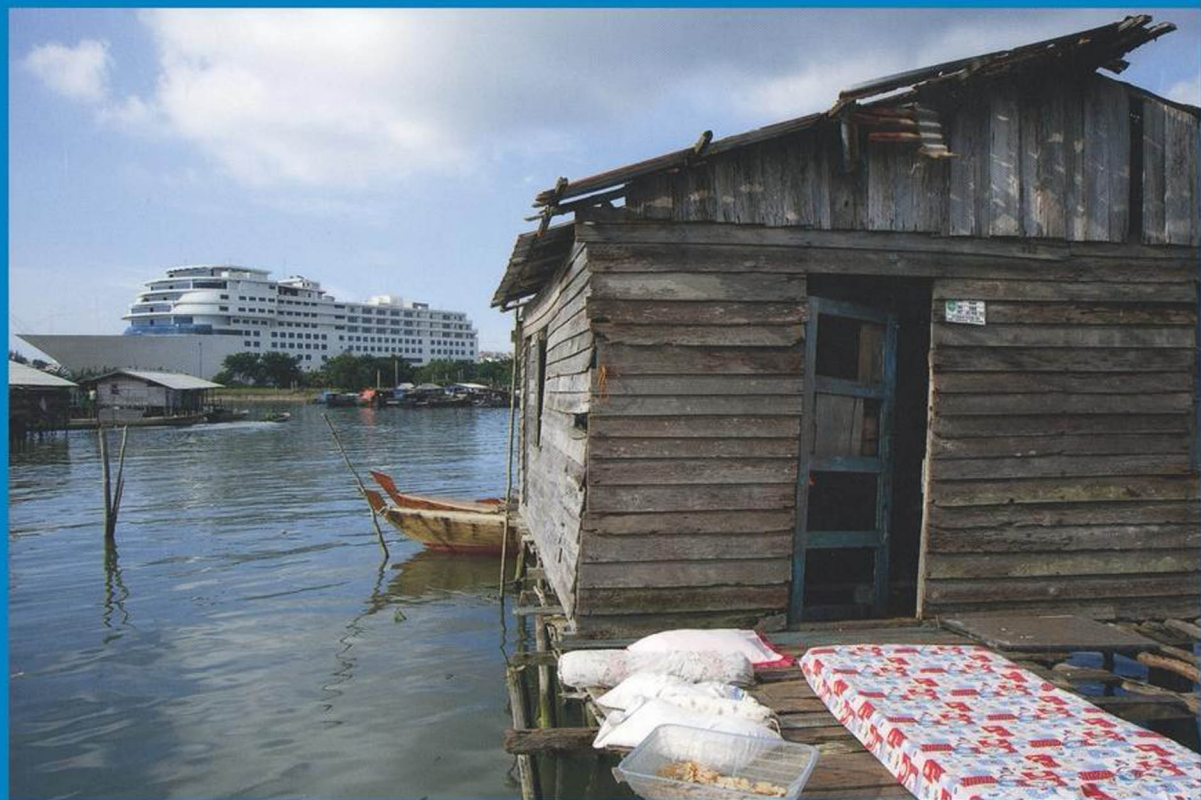


BEYOND OLIGARCHY

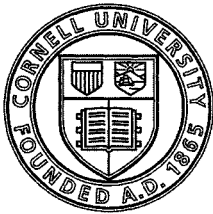
WEALTH, POWER, AND
CONTEMPORARY
INDONESIAN POLITICS



Michele Ford and Thomas B. Pepinsky, editors

CORNELL SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS

Beyond Oligarchy



Cornell University

This page intentionally left blank

Michele Ford and Thomas B. Pepinsky, editors

Beyond Oligarchy Wealth, Power, and Contemporary Indonesian Politics

SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS
Southeast Asia Program
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York
2014



Editorial Board

Benedict R. O'G. Anderson
Anne Blackburn
Thak Chaloemtiarana
Tamara Loos
Kaja McGowan
Keith Taylor
Andrew Willford

Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications
640 Stewart Avenue, Ithaca, NY 14850-3857

Cornell Modern Indonesia Project No. 77

© 2014 Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, no part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Cornell Southeast Asia Program.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: hc 978-0-87727-326-4

