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# VIEWS AND CONCEPTIONS ABOUT DEMOCRACY AMONG INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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# Abstract

Indonesia, one of the most populous countries in the world, is undergoing a major transition to democracy. In the anti-government demonstrations that led to the fall of the authoritarian leadership of Suharto, many university students played an active and significant role. Whereas professionals with an academic background often have a strong influence over the political and societal affairs of a country, university students will probably influence the political development in Indonesia also in the future. Knowledge of how they view the idea of democracy is therefore very important if we want to understand Indonesia's democratic development.

This analysis builds on in-depth interviews with Indonesian university students. It is not statistically representative but gives a qualitative insight into how they view the issue of democracy, both in general and with reference to their opinions about politics and society in Indonesia. The study also focuses on how they estimate the future of democracy in Indonesia and to what extent their views may be understood in the context of globalisation if democracy is viewed as an export commodity. The concept of democracy used in the study is Robert Dahl's definition *polyarchy*.

Most of the interviewed students are positive towards democracy and its future in Indonesia. However, some of them are eager to emphasise that certain moral values that support the public good must function as a guideline when the citizens exercise their democratic rights. This phenomenon may be regarded as a sign of a resistant political identity created in opposition to the dominant individualistic centred liberal democracy in the era of globalisation. Many interviewees also emphasise that problems like low level of education, national disintegration and the paternalistic cultural features of Indonesia are obstacles to democracy and democratisation.

*Keywords:* Indonesia, students, democracy, polyarchy, Islam, Pancasila, globalisation

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose and Problems

With approximately 210 million inhabitants, the Republic of Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world. It consists of a huge archipelago that stretches almost 5000 km from the Asian mainland into the Pacific Ocean. Three hundred ethnic groups inhabit the islands and many of these have their own culture and language. In spite of this diversity, the centre of power is located in the capital city Jakarta on the island of Java and the national language *Bahasa Indonesia* is spoken all over the country (Lindahl 1998: 3-14).

Today Indonesia is undergoing a transition to democracy. The transformation was triggered by the economic and financial crisis in 1997/1998 and led to the fall of President Suharto whose reign lasted for about three decades and involved harsh undemocratic measures to keep control over state and society. The demand for democracy and change in the Indonesian society was evident before the fall of the autocrat and was often expressed among the growing middle class but also at grass-root levels. The government, however, that became increasingly draconian in its attitude against opponents, did not tolerate dissenting voices. In the end, this created a cleavage between government and society that finally led to the fall of the regime. The life of the regime was prolonged by the favourable economic conditions that came to an end 1997/1998 (Soesastro 2000: 151).

The starting point on Indonesia's way to democracy took place in 1999 when Abdurrahman Wahid, a secular Islamic leader (Kadir 2000: 324-325), was elected to the presidency as a result of free parliamentary elections. Since then there has been a great deal of controversy in Indonesia's political life and in July 2001 vice president Megawati Sukarnoputri replaced Wahid. Nevertheless, democratic norms are still used as the guiding principles for governance in the country even if the political future is hidden in uncertainty (DN: 2001-07-24).

The development towards democracy in Indonesia is extremely significant for the rest of the world. From the perspective of Indonesia's size and its big population it is obvious that the ongoing process of democratisation must be investigated carefully in all fields and academic disciplines where more knowledge can be explored. Questions concerning political

opinions and attitudes towards democracy are in my view of special importance in this context since the character of the political culture, which comprises these phenomena, is crucial for democratic development. A political culture of attitudes and opinions towards democracy that are positive is said to be conducive to a stable democratic development (Sannerstedt 1994: 73). The aim of this study is therefore to contribute to the understanding of Indonesia's prospective democracy by an illumination of democratic views and attitudes. This will be done with reference to a specific group in the Indonesian society that is very influential from a political point of view, namely university students.

In many parts of the world students have acted like social reformers with demands about democracy and economic equality. This phenomenon has been evident in Teheran, Lagos, Rangoon and Beijing as well as in Belgrade where their engagement contributed to the removal of Slobodan Milosevic (*Studentliv* 2/2001). Students have also been a crucial factor in Indonesia's political development. In the anti-government demonstrations and the mass rioting that were conducive to the fall of Suharto in 1998, they were very active and their efforts played a leading role in the events that led to the subsequent democratic reforms (Maher 2000: 150-172; Törnquist 2000: 41). Against this background it is interesting to look closer at how Indonesian university students actually view the concept of democracy and what attitudes they have towards it. Since the students are a significant pawn in Indonesia's political game and development, knowledge about their political opinions is essential if we want to understand the democratic progress.

Another reason to investigate their opinions about democracy is their potential positions at leading posts in the future. Since professionals with an academic past often have a great deal of say in many areas connected to the political affairs and procedures of a country, the students' conceptions of democracy are highly important. From this perspective the students could be considered as a future elite in Indonesia. Their views on the issue of democracy may therefore be very useful in the process of understanding the future political development in the country.

