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# The Myth of Civil Society's Democratic Role: Volunteerism and Indonesian Democracy

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## ABSTRAK

Apakah menggiatnya aktivisme politik masyarakat sipil berkorelasi positif terhadap pendalaman demokrasi di Indonesia? Artikel ini berusaha menjawab pertanyaan tersebut dengan mengkaji peranan masyarakat sipil dalam Pemilu Presiden 2014, dengan fokus aktivisme gerakan relawan yang mempengaruhi proses maupun hasil pemilu. Meskipun beberapa studi terkait aktivisme masyarakat sipil dalam pemilihan presiden 2014 menyarankan adanya hubungan antara peran gerakan relawan dengan proses demokrasi di Indonesia, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa asumsi (dan glorifikasi) terhadap gerakan relawan dan kaitannya dengan demokrasi perlu dipertimbangkan kembali. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa meskipun aktivisme gerakan relawan berkontribusi positif terhadap proses pemilu yang lebih demokratis, namun pemeriksaan lebih lanjut terhadap aktivisme gerakan relawan justru mengonfirmasi adanya karakteristik yang problematis serta keterbatasan gerakan relawan yang dapat menyebabkan keterputusan kaitan antara masyarakat sipil dan konsolidasi demokrasi di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: masyarakat madani, volunteerisme, kelompok relawan, pemilihan presiden, konsolidasi demokrasi

## ABSTRACT

Is a flourishing civil society's political activism positively correlated with the deepening of Indonesian democracy? This article addresses this question by examining the role of civil society in the 2014 presidential election in Indonesia, focusing on the collective actions of volunteer groups (known as Gerakan Relawan) that shaped both the election process and its result. While some studies on civil society activism in the 2014 presidential election suggested the connection between the role of volunteer movement and the democratic process in Indonesia, this paper suggests that the overpraised assumptions regarding the connection between civil society's role and democratic consolidation, in the case of volunteer movement, needs to be reconsidered. This paper argues that although the activism of the volunteer movement has positively contributed to the democratic process of the 2014 election, however, realistic assessment of the volunteer movement confirms its problematic nature and the limits of volunteer activism that may contribute to the disconnection of civil society and democratic consolidation in the country.

Keywords: civil society, volunteerism, volunteers group, presidential election, democratic consolidation

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## INTRODUCTION

Much of the debates on Indonesia's presidential election in 2014 remarked the notion of civil society as an engine behind the growing spirit of volunteerism, individual activism, public monitoring, and collective actions that shaped both the election process and its result. Due to the vibrancy and voluntary activism of civil society during the 2014 presidential election, they were hailed as "celebrity of the election" and even "savior of Indonesia's democracy". Following this success, observers and pundits highlighted the notion of civil society's resurgence, whose power is beyond political parties in organizing and mobilizing popular support in the elections. Civil society has become critical element that has succeeded in changing electoral politics in Indonesia. They have manifested as a real political force vis-à-vis political parties and money-driven campaigns. According to the literatures, many believe that without the support of civil society, Joko Widodo (or Jokowi) would not have been elected as Jakarta's governor in 2012 and president-elect in 2014 (Hurriyah 2018). Thus, the emergence of the so-called *Gerakan Relawan* has marked a new feature of civil society's political activism in Indonesia's electoral politics.

Most studies regarding the phenomenon of volunteerism in the 2014 residential election have suggested a connection between the role of civil society (in the form of volunteers) and democratization in Indonesia (Sefsani and Ziegenhain 2015; Hasanuddin 2014; Suaedy 2014; Ambyo 2014; Arianto 2014) on the basis of two reasons: *first*, these volunteers –who worked individually and in groups, across all classes in society, had various backgrounds – emerged as a progressive civil society (Mietzner 2013) characterized by autonomous and voluntary organizations motivated by pro-democratic goals (Sefsani and Ziegenhain 2015) with a high degree of political awareness (Samah and Susanti 2014). *Second*, the role of volunteers is considered as a breakthrough for political change in Indonesia (Suaedy 2014) and is in line with civil society's democracy-building functions that deepen democracy in the country (Sefsani and Ziegenhain 2015; Hasanuddin 2014; Okamoto 2014) and

help change the political values of patrimonial and oligarchic nuance in Indonesian political tradition (Alam, et al. 2017).

While the idea of civil society as an agent for democratic consolidation has long been theoretical belief within the academic communities (Putnam 1993, Gellner 1994, Fukuyama 1996, Diamond 1999, Porio 2002, Boussard 2003), a careful examination of whether this assumption is flawed and immature is necessary. Notably, after reaching soaring and unprecedented popularity in the last two decades, the concept of civil society has become the object of considerable scrutiny, cynicism, and even disdain for years (Berman 1997). Compared with the idea of civil society as the remedy for the various ills afflicting advances industrial democracies (Putnam 1993), a flurry of studies accuses them of fostering the very ills they are meant to help cure: authoritarianism, corruption, and lack of accountability, to name just a few (Encarnación 2006). Thus, the purpose of this article is to confirm the overpraised assumption of civil society and the case of Indonesia's 2014 presidential election may underline this idea.