ISBN: pb 978-0-87727-303-5

Cover designed by Kat Dalton

Cover photograph by Henri Ismail, reprinted with permission

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
Preface	ix
Introduction: Beyond Oligarchy? <i>Michele Ford and Thomas B. Pepinsky</i>	1
Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia <i>Jeffrey A. Winters</i>	11
The Political Economy of Oligarchy and the Reorganization of Power in Indonesia <i>Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison</i>	35
Improving the Quality of Democracy in Indonesia: Toward a Theory of Action <i>R. William Liddle</i>	57
Pluralism and Political Conflict in Indonesia <i>Thomas B. Pepinsky</i>	79
Oligarchs, Politicians, and Activists: Contesting Party Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia <i>Marcus Mietzner</i>	99
Popular Agency and Interests in Indonesia's Democratic Transition and Consolidation <i>Edward Aspinall</i>	117
Labor and Politics under Oligarchy <i>Teri L. Caraway and Michele Ford</i>	139
Elite Competition and Changing State-Society Relations: <i>Shari'a</i> Policymaking in Indonesia <i>Michael Buehler</i>	157
Contributors	177

This page intentionally left blank

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors acknowledge the support of our colleagues and of the institutions that provided funding for the workshop on which this volume is based. In Australia, these include the International Portfolio, the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, and the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney, as well as the Australian Research Council. In the United States, these include the Institute for Social Sciences, the Southeast Asia Program, and the Department of Government at Cornell University.

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

In December 2012, a group of political economists, political scientists, and political sociologists gathered at the University of Sydney to consider the effects of inequalities in wealth and power on contemporary Indonesian politics.¹ The lively and critical discussion over two days centered on competing interpretations of oligarchy in Indonesian democracy by scholars representing a range of theoretical traditions. This volume is the product of those discussions.

As Jeffrey Winters noted at the workshop, “beyond oligarchy” could mean one of two things in assessments of the state of Indonesian politics. On the one hand, it could refer to a time when oligarchs were no longer politically dominant. On the other, it could refer to a framing of politics that does not focus as closely on the interests and influence of the very rich. What we mean by “beyond” is very much the latter. Like the great majority of scholars of contemporary Indonesian politics, all those present at the Sydney workshop are sensitive to the influence of material power on the politics of post-Suharto Indonesia. However, most of the participants do not explicitly work within the oligarchy framework, as proposed either by Winters or by Richard Robison and Vedi Hadiz. Instead, they emphasize other factors shaping Indonesian politics, including non-material sources of political power, the organization of oppositional forces, electoral institutions and the political incentives that they produce, and the craft and skill of Indonesia’s political leaders. The debate, then, is over starting points and emphases. Is material power the fundamental driver of Indonesian politics? How should scholars approach non-material interests in the context of oligarchy?

The insights generated by scholars of oligarchy should be taken seriously. Indeed, the express purpose of the workshop was to challenge the assumption that scholars drawing on different theoretical traditions necessarily always operate within “parallel universes” when it comes to the study of politics in Southeast Asia.² As the workshop demonstrated, this does not have to be the case. At the same time, it is important to recognize that—extensive citation of the work of Robison and Hadiz in contemporary research on Indonesian politics notwithstanding—there had been little productive exchange among proponents of the oligarchy thesis and scholars who adopt a different perspective. As a result, the literature risks becoming mired in stale, predictable, and unproductive pronouncements, rife with caricatures and misrepresentations, on all sides. In the absence of vigorous and genuine

¹ The workshop was co-hosted by the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney, the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, and the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program. Ford’s co-convenorship of the workshop and co-editorship of this volume, as well as a special issue of *Indonesia* (October 2013) that included a selection of the papers, was undertaken as part of an ARC Discovery Project grant (DP120100654).

² Richard Robison, “Interpreting the Politics of Southeast Asia: Debates in Parallel Universes,” in *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Politics*, ed. Richard Robison (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 5–22.

exchange, there is a danger that the field could evolve into a collection of inward-looking scholarly camps whose failure to engage seriously with the important theoretical and empirical contributions of those working in other traditions lessens its collective capacity to understand and theorize Indonesian politics. The purpose of the workshop, and of this volume, is to promote such exchange.

Our experience in Sydney, and subsequently at the 2013 conference of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in San Diego, California, confirmed that these conversations best happen in person. Face-to-face interactions force us to take responsibility for our positions, and to respond to questions and challenges informed by different theoretical traditions in a way that written exchanges do not. The essays in this collection—the output of those face-to-face discussions—represent distinctive statements about political power and material inequality in contemporary Indonesia. By publishing them as a collection, we seek to reclaim a tradition of focused debate about Indonesian politics at a time in which major works on post-New Order Indonesia have offered very different interpretations of the essential character of Indonesian democracy.