Three questions will be dealt with in the study:

- *How do Indonesian university students view the concept of democracy?*
- *How do they view democracy with regard to their opinions about the political situation in Indonesia?*
- *What are their conceptions about the future of democracy in Indonesia?*

From a sociological point of view, studies concerning democracy are very important. Questions about democracy and its effects on governance are common among sociologists today and can be found in many areas of sociological research. Problems connected to globalisation and democracy is one example (Beck 1998: 89, 124-127; Castells 1998: 319-359; Castells 2000: 312-346). Other examples are research that deals with democracy and its relationship to the modern nation-state and democracy's relation to notions of pluralism and elitism (Giddens 1994 b: 120-140). Political attitudes, which this study focuses on, are often analysed in the field of political sociology where special attention is given to influences of social and cultural structures on political behaviour (Togeby 1997: 215-216).

Moreover, the concentration on a Third World country that distinguishes this study is also sociologically important. Since the focus of sociology often lies on the industrialised societies (Giddens 1994 a: 36), more knowledge about the Third World is important for the discipline. The development of the industrial societies has taken place in interplay with the rest of the world and nowadays almost all societies and nations are closely related to each other. Factors like trade and globalisation are so essential today that it is impossible to understand and interpret the industrial world without the Third World included in the frames of reference (Giddens 1994 a: 131). Knowledge about non-industrialised countries thus has a potential to enrich the field of sociology.

## 1.2 Method of Analysis

### 1.2.1 Practical Features

The study is based on a fieldwork conducted at two universities in Indonesia during April and May 2001. Several in-depth interviews with university students were carried out during that period and the information received constitutes an example of how students in Indonesia may look at democracy in the light of the questions defined above. The study is therefore not statistically representative. Its ambition is rather to give a deep qualitative understanding.

Both universities are situated at the island of Java and are two of the major national academic institutions in the country (*UGM; UI; USLC*). I started at *Universitas Indonesia* (University of Indonesia) in Jakarta where fourteen students were interviewed. After that I continued to Yogyakarta and carried out interviews with nine students at *Universitas Gadjah Mada* (Gadjah Mada University). The individuals involved in the study have different academic backgrounds and come from various faculties at the universities. They were not chosen in any

systematic manner. Rather, I walked spontaneously around the campuses and tried to talk with as many students as possible. I often confronted them on the spot and conducted the interview directly without any intermediaries. By doing so, I avoided contacts with the upper parts of the university hierarchy like teachers and people from the headmaster's office, who otherwise could have helped me to arrange the interviews. Against the background of my earlier experiences from Indonesia where I have noticed a strong commitment to hierarchies among the population, I realised that this help could become somewhat problematic. My goal was instead to minimise all influences from lecturers or academics from the upper parts of the university hierarchy who the students might look up to as more knowledgeable. They could easily have coloured the views of the students, especially if they had arranged the interviews. Worse, maybe they would have attended the interviews and influenced the interviewees even more. Such a scenario would have caused me a great deal of problems. To get the best results I wanted to stand face to face with the interviewee in an equal relationship built on the perception that we both are university students who talk about democracy. This ideal functioned well during the fieldwork.

The language used during the interviews was English sometimes mixed with Indonesian. In Yogyakarta, a former student in social science who works at the university helped me with interpretations since the level of knowledge in English is lower there compared to Jakarta, at least among my interviewees. This did not cause any problems for the ideal of an equal relationship with the students. Even if the interpreter works at the university she is still regarded as a fellow-student by other students and, according to my impressions, acquainted with the interviewees on a non-formal basis.

The usage of an interpreter did not result in any serious problems when it comes to the transmission of questions and answers. Michael Quinn Patton (1990: 338) argues that the conversation must be translated in an exact manner whereas the interpreter often contaminates the information by his or her effort to explain the questions and to summarise the answers. In the end this makes it difficult to know whose perceptions we are actually describing. Is it the interpreter's or the interviewee's? Since my knowledge in Indonesian is good, I could control what was said during the interviews and thereby mitigate these problems. The reader may ask why the interviews were not conducted without interpreter under these circumstances. The answer is simply that it is easier to understand a conversation as a listener than it is to speak the language when the practical knowledge is limited.

In the coming analysis there is a distinction between students with an Islamic view on democracy and other students. Likewise, there is difference between leftist-radical students and



others. I first met these students by chance in Jakarta and found that their views on the issue of democracy were interesting and sometimes very different. Initially, I did not have any intentions to investigate if Islamic and leftist-radical students had distinctive views. It was rather the students themselves who proclaimed these standpoints. Since I found their opinions interesting, a decision was made to find out if these views were represented among other Islamic and leftist-radical students as well. It resulted in a more active search for interviewees with an explicitly Islamic or leftist-radical view on politics, especially in Yogyakarta where I got in contact with student organisations that subscribe to these ideas.