Contrary to the literatures, this article suggests that the overpraised assumptions regarding the political activism of the volunteers and its connection to the democratic deepening should be reconsidered. This article attempts to answer whether a flourishing civil society's political activism correlated positively with the deepening of Indonesian democracy. By examining the role of the volunteer movement, this article aims to contribute to the debate on the connection between the role of civil society and democratic consolidation. This paper argues that although the robust activism of the volunteers movement has contributed to the democratic process and improved the quality of the 2014 election, their role had little, if any, effect on democratic consolidation in Indonesia. This study shows that the problematic nature and agenda of the volunteer groups have not limited their ability to perform democracy-building functions and contributed to the disconnection of civil society and democratic consolidation in the country.

## CIVIL SOCIETY RECONSIDERED

The idea of civil society as an agent of democratic consolidation has long been a theoretical belief within the academic communities. Civil society is often hailed as the engine for democratization: in bringing about democratization, propelling democratic transition as well as consolidating democracy. Many scholars agree in describing civil society as a social force within a society that contributes to the development of democracy and serves as a prerequisite for democratic consolidation. Civil society, as Diamond (1994, 3-17) suggested, can contribute to the strengthening of democracy through its democratic-building functions, in which civil society: (1) sets the limit on state power; (2) supplements the role of political parties; (3) develops democratic attributes; (4) creates channels for the articulation, aggregation, and representation of interest, and generates opportunities for participation and influence at all levels of governance; (5) mitigates the principal polarities of political conflicts; (6) recruits and trains new political leaders; (7) monitors elections; (8) disseminates information and aids citizens; (9) supports economic reform; and (10) strengthens the democratic state.

As this paper attempts to avoid the glorification of civil society, carefully observing how the political context determines the nature of civil society and its effect on democracy is critical. One of the often raised questions is to what extent is a robust and vibrant civil society are beneficial to the development of democracy and, even more notable, to a consolidated democracy? The nature of civil society is such that it is a complex and heterogeneous entity that may compound organizations with undemocratic goals and uncivil manners. Civil society can be good or evil or something else, and its various components may or may not behave in a civil manner; additionally, it may or may not espouse democratic goals (Bermeo 2000; Hadiwinata 2005). Hence, the glorification of the idea of civil society as a type of a panacea for the developing world, would result in consequences such as flawed argument that would require reconsideration.

The most influential text criticizing the idea of the virtuous power of civil society is Omar Encarnación's *The Myth of Civil Society*, a study

of civil society in the consolidation of Spain and Brazil's democracy. According to Encarnación, in contrast to the idea of a vibrant civil society as prerequisite for democratization, a flourishing civil society can actually be a hindrance to democratization, particularly if surrounded by weak and inefficient political institutions. Encarnación (2003, 5) concludes that many of the new democracies during the third wave lack most of the conditions usually attached to a vibrant and robust civil society. Similar to Encarnación's emphasis on the political context of civil society, Caroline Boussard's *Civil Society's Role in the Post-Transition Honduras* is also useful. According to Boussard (2003), to understand civil society's complex relationship to democracy, three features must be addressed: the political context, the external influence and the internal structure of civil society organizations (CSOs).

In terms of political context, the role of civil society is strongly dependent on the state, particularly the strategies of the governing elite. Without sufficient attention to the surrounding political structures, civil society's democracy-building potential cannot be understood. In terms of external influence, the emergence of the so-called non-governmental organization (NGO) development has been emphasizing the impact of development assistance on civil society's role in development and democratization. Finally, the internal structure of civil society organizations is also crucial to understand how civil society may contribute to democratization. As Boussard (2003, 6) asserted, a civil society compounds of organizations with undemocratic goals and methods, and with internal authoritarian structures, is not likely to contribute to democratic development by functioning as "schools for democracy", as suggested by Alexis de Tocqueville, however, it may still have a democracy-building function by being a countervailing power to the state .

#### CIVIL SOCIETY'S ACTIVISM IN THE 2014 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

For much of the country, the 2014 presidential election has become a test for the longevity of Indonesian democracy, due to the formidable contestation between two candidates depicted as the symbol of a demo-

cratic leader versus the authoritarian elite. Mietzner (2014, 112) asserts that the election was a threat to Indonesia's democracy for two reasons: *first*, the election highlighted the strength of the country's antidemocratic forces -within the elite and the general electorate, and *second*, the election was a contest not only between two candidates, but also between diametrically opposed concepts of power and visions for Indonesia's future: namely, between grassroots volunteerism versus oligarchy; technocratic moderation versus populist demagoguery; and support for democratic elections versus the denunciation of them as "un-Indonesian and too costly". To many prodemocracy activists, the election was the culmination of their sustained efforts in mobilizing various segments of Indonesian civil society in the post-Suharto transition. Given that the election occurred in a dramatic political environment, the rising of Prabowo's popularity during the election eventually resulted in civil society entering the political arena and engaging with the political activism during election in many ways. Civil society activists went from being neutral and focusing on election monitoring, to playing a more political and partisan role, working on or volunteering for campaigns to increase the electoral base for Jokowi.