One of the distinctive features of an earlier generation of Indonesia scholarship³—one which we seek to emulate—was that it not only applied existing theoretical perspectives to Indonesia, but refined theories and concepts, and generated new ones, from a close understanding of the Indonesian case. In this way, area-focused analyses can contribute to broader disciplinary developments in political science and related fields, something that all contributors to this volume agree is an essential goal. Together, these essays constitute a first step in that direction. As the organizers of the workshop and the editors of this collection of essays, we acknowledge that the impulse to carve out a distinctive theoretical space can hamper productive exchanges across traditions that recognize common points of departure. While these essays do not entirely overcome this impulse, they nevertheless collectively represent the first truly open and critical exchange on this topic since the fall of the New Order. We hope and expect that they will spark further debate on Indonesian politics over coming years.

Michele Ford and Thomas B. Pepinsky
November 28, 2013

³ See, among others, Benedict Anderson and Audrey Kahin, eds., *Interpreting Indonesian Politics: Thirteen Contributions to the Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1982); and Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye, eds., *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978).

INTRODUCTION

BEYOND OLIGARCHY?

Michele Ford and Thomas B. Pepinsky

The collapse of Indonesia's New Order has proven a critical juncture in Indonesian political studies, launching new analyses about the drivers of regime change and the character of Indonesian democracy. It has also prompted a new groundswell of theoretical reflection among Indonesianists on concepts such as representation, competition, power, and inequality. As such, the onset of Indonesia's second democratic period represents more than just a new point of departure for comparative analyses of Indonesia as a democratizing state: it also serves as a catalyst for theoretical and conceptual development. The contributions in this volume address one prominent arena that has encompassed much of the recent analysis of democratic Indonesia: material wealth and inequality, and how that relates to political power.

A focus on material wealth and political power emerges naturally from Indonesia's political history since independence. Among most academic analysts of Indonesian politics, there is broad agreement that Indonesia has undergone a democratic transition, but that political democratization has not produced an ideal-type liberal democracy as imagined by democratic theorists abroad and aspired to by many activists in Indonesia. There is also broad agreement that material interests and the relations among the holders of political and economic power are central to explaining the character of Indonesian democracy in the post-Suharto era. The analysis of material wealth and its organization is central—in various ways—to a host of other issues and concerns: accounts of corruption in democratic Indonesia that draw on insights from public choice analyses;¹ institutionalist accounts of democratic Indonesia's political economy;² the politics of business and economic

¹ Ross H. McLeod, "Soeharto's Indonesia: A Better Class of Corruption," *Agenda* 7,2 (2000): 99–112.

² See, for example, Thomas B. Pepinsky and Maria M. Wihardja, "Decentralization and Economic Performance in Indonesia," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 11,3 (2011): 337–71; and Andrew MacIntyre, "Institutions and the Political Economy of Corruption in Developing Countries" (discussion paper, Workshop on Corruption, Stanford University, January 31–February 1, 2003).

reform;³ and discussions of elections, party competition, and elite politics under the new democratic order.⁴

Yet despite wide agreement that material wealth is important for characterizing politics and political economy in democratic Indonesia, analytical focus on material power and its consequences for Indonesian democracy is most closely associated with the concept of oligarchy, and specifically with these three major scholars of Indonesian politics: Vedi Hadiz, Richard Robison, and Jeffrey Winters. Robison and Hadiz's *Reorganising Power: The Politics of Oligarchy in the Age of Markets*⁵ and Winters's *Oligarchy*⁶ share an approach to Indonesian politics that emphasizes the primacy of material resources as a form of both economic and political power. Relative to closely related literatures in political science, political economy, and sociology, *Reorganising Power* and *Oligarchy* are also theoretically distinctive, departing from the conceptualization of oligarchy that has emerged from the power elite and elite theory traditions.⁷

This volume contains eight contributions to the analysis of material wealth and political power in Indonesia. Our introductory chapter begins with an overview of oligarchy as a concept—and as articulated by these three prominent scholars of Indonesian politics—before turning to discuss the challenges raised by the remaining contributors, and the implications of these challenges for the study of Indonesian democracy.

