

Making democracy work, the Learning Curveⁱ

presentation by

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at the launching of the

KOMUNITAS INDONESIA untuk DEMOKRASI

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the main lessons learned during the past - optimistic - decade about the possibilities of supporting democracy is that laying the foundations for democracy and good governance through institution-building, support to electoral administrations, legislatures, judiciaries, media, civil service, or capacity building efforts directed at governance actors, do not necessarily generate democracy. Instrumental or procedural approaches to democracy support are not sufficient. Unless there is broad-based commitment to democracy within a society, which can only be achieved through dialogue and consensus-building about the institutional arrangements, democracy will not take root.

During the ‘first wave’ of democracyⁱⁱ in the 19th century in the Western countries, democracy evolved as the outcome of a long process of struggle in what are now called established democracies. As a result, the democratic architecture in each of these countries is different, none inherently better than the other.

The countries that opted for a democratic system of governance in the ‘third wave’ of democracy towards the end of the Cold War period, have had to establish democracy in a limited time periodⁱⁱⁱ. Democracy is no longer the outcome of a long historical process, but the explicit objective of deliberately initiated reform processes. Democracy has become the imperative form of governance during the past decade. The unfortunate result is that too often local accountability for the democratic reform process is geared towards the international donor community instead of the national constituency.

Not long ago, in 2002, the biggest democracy in the world, India, celebrated its fiftieth democracy anniversary. The lessons learned in the evolution of India’s democracy^{iv} underlines the importance of what is referred to as the *indigenization* of democracy. It shows that local ownership is a necessary condition for reaching consensus on the idea of democracy among the people and the elite. The Indian historical process has followed no one’s script. It has, therefore, not produced neat or easy outcomes. It leaves gaps, and produces contradictions. There is, in other words, no shortcut to developing and sustaining the principles of democracy except weaving every strand and tying every thread to assure that it is part of the belief and value system of the people.

Democracy assistance during the last decade has emphasized support for electoral processes, most often restricting democracy to competitive politics. Despite the value of this support, complementary attention - as the Indian historical development teaches - is required for processes that support the strengthening of the *accommodative* and *reconciliatory* functions of democracy into institutional and procedural frameworks.

The majority of countries that introduced democracy during the 80s and 90s - in particular in sub-Saharan Africa and to a lesser extent in Latin America - have remained 'illiberal' democracies^v or democracies in form only. A 'fourth' wave of democratization is required for democracy to gain real substance. This 'fourth wave' should focus on reconciling past causes of conflict and on new constitutional processes as constitutions are 'the autobiographies of nations' (South African Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs^{vi}). Also, the 'fourth wave' should combine the practice of inclusivity and accommodation with regular competition for elected office.

This 'fourth' wave of democratization should be different from the previous ones in that it would not necessarily emphasize the expansion of the number of countries turned to democracy but would focus on *entrenching democracies in substance, on improving the quality of democracy*.

Democracy has to be generated from within societies, and hence outcomes will differ. It is a paradox in a globalizing world that the definition of what constitutes a democracy appears to be shrinking. A *check-list model of democracy* has quickly taken over the global imagination, like a fashionable trend in the project and programme management culture of agencies in international cooperation. This model leaves little room for plural conceptions or appreciation of different models of democracy.

The value of *process*, the *time* that is required for *change* without the system breaking down into violent conflict, the importance of *indigenization* (local ownership) of the idea and resulting institutions and procedures of governance, the need for more comprehensive and authentic analysis, all have implications for *how* democracy can and cannot be supported from the outside.

The author and historian Timothy Garton Ash^{vii} has made the following interesting observation about the value of dialogue. Two hundred years ago, the mantra of the French revolution asserted that *the goals justified the means*. This resulted in numerous heads rolling down the guillotines. The lessons of the transitions in Eastern Europe, South Africa and Chile, is that *the means used to drive the revolutions determine their outcomes*. In these successful transitions, the revolutionary means was '*dialogue*', and the dialogue processes resulted in peaceful transitions that prepared the way for new open societies with generally positive socio-economic performances.

The value of dialogue is increasingly recognized, for example in the recent EU communications on external relations, as the method to advance democracy both as objective of international cooperation and as instrument for ownership and sustainability of reform process and policies. The question is how this method can be applied in the provision of international assistance?

