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INDONESIA: THE BENEFITS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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Since the collapse of President Suharto's New Order regime in 1998, Indonesia has undergone a remarkable transformation. The Suharto regime eliminated meaningful political competition, centralized and militarized power, and habitually resorted to extraconstitutional violence. Yet since Suharto's political demise, robust multiparty competition has flourished, civil liberties have been restored, political authority has been decentralized, and the military's political role has waned.

Indonesia poses a paradox. The former Dutch colony is a lower-middle-income country that covers the world's broadest major archipelago. It has a predominantly Muslim population and is marked by tremendous ethnic diversity. Along with Mexico, it was the last major country to be part of the "third wave" of democratization that took place during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Unlike Mexico, however, which underwent a gradual, controlled opening over several decades, autocracy in Indonesia unraveled violently and abruptly. As of the late 1990s, few observers considered Indonesia a good bet for robust democratization.

Indonesia's surprising success is largely a product of its unusually vibrant associational life. Vigorous sociability and participation facilitate effective popular collective action in politics, enabling Indonesians to defend their rights and constrain elites. Indonesia shows how a polity can manifest high levels of social and political engagement even prior to large-scale industrialization. It further demonstrates how such engagement sustains democratization.

Indonesia's status as a democracy is a source of debate. Some observers emphasize serious shortcomings in the country's movement to open politics, including administrative ineffectiveness and rampant corruption. Although such arguments identify real problems, they judge Indonesian democracy against an ideal rather than examining it within a comparative framework. They also may confuse democracy with quality of governance.[1]

The instrument most widely used to assess countries' levels of political openness is Freedom in the World, Freedom House's annual comparative survey on political rights and civil liberties. Freedom House gives countries separate scores for political rights and civil liberties, which are then combined for a complete score, often dubbed the "freedom rating" or "FH score." Ratings range from 1 (greatest political openness) to 7 (least political openness). Countries that rate between 1 and 2.5 are classified as Free; between 3 and 5, Partly Free; and from 5.5 to 7, Not Free. Since Freedom House began issuing scores in the mid-1970s, most Southeast Asian countries have fallen into the categories of Not Free or Partly Free. The Philippines and Thailand entered the Free category in the 1990s, but fell back into the Partly Free group in the middle of the last decade and remain there today.

During Suharto's reign, Indonesia never rated as Free. Soon after Suharto's resignation in May 1998, however, the country undertook broad-reaching reforms. The government legalized labor unions, liberalized press regulations, and adopted a new law on political parties that opened political competition. Fresh elections for the legislature, the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR), were set for 1999, culminating in the first free balloting since 1955. Over the next decade, Indonesia amended its constitution to reform political institutions while also expanding protections for speech, press, and association. Changes included establishing direct elections for the presidency in 2004, setting a two-term limit for the president, shifting substantial powers from Jakarta to the provincial and local *(kabupaten)* levels, scrapping reserved seats for the military in the DPR, and creating an autonomous electoral commission.

Since its transition to democracy, Indonesia has become the most open polity in Southeast Asia. Between 2005 and the most recent Freedom House survey (for 2010), it was the only Southeast Asian country to rank as Free in any one of the six survey years—and it enjoyed this rating in all six years. Democratization is not complete or trouble-free in Indonesia. Politicians have asserted control over soldiers, but the military still looms larger than it should in an open polity.[2] Some reforms that were designed to aid the democratization process have had unintended consequences. For example, decentralization measures that were meant to give the people a greater say in governance inadvertently have

also empowered predatory forces.[3] Still, Indonesia has undergone a pronounced move toward more open politics.

Obstacles to Democracy

Indonesia's experience is all the more remarkable because the country lacks structural, cultural, and historical conditions that are often considered crucial for democracy. A country's level of economic development may be the most important structural determinant of democracy's prospects. Higher development is associated with greater popular sophistication, a larger middle class, greater political patience among the poor, and stronger capacity for public-service provision. Yet at $4,300, Indonesia's GDP per capita (GDPpc) at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is roughly half of China's and less than a third of Malaysia's. Indonesia's democratization has occurred despite—not because of—its level of development.