All conversations were recorded and I asked permission to do so before the interview started. In order to create a situation where the interviewee could feel free to speak out, I also guaranteed that the recordings would be treated as strictly confidential. As a further means to protect the students, their real names will not be referred to in the analysis.

### 1.2.2 Theoretical Features

This work builds on a qualitative method of research. My intention was to create a situation with the interviewee that was similar to an ordinary conversation. In this process, however, my own views and ideas were of secondary importance. Instead, I tried to assume the role of an interested listener while the interviewee was the one who conveyed the knowledge. By doing so, I wanted to look inside the world of the students, try to understand how they experience their situation, and interpret their own values. This approach is similar to what Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (1997: 6) describe as *naturalism in qualitative research*, i.e. to understand social reality “as it really is” and eventually describe what comes naturally. In the field of qualitative research, those ideas can be found in the discipline of symbolic interactionism and in the thoughts of George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer (Charon 2001: 29, 31; *SP* 1992: 133). Blumer argued that a naturalistic approach is necessary in order to avoid the misinterpretations of social life that may result if we look at the human being only as a respondent to uncontrollable societal forces. By focusing on outlying forces that are said to determine human behaviour we tend to ignore all the processes that goes on in the human mind before a decision is made. The individual will then be degraded to a creature that only react on certain stimuli. Thus, research that tries to predict human behaviour with statistical analysis by the usage of variables like for example age, gender and occupation is problematic. Even if covariance can be found, the results can not say us anything about experiences, feelings or motives that *really* are conducive to a certain behaviour for a particular individual.

The only way to reach knowledge about society is, according to Blumer, to focus on reality as the individuals under investigation see it (*SP* 1992: 128-134). This notion has been the guideline for the method used in the study. It is therefore the views and the ideas of the interviewees that have laid the foundations for the coming analysis.

In order to prevent any misunderstandings, it must be clear from the beginning that I have used a concept of democracy that functioned as a compass during the interviews to keep the conversations on the right track. Despite this deviation from a 'pure' naturalistic method, it is still the views of the students that are in the centre of the analysis. The concept of democracy used in the study merely plays the role of a framework. Why and to what extent I have used it will be discussed in section 2.1.

### 1.3 Outline of the Thesis

As a starting point, some prerequisites that will facilitate the understanding of the thesis will be presented. The notion of democracy that was used during the interviews will be discussed and I will explain why that concept is appropriate to adhere to. It will be done against the background of different theoretical problems connected to the meaning of democracy.

I will then describe the political landscape in Indonesia. This part is necessary for the reader to be able to interpret the environment where the students' opinions about democracy exist and come from.

Thereafter an analysis of the interviews will be presented that gives a picture of the students' opinions with reference to the questions raised in the study. This chapter is the principal part of the study and important if the reader want to get an insight into how the interviewees look at democracy. The outline will be done according to the different themes in the concept of democracy that was used as a framework during the interviews.

The analysis will then be extended to a more abstract perspective. Some of the opinions conveyed during the interviews will be viewed in the light of sociological theories that may help to give a better understanding of how and why the students look at democracy the way they do. This part of the study does not give an all-embracing analysis of the material that is going to be presented. It rather focuses on some opinions that according to my view are very interesting.

Finally I will present a summary and draw conclusions of the analysis.

## 2 Prerequisites for Comprehension of the Analysis

### 2.1 Towards a Definition of Democracy

Democracy has always been a highly contested concept. Today there is a myriad of meanings and interpretations of what should be included in the notion. The main schism between different conceptions of democracy concerns the range and extent of political properties enclosed in the concept (Diamond 1999: 7-8).

Minimalist definitions of democracy tend to limit its scope and keep it distinct from economic and social spheres of society. Otherwise, the concept of democracy will be so wide that it will lose its ability to cope with the empirical reality. In the end, this will make it difficult to study the phenomenon at all. Another argument is that economic and social dimensions of society must be excluded in order to create possibility for analysing how and to what extent those aspects are related to democracy (Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1989: 8; Uhlin 1995: 8).

According to the maximalist definition of democracy, a minimalist concept excludes issues concerning the distribution of power in society. A minimalist concept will also face difficulties in addressing problems concerning social and economic inequalities because it makes them irrelevant. As an example, the minimalist definition of democracy does not take into account social movements that may play an important role in the political process. Nor does it have any capability to include gender issues because the political, from this point of view, only includes elite institutions in the public sphere and in these institutions women are seldom found. Women therefore, will not appear as politically active and can not be analysed (Uhlin 1995: 8). For my part I believe that both concepts may be useful whereas different notions and views on democracy can play different roles under different circumstances depending on the subject under investigation.