Although the political activism of civil society has been more robust ever since the 1998 *Reformasi*, the mobilization of civil society in this particular election was unprecedented, more diverse, more active, more political and partisan (Lay 2015). There are at least two differences in terms of civil society's political activism in prior to 2014 presidential election. The first is the concern toward the electoral politics of civil society actors. Different from previous elections in which the political activism of civil society focused mainly in the arena of legislative elections (e.g., participating as legislature candidates from a political party or independent candidates), the 2014 presidential election witnessed a more partisan and politicized civil society. By these, it means that they involved in electoral activities not only as electoral base, but also actively participated as campaign machine for candidate.

The second difference concerns civil society's interaction with formal politics and political parties. Prior to this election, civil society ac-

tors developed connection with political parties and transformed their role from activists to politicians, to endorse many policy reforms and changes in the parliament (Ichwanuddin 2010; Perdana 2014). In this case, CSOs and activists used their personal relations and networks to open dialogue and communication with politicians in the House of Representative or DPR (Perdana 2015). Cooperation between the two parties then became a key factor that characterized civil society's interaction with formal politics. By contrast, civil society's attitude during 2014 presidential election indicated that albeit being partisan, civil society tended to maintain a considerable distance from political parties. Instead of endorsing Jokowi's nomination to political party, civil society activists established many new volunteer organizations or groups to support Jokowi's candidacy and took over the parties' function as campaign machine during the election (Sefsani and Ziegenhain 2015, 20).

Within a year, the number of these volunteer groups increased to hundreds and involved various elements. More than 100 volunteer organizations were founded from 2013 to 2014 and declared their support to Jokowi as presidential candidate, for example Bara JP, PROJO, Almisbat, Seknas Jokowi, Duta Jokowi, ARM, Jokowi Mania, Solmet Jokowi, Arus Bawah Jokowi, Kawan Jokowi, Jasmev, Gerak Indonesia, Kornas Jokowi, JPKP, GK Center, RPJP, EP for Jokowi, Komunitas Alumni Perguruan Tinggi, Sekber Jokowi, GRI, RKIH, Kabar Nawacita, and Forkami. According to Gultom, the coordinating secretary of the *Tim Koordinasi Relawan Nasional Jokowi–JK* (National Volunteer Coordination Team for Jokowi–JK), approximately 1,289 volunteer groups were established throughout Indonesia, comprising an estimated of 1–1.5 million members or sympathizers. This figure is based on the declarations of volunteer status released by the team's office. Many groups, however, did not register their members. Thus, the estimate is believed to be only one third of all the volunteers (Lay 2015, 33). As the establishment of the volunteer groups was not directed by Jokowi but more by grassroots participation, they were loosely organized. Thus, creating a list comprising all the members of the volunteer groups is not possible. The most notable characteristic of the volunteer groups is that they included indi-



viduals from the lower classes such as housewives, traders at traditional markets, musicians and youth, as well as businesspeople and political figures (Suaedy 2015). For example, one prominent volunteer organization, namely Bara JP (*Barisan Relawan Jokowi Presiden*), claimed that its members were from various backgrounds, namely journalists, politicians, actors, artists, lawyers, and students.

For Jokowi, the importance of volunteers was unquestionable to the point that he acknowledged that without the support of volunteers, it would have been impossible for him to be nominated by his party and win the election. Table 1 below presents several volunteer groups considered to be important and to have leading roles in mobilizing support, shaping public opinion, and campaigning for Jokowi in the 2014 presidential election.

Table 1  
Major Volunteer Groups Supporting Jokowi

Name	Network	Background	Reasons for Support	Form of Support
BARA JP (Established on June 15, 2013)	34 provinces, 67 countries	Activists from various backgrounds: professionals, journalists, worker activists, musicians, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis of trust toward political elites</li> <li>• Aspiring for political changes</li> <li>• Supporting Jokowi as a presidential candidate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect 15 million signatures on a petition for the PDI-P to nominate Jokowi</li> <li>• Mobilize 500 witnesses on ballot day</li> </ul>
SEKNAS JOKOWI (Established on Dec 15, 2013)	30 provinces, 267 districts, 2000 members, several wing organizations	Civil society and democracy activists from various CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting Jokowi as a presidential candidate</li> <li>• Safeguarding Indonesian democracy and democratic reform agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize a national poster competition</li> <li>• Formulate agenda and platforms for <i>Nawacita</i> campaign</li> <li>• Design campaign for youth and women's groups</li> </ul>
PROJO (Established on Dec 23, 2014)	34 provinces, 497 regencies/municipalities	Student activists from the 1980s, PDI-P members and party activists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting Jokowi as a presidential candidate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence PDI-P to nominate Jokowi</li> <li>• Mobilize 500 witnesses on ballot day</li> <li>• Provide campaign attributes</li> </ul>
ALMISBAT (Established on April 4, 2014)	40 districts in 7 provinces	Student activists from the 1998 Reform movement, PDIP members and party activists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refusal of Prabowo and New Order's revival</li> <li>• Supporting Jokowi as a presidential candidate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design campaign for youth groups and students</li> </ul>

