

Indonesian Student Movement Moral Force Doctrine in Social Change Under Jokowi's Indonesia and Its Future

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ABSTRACT

The development of Indonesian democracy is slowly regressing under Jokowi's Administration, amidst that regression, two massive student movement occurred in 2019 and 2020. Despite the scale of the movement, those movement couldn't maximize their success. This article attempts to answer two questions regarding that matter, first, why the student movement in Jokowi's Administration couldn't achieve success? Second, is the student movement still viable to do a social change? To answer those questions this article examined the moral force doctrine which constructed along with the student movement throughout the history. This article argue that the moral force doctrine needs to be abandoned because it made the student movement have an obscure position towards the establishment and limiting the student movement to build alliances with other political groups. Yet, the student movement still viable to do a social change in a time of crisis even it doesn't change its doctrine.

Keywords: student movement, moral force doctrine, democracy

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan demokrasi di Indonesia sedikit demi sedikit mengalami regresi pada masa Pemerintahan Jokowi, di tengah regresi tersebut terjadi gerakan mahasiswa yang cukup besar pada tahun 2019 dan 2020. Meskipun gerakan tersebut besar dalam secara skala, tetapi gerakan-gerakan tersebut tidak dapat mencapai keberhasilan yang maksimal. Artikel ini mencoba menjawab dua pertanyaan terkait hal tersebut, pertama mengapa gerakan mahasiswa pada Pemerintahan Jokowi tidak berhasil mencapai tujuannya? Kedua, apakah gerakan mahasiswa masih dapat melakukan perubahan sosial? Untuk menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan tersebut, artikel ini mencoba memeriksa ulang doktrin gerakan moral yang sudah terkonstruksi bersamaan dengan identitas gerakan mahasiswa sepanjang sejarah. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa doktrin gerakan moral harus ditinggalkan karena membuat posisi gerakan mahasiswa menjadi tidak jelas di hadapan kekuasaan dan membatasi gerakan mahasiswa untuk membangun aliansi dengan kelompok politik lain. Tetapi, gerakan mahasiswa masih dapat melakukan perubahan sosial jika terjadi krisis, meskipun tidak mengubah doktrinnya.

Kata kunci: gerakan mahasiswa, doktrin gerakan moral, demokrasi

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian democracy in recent years has become a big academic debate. Researchers saw regression in Indonesian democracy under Joko Widodo's Administration. There are several accounts which discussed this topic such as Warburton and Aspinall (2019) who argued that Indonesian democracy is an illiberal democracy and emphasized on structural, agential and popular forces in Yudhoyono's Administration and Joko Widodo's Administration

that led the Indonesian democracy itself to regression. Scholars such as Power (2018) and Mietzner (2020) noted that Indonesian democratic regression cannot be separated with the rise of populist movement which could be seen in Prabowo Subianto's presidential campaign in 2014 and 2019, yet Jokowi rather opt to fight the populist surge with illiberal means or as Mietzner (2019) puts it as authoritarian innovations. These innovations are criminalisation towards the populist movement, manipulation of law enforcement and efforts to undermine oppositions (Power 2018; Mietzner 2019b). The regression itself could be seen within the first term of Jokowi's Administration which puts economic matters above democracy reform and other key issues such as environment, employment, and land reform (Ekayanta 2019) and could be argued sided with the oligarchic power in Indonesia (Muhtadi 2015). It is also worth noting that the covid-19 pandemic situation has made Jokowi Administration push through democratic regression in Indonesia through strengthening the military and intelligence also laws that restrict freedom of speech (Setijadi 2021).

As democracy regressing under Jokowi's Administration, there are two most noted mass protest movement which is #ReformasiDikorupsi in September 2019 and omnibus law protest in late 2020. Yet, with those two mass protest occurred in Indonesian political landscape there are no significant change in social or political realm, 2019 protest did bring result to some extent as the policies questioned postponed (Adhipermana, 2021) yet in 2020 those policies transformed into omnibus law and despite the mass protest, the law still passed. There are several writings related to this issue, Wasisto and Prayudi (2019) focused on why the 2019 movement occurred in the first place and conclude that the root of the problem is a miscommunication between the student and the state. Whereas Fuadi (2020) and Nofirma et. al (2020) attempted to explain the social media side of #GejayanMemanggil movement which is part of the 2019 September movement and their importance towards the mobilization of the student movement. The September 2019 movement evolved as a social opposition in the event of 2020 omnibus law movement and shows similarities in leadership and further consolidate itself (Lane 2020). In the social media perspective the movement itself challenged by the state with cyber-surveillance and cyber-troops deployments (Sastramidjadja and Rasidi 2021). All of those literature suggest there are some kind of growth in Indonesian opposition which is tied to student movement. Despite that, those literature doesn't really mention on the failure of the student movements and why it is a failure in the first place. The September 2019 movement in particular reviving a massive student social movement. Indonesian political condition, couldn't be separated with the construction of student identity of "agent of change" or "moral force." That identity constructed along with Indonesian political history because student had always been plays a big role in political and social change such as the transition of the Old Order to New Order and New Order to Reformasi, so it can be concluded that student in Indonesia is regarded as one of the most important elements of social change.