When studying democracy in a Third World country like Indonesia, however, there are other problems in the discourse of democracy that also have to be taken into account. Anders Uhlin (1995: 9) argues that there is a tendency among many scholars to put forward only one model of democracy. This model is based on the liberal form of democracy that has been developed in the West. According to Uhlin, this model is connected to a form of cultural

objectivism, meaning that the Western form of democracy should be used all over the world. As a consequence this standpoint has created a counterattack among scholars and political leaders who reject the idea of cultural objectivism by saying that non-western cultures are so different from Western cultures that a democracy based on liberalism is impossible. From this polemic, an idea has been developed of a specific “Asian-style democracy” based on indigenous Asian values. These values are regarded as incompatible with the demand for individualism in the Western notion of democracy.

According to its proponents, Asian values include stability, discipline and a strong respect for authority. It is said to pave the way for a society that put the individuals’ duty to the community ahead of individual rights as these are viewed in the liberal tradition of democracy. Human rights and democratic principles are therefore seen as alien and different from Asian culture and tradition (Uhlin 1999: 1; see also Hewison 1999).

The ideas of Asian values and “Asian-style democracy” have been adopted as legitimising instruments by quasi-democracies in many Southeast Asian countries. This is evident when analysing the national ideologies of states like Malaysia and Singapore whose leaders are quite open about the differences between their democracies and those of the West. With the statement that they represent a form of democracy that harmonises better with their indigenous cultures and traditions, these regimes have been able to put forward criticism about “Western arrogance” as a response to foreign pressures concerning democratisation and development of human rights in their countries (Thompson 1993: 3, 6, 10; Uhlin 1999: 1). Even if Indonesia has held a more low-key style in this debate compared to Malaysia and Singapore, the discourse of Asian values is also perceptible in Indonesia’s “Pancasila democracy” that has been powerfully promoted in the country (Mulder 1998: 95, 122; Thompson 1993: 10; Uhlin 1999: 10-14; see also chapter 4 in this thesis).

With the many concepts of democracy in mind and the fact that the human intellect is under perpetual construction, I think it is difficult to argue that there is *one* notion of democracy that could be interpreted as all-embracing. On the same time, however, there are certain characteristics in the philosophical tradition of liberalism that are necessary for the mere existence of democracy. If these characteristics are absent in a political system it is doubtful whether we can define it as a democracy at all. For example, the ideas of individual rights that secures popular control over the process of decision-making and the premise that there is no non-elective final truth about what is good for society, are two traits of liberalism that seems to be indispensable for democracy (Beetham 1999: 34-35). It is thus very difficult to separate liberalism from the notion of democracy and this factor can not be ignored. In other words, if

the content of what we identify as democracy is going to have any meaning there must be a certain bias towards ideas that originate in liberalism.

In an effort to overcome problems with ambiguous designations and propagandistic violations of democracy Robert Dahl has created an alternative denomination of the concept. Dahl's definition of democracy consists of seven institutions that must serve as a guide if a state wants to claim itself as democratic (Dahl 1991: 71-80). The concept is called *polyarchy* and could be interpreted as an ideal type that may be used as a universal checklist when distinguishing different political systems around the world (Karvonen 1997: 21). In my view the strength of polyarchy is its character as an ideal type with the ability to examine all conditions under which democracy is said to be in force. It also corresponds well to the indispensable ideas of liberalism mentioned above (Svensson 1997: 146). Dahl describes polyarchy in the following way:

*Was the United States a democracy in the nineteenth century, despite its restrictions on full citizenship? Is it a democracy today? Because of the ambiguity and multiple meanings of the term democracy, I find it useful to call a political system in which the seven institutions are present a polyarchy or a democratic polyarchy, though I want to follow ordinary practice by referring to a country governed by polyarchy as a democratic country (Dahl 1991: 74).*

Dahl's institutions meet a number of essential conditions for democracy: extensive competition among individuals and groups for public offices at regular intervals without violence, an inclusive level of political participation and possibilities for citizens to select leaders and policies through fair and frequent elections with no social group excluded and a wide level of civil and political liberties (Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1989: 8). Owing to its usefulness and width this ideal type is used as a definition of democracy here.

Whereas I have been working with in-depth interviews, the concept of polyarchy functioned only as a basis for discussion during the conversations with the students. In other words, much space was left for the respondents' own notions and ideas about democracy and Dahl's definition merely played the role of a comparative framework. Since some of the questions raised in this study are exclusively empirical and not bound to any preconceived ideas about democracy, the notion of polyarchy was not used all throughout the interviews. As an example, when I asked questions about the students' conceptions about the future of democracy in Indonesia, I did not employ Dahl's concept at all. Instead I let the interviewee speak without any reservations about the meaning of polyarchy. When we discussed the interviewee's opinions about the institutions of democracy, however, I did make use of Dahl's definition because I found it necessary to concretise democracy under these circumstances.