DUTA JOKOWI (Established on June 10, 2014)	33 provinces	1999 student activists, musicians, Christian activists from KWI.	• Supporting Jokowi as a presidential candidate	• Conduct political canvassing in 100 cities. • Extend territorial activities through networking with various organizations
POSPERA (Established on April 30, 2014)	23 provinces, 277 regencies/ municipalities, 2000 volunteers	Student activists from the 1998 Reform movement	• Supporting Jokowi as a presidential candidate	• Conduct political canvassing • Extend territorial activities throughout Indonesia • Distribute campaign attributes to voters
KAWAN JOKOWI (Established on May 13, 2014)	22 provinces	Activists from various backgrounds: professionals, musicians, social activists, etc	• Supporting Jokowi as a presidential candidate	• Launch a website to recruit volunteers (in cooperation with Barisan Muda JK) • Design a campaign for youth groups through social media and YouTube
ARM (Established on March 8, 2014)	Several labor unions	Labor activists and networks	• Supporting Jokowi as presidential candidate	• Mobilize support from the working class • Develop network with various national and local worker organizations
KMB for JKW-JK (Established on May 28, 2014)	34 provinces, 300 regencies	Business communities	• Supporting Jokowi as presidential candidate	• Mobilize support from business communities for Jokowi-Kalla
JASMEV 2014 (established on Aug 12, 2012, re-activated in 2014)	31 regional coordinators (in big cities and some foreign countries); 1000 members	Professionals, social media activists	• Supporting Jokowi as presidential candidate	• Campaign for Jokowi on social media

Source: Author's compilation from various sources.

Although the mobilization of volunteer groups can also be found in Prabowo's campaign, volunteer groups that supported Jokowi had distinctive features compared to Prabowo's volunteers, especially in terms of size, characteristics, and background. Prabowo's volunteers were mostly established by political parties and operated under the parties' commands, while Jokowi's volunteers were mainly established and loosely coordinated by civil-society activists and comprised various segments of society: youth, students, activists, musicians, workers, celebrities, and political figures. Furthermore, the scope of Jokowi's volunteer networks covered the national and subnational levels, for example, the

provincial, regency, municipal, and neighborhood levels throughout the country and were mostly initiated by non-political activists.

In terms of organizational scope, volunteer groups that supported Jokowi can be categorized into three types. *First*, organizations operating at the national level became prominent groups. These organizations were established either by party activists or civil-society activists, had official branches in many provinces and regions, and maintained a minimum level of coordination. These organizations created various methods of campaigning and provided campaign attributes and distributed them to small volunteer groups at the local level. *Second*, organizations established as branch groups at the provincial, regency, and municipal levels. Some organizations were established as international branches and mobilized support from Indonesian citizens living abroad. *Third*, local volunteer groups established throughout the country by local communities, individuals, groups initiatives, and interest groups.

Another notable feature of the volunteer groups that supported Jokowi is they were established long before the 2014 election. Notably, the presence of volunteer groups that supported Jokowi was flourishing in 2012, when several volunteer groups emerged as extra-party campaign teams for Joko Widodo–Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (popularly known as Jokowi–Ahok), who were candidates for gubernatorial positions in Jakarta’s 2012 election. The notable characteristic of these groups was their heterogeneity in terms of affiliations, backgrounds, campaign methods, and area of operation. In the 2014 presidential election, many of these volunteer groups continued to support Jokowi due to his record of promoting bureaucratic reform in Jakarta. One volunteer said,

“they had a range of different religious affiliations, ethnicities, social classes, professions, hobbies, origins and education. Some were from political parties or were friends of party activists who had cast aside their party identities, while others had no affiliation at all to political parties, or had initially sympathized with another pair of candidates before shifting. The volunteers’ areas of operation also

differed, being defined either by geographical territory, segments of society, or the virtual/ real world. Each group of volunteers was generally formed out of the initiatives of several people, with a number of others joining later. Their methods also varied; some worked in a systematic and organized manner within a group of volunteers, while others worked alone” (Suaedy 2014).

#### VOLUNTEERS AND THE DEMOCRATIC-BUILDING FUNCTION

Regarding the establishment of volunteer groups, at least three explanations provide insights into the phenomenon of the volunteer groups. *First*, the phenomenon can be perceived as a sign of skepticism and political distrust toward political parties. In this condition, political parties are considered corrupt entities characterized by patrimonial politics (Aspinall 2010), neo-authoritarian platforms (Mietzner 2009), massive corruption, and disconnection with their constituents (Hamid 2012). Consequently, when volunteer groups emerged and assumed a role to assist the political parties, they became more publicly acceptable. Although the volunteer groups are outside the party and even tend to be antiparty, they operate similar to a party in terms of campaigning and mobilizing support for a candidate. Organizations such as PROJO served the role of political parties during the campaign and performed various duties, for example, preparing witnesses in polling stations, mobilizing support, designing campaigns and advertising, agitating, and monitoring the voting process (Interview with Budi Ari Setiadi, September 18, 2016).

