

***Demokrasi Permusyawaratan***  
***A Review of AIPI's Desain Ulang***  
***Demokrasi Indonesia***

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## “Berawal di Akhir, Berakhir di Awal”

### What is the problem we are trying to solve?

1. *Demokrasi gagal* p. 3, *demokrasi cukong* p. 29, *pembusukan* p. 57, *demokrasi di atas pasir* p.189, *kebekuan dan dangkal* p. 200
2. The erosion of traditional forms of popular deliberations and lack of everyday democracy (Bab 1)
3. Find a particular Indonesian form of democracy (p. 2, p. 22, p 68) synthesizing modern democracy with musyawarah-mufakat (Bab IX, X)
4. “*Memulihkan kembali sentralitas demokrasi*” (p.186)
5. Weakness of MPR (p. 23, 176-181)
6. Enrich research focus on political institutions and behavior (p. 187, p. 248)
7. Renew civic education and build civic virtue (Bab XIII)

# Is Deliberation the Solution? What Does it Bring?

1. The direct voice of citizens and public participation
2. Closeness of relations in deliberations bring accountability and sanctions
3. Deepening of everyday democracy and citizen politics
4. Collaborative governance can undermine patronage relations
5. Civic education on *musyawarah* can deepen democratic values

**In short, deliberation can deepen everyday democracy (and already is)**

But the book does not really prove that the lack of deliberations is the main reason for declining democracy in Indonesia and that deliberations can solve the present autocratic tendencies, institutional weaknesses and elite capture

# Indonesia 2026: the Scorecard

## On the Plus side

- Continued belief in democracy, which is resilient. Political discourse is not nasty
- Compared with other countries, not doing as bad. Not a full autocracy
- Free elections and results accepted
- Local governance improving
- Resilient and vibrant civil society with some important achievements
- Power dispersal and political fragmentation limits authoritarianism

## On the Minus side

- Ten years of decline in democratic indices
- Elections not fair: vote buying, using state resources for party-political ends, and high-cost entry to politics
- New political dynasties are being built
- Rising religious fundamentalism, but declining ethnic tensions. The normalizing of extreme positions
- Continued corruption and oligarchy
- Recentralization and remilitarization
- Patrimonial politics

Mid-level “flawed democracy” (EIU), “partly free” (FH) and “electoral autocracy” (V-DEM)  
Civil society is “obstructed” (CIVICUS)

# Why is Indonesian Democracy Resilient?

*Ask not only why democracy declines but how it survives (Mietzner 2024)*

- Elite competition and fragmentation
- Decentring of political power
- A resilient and vocal civil society
- Media rivalry and new forms of grassroots and social media
- A revival of local democracy and grassroots initiatives – elasticity of community life (community spirit)
- *Musyawarah* contribute to this through collaboration, harmony and non-competition

Indonesian democracy might be more resilient because it has a strong normative base in consensus

# What are the Options?

***“The cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy”***

John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1927

***“A country does not have to be deemed fit for democracy; rather it has to become fit through democracy”***

Amartya Sen, *Democracy as Universal Value*, 1999

***“Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”***

Winston Churchill, UK House of Commons, 1947

# The Good and Bad of Democracy

## Theory

- 1a. “Majority rule, minority rights”
- 2a. *Trias Politica*
- 3a. Rule of law for all, civic rights
- 4a. Free and fair elections
- 5a. Promotes economic growth and human development
- 6a. Everyday forms of citizen engagement
- 7a. Promotes civic engagement



## Practice

- 1b. The opposition is not given rights
- 2b. Unitary executive
- 3b. Polarization and elite capture.
- 4b. Free but not fair election
- 5b. Money politics, economic capture and patronage
- 6b. Only involves citizens every five years in elections
- 7b. Shrinking civic spaces

## Strengths of *Demokrasi Permusyawaratan*

- Can revitalize everyday politics and citizen engagement by strengthening more voices. Effective in the community and face-to-face
- Can enrich majoritarian voting by follow-up deliberations/social contracts
- Decisions become better with more diverse sources and points of view
- The force of the better argument wins
- “Talk-based” fits Indonesian context and local wisdom and is durable
- Accountability can be strengthened when government actors become more embedded in in solidarity forms of collaboration
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration can challenge unequal power relations and structural restraints and undermine the mediating role of patrons
- A focus on “good enough” solutions makes it easier to implement

# Forms of Deliberative Democracy

## Existing in Indonesia:

- Customary institutions/*tudang sipulang, pela gandong* etc.)
- City assemblies/*forum kota*
- Citizen forums/*forum warga/lintas pelaku*
- Village assemblies/*MusDes*
- Town hall meetings/*rembug warga*
- Participatory planning/ *Musrenbang* (not mentioned)
- Decision-making forums in social movements

## In other countries:

- Citizen assemblies (US, UK etc.)
- Citizen conventions and juries (France, Ireland, UK, US)
- Participatory budgeting (Brazil)
- Consensus conferences (Denmark, US, Australian)
- Deliberative polls (Switzerland)
- Planning cells (Germany)
- Deliberation days (US)

## Weakness of *Demokrasi Permusyawaratan*

- Difficult at scale and on contentious political issues
- In a clientelist democracy, the voice of the those with high cultural capital prevails in meetings, the marginalized are silenced and the consensus is distorted in favor of the elite (p. 43, 51)
- Face-to-face consultations might not fit Generation Z (Bab XII)
- Needs open and frank debate which might be foreign to Indonesia (p. 92)
- *Musrenbang* has turned into *lomba pidato* and ends up at lowest two steps of the participation ladder (inform/consult) and not collaborate/empower. Results in fatigue with low participation (*mustahil*)
- Does not challenge existing power structures and can reinforce existing inequalities

# Practically Speaking on *Demokrasi Permusyawaratan*

- Revitalize *Musrenbang*
- Revitalize *Musyawarah Desa*
- Introduce and/or revitalize town hall meetings
- Practice and legislate social accountability
- Link to legislative agendas
- Revitalize deliberations in MPR, DPR, and DPRD
- Civic education and legal literacy
- Implement decisions

**How to revitalize:** (cf. pages 202-207)

- Stratified selection of participants (microcosm) in synchronous townhalls. A variety of voices
- Use trained facilitators to improve the quality of deliberations
- Government officials and experts as *narasumber*, not decision-makers
- Safe spaces and quotas for women and minorities

## In Conclusion

- A timely book: problematizing key weaknesses and solutions for Indonesia's democracy
- Need to be clearer in terms of advocacy what the end-game is: what is the problem you want to solve?
- Deliberations can deepen the role of citizens in everyday politics
- But public deliberation by itself is not enough to change political culture, structural inequalities and institutions – it needs civic education, collective action and citizen power enforced through legislation and social accountability



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