Another potentially influential structural factor is sociocultural fractionalization. Many observers consider democracy difficult to achieve in diverse societies. Yet Indonesia is exceptionally heterogeneous, and deadly friction has often flared along communal fault lines. The regions of Aceh and Papua have had active separatist movements, for example, and the country has witnessed clashes between Muslims and members of the Christian minority, who make up 9 percent of the population, as well as attacks on members of the ethnic-Chinese population. If ever one would expect heterogeneity to hand rulers a convincing excuse for authoritarianism, it would be in Indonesia. But diversity has not prevented advancement to an open polity.

Cultural as well as structural factors may affect prospects for open politics. Prominent among aspects of culture is religious tradition. Roughly seven in eight Indonesians are Muslims. While observers differ over whether Islam is incompatible with democracy, predominantly Muslim countries score below the global mean on FH scores.[4] Yet religion has not stymied democratization in Indonesia.

We may also observe cultural orientations at the microlevel. Of particular importance are popular attitudes toward democracy. The World Values Survey (WVS) provides useful data. It asks respondents to evaluate political systems. The question is worded as follows: "I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad way of governing this country?" The four types of systems that individuals are asked to evaluate are those "having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections"; "having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country"; "having the army rule"; and "having a democratic political system."[5]

In order to assess orientations toward democracy, we have created a measure that includes support for democracy together with rejection of nondemocratic alternatives. The result is an index ranging from 1 to 4, in which 1 indicates the least support for democracy and most support for nondemocratic alternatives, and 4 represents the highest support for democracy and lowest support for nondemocratic alternatives.[6] The WVS provides data for six Southeast Asian countries.

The results, which we calculated based on individuals' responses, reveal that Indonesians do not express especially prodemocratic orientations. Among respondents in Southeast Asia, Indonesians average 2.7; Filipinos, 2.5; Malaysians, 2.6; Thais, 2.6; Singaporeans, 3.0; and Vietnamese, 3.2. The high scores of Singaporean and Vietnamese respondents suggest that people who have never enjoyed democracy may be more likely to esteem it. In short, the data provide no evidence that Indonesia's advantage stems from exceptionally prodemocratic popular attitudes.

History is also often considered a determinant of democracy's prospects. Among countries that have suffered protracted bouts of authoritarianism, those that enjoy prior experience with open politics may have advantages. Yet before the late 1990s, Indonesia had known little democracy. Experience with open politics was limited to a spell that lasted from 1949 to 1957. Thereafter, President Sukarno, the country's founding father, introduced a new system of government, paradoxically called "Guided Democracy," which banned major political parties and replaced the DPR with an appointed legislature. Suharto's seizure of power in 1965–66 ushered in an even more severe form of authoritarianism that was to last until the late 1990s.

Suharto's regime was harsh, penetrative, and personalistic. Its agents of control included the hegemonic Golkar party and the armed forces, each of which established a firm presence in all geographical areas and all realms of political life. The regime also established thoroughgoing control over the economy, creating what Ron Duncan and Ross McLeod call the "Suharto franchise"—a web of military agencies, top bureaucrats, and state-owned enterprises.[7] That economic order was enforced by a structure of state-linked criminal gangs known as *premanisme*.

The deeply personalistic regime vested so much power in Suharto, and Suharto was so eager to exploit that power for personal gain, that by the time of his fall some analysts regarded the regime as sultanistic—a type of order that may create an especially unfavorable starting point for democratization.[8] If soft authoritarianism with some semblance of legality creates a better launch pad for subsequent democratization than does personalized, arbitrary dictatorship, post-Suharto Indonesia did not enjoy auspicious initial conditions. In sum, at the onset of the post-Suharto period, structural, cultural, and historical factors seemed stacked

TABLE 1—ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP, WORLD VALUES SURVEY