OLIGARCHY: AN OVERVIEW

A core feature of analyses of Indonesia using the oligarchy framework is the claim that democratization has changed the form of Indonesian politics without eliminating oligarchic rule. Both Winters and Robison and Hadiz accept that the formal structures of electoral democracy can coexist with oligarchic rule, most often where democracy exists in minimalist or procedural terms.⁸ Hadiz and Robison observe that oligarchy and procedural democracy are compatible, and find that meaningful elections have changed the *behavior* of oligarchs. Both analyses allow that democracy has had real effects on oligarchic rule, but deny that this implies that oligarchy is necessarily diminished by competitive elections. This point has important consequences for any evaluation of the quality of Indonesian democracy

³ See Christian Chua, *Chinese Big Business in Indonesia: The State of Capital* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008); and Yuri Sato, "Overview of the Seven Years' Experiment: What Changed and What Matters?" *The Developing Economies* 43,1 (2005): 3–16.

⁴ See, for example, Nankyung Choi, "Democracy and Patrimonial Politics in Local Indonesia," *Indonesia* 88 (October 2009): 131–64; and Andreas Ufen, "From Aliran to Dealignment: Political Parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 16,1 (2008): 5–41.

⁵ Richard Robison and Vedi R. Hadiz, *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

⁶ Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷ See C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1956); and Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, trans. Hannah D. Kahn (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939). As Winters argues, these works are departures from the classical understandings of oligarchy that originated in the works of Plato and Aristotle.

⁸ Adam Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense," in *Democracy's Value*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23–55.

in the post-Suharto era. While the behaviors and strategies of oligarchs may have been modified by the imperatives of electoral democracy—and, indeed, by the introduction of additional loci of decision-making with the advent of decentralization—there is no institutional, electoral, or mobilizational “fix” to the problem of oligarchy. According to both Winters and Robison and Hadiz, the degree of political change needed to disrupt the nexus between wealth and political power in Indonesia (as elsewhere) is, in fact, no less than revolutionary.

The commonalities between *Reorganising Power* and *Oligarchy* notwithstanding, their understandings of how material inequality shapes Indonesian politics differ in several important ways. A close examination of these differences, therefore, is timely, not least because of the influence that these analyses exert. The approach offered by Robison and Hadiz in *Reorganising Power* and related work has been invoked in many interpretations of Indonesian politics since the fall of the New Order.⁹ Winters, meanwhile, has used his expertise as a scholar of Indonesian political economy to produce a work that has been recognized as a signature contribution to mainstream political science.¹⁰ As Winters’s argument joins that of Robison and Hadiz in characterizing oligarchy in Indonesia, it is important to recognize that, whatever their similarities, these arguments draw on different theoretical backgrounds and have different implications for the study of Indonesian politics.

The first and central difference between the two analyses of oligarchy lies in its definition. Both theses emphasize the key concept of wealth defense. Robison and Hadiz describe oligarchy as a “system of power relations that enables the concentration of wealth and authority and its collective defence,”¹¹ and Winters as the “politics of wealth defense among materially endowed actors.”¹² But whereas Robison and Hadiz are decidedly neo-Marxist in their positioning of oligarchy within the development of global capitalism, Winters’s emphasis is more Weberian, concerned with the role and locus of coercion in the politics of wealth defense. In other words, while both Robison and Hadiz and Winters understand oligarchy differently than do analysts of oligarchy, elite domination, and related phenomena who work within the power elite tradition, they also understand it quite differently from one another. This fundamental difference has great consequences for the operationalization of wealth defense as a concept. For Hadiz and Robison, the collective nature of oligarchy is fundamental, as is the concurrence between conflicts over wealth and political authority. Winters’s definition of oligarchy, by contrast,

⁹ See, for example, Vedi Hadiz and Richard Robison, “Neo-liberal Reforms and Illiberal Consolidations: The Indonesian Paradox,” *Journal of Development Studies* 41,2 (2005): 220–41; Garry Rodan and Kanishka Jayasuriya, “Capitalist Development, Regime Transitions and New Forms of Authoritarianism in Asia,” *Pacific Review* 22,1 (2009): 23–47; Nankyung Choi, *Local Politics in Indonesia: Pathways to Power* (London: Routledge, 2011); and Yuki Fukuoka, “Oligarchy and Democracy in Post-Suharto Indonesia,” *Political Studies Review* 11,1 (2013): 52–64.

¹⁰ In Winters’s 2011 book, Indonesia constitutes one case study in a larger comparative exploration of oligarchies ranging from the prehistoric era, through classical Greece and Rome and medieval European, to contemporary treatments of Singapore, the Philippines, and the United States.

¹¹ See Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison, “The Political Economy of Oligarchy and the Reorganization of Power in Indonesia,” this volume, pp. 35–56. It is worth noting that these authors’ most recent definition differs from that which they offered in *Reorganising Power in Indonesia*.