Indonesian student in Jokowi's Regime couldn't achieve what their predecessor did in the past, therefore, there are two question should be tackled in this paper, first why social and political change doesn't occurred despite the massive number of student involved in mass protest during Jokowi's Administration? Second, can we still rely on the student movement for a social change? To answer those questions this article will examine the moral force doctrine which is a part of the Indonesian student movement identity and see how its obstructing the success of the student movement itself. This article argue that the obscurity of student movement position towards the establishment and their reluctance to build alliances with other political groups made their effort for change or maintain democracy fruitless in Jokowi's Administration. Yet, we cannot totally turn our back from the student movement as a vanguard

of change in Indonesia as history tells us, but the student movement have to rearrange themselves to increase the possibility.

THE POSITION OF STUDENT MOVEMENT IN DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

To discuss the question aforementioned above, we need to see the role of student in democracy theoretically. In this case we could put student as one of the many elements of civil society. In transitional view, one could argue that civil society have a massive role in transitioning a regime from authoritarian to democracy. The transition would go through three phase of change marked with liberation phase which when civil society took a part in the construction of individual rights and enlarging the public space; transition phase when civil society provoke the demolition of authoritarian regime through protest, demonstration and other form of extra-parliamentary political movement; and lastly consolidation phase where civil society took a part in the effort of building and strengthening good governance and making sure that democracy is *the only game in town* (Linz and Stepan, 1996).

The second matter we have to discuss in this article is the definition of social change. After all, a movement in a political perspective always aim to voice dissent and even seek some extent of change in either social or political realm. Social change, could be seen as a change in social structure such as size of a society and its composition, by this it is also means that changes in attitudes or beliefs which could influence institutions included (Ginsberg 1958). Scholars have debated the progression of social change, the most notable one says its linear like a straight line which evolves society to a different phase, an example regarding this view is Marx's objective development (McDonald 1968) and Weber (Bardis 1959). The roots of change, is varied in the society such as economic development, effectiveness and legitimacy. The economic development is self explaining but the effectiveness of a regime is tied on how the government can function as measured by reactions by large number of population or powerful groups. Meanwhile legitimacy refers to the capacity of a government to produce and maintain beliefs in the established institutions or forms (Lipset 1963). Supposedly, any form of governance have to satisfy the economic development, effectiveness and legitimacy for the majority of population. In the theory of social change and democratization above, there is a same problem which is a teleological problem that assumed a change is designed by nature, but this article would not discuss that further rather than that we should focus on how a change occurred. Now is safe to say that a change would happen if some kind of "force" or certain population in a society have the will to change the society through various means such as protest, revolution, civil war.

Those theories make a better understanding on where the Indonesian student movement should be placed. First of all student movement should be regarded as one of the elements of civil society and the one who allegedly successfully attempted the liberation phase in Indonesia – New Order – in order to make way for democracy. Second, with the their attempts to liberate Indonesia towards democracy it could be argued that they also questioned the legitimacy of a particular regime and we should see the student movement as a force in terms of social change. In this regard we should calculate how the student have brought changes in Indonesian political and social realm. To summarize, the student movement is one of the civil society that would bring changes towards the configuration in the social and political realm, at least in Indonesia. In the Reformasi Era we should also look for the student as a force that attempts to maintain democracy after slow regression in Jokowi's Administration.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses the qualitative method and based on a literature study of a collection of qualitative data including books, documents, online news, journals, and various written sources that are relevant to the problem of this research.