	World (all WVS respondents)	Indonesia	Malaysia	Thailand
Average number of organizational memberships per respondent	1.69 (N=67,955)	2.55 (N=1,867)	1.72 (N=1,198)	1.96 (N=1,493)
Percent of respondents belonging to at least one organization	62.6 (N=70,795)	83.8 (N=1,980)	60.8 (N=1,201)	50.5 (N=1,533)

TABLE 2—ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, EAST ASIAN BAROMETER

	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
Percent of respondents belonging to at least one organization	30.7	25.1	9.9	22.4
Percent of respondents belonging to three or more organizations	5.4	0.6	0.6	1.8
N	1,598	1,200	1,012	1,546

For survey results, see *www.jdsurvey.net/eab/eab.jsp*.

Note: Surveys were conducted in the Philippines in 2005 and in Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore in 2006. The East Asia Barometer subsequently merged with the South Asia Barometer to become the Asian Barometer Survey.

against democratization. How, then, can we explain the emergence and persistence of open politics?

Robust Civic Engagement

Indonesia enjoys one distinct advantage: extraordinary levels of civic engagement. Indonesians participate in organizational life at unusually high rates and display a high level of interpersonal sociability. The WVS queries respondents about their participation in various formal organizations.[9] Using data from the 2005–2008 surveys, we have created a variable for the average number of memberships in each country by summing the number of active and inactive memberships for each respondent in each country's survey.

Indonesia rates in the top fifth of all 49 countries for which we have data. Table 1 above presents the numbers. Indonesia tops the three Southeast Asian countries for which data are available.[10] Roughly 84 percent of Indonesians belong to at least one organization, compared to about 61 percent of Malaysians and 51 percent of Thais.

An alternate source for assessing organizational membership is the East Asian Barometer (EAB). The question wording in the EAB differs from the WVS. In the EAB, respondents were asked if they belonged to any organization or formal group. If they responded "yes," they were asked to name up to three groups to which they belong. These open-

ended responses were then formed into categories by the survey investigators. Since only groups and organizations put forward by respondents are included, we should expect lower levels of membership using the EAB measure as compared to the WVS measure. Table 2 on page 74 shows the EAB findings.

Taking a closer look at which organizations attract the most members is also instructive. Political parties, residential and community associations, and religious groups ranked highest. Table 3 on page 76 reports membership in these types of organizations. Overall, Indonesians participate at a higher rate than people in the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore, although Thais have a slightly higher participation rate in neighborhood associations. Noteworthy are the numbers for membership in religious groups, which are far higher in Indonesia than the other three countries.

Organizational membership is one aspect of associational life; interpersonal sociability is another. Four questions in the WVS are particularly useful for assessing sociability. They ask people how frequently they spend time with four distinct groups of people: friends, coworkers, fellow members of religious organizations, and people from sports, voluntary, or service groups.[11] For each question, the possible answers were "weekly," "once or twice a month," "only a few times a year," or "not at all." These questions were posed only in the fourth wave (1999–2004) of WVS surveys, which comprise responses from individuals in 64 countries, including Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore.

We rescaled each item to fall between 0 and 1, with 0 equal to "not at all" and 1 equal to "weekly." We used these results to construct a "sociability index," which takes the average of individual scores across the four responses. Scores range from 0 to 1, with 0 corresponding to an individual who spends no time with anyone from any of the four areas of social life, and 1 to someone who spends time weekly with people from all four. By averaging across all individuals in each country's sample, we generate a measure for average sociability in each country.

The country with the lowest sociability score of all 64 countries in the sample is Russia, at 0.30. The country with the highest score is Indonesia, at 0.79. A person with a score of 0.79 might spend some time each week with individuals from two of the social realms and monthly with individuals from the two other realms. Indonesians are extraordinarily sociable. Table 4 on page 76 shows the numbers for the global average and for the Southeast Asian countries in the survey.