¹² Winters, *Oligarchy*, p. 7.

does not require collective behavior by oligarchs, nor the pursuit or defense of authority: these are possible, not necessary, implications of oligarchic rule.

Various other differences follow from these different conceptualizations of oligarchy. Most obviously, *Oligarchy* and *Reorganising Power* differ in their focus. *Reorganising Power* offers a deep analysis of the Indonesian case. In it, Robison and Hadiz argue that Indonesia's oligarchy is a condition of late capitalism in the periphery. Their historical discussion reveals that it is also a relatively recent development, dating to the late New Order period:

... the relationships between state authority and the bourgeoisie in Indonesia changed from a Bonapartist form in the early Suharto era to one that took an oligarchic form in the later New Order period. This was a state that had become the possession of its own officials and that acted to preserve its own institutional underpinnings and on behalf of major capitalist interests. Such a state was transformed to one that was defined by an increasing fusion of wealth and politico-bureaucratic power, articulated in the relationships and interminglings between the leading families of business and those of politics and the bureaucracy as they became enmeshed directly in the ownership and control of capital.¹³

This change in the relationship between wealth and political power over the course of the New Order suggests that capitalism does not always produce oligarchic rule. This approach contrasts with the comparative focus adopted by Winters, which positions oligarchy as a more general phenomenon. In Winters's analysis, oligarchy is a property of any social formation characterized by a very uneven distribution of material resources. The central message from this conceptualization is that oligarchy manifests itself differently across epochs and political contexts.¹⁴ But insofar as capitalism produces extreme inequalities in wealth, it produces extreme inequalities in material power, and oligarchy is inevitably the result.

As applied to Indonesia, these approaches also differ in their primary unit of analysis. With his definition of oligarchy as the politics of wealth defense by materially endowed actors, Winters's analysis centers on individual actors who sometimes act collectively, but often do not. The emergence of various forms of oligarchy—warring, civil, sultanistic, and ruling—presented in *Oligarchy* is primarily determined by the different threats oligarchs face and how wealth defense is accomplished. Electoral politics is a possible channel for the exercise of power in the pursuit of wealth defense, and oligarchs may choose to support, sponsor, or even become political elites. But while “extreme material inequality necessarily produces extreme political inequality,”¹⁵ this linkage does not require that all individual oligarchs engage in the political sphere or hold positions of direct rule, according to Winters. This contrasts with Robison and Hadiz's emphasis on the collective system of power relations in Indonesia and the evolving relationship between the state and the bourgeoisie, which—returning to their definition of oligarchy—entails the fusion of wealth accumulation and political power from the late New Order period. Neither

¹³ Hadiz and Robison, “The Political Economy of Oligarchy,” p. 38.

¹⁴ Other forms of economic organization—feudalism, plantation agriculture, and many others—can also produce extreme wealth stratification, and thus oligarchy.

¹⁵ Jeffrey A. Winters, “Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia,” this volume, pp. 11–12.

approach ultimately privileges structure over agency, but Winters's analysis of Indonesian politics places relatively more emphasis on agency than does the analysis by Robison and Hadiz.

The identity and importance of "outsiders" as a challenge to oligarchy also differ in the two approaches. The fusion of wealth accumulation and political power and the emphasis on the systemic aspects of oligarchy in Robison and Hadiz's conceptualization imply that outsiders are those who are not members of the politico-bureaucratic elite. Winters, by contrast, distinguishes between oligarchs and actors in the social formation who are able to muster substantial power resources other than material wealth and use them to threaten oligarchs' capacity to engage in wealth defense. Thus, like other kinds of non-oligarchic power contenders, the "political elite" only coalesces and becomes legible as an analytical category when the power resources of its members are sufficient to threaten the material interests of the very wealthy, and are used for that purpose.

Both analyses invoke a similar caveat when it comes to "outsiders" who rely on mobilizational power. All three authors point to the disorganization and fragmentation of the Indonesian working class, and, indeed, of other oppositional forces.¹⁶ Yet the implications of this fragmentation differ for the two analyses. Class relations are a central problematique for Robison and Hadiz. In the Indonesian case, they argue, the working class is disempowered to an extent that it is unable to act in pursuit of its own interests either by itself or in alliance with the liberal middle class. Winters agrees that the Indonesian working class is insufficiently powerful to challenge the material resources of the oligarchs, but would argue that the working class is but one potential vehicle for mobilizational power in Indonesia or elsewhere. In other words, where Robison and Hadiz understand working-class movements as the logical outcome of class-based exploitation, Winters chooses not to look to class but rather to mobilizational power—which may at times coincide with particular class formations—as a fundamentally different kind of power resource, which offers the possibility of explosive change but little else. This is so, he argues, because of the difficulty in sustaining a high level of mobilizational activity, but also because great material wealth can be used to purchase mobilizational and indeed other forms of power.