THE MORAL DOCTRINE IMPACT ON RECENT INDONESIAN STUDENT MOVEMENT AND THE FUTURE

With those theories being mentioned we now can tackle the question of this paper, and attempt to put the student movements in Indonesia as a “force” in an attempts for a social change through political means such as protesting. We can put the student as a “moral force” due to the constructed identity discussed earlier. Indonesian student regarded as a “moral force” is not new, the idea itself came from how Soe Hok Gie and Sok Djin (Arief Budiman) percieved student movement in Indonesia, in essence the “moral force” doctrine said that student movement that involved in politics first and foremost as a student (Lazarus 2021) Aspinall (2012) further elaborate the moral force doctrine and said that the student is special and morally motivated hence regarded lack in terms of personal interest and ambition, and the student also seen as the embodiment of national interest and could act to save the nation. In other words, the student movement is expected to be a non-partisan and normative movement. Usman (1999) argued that Indonesian student is a moral force due to its nature as a intermediary between the people and political system, he puts the student movement as a part of civil society in liberal democracy. What Usman (1999) saw in student movement was to fulfill civil society role in a normative framework. Another perspective on how Indonesian student's role in social change emphasizing on how student movement have to hold their moral ground and their movement is always tends to move towards a more democratic society and have to represent the people's interest (Akbar 2016). The problem with those perspective is how they put the indonesian student movement as a driving force for a change and assumed that the student movement would act as an intermediary between the people and the political system. The moral force doctrine, however, is implying that the student should not build alliances with other social and political groups that could possibly violate the student own agenda (Aspinall 2012).

A critique towards the moral force doctrine is emphasizing the “neutral” attitude of that aforementioned doctrine which self limiting from building alliances and tends to be a pro status quo movement as it doesn't directly address the underlying problems but rather to be a corective towards the establishment and acts like the opposite of progressive political project (Novianto 2016). The corective and normative nature of student movement rooted from the New Order Era with narrow space for politics and politics regarded as a dirty and full of corruption (Robet, Politik Hak Asasi Manusia dan Transisi di Indonesia: Sebuah Tinjauan Kritis 2008). As the result of the coercive nature of the New Order Era, the student began to downplaying their threat to the status quo by emphasizing their moral ground and that they were not interested in politics but to correct what was wrong (Aspinall 2012). That stance towards the status quo is inherited within the construction of the student movement in general, I can argue now that the student movement as a corective and rather normative movement. This moral force doctrine led on how the student positioned themselves within the political realm as one of the corective force. This position made the student movement could not confront the establishment in a more revolutionary way or place themselves as an antagonistic force that also define the status quo as their opposite camp. If we try to see the fall of the New Order, student movement along with another movements made an alliance

which led to their confrontation to the regime, we could see this alliance in Uhlin's (1998) account on the 1997-1998 pro-democracy movement which brings the moderate and the radical together. That position helped the movement itself to define themselves and to define their enemy (New Order).

Fast forward to Reformasi Era, we could safely say that Indonesia had the chance to experience democracy with regional and central elections. Indonesian democracy, however, as we discuss in the introduction section of this article, is regressing towards authoritarian tendency. While Jokowi's Administration cannot be categorized as a authoritarian regime but the fact that the democratic condition narrowed is enough to bring the student to protest like the #ReformasiDikorupsi movement in 2019 and omnibus law protest in 2020, one can argue that the Jokowi's Administration is a hybrid regime or a partly democratic one. With that said, we can conclude that student as one of many elements of civil society carried out a liberation attempts in 2019 and in 2020. By those two mass protest events, we could see at least a group – student movement – in the society questioned the legitimacy of the Jokowi's Administration, yet those attempts, however, like mentioned above is rather fruitless or made little change to the social and political realm. The fruitless efforts is tied to how the student movement still held high the moral doctrine and as a result it would make an impact on how the student movement positioned itself.

First of all, As mentioned above, social change could happen if there's a force or a certain population in the society pushing for a change, the only problem with the Indonesian student in this matter is how they perceived the establishment as an enemy yet at the same time the moral force doctrine itself limiting themselves to turn the establishment to a real enemy of the movement. An example of this obscure relationship could be seen in the midst of 2019 #ReformasiDikorupsi movement which involved a massive number of student in various cities. In that movement the student called for a vote of no confidence towards the legislative body as well as the executive body as a symbolic move to show that they did not believe any of those bodies to solve problems even those bodies were the one causing the problem (Ristiano 2019), yet on the other hand the student movement keep their movement to urge those bodies particularly the legislative to fulfill their demands. This relationship made the student movement reluctant to voice their dissent in a progressive way. One one hand, they call they have no trust towards the elites and admit that the Indonesian democratic institutions is porous but on the other hand, they still lean their struggle on the elites action to resolve the issues (Adhipermana 2021). This kind of position would work well in a democratic society where democracy is *the only game in town* or where the trust towards democratic institutions is high enough, but will not work in an event where they tries to question the legitimacy of the exercise of power by the state elites yet still attempted to wait for the elites to act and solve the problems.

