Conflicts and Elections

“Without conflict, no progress: that is the law which civilization has followed to the present day.”
(Marx 1847, cited in Dahrendorf 1959)

The famous quote above was written by Karl Marx over 150 years ago. Marx’s statement is still relevant to illustrate the continuous emergence of conflicts throughout the change of time. History has shown that the most common patterns of social conflicts globally involve the issues of class and ethnicity (Young 1982). These patterns can be seen in several classical studies such as those of Dahrendorf (1959) that views conflicts from the economic (class) perspective and van den Bergh (1965) and Horowitz (1985) that analyze racial and ethnic conflicts. Throughout the development of political science, conflicts were then also analyzed through other approaches such as the power of the state and resources (Tilly 1978), culture (Huntington 1996), and ideology or religion (Colement 1956; Kakar 1995; Selengut 2003).

The case of Indonesia is an accurate example to demonstrate how conflicts are integral to the dynamics of society. Most of the violent conflicts in Indonesia involve group identities as their cause of tension. However, Jacques Bertrand (2004) stated that there are other factors that play key roles in the mobilization of ethnic groups in Indonesia: electoral competition, competition for resources (both at the local and national level), and unfair and discriminatory policies. In other words, the emergence of conflicts may also be determined by the winners of elections and policy-makers. For instance, the conflict between Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and Indonesia was one of the conflicts caused by unfair policies (Bertrand 2004). After the signing of the peace agreement in 2005, the Aceh conflict still continued to find its way to resurface through new political arenas. This reality will be further
elaborated in an article by Bayu Satria Utama in this edition of *Jurnal Politik*.

This year’s second edition mainly consists of articles on issues of conflicts and elections. These articles discuss conflicts between the people and the government (such as the one between the central government and GAM as discussed in an article by Bayu Satria Utama and the conflict between the government and environmental groups in an article by Priyo Fajar Santoso and Bevaola Kusumasari); internal conflicts in Islamist parties (as analyzed in an article by Hardianto Widyo Priohutomo, Kamarudin, and Syahrul Hidayat); the roles of female activists in local elections (discussed in an article by Laila Kholid Alfirdaus and Rosihan Widi Nugroho); and the evaluation of the 2019 overseas election (written by Gusti Raganata).

Just as our previous edition, this edition comprises five articles and one review in English. The first article is written by Bayu Satria Utama, entitled “Asymmetric Decentralization in Aceh: Institutionalization of Conflict of Interest by Elites of GAM.” The article analyzes the continuation of the GAM conflict in new political arenas after its peace agreement. The article argues that the implementation of special autonomy or asymmetrical decentralization through electoral politics paves way for the GAM elites to compete and create institutionalized conflicts.

The article by Hardianto Widyo Priohutomo, Kamarudin, and Syahrul Hidayat discusses factionalism in Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS). The article, entitled “The Emergence of Gerakan Arah Baru Indonesia (Garbi) and Factionalism in Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS),” argues that prior to the emergence of Garbi (which then transformed into Partai Gelora), factionalism inside the PKS body brought very little impact to the solidarity of the party, due to the party’s strong ideology and doctrines.

The third article, written by Priyo Fajar Santoso and Bevaola Kusumasari, is entitled “Key Elements of Environmental Justice in the Geothermal Power Plant Resistance Movement.” The article examines the ugly side of geothermal energy—a type of energy commonly believed to be environmentally friendly. The authors show that geothermal energy,
as well as its development, may pose harms to society. By basing their study in Kabupaten Banyumas, Santoso and Kusumasari analyze the discourse and strategy employed by social movements to oppose the establishment of a geothermal power plant in Baturraden.

In “Needed but Neglected: Women Activists as Vote Getters in Elections at the Local Level”, Laila Kholid Alfirdaus and Rosihan Widi Nugroho analyze the roles of female activists as mere vote-getters in elections. Alfirdaus and Nugroho conducted their research in Semarang, Central Java to show the problems of representation of women and gender equality in Indonesia, especially in elections, where the roles of women are still limited to the mobilization of votes.

The fifth article is “Challenges and Innovation of Indonesia Overseas Election in Tokyo” by Gusti Raganata. The article discusses the problems that occurred during the 2019 overseas elections, focusing on the one held in Tokyo. The author argues that technological innovation can act as a solution to the obstacles to the implementation of overseas elections as well as a driver for its improvements.

This edition is closed with a book review by Fredick Broven Ekayanta. In “Intellectuals in Post-Soeharto Politics”, Ekayanta assesses Airlangga Pribadi Kusman’s book The Vortex of Power: Intellectuals and Politics in Indonesia’s Post-Authoritarian Era. In his review, Ekayanta examines the role of intellectuals in Indonesia after the collapse of the New Order using three approaches. By using additional literature as its reference, this review concludes that Kusman’s book argues that the cooptation of intellectuals became a great challenge in Indonesia’s transition to democracy. The intellectuals, expected to be the reformation era’s agents of change, have instead failed to lead the country’s journey to good governance.

As a closing statement, the editors would like to convey their greatest gratitude towards all the authors, reviewers, as well as the readers of Jurnal Politik for their support. We hope that this ninth edition of Jurnal Politik contributes to the development and discourse in the studies of political science. Happy reading!
REFERENCES