A final distinction between the two analyses of oligarchy lies in the scale or level of analysis. Winters's analysis uses examples from multiple jurisdictional levels of oligarchic power, but in the case of Indonesia offers little discussion of how to apply the concepts of oligarchic scale and intensity beyond Jakarta, or of how oligarchic power at different scales may interact. In some locations in the Indonesian periphery, including most obviously resource-rich regions, "national level" oligarchs have a direct interest and may seek direct influence. It is vital, however, also to pay careful attention to local oligarchs, whose existence is important to our understanding of local politics in both empirical and theoretical terms. The material resources of local oligarchs are almost always far less in absolute terms than those of the national level oligarchs. But they are focused in a particular place, and complemented by the other power resources generated as a consequence of their social and economic position in that locality. This is important theoretically for those who seek to understand the impact of material wealth on local politics and to account for the ways that the

¹⁶ Edward Aspinall, "A Nation in Fragments: Patronage and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies* 45,1 (2013): 27–54.

combination of power resources held by local oligarchs stacks up against the very partial deployment of the resources of much richer national oligarchs in that particular locality if we are to understand the impact of material wealth on local politics. Such discussion does not fault Winters's analysis of oligarchy—its focus on national politics is certainly reasonable given the comparative nature of his work—but being able to shift the scale down to local politics is necessary for any complete understanding of Indonesian politics.

By contrast, Hadiz and Robison address local politics in decentralized Indonesia directly. Observing that decentralization has created a new arena of political conflict, they argue that the local political-bureaucratic elite inherited from the New Order has found this arena to be productive for amassing material resources. Not surprisingly, then, those local elites use the authority conferred upon them through decentralization to defend both the wealth that they have accumulated and the opportunities to do so afforded to them by the political structures associated with decentralization. The challenge facing Hadiz and Robison's perspective on local oligarchy lies in the positioning of non-material power resources, which are acknowledged by Hadiz and Robison to be essential components of local power configurations, but not necessarily theorized.

These differences—in definition, focus, unit of analysis, treatment of outsiders, and scale—clearly delineate the two dominant understandings of oligarchy in contemporary scholarship on Indonesia. Of course, for reasons outlined above, it would be mistaken to overdraw these distinctions, for there are broad commonalities between these analyses. But critiques of Winters's conception of oligarchy are not *necessarily* critiques of Robison and Hadiz, and vice versa. Careful demarcation of the two approaches, while acknowledging their deep similarities, is necessary to comprehend how oligarchy is employed as a way of understanding the importance of concentrated material wealth in Indonesia's political economy. This careful comparison of works by these authors allows for a better assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their general approach—focused on oligarchy—by other scholars working within and outside this tradition.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS

Winters's essay, which begins this volume, outlines the key elements of his thesis of oligarchy as it applies to post-Suharto Indonesia. In it, Winters asserts that the dramatic changes brought about by democratization are real and important, but that they neither disrupted nor diminished oligarchic power. Rather, electoral democracy has been accompanied, he argues, by a shift from a sultanistic form of oligarchy, in which Suharto effectively set the rules of the oligarchic game, to a much less constrained "electoral ruling" form of oligarchy, in which oligarchs' strategies of wealth defense include an intense focus on the political realm. Winters concludes that this shift has been wildly successful, with oligarchs having "captured and now thoroughly dominat[ing] the country's democratic institutions" (p. 20).

While agreeing with Winters's conclusion that oligarchs dominate the political institutions of democratic Indonesia, Hadiz and Robison's contribution offers a very different interpretation of the impact of Indonesia's transition to democracy on the form oligarchy takes. Where Winters identifies a dramatic shift in oligarchs' strategies of wealth defense (and consequently in oligarchic form), Hadiz and Robison argue that "the social order of the previous regime and its ascendant

political forces remain intact and in charge of the state" (p. 54). Always central to their conceptualization of oligarchy, politico-bureaucratic power thus "continues to be the key determinant of how private wealth and social power is accumulated and distributed" (p. 35). Reformist individuals and new political vehicles may have emerged, but they have been quickly drawn into predatory politics, succumbing to a system shaped by an unchanging logic of oligarchy.

