Conflict and Public Policy

“You may gain temporary appeasement by a policy of concession to violence, but you do not gain lasting peace that way.”
(Eden 1938)

The prominent quote above was spoken by Anthony Eden, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1955 to 1957. The quote illustrates how the fate of peace and conflict depends on the policies taken by politicians. Theoretically and empirically, conflict and public policy are always interconnected. Public policy, through mediation and consensus, can be seen as a tool to reduce conflict (Sidaway 2005). However, bad public policy can cause conflicts. Unjust and discriminative policies, for example, can lead to poverty and inequality. Eventually this will result in the emergence of violent acts (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Sambanis 2004; Ikejiaku 2009).

In Indonesia, several studies have discussed how inappropriate and bad government policies can cause friction and disputes. Transmigration and agrarian policies, for example, can affect local communities and indigenous minorities negatively (Fearnside 1997; Lucas and Warren 2013). The excessive use of military force and violent approaches as policy instruments also can create and preserve rebellions and independence movements. The case of Aceh and Papua can be used as an example (Ross 2005; Heidbüchel 2007). This phenomenon is similar with what happened in Iraq when the United States of America and its allies invaded Iraq and created an endless cycle of violence, providing terrorist organizations like ISIS the opportunity to seize control from the chaotic situation (Mitchell and Massoud 2009; Gulmohamad 2014).

In this edition, several articles will discuss issues relating to policy and conflict, particularly in Indonesia. The first article is “Fighting Money Politics and Shamanic Practices,” written by Guno Tri Tjahjoko. The author discussed about the
elections in Sriharjo Village, Bantul Regency in 2018. Several findings have pointed to the practice of money politics and the use of shamans as winning strategies. Sums of money was handed out by one of the candidates to the voters the night before the election. In addition, the campaign team used shaman or magical powers to aim voters who do not choose its candidate. Usually at local elections, people without sufficient capital would not be able to win. However, the case from this article shows that a female candidate was able to successfully defeat the other candidates. The article argues that this was achieved through a political strategy of conscience and honesty. The actions taken included community empowerment, network building, and strict supervision of the opposing team.

The second article is written by Maksimus Regus. This article seeks to explore interreligious conflicts in Indonesia. In the article, the author reassessed interreligious conflicts. The author questioned the growing consensus that religion is a primary root of conflicts, especially interreligious conflicts in Indonesia. He argues that religion is not the only factor that can cause conflicts. Conflicts are surrounded by varieties of contexts such as social, economic, political, and also cultural aspects. Religion is recognized as a strong factor, but it cannot stand alone in causing interreligious conflicts. He also discussed the implications of the conflicts, which may affect multiculturalism in the future.

The third article in this edition is written by Fadilah Putra and M. Faishal Aminuddin, entitled “Democracy and Social Policy in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Process Tracing Analysis”. This article discusses about social policies in Southeast Asia. The authors picked out four countries to compare and analyze how social policy relates to democratization. This article challenges the notion that states that autocratic countries also prioritize good social policies. This study finds a variance in degrees of change in social policy between Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Phillipines. The authors argue that several groups receive discrimination pertaining to their access to public service, indicating that in developing countries, social policies produced by democratic processes are more inclusive.
The next article analyzes coordination mechanisms of several countries in creating effective models to minimize the risk of terrorism financing schemes that are applicable in Indonesia. The article assumes that terrorist financing activities can be prevented through synchronization among authorities. Maliki Sukmana, as the author, suggested several aspects that can be improved using an evidence-based approach. More details can be seen in his article, entitled “Joined-Up Government in the Prevention of Terrorist-Financing Offenses by Nonprofit Organizations: An Evidence-Based Approach”.

The last article is written by Fahlesa Munabari, Nadia Utami Larasati, Rizky Ihsan, and Lucky Nurhadiyanto. This article talks about religious contexts in religious movements or Islamic revivalism. In the article entitled “The Caliphate, Sharia and NKRI: Democracy and The Nation-State Through The Lens of Islamic Revivalism in Indonesia”, the authors argued that four Islamic revivalism movements in Indonesia, which are FPI, HTI, MMI, and FUI, play a role in mobilizing the masses to address policies and programmes issued by the government that are considered not conforming to the teachings of Islam. They also analyze that these actions originate from their different understanding of the concept of nation state and democracy. However, these organizations have a common objective, which is the implementation of the Sharia in Indonesia.

This edition is closed with a book review by Harlitis Berniawan Telaumbanua, “Preventing the Death of Democracy from Within”. The author reviewed How Democracies Die, a book written by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. Telaumbanua discussed how democracy as a political system is facing a death threat. In this review, he argues that the death of democracy can be instigated by non-military forces. Democracy can be hijacked by autocratic elites through legitimate or legal ways. Later, he identified several signs of democratic values being attacked by looking at what has happened in the United States. At the end of his review, the author underlined the magnitude of the danger and how these possibilities can also occur in Indonesia.

As a closing remark, we would like to convey our greatest gratitude towards all the authors, reviewers, and also the readers of Jurnal Politik
for their support. We hope this edition of Jurnal Politik can contribute 
to the development of discourse in the study of political science. We 
hope you enjoy it. Happy reading!

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