The data on both organizational membership and social interaction show that associational life is exceptionally rich in Indonesia. But going beyond these numbers, what does Indonesia's civic life looks like on the ground?[12] Religious and neighborhood associations (known as RT/RW) are particularly dynamic. The most common type of religious organization for Indonesian Muslims is *pengajian* prayer groups. They

TABLE 3—MEMBERSHIP IN THE MOST POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS, BY TYPE OF ORGANIZATION, EAST ASIAN BAROMETER

	Indonesia	Thailand	Philippines	Singapore
Percent of respondents belonging to political parties	2.2	0.2	0.5	0.3
Percent of respondents belonging to residential and community associations	12.0	13.1	3.8	2.2
Percent of respondents belonging to religious groups	15.7	0.7	6.6	3.2
N	1,598	1,546	1,200	1,012

TABLE 4—SOCIAL INTERACTION

	World (all WVS respondents)	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore
Sociability index score	0.49	0.79	0.54	0.49
N	70,694	901	1,169	1,486

are usually organized by residence, so that neighbors on the same street normally belong to the same group. *Pengajian* groups, which are segregated by sex, serve as more than a form of corporate worship. Gathering to study the Koran provides neighbors with an opportunity to socialize. Christians in Indonesia, particularly Protestants, often belong to Bible study groups, song and praise groups, and prayer groups that serve a similar purpose within their communities.

Residential and neighborhood groups include women's Family Welfare Groups (PKK) and neighborhood associations. PKK was born in the 1970s under the Suharto regime. Its volunteers promote literacy, teach cooking classes, connect residents to health-care services, and help to implement Indonesia's family-planning program. While PKK is not entirely autonomous from the state, the women who join it are volunteers who see their role as providing services to their communities. The system of neighborhood associations (RT/RW) was also originally established in order to give the central government neighborhood-level reach. In the post-Suharto era, however, the groups have allowed participants to take part in bottom-up decision making and provided them with security and social services.[13] Similar to *pengajian* groups, PKK and RT/RW comprise individuals living in the same locale. The same groups of neighbors commonly participate in several of these associations, thereby developing relationships that are reinforced in multiple settings.

Arisan (rotating-credit associations) and *gotong-royong* (mutual-aid) activities also figure prominently. *Arisan* meetings, which are usually convened monthly, serve a social as well as an economic function, bringing together neighbors for an evening of swapping news. *Gotong-*

royong typically involves neighborhood clean-up and maintenance. Neighborhood associations plan *gotong-royong* activities at regular intervals, and social pressure to participate is high.

How Civic Engagement Bolsters Democracy

Spirited associational life has enabled Indonesians to sustain self-government in three key ways: first, by cultivating a sense of efficacy; second, by developing and transferring civic skills that enable citizens to participate in politics effectively; and third, by creating opportunities for individuals to be recruited for political participation. A sense of efficacy is important because those who believe that they can effect change at the community level or in a smaller social circle are more likely to feel able to influence politics at higher levels. Individuals who participate in voluntary activities—whether studying the Koran, tidying the block, or paying into a rotating-credit pool—become part of a collective effort in which they can see the utility of their own contribution for the whole group.

Scholars have found that a sense of efficacy serves as a psychological resource that can motivate political action. The correlation between a sense of efficacy and voter turnout as well as nonvoting political participation has been established in studies on political behavior.[14] If people believe that they can make a difference, they are more likely to take part in political actions to defend their rights, such as participating in protests or helping to build opposition parties. Statistical analysis of the data for Indonesia in the East Asian Barometer backs up this contention. It shows a positive correlation between respondents' sense of political efficacy and their likelihood of participating in campaign work, engaging in acts of contentious politics, and contacting public officials.[15]

The City Chamber (Dewan Kota) of Surabaya, the capital of East Java and the country's second-largest city, exemplifies how a strong sense of efficacy is cultivated in Indonesia. The Chamber was launched in 2003 and includes more than 160 professional associations. It uses donated office space and conducts activities on a volunteer basis. Chamber volunteers deploy their professional skills and contacts to advocate on behalf of vulnerable citizens.