The following figure shows the topics of discussion and illustrates how and to what extent the definition of polyarchy was used during the interviews. Where Dahl is referred to, the figure also presents the seven institutions of polyarchy. For a more detailed description of how these issues were composed into questions, see the interview guide in the appendix.

<b>Topic of discussion</b>	<b>Polyarchy used</b>
The concept of democracy among the university students in general, i.e. what principles and/or institutions they regard as most important for democracy. <sup>1</sup>	No
Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials (Dahl 1991: 73).	Yes
Virtually all adults have the right to vote (Dahl 1991: 73).	Yes
Elected officials are chosen and peacefully removed in frequent, fair and free elections in which coercion is absent or quite limited (Dahl 1991:73).	Yes
Most adults have the right to run for public offices in elections (Dahl 1991: 73).	Yes
Citizens possess a right effectively enforced by judicial and administrative officials, to freedom of expression, including criticism of and opposition to the leaders or party in office (Dahl 1991: 74).	Yes
Citizens have access, and an effectively enforced right to gain access, to sources of information that are not monopolised by the government of the state or by any other single group (Dahl 1991: 74).	Yes
Citizens possess an effectively enforced right to form and join political organisations, including political parties and interest groups (Dahl 1991: 74)	Yes
Indonesian university students' estimation of the future of democracy in Indonesia.	No

Table 1. The use of polyarchy during the interviews

The above reasoning involves many theorists and notions that generally belong to the field of political science. That may be seen as peculiar in a sociological study. It must be remembered, however, that political science is an eclectic discipline that borrows many theories and ideas from other social sciences (Lundquist 1993: 14-17). The influence of sociology in the field of political studies has been strong over the past decades and that has made it harder to distinguish political science from sociology. Among other things, this is evident in studies of political attitudes and in research about political development in the Third World where the society may be organised in peasant communities, tribal units or the like. Since political

<sup>1</sup> The decision to include this issue was inspired by Anders Uhlin (1995: 219).

science traditionally has focused only on formal structures of government, these issues have required extensive borrowing from sociology and from anthropology. Thus, the trend in political science has been toward a merger with sociology in many significant fields of research (Bottomore 1971: 73-73; Togeby 1997: 215-216). For that reason, I do not see any complications with the inclusion of theorists and conceptions that generally belong to political science here. The interdisciplinary development between the two scientific fields makes it natural.

## 2.2 Indonesia's Political Landscape

Indonesian political culture involves many different ideas. Javanese feudalist values that have been influenced by, among other things, features of Japanese fascism are one example. But there are also ideals of social justice, equality and grassroots opposition against abuse of power and these ideas are an integrated part of the Indonesian culture as well (Uhlen 1995: 79).

If a reasonably comprehensive picture of the modern political culture in Indonesia during the Suharto era is going to be sketched, it would be fair to describe it as primarily dependent on non-ethnic, and secular values. This was a result of the two central goals of the Suharto regime, i.e. stability and development, that were achieved by the coercive support of *ABRI* (the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia), and the government whose legitimacy was based on its success in maintaining socio-political stability and development. In its endeavour to keep the nation together, the government undertook a major effort to subsume all political cultures and organisations in the country into one national political culture with its own ideology. This ideology was said to be purely Indonesian and is called *Pancasila* (*USLC*; for a more detailed discussion about Pancasila, see section 4.1.2).

In the early 1990s, a variety of subcultures existed in the political landscape: bureaucratic, military, commercial, literary and artistic, each with their own ideas about politics but all directed to the successful operation of the modern political system. Among the most important were the military that embodied the national spirit as a unifying institution, and the intellectuals who were more likely to be influenced by Western political values. It was from the latter that pressures for democratisation finally came (*USLC*).

The ideology of Pancasila is maintained in the constitution today, but the foundations of the stable Indonesian society are about to break down. When Suharto was unable to handle the economic crisis in 1997/1998, the military withdrew its support and chaos spread swiftly

(Lindahl 1998: 24-26). In many part of the archipelago, like in East Timor and Aceh, demands about autonomy that had smouldered for many years grew stronger and threatened to split the nation. Partly, this was a result of the repressive treatment practised by the Suharto regime during many years (Uhlin 2000 c: 55-57). Thus, the unifying ideals of the Indonesian political culture began to crumble. The removal of Suharto also led to changes in the centre of Indonesia's governance. In the prelude to the elections in 1999, the dominating party *Golkar* that traditionally had been the army's and Suharto's alibi to stay in power, started to break up. A flora of new parties emerged that began to influence the political life in the country, among them were many Islamic parties (Azra 2000: 309-314; Lindahl 1998: 20, 26).

Even if Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world and united with the universal Islamic community, orthodox Islam is in fact a minority religion (*USLC*). The Muslim community as a political force is divided in traditionalists and modernists (Azra 2000: 311-312). The traditionalists generally seek to defend a conservatively religious way of life and protect orthodoxy as much as possible from the demands of the modern state. Modernists on the other hand, want to adapt Indonesian Islam to the requirements of the modern world (*USLC*).