*Second*, the volunteering phenomenon is also considered a struggle against the oligarchy. Indonesia's post-transition politics is characterized by an oligarchic democracy<sup>1</sup> (Winters 2013; Ford and Pepinsky 2014). When Prabowo ran for president in this particular election, many in-

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<sup>1</sup> Despite being accredited as the third largest democracy in the world and one of the best examples of democracy in Southeast Asia, a democratization assessment of Indonesia reveals serious pitfalls. As Indonesian democracy consolidates, oligarchs are increasingly positioned as key arbiters of the country's political life (Winters in Ford and Pepinsky 2014, 3).

dividuals believed that he represented the oligarchs. Civil society considered him a symbol of old authoritarian Indonesia and volunteers believed that this particular election was the “final battle” between the New Order and the Reform Era (Sefsani and Ziegenhain 2015, 22). Hence, many volunteers could have been supporting Jokowi in this election. An argument was made that the volunteer groups emerged not only because of the distrust of the parties but also because they rejected the elite’s behavior, which tended to be formalistic and elitist, and ignored the will of the people (Aequina 2016). Thus, individuals opted to form a volunteer group and participate in the election, whether to monitor the process or to mobilize support for a candidate. *Lastly*, the emergence of volunteer groups is related to the electoral politics of the civil society in the presidential election. Although civil society activists have opportunities to nominate themselves as candidates in legislative elections, with or without political parties, the situation was, of course, different in this election. The capacity of civil society to nominate their own candidate was limited, if it existed at all, because no independent candidate ran in this election. Hence, many civil society activists joined volunteer groups as a vehicle and an alternative channel for their electoral politics and to take advantage of the political opportunity of that time.

Although these arguments may explain the emergence of volunteer groups and their role in fulfilling the functions of political parties in the election, an association between the volunteers’ role and democratic deepening has not been observed. Thus, careful examination of the extent to which the emergence and role of volunteers in the election contributed to the development of a robust civil society and to the democratic deepening in Indonesia is needed and assessment of whether their support of Jokowi for president was based on the democratic reform agenda is also necessary to clarify the assumptions of civil society as an engine for democratization. At one point, this article agrees that the role of volunteers is indeed significant and undoubtedly a factor behind Jokowi’s victory in the 2014 presidential election. In addition, the article accredits the importance of “traditional” civic organizations

as a watchdog for the election to ensure that the process and results are credible. During the election, civic organizations and individuals were actively involved in monitoring, observing, and checking the outcomes of the election and inviting public participation in the recapitulation of the votes. Arguably, such initiatives are critical because they prevented irregularities in that election and will prevent irregularities in future elections. According to Lançee (2014), such initiatives have marked civil society's agenda in support of electoral integrity and are significance to make it legitimate, open to scrutiny, and apt to change that could promote fairer proceedings and increased levels of trust among the electorate.

With regard to the role of volunteers, Sefsani and Ziegenhain (2015) argued that Jokowi's volunteers used three predominant means to contribute to the deepening of democracy in Indonesia: *"By being active and undertaking the election campaign activities mentioned previously, the voluntary groups fulfilled various functions of a civil society, which Diamond has identified as being supportive of democracy. By spreading information about Joko Widodo's democratic reform agenda, volunteer groups disseminated democratic ideas and values. By being autonomous and voluntary, the volunteer organizations set an example, advocating a change from electoral support as a form of clientelism to self-directed and participatory citizenship. The activities of the relawan organizations were an example of active involvement in politics by normal citizens and empowered many individuals who had not taken an active interest in politics in the past, and thus stimulated political participation"* (Sefsani and Ziegenhain 2015, 30).

For many volunteers, supporting Jokowi over Prabowo meant fighting for improvements in Indonesian democracy. By choosing the populist version of Jokowi over the populist version of Prabowo, civic groups' expectations were high, that is, a Jokowi presidency would be marked by transparency, accountability, rule of law, and respect for human rights (Vaughn 2014). Such high expectations had been expressed widely by various elements of civil society, including individuals participating in voluntary actions to campaign on his behalf. Through social media,

people expressed their approval for Jokowi freely, using the ribbon “I Stand on the Right Side” next to their avatars on Facebook and Twitter, implying that the best choice was to support Jokowi. Compared with the enormous support that Jokowi received in the election, Prabowo received a considerably strong rejection from many prodemocracy elements. Civic groups and national media coverage seemed to favor Jokowi over Prabowo. Notably, *The Jakarta Post*, in an unprecedented and bold move, expressed its rejection of Prabowo explicitly and endorsed Jokowi in an editorial column, “*Endorsing Jokowi*” (the Jakarta Post, July 4, 2014).