Chamber projects include an effort to hold the national and municipal governments to the constitutional guarantee that a fifth of central and local budgets be allocated to education. Chamber members work with families and students who are not receiving the educational benefits to which they are entitled to draft letters of complaint, which the volunteers then deliver to the appropriate authorities. Members also work with the Association of Residents of the Surabaya Stren Kali in their battle over riverside development, and with villagers who were displaced as a result

of the mud volcanoes in Sidoarjo, East Java. The Chamber helps the poor to defend their rights, thereby potentially fostering a sense of efficacy among traditionally marginalized sectors.

The second mechanism that connects association to democracy is the development and transfer of skills that can render political participation effective. In their study of American political participation in the late-twentieth century, Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady found that participation in associations—and particularly religious organizations—is crucial for developing civic skills, which the authors define as "the communications and organizational abilities that allow citizens to use time and money effectively in politics."[16]

The structure of many Indonesian associations facilitates the development and transmission of civic skills. Local groups, including women's groups and *pengajian*, are often embedded in larger organizations that provide leadership training. For example, the two largest Islamic associations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, are hierarchically organized mass organizations that sponsor myriad social, educational, and religious activities, including *pengajian*.[17] Both link village-level affiliates to national coordinating bodies, and both have a system for leadership development *(kaderisasi)*.

NU and Muhammadiyah are nonpartisan. Yet following Suharto's fall, both organizations generated political parties. Many NU members joined their longtime leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, in launching the National Awakening Party (PKB). Muhammadiyah spawned the National Mandate Party (PAN), led by Amien Rais, then chairman of Muhammadiyah. Nearly all of the new parties' officials, as well as many staff members of other political parties, had received prior leadership training from NU and Muhammadiyah.

A Political Proving Ground

Student groups also impart leadership and organizational skills to their members. Many Indonesian students belong to intercampus associations that operate at a national level and have fiercely competitive elections for leadership positions. Student activists are often prominent in high-stakes, contentious politics. The student protests that helped to force Suharto's resignation in 1998 are reenacted regularly on a smaller scale to press for political causes. In 2010, student groups convoked demonstrations to protest the government's sluggishness on curbing corruption, to contest the results of an election in the province of West Nusa Tenggara, and to halt the development of a palm-oil plantation in West Sumatra. Student activists often advocate on behalf of less educated citizens and forge cross-class linkages in the process. For example, with help from student organizations, residents of Surabaya's Stren Kali riverbank community who were facing forced relocation built

a 1,500-member organization that convinced the provincial government to alter its policy.

The third way in which vigorous associational life sustains democratization in Indonesia is by generating recruitment channels for collective action. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady find that Americans who are active in nonpolitical organizations such as churches and unions are especially inclined to accept invitations to participate in political activities. Examples of recruitment into politics from nonpolitical networks abound in Indonesia. Many new members come to Islamic parties through prayer groups and student organizations. Students often join organizations for nonpolitical reasons but then become involved in politics after being asked by a fellow group member to write a letter, sign a petition, or join a demonstration. Rachel Rinaldo shows how women activists who "became members of Muslim student organizations or prayer groups in a conscious attempt to become more Islamic" subsequently undertook broader public activism.[18] Rinaldo found that most women activists in the Prosperous Justice Party in Jakarta had been recruited from university *dakwah* (proselytizing) groups.

Neighborhood associations, women's groups, and informal social interactions also serve as springboards into political participation. Norms of volunteering for charitable activities, such as those undertaken by the Chamber, PKK, and RT/RW, lend themselves to ready conversion into commitments of time to political causes. The chances of being drawn into political action are greater the more one interacts with others.[19] Given that, according to the WVS data, Indonesia has higher levels of sociability than any other society in the world, the chances of any individual Indonesian being asked to participate in politics—and of subsequently being successfully recruited—are particularly great.

Civil society organizations serve as a check on official high-handedness. For example, as parliament prepared to amend the constitution in 2001 to provide for direct presidential elections, President Megawati Sukarnoputri sought to delay the reform an additional five years. She argued that the population was not yet ready for direct elections. But parliamentary parties who opposed Megawati, buoyed by public support for the reform, refused to back down. Megawati capitulated and allowed the direct elections (which she lost) to take place. In 2008, citizens of South Sulawesi Province took to the streets *en masse* to demand that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (known as SBY) overturn a questionable court decision that had annulled the results of the region's gubernatorial elections. The demonstrations compelled a presidential decree ordering a recount of the vote, ultimately leading to the installation of the originally declared winners.