A number of authors have argued that democracy survived the 20th century on the skin of teeth given Bolshevism and Stalinism in Russia, fascism in Italy, nazism in Germany, militarism in Japan and apartheid in South Africa. These oppressive systems all destroyed individual rights and the process of self-governance. Amartya Sen^{viii}, the Nobel laureate for Economics, argues, however, that democracy as a system of governance has come out of the past century as the big winner for bringing peace, stability and prosperity. Prof. Sen recognizes the *intrinsic* value of democracy (the basic need of freedom and liberty), the *instrumental* value (making governments responsive to people's needs) and, often overlooked, the *constructive* value of democracy.

The *intrinsic value* of democracy, the basic need of freedom and liberty, is a universally held value by cultures on each continent. The *instrumental value* of democracy was demonstrated by Sen in his research in which he showed that over the past 50 years countries governed by democracy have not known famines. Simply because democratic governments are more responsive to the needs of their peoples they will, therefore, institute policies that prevent the occurrence of famine.

This finding is gaining wider recognition in today's world. In a recent article in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, Morton Halperin, Joseph Siegle and Michael Weinstein, analyzing data over the last forty years, come to the conclusion that poor democracies have grown as fast as poor autocracies but have significantly outperformed the later on most indicators of social well-being. They have done for example much better at avoiding catastrophes, and people live on average 9 years longer in poor democracies.

The believe that democracy can take hold only once a state has developed economically or has a system of functioning rule of law and hence advocate a go-slow approach towards promoting democracy should be dispelled by the facts. Countries remain poor precisely because they retain autocratic political structures as the authors of the *Foreign Affairs* article state. There are strong empirical arguments to conclude that a development-first strategy perpetuates a deadly cycle of poverty, conflict and oppression and form, therefore, a barrier for social and economic development.

The *constructive value* refers to the political and social dialogue in democracies that allow values to be shaped, internalized and transmitted. Thus democracy is seen as an objective as well as an instrument for nation building, for establishing a community of equals, for the generation of prosperity, and for the peaceful management of conflicts of interests. The success of democracy depends not only on the institutional forms that are adopted (important as they are), but also on the vigour of practice.

Amartya Sen has subsequently famously stated that '*a country does not have to be judged to be fit for democracy, rather it has to become fit through democracy.*'

In this context, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased and honoured to be at and to participate in the launching of the Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi, or KID, in Indonesia's capital Jakarta. Earlier I referred to India as the largest democracy in the world. Since the recent, formal conclusion of the past election year in this country, we can refer to Indonesia not only as the largest Muslim country, but also as the third largest democracy *and* the largest Muslim democracy in the world. This is surely something for Indonesians to be proud of.

It is only six years ago that an overwhelming number of Indonesian citizens chose to make an end to authoritarianism and enter the hazardous road towards democracy. In all honesty I find it astonishing what Indonesians have achieved within such a brief period of time - for hazardous it was. Few if any observers of the Indonesian political landscape could have predicted that Indonesia would so quickly find itself where it is now.

In 1998, *Reformasi* really happened like a bolt from the blue. Of course, analysts would have expected an end to the authoritarian regime at some point in time, but hardly anyone could have foreseen the momentum that built up so fast in that memorable year, much less the developments that came after this. Let me mention here the freedom of the press, which is one of the indispensable cornerstones of democracy and which was brought about almost instantly. Another remarkable development was the fact that only one year after the beginning of *Reformasi*, Indonesia organised its first free and fair elections after more than 30 years of sometimes harsh

dictatorship, in 1999. Those elections became known to have been *a celebration of democracy* because of the enthusiasm and interest of the Indonesian people.

However, after that year, both inside and outside Indonesia, observers became pessimistic about the Indonesia's prospects for the future, as they felt that the momentum of *Reformasi* had passed all too quickly and the enthusiasm of Indonesians for democracy had faded too fast. On hindsight we can now see that these observers have been too gloomy, for Indonesia continued to walk the road it had chosen, albeit perhaps at a slower pace. But then, some things in life – also in political life – need time, for instance the translation of past experiences into guidelines for the future. Clearly, Indonesia has learned lessons from the first feeble steps it took in the beginning of *Reformasi*. With great perseverance it has translated these lessons into new legislation that warrants, shapes and strengthens its democracy. For example, not long before the start of this memorable election year, the Indonesian Parliament passed a new election law and made amendments to the constitution that resulted, amongst others, in stronger regional representation on the national level with the new legislative body of the DPD, in the founding of a truly independent Constitutional Court, and, most importantly, in the first direct elections of a new President.