In the opinion of Jokowi’s supporters, stand up for Jokowi was interpreted as support for strengthened democratization in the country and “a battle” to safeguard the future of Indonesian democracy. At this point, civil society is considered being partisan in this election as a mean to ensure the advancement of the democratic agenda under Jokowi’s administration—if he won. However, this article asserts that the discussion of civil society should investigate that its establishment and role as agents of democratization may be hindered by the complexities within civil society itself; thus, an investigation of the case of volunteers from this perspective is worthwhile. A realistic assessment on the role of the volunteer groups that supported Jokowi reveals volunteers remain constrained by their capacity to strengthen democracy. Although the role of the volunteers have fulfilled some of the democratic-building functions, an examination of whether such functions were run only by volunteers during the election is necessary. The success of volunteers in endorsing Jokowi’s candidacy to the political parties and fulfilling their function as Jokowi’s campaigners is not necessarily associated with the democratic-building function as Diamond advocates. Instead, volunteers are functioned as an “extra political party” in Jokowi’s campaign.

Civil society in its ideal form is more likely to contribute to the democratic process if it maintains its fundamental role to empower people and serves as the counterbalance power and as the watchdog of the election. In the context of the 2014 presidential election, these roles were played mostly by the so-called traditional civic organizations.

These organizations gathered and produced collective actions to ensure the integrity of the election and were directly engaged in canvassing and interacting with voters to generate opportunities for public participation in the election process and result. Support for candidates in this context must be considered as personal preference, with the democratic reform agenda being a secondary priority. However, this condition was not the case for volunteer groups that supported Jokowi; their establishment and motivations were more complex, and some groups were created solely to win Jokowi's campaign, not to pursue further democratic agenda. Furthermore, some groups were even created to seek political and economic interests of their members, while some operated like political parties. Hence, relating the role of the volunteers to the democratic deepening process in Indonesia might be presumptive and oversimplified.

#### THE COMPLEX NATURE OF VOLUNTEER GROUPS SUPPORTING JOKOWI

Although the aforementioned arguments support the vital role of civil society—and volunteers in particular—during the election, these claims have not investigated the possibility that these volunteer groups may have had undemocratic goals. Notably, regarding this point, Suryajaya (2014) asserted that volunteer groups that supported Jokowi also consisted of individuals with an interest in advancing their political goals and that a distinction must be made among the volunteers based on their motivation prior to and after the election (Table 2).

Table 2  
Type of Volunteer Groups Supporting Jokowi

Motivation	Type of Volunteers	Political Position in the Post-Election	Assessments
Supporting Jokowi as a refusal of Prabowo	Anti-Prabowo Volunteers	Critical to Jokowi's administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realistic expectation toward Jokowi's administration</li> <li>• Maintain critical position toward Jokowi's governance</li> </ul>
Supporting Jokowi due to his personality	Volunteers Type A	Supporting Jokowi for personal reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Militant supporters, whose militancy relied on Jokowi's figure</li> <li>• Key factor for Jokowi's victory</li> </ul>



Supporting Jokowi due to his programs	Volunteers Type B	Critical supports based on programmatic issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid support towards Jokowi despite negative opinion or Jokowi's personality.</li> <li>• Attracted to Jokowi because of his programmatic issues</li> <li>• Key factor for Jokowi's victory</li> </ul>
Supporting Jokowi for political opportunity and career	Oligarchs	Concession and project-based support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims for political positions for personal interest and forced Jokowi to engage in "horse trading" politics and abandon some of his programmatic agenda.</li> </ul>

Source: sorted data from Suryajaya 2014.

After the election, one of the most upsetting occurrences was the influx of volunteer figures to state-owned enterprises (known as *Badan Usaha Milik Negara, BUMN*). While this tradition has been upheld by previous presidents as a means of providing political compensation, Jokowi's administration was no exception to this tradition despite his pledge to run an open government free of collusion and free of horse-trading politics. Not long after his inauguration as the president of Indonesia, Jokowi appointed a considerable number of figures from the volunteer groups to political offices in state institutions or as commissioners in various BUMN. As admitted by Adian Napitulu, a Pospera leader, many of Pospera members were appointed as commissioners in BUMN, mostly at PTPN (PT Perkebunan Nusantara) located in many provinces (Sumandoyo 2016). Similarly, PROJO officials reported that many PROJO figures were appointed as commissioners in various SOEs and were involved in facilitating the implementation of government programs in various regions.

Thus, coming to the following conclusion was not difficult. The employment of volunteers, politicians, and success teams was used as compensation for their support in helping Jokowi win the election. In Indonesian political tradition, commissioner positions in SOEs are typically considered a reward from the government-elect to individuals who have connections to the government and were involved in the political process prior to the election. Hence, supporting Jokowi with the expectation of political reward is not unusual for volunteer groups, despite their initial support for Jokowi to achieve democratic goals. The

salary of a commissioner ranges from IDR 10 to 120 million, depending on company's revenue; thus, unsurprisingly, many volunteers were interested in becoming commissioners. Notably, many volunteers applied to become a commissioner through *Rumah Transisi*, an *ad hoc* team led by Rini Soemarno (later the Minister of SOEs) that prepared a blueprint for Jokowi's administration.