These actions, in which organized popular pressure induced presidents to uphold democratic procedure, stand in stark contrast to those seen in countries that lack vigorous civil societies. In Russia, for ex-

ample, then-President Vladimir Putin emasculated electoral institutions by scrapping gubernatorial elections and undertaking "reforms" that discriminate against opposition parties. These measures were not popular, but Russia's sapless civil society put up little fight, and Putin was able to realize his schemes without having to contend with a single mass protest.

The strength of Indonesian society constrains rulers indirectly as well by taking certain possible power plays off the table. After a decade and a half of sustained social engagement, rulers have come to expect popular pushback. Consequently, the scope of actions that a national leader would even conceive of taking is restricted. It is difficult to envision an Indonesian president now attempting to carry out the assault on open politics so smoothly executed by Putin in Russia because Indonesia's leaders know that they would have little chance of succeeding.

In sum, Indonesians' high level of engagement in associational life has enabled the country to reap advantages that are normally considered the products of socioeconomic modernity: a sense of political efficacy, organizational and communication skills that help people to articulate their goals and air their grievances, and dense and overlapping social networks that open avenues for recruitment into political life. In terms of democratic attainment, Indonesia punches above its socioeconomic weight. The Indonesian experience supports Alexis de Tocqueville's contention that the vitality of associational life affects the viability of open politics, and challenges revisionist theories that cast doubt on the value of a robust civil society for democracy.[20]

Vibrant associational life may also curb the growth of inequality. The capacity of elections alone to safeguard the interests of the poor is limited in any polity, and it may be particularly circumscribed in Indonesia. In their analysis of the 2009 parliamentary and presidential elections, Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle found little correlation between voters' socioeconomic status and their voting behavior. Indonesia lacks a powerful leftist party that speaks for the poor. Mujani and Liddle hold that this circumstance might be due to the horrific memories of the mass violence that Suharto perpetrated against the Communist Party in 1965–66. Alternatively, Mujani and Liddle say, in today's information-saturated, electronic-media-driven environment, Indonesian voters may "simply be short-cutting the old ideological differences and making their own direct assessments of elected officials' policies and programs."[21] Whatever the reasons for the lacuna on the left, Indonesia lacks the functional equivalent of, say, Brazil's Workers' Party, which has forcefully advocated policies to aid the poor.

Yet even without such a powerful progressive force in electoral politics, Indonesian politicians are generally solicitous of the poor. Budgetary spending on poverty-reduction measures nearly tripled between 2005 and 2008.[22] As in most developing countries, the gap between the haves and the have-nots is vast in Indonesia. Yet Indonesia's Gini

coeffecient, which measures socioeconomic inequality, is lower (that is, more favorable) than in any other country in the region. At 0.37, its score is better than those of Thailand (0.43), Malaysia (0.44), the Philippines (0.46), and Singapore (0.48). It is also lower than that of China (0.42).[23]

While our understanding of the link between civic engagement and inequality is still hazy, it is noteworthy that vigorous voluntary political participation has established patterns of elite-society relations in Indonesia in which politicians who ignore public demands risk swiftly becoming targets of organized resistance. Groups such as the Chamber of the City of Surabaya, in which well-educated professionals work to help the underprivileged to defend their interests, and Muhammadiyah and NU, which form vast networks of mutual assistance, may limit the economic as well as the political marginalization of Indonesia's have-nots.

Indonesia and the Arab Revolts

The Arab insurrections of 2011, along with the Iranian uprising that began in 2009 and continues to smolder, constitute the twenty-first century's most momentous political events to date. Not since Indonesia's breakthrough at the end of the twentieth century has the world witnessed such dramatic, large-scale, and potentially liberating upheaval. The Indonesian experience may inform our assessments of the possibilities for self-rule in the Middle East.