Such far-reaching innovations naturally have many practical consequences, for instance with regard to the adequate communication of these innovations to the Indonesian populace, or the mere logistical problems of general and presidential elections based on brand new legislation in one of the largest archipelagos in the world. Well before the elections of April 5, many an observer was sceptical about the way it would eventually all work out, to say the least. Some even were quite pessimistic, as they thought that all kinds of conditions were fulfilled to spawn electoral violence. But the Indonesians have proved them all wrong.

This landmark election year in Indonesia has passed without one major dissonant in the electoral symphony, with a high voters' turn-out and an intensely involved electorate that has followed its conscience and has voted independently. Given the circumstances that I have sketched here, that is clearly something to be very proud of, not in the least also in the larger context of an international debate about the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Indonesia has shown the world that these two quantities are surely not strange bedfellows but that there can be harmony between the two and mutual inspiration.

For us, who are concerned with supporting democracy, Indonesia is a goldmine of important lessons learned. These lessons are complemented with the discourse about the new challenges democracy faces in ensuring that the balances on which the system operates remain vibrant. There is nothing natural about democracy, it needs permanent maintenance, renewal and internalization. It should be integral to our educational systems to ensure that next generations grow up equipped with knowledge and the spirit of mind to keep the system alive and dynamic.

In supporting democratic reform processes many lessons have been learned during the past ten years. One of them is a recent article in the *Journal of Democracy* by Thomas Carothers, titled: *The End of the Transition Paradigm*, which shows that countries in transition from authoritarian systems of governments do not move by definition via straight lines to democracies (the normal curve more often than not resembles the curve of the Jakarta Stock Exchange). Of the about 100 transitional countries of the last 10 years, probably fewer than 20 are clearly en route to become successful democracies. The remainder finds itself in a gray zone in which democracy remains shallow and troubled.

Another assumption of the transition paradigm - namely the notion that regular, genuine elections, will not only confer democratic legitimacy on new governments, but continuously deepen political participation and democratic accountability - has often come up short. In many transitional countries, regular, genuine elections are held but political participation beyond voting remains superficial and government accountability is weak. The wide gulf between political elites, (government and opposition) and citizens in many of these countries turn out to be rooted in structural conditions, such as the concentration of wealth or certain socio-cultural traditions, that elections themselves do not overcome.

Carothers also observes that electoral competition does often little to stimulate the renovation or development of political parties in many gray-zone countries. Such profound pathologies as highly personalistic parties, transient and shifting parties, or stagnant patronage-based politics appear to be able to coexist for sustained periods with at least somewhat legitimate processes of political pluralism and competition.

The role and significance of well-functioning political parties have been mainly neglected during the past 10 years in supporting political reform processes. Much attention has been given to electoral processes and election observation. Also, much international assistance has been channeled to civil society organizations and to good governance. But most if not all of that assistance neglected the importance of the role of Parliaments and, especially, the role of political parties. Yet, political parties in democracies are the linchpins between the state and the citizens. Parties translate interests within society into political platforms, negotiate peacefully the conflicts of interest within societies, select and train future political leaders, and compete in regular elections. In addition, it is essential that parties mobilize the participation of citizens in public decision-making processes and ensure through internal democracy to be responsive to the needs of society.

Ivan Doherty^{ix} of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has correctly observed that strengthening civic organizations, which represent the demand side of the political equation, without providing commensurate assistance to the political organizations that must aggregate the interests of those very groups, ultimately damages the democratic equilibrium.

While focusing on Indonesia, I don't want to miss the opportunity to observe that some of the challenges in the functioning of political parties in young democracies are not uncommon in the established democracies as well. Being a Dutch citizen, it is of interest to me that in 2002 the Netherlands experienced general elections that profoundly shook the traditional political parties on their foundations. Out of nothing a highly personalized grouping presented itself to the electorate and became the second biggest party in Parliament, gaining itself a place in the government. Although it can be seen as an asset that democracy allows for such innovations, it cannot be denied that the electorate expressed dissatisfaction with the way mainstream political parties function and have lost touch with their constituencies. It has triggered a serious debate about the democratic deficit in the Netherlands. Solutions advocated point in the direction of restoring the primacy of politics in era in which politics has been reduced to the technical or bureaucratic management of the state, and of a revitalization of the political parties.

