indonesia under the presidency of Soeharto in line with other East Asian countries which shared common characteristics in terms of strong political leadership and a clear emphasis on development based on high export performance. The final blow to the Soeharto presidency came from the East Asian Economic Crisis which undermined the essential requirement of the legitimacy of his presidency — a blow that basically originated from the powerful forces of market-based globalization against which which Soeharto was clearly unprepared. The analysis of presidential legitimacy as applied to each Indonesian president will further strengthen McIntyre's theme of a shift from personal towards constitutional rule.

The relevance of civil society to political systems is broadly recognized. When discussing such issues as democracy, human rights, and rule of law, it is important to examine the emergence and development of civil society in Indonesia. NGO (non-governmental organizations) activities under Guided Democracy were weak and under the New Order regime, NGO activities gradually became significant. However, they were very careful not to cross the politically delicate line and confined themselves to such areas as development and environment mainly for operational purposes and not for advocacy. Their number increased and activity levels considerably appreciated in the course of the 1990s. Indonesia came to be regarded as one of the countries where NGO activities were the most active by the time the East Asian

economic crisis hit the country in 1997. The Indonesian civil society as a whole, including students and NGOs, were ready to provide a robust response to the ill-conceived reactions of the government to the first 21st century-type economic crisis. Their activism went easily beyond the traditional politically sensitive bounds in the context of this crisis, providing the final blow to the leadership of Soeharto.

The depth of rule of law in the Indonesian presidential system would depend to a great extent on the maturity and strength of the civil society. Shocks and challenges to the Indonesian presidency abound in the coming period as suggested by such recent tragedies as tsunami, terror attacks, and the East Asian economic crisis — all of which would require stronger executive powers of a president. Yet it is essential for a healthy constitutional presidency to be checked by a vibrant civil society through a structure of good governance. The major counterforce to the dictatorial presidency for a couple of years after 9/11 in the United States was the deeply rooted civil society which has barely managed to uphold the constitutionality of the Bush Presidency, whereas Russia has been clearly changed in the last few years from a constitutionally based presidential system with a weak economy to an authoritarian presidential system with a relatively vibrant economy. This trend was evidently accelerated by internal security challenges posed by the Chechen rebellion and the difficulties and opportunities associated with economic globalization. The Russian civil society began to be active since the 1990s without, however, deep historical roots in the society and has proved not to be effective in applying a break to the emergence of Putin's dictatorial presidency.

The shift from personal towards constitutional rule may not necessarily be the only way to go in Indonesia. Atavism is clearly a possibility as is suggested by current developments in Russia. McIntyre would have done better if he had incorporated an analysis of the role of Indonesian civil society into his otherwise excellent account of Indonesia's presidential history.

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