Of the countries that experienced tumult in 2011, Indonesia is poorer than all but Yemen, whose GDPpc is $2,600 at PPP. At $4,300, Indonesia's GDPpc is a bit lower than Syria's ($4,800), nearly a third less than Egypt's ($6,200), less than half of Tunisia's ($9,500) and Iran's ($11,200), a third of Libya's ($13,800), a fifth of Saudi Arabia's ($24,300), and a ninth of Bahrain's ($40,400).[24] Indonesia, like the countries of the Arab world, is predominantly Muslim, and like Egypt and Syria, it has a sizeable Christian minority. Indonesia's Muslims, moreover, are no less "Islamic" than their brethren in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA); data from the WVS show that they rate higher than Arabs and Iranians on mosque attendance and self-reported religiosity.[25] The Suharto regime, moreover, like many of the tottering regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, combined personalization and militarization of power. The poverty, Islamic religiosity, and history of arbitrary rule that prevail in many MENA countries also characterize Indonesia.

What about the vibrancy of civil society in the Middle East and North Africa? Here, some observers see grounds for pessimism. Timur Kuran recently called attention to "the longstanding dearth, across the Arab world, of autonomous nongovernmental associations serving as inter-

mediaries between the individual and the state." According to Kuran, "this chronic weakness of civil society suggests that viable Arab democracies—or leaders who could govern them—will not emerge anytime soon." He holds that civil society is weak "partly because Hosni Mubarak and other Arab dictators spent the past half-century emasculating the news media, suppressing intellectual inquiry, restricting artistic expression, banning political parties, and co-opting regional, ethnic and religious organizations to silence dissenting voices."[26] While Kuran focuses on Arab countries, the same could be said of Iran under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and then the mullahs of the Islamic Republic who overthrew him in 1979.

Kuran attributes the weakness of Arab civil societies to deeper historical factors as well. He emphasizes that *shari'a* (Islamic law) "lacks the concept of the corporation, a perpetual and self-governing organization that can be used either for profit-making purposes or to provide social services." He notes that the principle of the corporation long predominated in Europe, thereby aiding the formation of "politically vocal churches, universities, professional associations and municipalities [which] provided counterweights to monarchs."

Yet much of what Kuran notes about the repressiveness of Mubarak and the other dictators of the region could also have been said of Suharto—and civil society in Indonesia nonetheless has flourished. Furthermore, what Kuran regards as the deeper historical antecedents of democratization in Europe are not missing in the Arab world alone. Indonesia lacks them too. But their absence in Indonesia has not precluded the growth of a civil society that is capable of doing what Kuran rightly believes it must do in order for self-government to thrive—preserving pluralism and counterbalancing grasping elites.

Unfortunately, we encounter a shortage of data on the strength of society in the MENA region. The WVS includes Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, but not Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, or Yemen. Egyptians score below the global average on organizational memberships but above it on social interaction. Precisely the opposite obtains among Iranians. Data are lacking for organizational membership in Saudi Arabia, but the survey does include numbers on sociability, and Saudis rate above the global average. The data are too scarce to support strong conclusions, but what little information we have does not paint a uniformly bleak picture of the condition of civil society in the region.

Indonesia demonstrates that vigorous self-government is possible in a populous, poor, predominantly Muslim society with a recent legacy of harsh, militarized dictatorship. It shows that vibrant organizational life and interpersonal sociability can compensate for inherited disadvantages. The Indonesian experience does not presage successful democratization in Egypt, Iran, Libya, or Tunisia, but it does suggest that democracy in these countries is anything but impossible.

NOTES

1. This issue is usefully discussed in Marcus Mietzner and Edward Aspinall, "Problems of Democratisation in Indonesia: An Overview," in Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, eds., *Problems of Democratisation in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2010), 1–20. See also R. William Liddle and Saiful Mujani, "Indonesia's Democracy: From Transition to Consolidation," in Alfred Stepan and Mirjam Kunkler, eds., *Indonesia, Islam, and Democratic Consolidation* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming); and Greg Barton, "Raising Expectations: The Wahid Presidency and Indonesia's Democratic Transition," in Thomas Reuter, ed., *The Return of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Victoria, Australia: Monash University Press, 2010), 23–36.