In fact, political parties in all regions around the globe are under pressure. Large sections of society view political parties as ineffective and out of touch with their needs. Parties in the older democracies experience an aging and dwindling membership. At the same time, support has risen for special interest groups and antiparty movements. Mass media and information technology have diminished the role of political parties as channels between state and citizens, while at the

same time highlighting scandals and partisan corruption. It has given urgency to the need to modernize and democratize party structures.

The Institute for Multiparty democracy was established in 2000 by the political parties represented in the Dutch parliament, both from government and opposition. On a joint basis, the new Institute engages in partnerships with political parties in young democracies with the objective to share experiences with improving the functions and performance of political parties. Also, IMD makes financial and technical resources available to assist political parties with institution- and capacity-building. The mandate is implemented collectively in order to be able to channel assistance impartially.

This model was first experienced with assistance to new South Africa during its first post-apartheid general elections in 1994. In an evaluation in 1999 of the support provided over the years, Nelson Mandela qualified the support as very useful and welcome. He encouraged the Dutch political parties to build on this experience and make similar support available to other young democracies. This resulted in the establishment of IMD and the expansion of our partnerships with other countries in Southern Africa, West Africa, Latin America and in South-East Asia.

In Indonesia, ladies and gentlemen, an IMD delegation established first contacts in 2001, subsequent to which IMD entered into a dialogue with representatives of political parties, the KPU, government and civil society. The aim of this dialogue was to develop the contours of a cooperation programme that would be fully owned by Indonesians themselves. Our gathering today marks a crucial point in this development as we are witnessing the launching of the *Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi* or KID. The implementation of the concept that emerged during this process of dialogue and consultations will be facilitated by KID. This concept has found expression in what is called the 'Sekolah Demokrasi', an institution to be initially established in five provinces and, per province, in three kabupaten. Basically the mission of the Sekolah Demokrasi will be the dissemination of the concept of democracy and the enhancement of the practice of democracy. Furthermore, the Sekolah Demokrasi will facilitate citizens to become active agents in their interactions with state institutions and, in particular, with the political parties.

This will certainly not be an easy task and it is therefore with feelings of gratitude and pride that I am able to tell you that the Board of the KID consist of nine eminent Indonesians who are well known in Indonesia and beyond and who are held in high esteem. Since the KID was established last May, these nine individuals have shown such great involvement and enthusiasm that already today the KID is able to launch itself and present itself to the Indonesian public. Moreover, the KID's pro-active, hands-on attitude also comes to the fore most clearly in the fact that it has organised a series of six Round Table gatherings on democracy. These Round Tables constitute a dialogue with political parties and other stakeholders on the national level that will be complementary to the KID activities with regard to the Sekolah Demokrasi in the various regions.

It is, of course, no coincidence that the first of these Round Table meetings will be held tomorrow, October 28, the day when Indonesia commemorates that 56 years ago young Indonesians from all over the Archipelago gathered in Jakarta to express their hopes for the future in what is known as the *Sumpah Pemuda* or the Pledge of the Youth. As we now know, these young Indonesian men and women eventually saw their aspirations for a sovereign Indonesian

nation-state become a reality. In light of that great achievement, ladies and gentlemen, let me express my hopes for the success of the *Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi* and wish it well with the manifold and many-faceted dialogues it will initiate. For the challenge is to keep engaging in dialogues. Dialogues that include all stakeholders - as so many successful and peaceful transitions have demonstrated - with the objective to make democracy work better for the common good of all Indonesians, providing the conditions for reducing poverty, and improving social justice.

I look forward to the outcome of KID activities and hope that proposals and initiatives that may result from its deliberations will make a contribution to entrenching multiparty democracy in Indonesia.

Thank you, terimah kasih

ⁱ Title from the book *Aiding Democracy Abroad, The Learning Curve* by Thomas Carothers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1999)

ⁱⁱ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (1991)

ⁱⁱⁱ Juan J. Linz, *Democracy*

^{iv} *India's Electoral Democracy, 1952 – 2000*, Yogendra Yadav, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi (January 2001)

^v Fareed Zakaria, *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy*, in *Foreign Affairs* (1997)

^{vi} *Democracy in Nigeria, Continuing Dialogue(s) for Nation Building*, IDEA Capacity Building Series no 10 (2001)

^{vii} Timothy Garton Ash, *Ten Years After*, *New York Review of Books* (Nov 1999)

^{ix} *Democracy out of Balance, Civil Society Can't Replace Political Parties* by Ivan Doherty in *Journal of Democracy*, April 2002, Volume 13, number 2