From the volunteers' perspective, being a commissioner and participating in the government is part of their responsibility to safeguard Jokowi's administration, to advocate policy changes within the government, and to ensure that the victory is maintained after the election. As argued by PROJO officials, President Jokowi's policy of granting offices concurred with precedent considering the significant role of PROJO in endorsing Jokowi's candidacy and supporting his campaign: *"Some of PROJO's members were assigned several SOEs to safeguard the implementation of the Nawacita program of Jokowi-JK"* (Interview, September 12, 2016). Correspondingly, Budi Ari Setiadi, Chairman of PROJO, also stated: *"By contrast, if we weren't involved [in the government] that would be odd. Although in my case, I don't have motivation to be commissioner, I support my fellow volunteers who fulfill that position. Who else then? We don't have to deny that volunteers are allowed to help [Jokowi] after election. In my opinion, the more volunteers [that become commissioners] there are, the better."*

Similar arguments from the volunteers can also be found in their statements reported in the mass media, namely, the sharp criticism from the public and the opposing opinions of volunteers regarding such behavior (Alvionitasari & Sugiharto 2016). Amid the rising criticism of volunteers' influx in SOEs, President Jokowi stated, *"Everything is in accordance with the selection mechanism, and the government aims to make SOEs a driving force for economy and infrastructure"* (Supratiwi 2015). However, Vice President Jusuf Kalla was more frank in responding to the critics. He said that the appointment of volunteers as commissioners by the President was part of the political tradition in Indonesian politics, that is, a new precedent had not been set (Pratomo 2015). According to Suaedy, the involvement of volunteers within the political system

following Jokowi's victory was a consequence of a partisan social movement; to take charge of the postelection political agenda, they had to be included in the government. Being involved and placed in strategic positions would make it easier for the volunteers to endorse substantial changes within policies without undermining democratic procedures (Suaedy 2016). As argued by Farid, founder of *Seknas Jokowi*, Jokowi's victory in the presidential election opened a space for volunteers to be directly involved from within and being a policy maker is more effective than being a watchdog for the government (Interview with KSI, March 31, 2017).

Arguably, this opportunistic behavior of volunteers confirms the problematic nature of the volunteer groups that supported Jokowi for president. *First*, it only nurtures, if not worsens, the tradition of "horse-trading politics" in Indonesia. Although Jokowi promised his presidency would end transactional politics, the opposite has been observed. The formation of a "cabinet of compromise" and the distribution of important positions among the volunteers and other supporters of his campaign was clearly the result of a horse-trading brand of politics. *Second*, this opportunistic behavior of volunteers refutes the argument that the volunteer groups that supported Jokowi had prodemocratic goals. Instead of safeguarding Jokowi's administration from the party oligarchs who attempt to paralyze and tame his power, these volunteers emerged as another group of oligarchs seeking power and wealth. Notably, the politics of volunteers during the election was epitomized in an online media special report called "Gurita Timses di BUMN"—Leviathans in State-Owned Companies (Sumandoyo 2016).

#### LIMITS OF THE VOLUNTEERS' DEMOCRACY-BUILDING FUNCTIONS

Although this article agrees that volunteers are instrumental in encouraging political participation, the extent of their role in fulfilling democratic functions was aimed particularly at gaining votes and winning the presidency for Jokowi. The partisanship of the volunteers has constrained their ability to fulfill the democratic functions of a

progressive civil society. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, not all volunteer organizations promoted democratic reform or further democratic agenda. Many were established solely to win Jokowi's campaign. In this context, a comparison of the volunteers' agenda and "traditional" CSOs' agenda would be worthwhile.<sup>2</sup> Compared to the extraordinary (and unprecedented) involvement of traditional CSOs in organizing collective action, monitoring the election and generating opportunities for public participation, the seemingly active and robust volunteer groups that played a pivotal role in the 2014 presidential election do not reflect a strong, robust civil society, which Putnam and Diamond have argued is a prerequisite for democratic consolidation.

Unlike the party oligarchs, volunteer groups that supported Jokowi were not a solid entity, that is, these groups were loosely organized, allied, involved many elements, and were considerably fragmented. The only factor that unified civil society (and volunteer groups) during the 2014 presidential election was Prabowo's candidacy. The presidential campaigns of Jokowi and Prabowo provided space for civil society to participate and use collective action to take a leading role in the election: to monitor the election or support Jokowi's candidacy. However, the situation changed after the election. Depending on their motivation, Jokowi's supporters may have had different attitudes toward Jokowi's administration: some might return to political apathy (Savirani 2015), some would return to critiquing civil society, and some others who gained "rewards" would be most likely to continue supporting Jokowi.