The six essays that follow offer analyses from scholars who bring different insights into Indonesian politics, and who represent different traditions in contemporary Indonesian political studies. The first of these is R. William Liddle's essay, which acknowledges an imbalance of material resources but advances an interpretation of Indonesian politics that prioritizes the actions of key individuals. Its main critique of the oligarchy framework in either form—either Winters's or Robison and Hadiz's—is that it prioritizes material power over other power resources, and obscures the craft that skillful politicians bring to bear in shaping the political arena. Like Winters, Liddle privileges agency. But where Winters is concerned with the cumulative effects of wealth defense by materially endowed actors, Liddle's ontology of the political centers on the individual and his or her ability to create, possess, and deploy political resources (pp. 57–58). In this way, individual actors can counteract constraints, which in the Indonesian context (as elsewhere in the modern world) necessarily include constraints imposed by those who possess great material wealth. His "theory of action" is a statement of what that analysis should become. It is equally a critique of approaches that focus on interest groups and social movements, to the extent that they privilege collective agency over the agency of the individual.

The key argument made in Thomas Pepinsky's essay is that a critical approach within the pluralist tradition offers a conceptual "toolkit" that allows us to move beyond the claims made about the intersection of material wealth and political power by proponents of the oligarchy thesis towards causal accounts of its consequences for policymaking. Pepinsky characterizes his approach as a framework of analysis rather than a theory or description of Indonesian politics, and he argues that such a framework can accommodate the key insights offered by each of the oligarchy theses while not being limited to them. At the core of his case lie two claims: that (a) critical pluralism has the capacity to produce hypotheses that can be falsified through empirical analysis; and that (b) the hypotheses it generates include, but are not limited to, hypotheses that test the link between political actions by or on behalf of those with great material wealth and the outcomes of contestations over policy. Therefore, unlike oligarchy, he contends, critical pluralism has the capacity to explain variation in policy outcomes under broadly similar structural conditions, and focuses on testing casual propositions derived from such explanations.

Marcus Mietzner takes up the pluralist critique of oligarchy in a focused discussion of political parties. Like other contributors to this volume, Mietzner does not dispute the influence of wealth in contemporary Indonesian politics. But he does challenge two key aspects of the oligarchy framework. First, he centers his analysis on the distinction between oligarchs and political elites, and distinguishes among several different types of oligarchs. In order to make this possible, Mietzner adopts a narrow definition of oligarchs, describing them as "actors whose primary power resource is the personal and direct possession of large amounts of capital" (p. 101), rather than individual actors who can deploy great wealth (Winters) or the systemic confluence of wealth and political authority (Hadiz and Robison). Following this

definition of oligarchs—which makes no assumption about the purposes to which capital may be put to use—Mietzner also challenges the primacy accorded to wealth defense by theorists of oligarchy in their explications of oligarchs' motivations for engaging in electoral politics. Second, he highlights the empirical and analytical risks of ignoring counter-oligarchic actors, pointing to the influence of non-oligarchic political elites and the new generation of civil society actors-cum-politicians as evidence of “ongoing and fierce contestation between oligarchs and counter-oligarchic forces” in Indonesia's political parties (p. 100).

The theme of contestation runs through the remaining three essays. Edward Aspinall points to another important analytical gap in the oligarchy thesis, namely, the failure to acknowledge or theorize the role of mobilization and popular agency. As a consequence, he argues, scholars drawing on this framework have produced “mono-tonal characterizations of Indonesian politics” in the late New Order and Reformasi periods (p. 125). Aspinall's key contention is that such characterizations do not recognize the influence of non-elite forces in shaping either regime change or post-authoritarian politics, including through alliances with elements of the ruling elite. Importantly, those alliances do not merely signify opportunities for cooptation, but can also channel non-elite interests in the policymaking process. Aspinall is careful to acknowledge that extreme material inequality has political consequences. He also emphasizes that oppositional forces are fragmented and disorganized. He nevertheless concludes that because Indonesian politics is marked by contestation as much as it is by oligarchic domination, an analytical focus on domination alone can neither understand nor explain the history and trajectory of Indonesian politics.