A brief look at the results of the elections in 1999 will provide a further assessment of the political landscape today. I will only deal with the most significant parties here. The largest party was PDI-P, *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle). The current president Megawati Sukarnoputri leads it. She is the daughter of Sukarno who was Indonesia's first president. PDI-P is a populist-nationalist party that is much appreciated due to the connection to Sukarno who still holds a strong popularity. On second place came Golkar, favoured by the regulation in the Indonesian electoral system that gives an overrepresentation to sparsely populated provinces where the party traditionally has its stronghold. The former president Abdurrahman Wahid who led the traditionalist Muslim organisation *Nadlathul Ulama* before he assumed the presidency, supported *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party) in the elections. Counted in votes this party came on third place. Other significant parties that gained seats in the parliament were *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (United Development Party) that is a traditionalist/modernist Muslim party, and *Partai Amanat Nasional* (National Mandate Party), also a Muslim party but with a more modernistic approach. As a remnant from the Suharto era, the army automatically gained 38 of the 462 seats in the parliament (Azra 2000: 309-313; Uhlin 2000 a: 53-54; Uhlin 2000 b: 30-32).

The general election did not produce a government. This was supposed to be done by the president who in turn would be elected by the 700-member People's Consultative Assembly.



Since no party gained majority, negotiations were needed to create a coalition. The Muslim parties subsequently formed an alliance that could match the PDI-P and Golkar. They then put forward Wahid as their candidate for the presidency and he eventually assumed the post with Megawati as his deputy (Bourchier 2000: 23-24; Uhlin 2000 a: 53-54).

## 3 Analysis of the Interviews

How do the students view the concept of democracy? How do they view democracy with regard to their opinions about the political situation in Indonesia? What are their conceptions of the future of democracy in Indonesia?

As could be seen from table 1, different topics have been discussed during the interviews to get some possible answers to these questions. In the following analysis I will give a short presentation of these topics and then try to outline the information that I got during the talks with the students.

Before I continue, some comments about the text could be in place. According to Steinar Kvale (1997: 241) it is important to present quotations from interviews in a written form that is easy to understand. Some of the excerpts have therefore been edited to make them more comprehensible to the reader.

It must also be emphasised that the students with an Islamic view on democracy are referred to only when their opinions are distinctive from the others. The views of the leftist-radical students are treated likewise. If there are no comments about these students' views in a certain section, it thus means that their opinions are similar to the opinions of the majority.

The interviewees will be presented with their assumed name and their academic affiliation the first time they are quoted. Thereafter I will only refer to the name if they are quoted again.

### 3.1 The Concept of Democracy among the University Students in General: Principles and Institutions

One idea of democracy that seems to have high importance among the students is the right to freedom without any threat of reprisals. This was often expressed in terms of freedom of expression and descriptions of a political order where everybody has a right to think and act independently. Igor, a 24-year-old student in psychology at University of Indonesia (UI) in Jakarta, expressed his basic thoughts about democracy in the following way:

Democracy is a freedom to act, to talk and to criticise. In a democracy there is no pressure or side effects of what someone says. I mean if someone criticise the government, there should not be side effects, like being captured. It is a freedom to act and to do what a person think is best according to him (Igor, interview 2001-04-17).

Budi 22, studies government science at Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta and is active in a left-wing student organisation located on the campus. His basic thoughts on democracy also involve a widespread individual freedom in many aspects of society:

For me democracy is a matter of freedom, freedom of the individual in every aspect. It means economic, political, social and cultural freedom. For me democracy is really that simple, a freedom of the individual in all of these aspects (Budi, interview 2001-05-19).

Many of the students who think that freedom is most important in a democracy also express a concern for orderliness when citizens are making use of their freedom. The substance of this orderliness varies and the students often find it difficult to explain its content. Amli, a 21-year-old student in finance and management at UI, thinks that certain norms and values must regulate the democratic freedoms:

Democracy means that we can express our ideas and emotions but we must have some norms or maybe values to keep these ideas and emotions on the right path. When we saw the riots in May 1998<sup>2</sup>, people expressed their emotions but not according to the good norms and values and because of that many disasters happened (Amli, interview 2001-04-24).

The values referred to by Amli are respect for other people and a respect for the fact that people have different opinions. These values must be an integrated part of people's minds if compromises are going to be reached, and that is very important in a democracy according to her.

While Amli holds the view that certain values and norms must guide the democratic freedoms, other students are talking about a kind of freedom under responsibility. Hariyadi, a 36-year-old MBA-student at UI said the following about his basic thoughts on the issue of democracy:

I think the most important in democracy is that everybody has the right to say what they want [...] but there must be a balance [...] everybody should have the right to say what they want, but they must understand too that individual freedoms must be in balance with national goals and what is best for the community (Hariyadi, interview 2001-05-01).