In addition, not all volunteer organizations supported democratic reform agenda. One reason for this phenomenon is because some volunteer groups were created simply to support Jokowi's campaign and helped him win the election. Consequently, most of these organizations dissolved after the election, except for PROJO and Pospera, which transformed into mass organization (known as *ormas*). The fact that the volunteer groups supporting Jokowi also consisted of "career-seekers" and "opportunists" has provided evidence to the argument in this paper.

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, "traditional" refers to established CSOs working on various topics, including anticorruption, an election watch, the environment, human rights, and democracy.

In this context, the nature of voluntary groups, that is dynamic and loosely organized, will have negative impact if misused by individuals with political motives (DEMOS 2015), as is the case for the volunteers who expect “rewards” in return for their support.

Limited by a seemingly narrow agenda, the role of volunteers is thus only instrumental in helping Jokowi with the election and far from contributing to the deepening of Indonesian democracy after the election—as has been argued in the literature. Notably, political volunteerism has successfully become a new phenomenon in Indonesian politics; thus, a more substantial discussion of the role of volunteers during elections is necessary. As one study argued, the function of volunteers should not be limited to supporting a candidate alone; instead, volunteers should feel morally obliged to participate in creating the new administration’s agenda to ensure that the promises made by the candidate to the electorate during the campaign period are implemented (Suryajaya 2014). In other words, to provide substantive meaning to the phenomenon of political volunteerism, the electoral politics of civil society must be based on programmatic issues; only by doing this can volunteers and civil society contribute to the democratic deepening in Indonesia. Constructing electoral support on the basis of programmatic issues will also help to ensure that civil society is fulfilling its democracy-building function. Hence, the question remains: can volunteers function as civil society if they do not distance themselves from the government? Considering the findings of this investigation into how most of the volunteers positioned themselves after the election, such expectations may be too hollow. Even an organization such as PROJO positioned its organization as a “die-hard” supporter of Jokowi’s administration, despite their transformation into an *ormas* after the election.

Instead of fulfilling civil society’s democracy-building functions, most volunteers were likely functioning as an arm of Jokowi’s election campaign: providing an electoral base, mobilizing support from voters, and campaigning for Jokowi. After the election, the volunteers supported Jokowi’s government and acted to safeguard Jokowi’s government through their involvement within it. This position, in the end, will

hamper their role in functioning as an independent civil society if they remain inside the government. That said, disconnection was observed between the seemingly democratic role of the volunteers during and after the presidential election. Although the role of volunteers increased the integrity of the election and the democratic process throughout the election, the problematic nature of the volunteer groups that supported Jokowi hindered the function of civil society after the election. The appointment of volunteer activists as commissioners, for instance, has resulted in skepticism and prejudice regarding the real motives behind the establishment of the volunteer groups and their reasons to support Jokowi in this election. Thus, most of the traditional organizations not clearly stating their support for Jokowi's bid for the presidency and focusing on preventing election irregularities by actively monitoring the process and the result makes sense. Although some members of traditional organizations joined volunteer groups, little effect, if any, was observed regarding the independence of the organizations.

Thus, a more in-depth investigation into civil society's support for Jokowi during his campaign for president, which was presumed to be morally appropriate, should be reconsidered. Although the support of civil society was the foremost factor in Jokowi winning the presidential election, his candidacy was also possible because of his party supporters. By contrast, civil society's capacity to transform politics through being the impetus that won Jokowi the election may not have succeeded in influencing his actions after the election. Despite the ability of civil society (in the form of volunteer organizations) to mobilize public support during the election and become a so-called hero of democracy, this capacity is of limited relevance to the democratization of Indonesia. In line with the democratic consolidation agenda, civil society's capacity to challenge oligarchic influence after the election was also restricted.

## CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that volunteers played an instrumental role in the democratic process in the 2014 presidential election. Their contribution to making the election a success and putting a popular

candidate into power has resulted in new hope for a flourishing, progressive civil society. To some extent, volunteers contributed to the improvement of the democratic process in the election: they stimulated citizens' political participation to legitimize the election and ensure that no irregularities occurred.

However, the discussion of volunteers in connection with democratic-building functions required consideration because volunteers are constrained by the problematic nature of volunteerism. Driven by the objective to elect Jokowi as president, volunteers were significant as campaigners and as a substitute for the function of political parties, but were irrelevant after the election. After the election, the presumably democratic volunteers did not manifest the expectation of being democratic champions, and instead, became rogues who exhibited opportunistic political behavior. In the end, the complex nature of volunteers impedes their capacity to advance the democratic agenda under Jokowi's administration.

In light of the seemingly progressive nature of civil society, the case of volunteerism in the 2014 presidential election provides little evidence to support the many assumptions linking vibrant, flourishing volunteer groups to the democratic functions of civil society. The case of political volunteerism in Indonesia, instead, demonstrates that the volunteer phenomenon is more related to the dysfunctional political parties, and that volunteers are instrumental in fulfilling various functions of political parties during the election. Although the success of volunteers as campaigners has inspired similar movements in local elections in Indonesia, this article suggests that it remains too early to attribute the embodiment of a progressive civil society in line with democratic-building functions to volunteerism.

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