One of the key social movements in contemporary Indonesia is the labor movement. Both Winters and Hadiz and Robison acknowledge that organized labor can threaten the oligarchy at particular (revolutionary) moments in time. As Winters rightly points out, the exercise of mobilizational power by subaltern actors is difficult to sustain and too easily neutralized by rent-a-mobs paid for by oligarchs. But as Teri Caraway and Michele Ford argue in their close study of trade union engagement in the political sphere, proponents of the oligarchy thesis underestimate the potency of the Indonesian labor movement's latent mobilizational power. While trade unions remain small and fragmented, they have nevertheless enjoyed a series of important policy victories in the post-Suharto years. At the core of these victories has been increasing militancy and a growing capacity to exploit inter-oligarch/elite competition in a context where significant financial resources are required for, but do not guarantee, electoral victory. Caraway and Ford conclude that the cases they present do not invalidate the oligarchy thesis, but draw attention to its fundamental limitations when it comes to explaining specific political (and policy) outcomes.

In the volume's final contribution, Michael Buehler argues that the best way to understand Indonesian politics is through an analysis of elite competition—an approach he argues is free from the weaknesses not only of the oligarchy framework but of the alternatives presented in other chapters described here. Buehler agrees with the proponents of the oligarchy thesis that Indonesia's bureaucratic and political institutions remain dominated by “old interests.” He differs from Winters in his claim that these “old interests” are, in fact, political elites, not oligarchs, and from Hadiz and Robison in his recognition that the Indonesian political landscape has changed markedly despite continuity in the economic interests that predominate and the relative weakness of societal interest groups *vis-à-vis* political elites. Buehler contends that the most consequential change in Indonesian politics since

democratization is that political elites are now forced to rely more on support from interest groups within society. However, elites' persistent dominance means that they continue to mediate the influence of those interest groups. In other words, opportunities for change have emerged in the "interstices created by *changing* relations among state elites," and are thus confined by the limits imposed by the actions of those elites (emphasis in original, p. 174).

As this brief overview reveals, it is inaccurate to describe the eight contributions in this collection as capturing a single debate between proponents and opponents of oligarchy in Indonesian politics. Neither do they track other familiar organizing principles in contemporary Indonesian political studies: political science versus area studies, North American versus Australian schools, basic methodological or epistemological divides (quantitative versus qualitative, rationalist versus interpretivist, or positivist versus realist, and so on).¹⁷ Rather, the essays by Aspinall, Buehler, Caraway and Ford, Liddle, Mietzner, and Pepinsky challenge the two oligarchy approaches on their ontology of Indonesian politics (Aspinall, Buehler, Liddle), their conceptualization of oligarchs and elites (Buehler and Mietzner), their methodological orientation (Pepinsky), their focus on non-material power resources (Aspinall, Buehler, Caraway and Ford), and their explanatory capacity (all six).

Aspinall, whose work most closely draws on comparative scholars of social movements and contentious politics, shares with Hadiz and Robison the emphasis on the disorganization and fragmentation of social forces as a fundamental characteristic of Indonesian democracy. Buehler, like the oligarchy theorists, recognizes the persistent importance of "old interests" in democratic Indonesia, but differs in his understanding of their relationship with the popular sector. Caraway and Ford explicitly recognize economic inequality, but highlight the indeterminacy of oligarchs' interests with regard to labor politics, and the opportunity that indeterminacy creates for the exercise of collective power to shape political outcomes. Mietzner rejects the possibility of a distinct and cohesive politics of wealth defense by distinguishing among types of oligarchs, and probing the purposes to which they deploy their material resources. Pepinsky's emphasis on the policy objectives of political actors pairs nicely with Mietzner's, while more strongly embracing the structural constraints articulated in the oligarchy framework. His essay is also more closely aligned with the contemporary emphasis on falsifiability and causal explanation in the social sciences than are any of the other essays. Liddle's contribution, meanwhile, has a distinctive focus on agency: while other contributors are attentive to individuals and their actions, only Liddle argues that individual choices must be seen as basic drivers of broad changes in Indonesian politics.

In sum, just as the two oligarchy theses differ in critical ways, so, too, do the alternatives offered here. Accordingly, the different perspectives on material power and inequality in democratic Indonesia offered in this volume open new opportunities for engagement across established traditions in the study of

¹⁷ On these divides, see Thomas B. Pepinsky, "Context and Method in Southeast Asian Politics" (revised 2013; paper first presented at the conference "Methodology in Southeast Asian Studies: Grounding Research—Mixing Methods," University of Freiburg, May 2012 (https://courses.cit.cornell.edu/tp253/docs/context_method.pdf, accessed March 3, 2014); and Thomas B. Pepinsky, "Introduction: State of Indonesian Political Studies," in *Producing Indonesia: The State of the Field of Indonesian Studies*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2014), pp. 233–36.