Arjuna 21, who studies international relations at UGM in Yogyakarta conveyed another similar opinion:

In a democracy there is freedom of speech and there is freedom of rights [...] but in spite of those things the freedom is not limitless. I mean that if freedom were limitless it would be anarchy. The limits of freedom are a matter of our consciousness about the public. We are free to criticise the president but there must be some ethics, some rules of conduct. With limitations I do not mean restrictions from the state etc.

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<sup>2</sup> The events that led to the fall of Suharto's reached a culmination in May 1998. It involved a lot of violence and rioting (Maher 2000: 150-172).

but people should have a consciousness so that they can handle their freedoms of democracy in a good way [...] without violence and so on (Arjuna, interview 2001-05-17).

According to my experiences and interpretations during the interviews, there seems to be uneasiness among the students about a risk of violence that may result from the freedoms of democracy. As in the case with Amlu above, they often refer to the violent demonstrations on the streets of Jakarta as a situation where the call for democracy and political reform is connected to anarchy and chaos, and this is something that they are afraid of. Therefore they often make demands of freedom with responsibility and applications of norms and values when talking about their basic meaning of democracy.

Other institutions and principles that seem to be included in the students' basic conceptions of democracy are ideas of parliamentarianism and accommodation of different interests in the political process. Tono is a 22-year-old student of psychology at UI and holds the following view:

Democracy for me is *dari rakyat oleh rakyat untuk rakyat* (from the people done by people for the people). It means that we work together to obtain a better life for all. The most important institution for democracy is the House of Representatives or the parliament. This institution consists of many people who have been elected [...] and I think this is good for the development of democracy (Tono, interview 2001-04-17).

The importance of accommodation of diverging interests as a basic foundation for democracy was expressed in various ways during the interviews and many students are concerned about the notion of compromise as important. Lisa, who is 22 years old and a student in public health at UI said:

I think the most important thing about democracy is when we try to appreciate other people's opinions and when we try to accept what other people think and what they do instead of trying to force our own wishes on them. I think, when you say you are a democratic man, you are someone who is able to accept criticism and able to give other people a chance to say what they want. You must understand what other people want and not just try to put your own opinion on the top of all (Lisa, interview 2001-04-30).

Some interviewees were anxious to put forward arguments about equality during the discussions about what democracy means to them. This was particularly evident among students that regard themselves as left-oriented in their political views. For them, economic and social equality has high relevance because this aspect is seen as a necessary precondition for democracy to work, especially in the Indonesian society where there is a high level of social and economic stratification. Otherwise, they do not think that every citizen will be able to take part of the democratic process due to social and economic hardships. According to them, the basic needs of the people must be fulfilled in the first place and therefore the notion of democracy always has a connection to equality. Alex, a 21-year-old student in communication

studies at UGM is a member of a leftist student organisation. He said the following about his fundamental conception about democracy:

For me democracy means that there is an arena where people can express their freedom and also get possibility to fulfil their basic needs. With basic needs I mean food, housing, clothes and so on. Whereas democracy is an important media to express who we are, it also relates to the economic sector. Everybody should have the equality to get their economic basic needs fulfilled so that they can express their genuineness as human beings (Alex, interview 2001-05-16).

During the talks with students who explicitly say they have an Islamic way of looking at democracy, I found a strong scepticism towards some of the basic democratic ideas. Those students are eager to create a clear demarcation between different notions of democracy, especially between Western and Indonesian concepts, and often say that the Western notion has to be modified to fit in the Indonesian context. While most of them still believe that ideas such as freedom of expression or equality are good and deserving, they find the ideals of majority resolutions in politics incompatible with their religion. Whereas the people consist of many different individuals with different capabilities, these students also think that it is problematic to let the majority decide how to formulate a nation's political agenda and choose appropriate leaders. Mustafa 21, is studying to become an engineer at UGM. He is also a candidate for the leadership in an Islamic student party. His reasoning resembles the other Islamic students' opinions about the conflict between democracy and Islam:

As I understand democracy as it is implemented in the Western countries where freedom means everything, activities such as prostitution and alcohol drinking are allowed based on individual freedom. It is also a part of the majority will because the majority want to have it like that, but for me democracy can not rely on the majority principle because religion should be the reference to our social activities [...]. There is no higher authority than Allah and with this principle there will be no practice of the majority principle. The preference should be the law of God. Democracy is a system where power is in the hand of the people and the people have the highest authority in that system, but what kind of people are we talking about? There is a difference between those who have awareness and those who have not. We can not make a similarity between a professor at the university and a pedicab driver. I still believe that there are so many values and principles in democracy that I agree with such as equality, freedom and also transparency but still I also want to criticise the concept of democracy because when we are talking about people, should we not make any differences between them? Whereas I believe in Islamic values, people who can hold power are those who have the right capabilities in three aspects: moral, intellectual and managerial. Leaders must be judged from what they have done to God, to their religion (Mustafa, interview 2001-05-18).