2. Marcus Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia: From Turbulent Transition to Democratic Consolidation* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009).

3. Michael Buehler, "Decentralization and Local Democracy in Indonesia: The Marginalisation of the Public Sphere," in Aspinall and Mietzner, *Problems of Democratisation*, 267–85; and Vedi R. Hadiz, *Localising Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

4. M. Steven Fish, *Are Muslims Distinctive? A Look at the Evidence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 229–49.

5. We created a data set that merged cases from the fourth wave (1999–2004) and fifth wave (2005–2008) of the survey. Thirty-three cases from the fourth wave were combined with fifty cases from the fifth wave for a total of 83 countries. The fourth-wave data were downloaded in July 2008, and the fifth-wave data in February 2009. The scale comprises questions E114–E117 from the WVS Integrated Questionnaire, available at *www.worldvaluessurvey.org*.

6. We follow the method used by Russell J. Dalton and Nhu-Ngoc T. Ong in "Authority Orientations and Democratic Attitudes: A Test of the 'Asian Values' Hypothesis," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 6 (August 2005): 1–21.

7. Ron Duncan and Ross H. McLeod, "The State and the Market in Democratic Indonesia," in Ross H. McLeod and Andrew MacIntyre, eds., *Indonesia: Democracy and the Promise of Good Governance* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2007), 73–92. See also Thomas B. Pepinsky, *Economic Crises and the Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes: Indonesia and Malaysia in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 42–61.

8. Edward Aspinall, *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); and H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 2: Genesis and Demise of Sultanistic Regimes," in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 38–40.

9. See *www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSAnalizeSample.jsp*. Question numbers V24–V33 in the World Values Survey (WVS) 2005 Codebook: "I am going to read off a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization?" This prompt is followed by a list of organizations.

10. While Vietnam is included in the survey, we exclude it here because in Vietnam "societal organizations" are state-sponsored and state-directed, and membership is usually obligatory rather than voluntary. Thus Vietnam is not an adequately open polity to allow for meaningful analysis of its associational life.

11. WVS, Integrated Questionnaire numbers A058–A061.

12. Information comes from authors' interviews with Indonesian citizens and participant observation in Medan, Palembang, Makassar, Semarang, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya in 2007 and 2009.

13. Aiko Kurasawa, "Swaying Between State and Community: The Role and Function of RT/RW in Post-Suharto Indonesia," in Benjamin L. Read and Robert Pekkanen, eds., *Local Organizations and Urban Governance in East and Southeast Asia: Straddling State and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 58–83.

14. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); and Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993).

15. Analysis is presented in Danielle N. Lussier, "Activating Democracy: Political Participation and the Fate of Regime Change in Russia and Indonesia" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011).

16. Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 304.

17. Suaidi Asyari, *Nalar Politik NU & Muhammadiyah: Over crossing Java sentris* [The logic of NU and Muhammadiyah politics: Looking beyond Java] (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2009).

18. Rachel Rinaldo, "Pious Islam and Women's Activism in Indonesia," Michigan State University GPID/WID Working Paper No. 291, May 2008, 3.

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20. For contemporary accounts that support Tocqueville's approach, see Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), and Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); For alternate views, see Ariel C. Armony, *The Dubious Link: Civic Engagement and Democratization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); and Omar G. Encarnación, *The Myth of Civil Society: Social Capital and Democratic Consolidation in Spain and Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

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22. Mujani and Liddle, "Indonesia: Personalities, Parties, and Voters," 43.

23. *CIA World Factbook,* available at *www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook*.

24. *CIA World Factbook*.

25. Fish, *Are Muslims Distinctive?* 19–68.

26. Timur Kuran, "The Weak Foundations of Arab Democracy," *New York Times*, 28 May 2011.