Second, it is regarding the "purity" nature of a movement. In this case, we can recall back on how Novianto (2016) and Aspinall (2012) argue about the student movement in Indonesia, the moral force doctrine emphasizes on the neutrality and moral highground of a student movement, if a movement is directly involved to politics it would violate the moral highground. The problem is, their movement was always political, they tried to push some change into a political system or influence certain policy to some extent. After all a movement would make certain changes if it enlarge itself through some kind of mobilization or uniting various groups in the society (Laclau 2005). I agree with Novianto's (2016) argument on how the moral force doctrine is self limiting to the movement itself, furthermore he argued that if the student movement could be relied on social and political change if only the movement build various alliances with other political groups.

All the argument above seems pessimistic about the student movement, yet we cannot really write the student movement off as a vanguard for maintaining democracy in Indonesia. There are two reasons to support this despite the failure of 2019 and 2020, first the student movement in Indonesia is defined by the New Order authoritarian rule (Aspinall, 2012; Jackson, 2005) thus the identity constructed throughout the New Order Era was an opposition of the authoritarian rule. This identity still reflected in the student movement in Jokowi's Administration Era along with the moral force and neutrality rhetoric, this means that to some extent the student still play an important role to maintain the legitimacy of a regime, yet their obscure stance hinder many possibilities that could be produced by their movement. If the student movement attempts a social change or maintain democracy in Indonesia, the first thing that the movement itself needs to address is this constructed identity. The identity cannot be the same as the one which opposed an authoritarian rule under New Order, it have to evolve into something else inside a democratic environment. Regarding the moral force doctrine, I believe with larger political space in the Reformasi Era it should be abandoned because the moral force doctrine was thriving inside the authoritarian rule and can maximize the narrow political space also downplaying their threat towards the establishment, yet in a democratic society – at least in a partly democratic one – the political space greatly increased compared to authoritarian regime and student movement should build alliances and ramify the civil society in order to keep promoting democracy and attempt social change towards a more democratic society.

Second, we couldn't deny what the student movement has achieved in Indonesian political history, to begin with the student movement was one of many groups that carried the idea of democratization. The triumph of democracy over the idea of organic state occurred in 1998 marked by the fall of New Order, this shows that maintaining democracy or attempting to do a social change is not an impossible task, albeit a difficult one. The reason for this is the change in Indonesian idea of a state itself. Bouchier (2015) noted that the Indonesian idea of a state have a close resemblance to the idea of an organic state, which can be traced back to Dr. Soepomo's notion. Soepomo's idea was an integralistic state which stressed on the relationship of the subjects in the polity as one in a family, this idea was dominant in BPUPK and PPKI thus highly influencing the constitution (Hutagalung 2005). Despite the organic state idea engrained in Indonesia, the democratic and liberal thought which develop in the civil society succeeded it in 1998, this victory was brought by the student movement and other elements of civil society (Robet 2020). It is also worth mentioning that the social change in 1998 was partly influenced by the 1997-1998 crisis, and with that crisis it completed what Lipset (1963) argued regarding a social change with legitimacy questioned, economic development downfall, and lack of effectivity (corruption was also an important issue during the transition period). With that reasoning, we could argue that at least if a crisis struck again the possibility of a social change would increase and the student movement would play an important role in that change as history told us.

CONCLUSION

The student movement failed to bring any changes towards the social and political realm under Jokowi's Administration due to their obscure and vague position towards the establishment, on one hand the student movement acknowledge that the Indonesian democratic institution was porous and questioned its legitimacy but on the other hand still rely on the elites to solve their demands. This caused by the moral force doctrine that constructed in the student movement identity itself which hindered them to build alliances with other political group and viewing such alliances would violate the neutrality of student

interest. Thus, despite the scale of their mass protest, the student movement couldn't bring any result. Yet, we couldn't say that the student movement is incompetent to become a vanguard of social change, the student movement would bring positive result to Indonesian democracy by abandoning the moral force doctrine and start build alliances with other civil society groups. But, at least if crisis would struck again, the student movement would be a vanguard of social change because they already questioned the legitimacy of Jokowi's Administration.

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