Religion and politics thus seems to be inseparable and that makes democracy somewhat problematic for Mustafa.

## 3.2 Politics Based on the Will of the People Through a Majority of Votes

We are now moving into Robert Dahl's formulation of democracy. As could be seen from table 1, his first institution proclaims that control over government and government decisions should emanate from the will of the majority of votes in elections. According to Dahl this institution arrived rather late in the history of democracy. Making the prime minister and cabinet depend on a majority of votes is a creation of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century (Dahl 1991: 72-73).

During the interviews, Dahl's first institution often developed into discussions about the pros and cons of letting the will of the people play a decisive role in politics. The talks did not reflect so much upon the procedures of representation, i.e. if elections are the best method to voice the will of the people or not. For my part this was an advantage. It created a chance to put a finger on the students' philosophy about the whole idea of people's power in politics which in itself is a fundamental component of democracy as well as an underlying notion in Dahl's first institution (Dahl 1999:120-129, 247).

From an ideal point of view, most students regard Dahl's first institution as very important and absolutely necessary in a democracy. Nyoman 20, a student in government studies at UGM, made the following comment on the topic:

Peoples sovereignty is the *raison d'être* of the existence of a state. It should be reflected in all parts of the government in a democracy. The state is a social contract between the government and the people so the behaviour of the state should always refer to what people wish. In the same manner the president should act on behalf of the people because he is elected by them (Nyoman, interview 2001-05-16).

When the idealistic ideas were confronted with questions about how to arrange governance in the complex political environment of Indonesia, the students showed a clear ambivalence. It was not clear if Indonesia should or can rely on the will of the people in politics due to certain indigenous problems and hindrances. One problem that was mentioned frequently during the interviews was the lack of political education and awareness among the citizens. For many students this seems to be a difficult obstacle in the process of democratisation in the country.

This excerpt follows the previous one:

As long as the people's political education has not reached a certain stage that makes them aware, I do not think we can rely on the will of the people. The problem of our political situation is the level of political education. This is why we have mob politics in Indonesia today. As long as we have this problem it is very hard for me to imagine that we can build our democracy on the will of the people (Nyoman, interview 2001-05-16).

Tuti is a 21-year-old law student at UI. She said the following about the tension between the level of education and people's power in Indonesia:

I think that the government should listen to the people because it would not exist without the people. But sometimes, like in Indonesia, the government can not listen to the people because the citizens here do not have a good education. They are not really aware of what is happening. Citizens in countries with a high level of education have more brain compared to the citizens of Indonesia and that will give them a better perception of what is going on in their country. You can not really say that the people in England are the same as the people in Indonesia. Other people will lead an uneducated population into chaos because they do not know what is happening. So in Indonesia, a government built upon the will of the people is not so important as in better-educated countries (Tuti, interview 2001-04-23).

With these problems in mind, many students expressed a deep concern for programmes and initiatives that can help to raise the level of education in Indonesia. Some suggested that a special subject that teach the basic principles of democracy should be an integrated part of the curriculum of the schools in the country (Amli, interview 2001-04-24; Lisa, interview 2001-04-30). Other said that the government must take initiatives to build a strong co-operation with different non-governmental organisations to achieve a better level of political understanding among the citizens (Arjuna, interview 2001-05-17). It is also interesting to note that many student organisations, especially left-wingers, engage in activities in which they educate farmers and workers in civil and political rights to relieve these problems (Ani, interview 2001-05-19).

According to my impressions from the majority of the interviews, the students' opinions about Dahl's first institution should not be regarded as negative views towards the democratic ideals even if they are sceptical against the applicability of the idea in Indonesia. Whereas the students highly esteem the idea of people's power in their idealistic attitudes, their views should rather be seen as well thought-out interpretations that are sensitive towards their indigenous experiences from their daily life. It must be admitted, however, that I also interviewed students that did hold an explicitly negative attitude towards Dahl's first institution even in their idealistic opinions. These views were especially evident among the Islamic students whose conceptions will be discussed further on.

Another issue that many interviewees regard as an obstacle to people's power in Indonesia is the hierarchic culture, which they think is a common feature in their country. Henky is a 20-year-old student in physics at UI:

We just choose our leader and then we let him do what he wants. This is our tradition. We need that principle [*Dahl's first institution*] in Indonesia, but unfortunately I have not seen it yet (Henky, interview 2001-05-03).

Nyoman puts it like this and also gives an explanation to the problems:

We have so called paternalistic or patrimonial relations here and that makes it very hard for individuals to express their opinions and use their democratic rights. This situation, however, can not be separated from how the old regime manipulated our cultural characteristics and taught us how to act politically, only to keep its own power (Nyoman, interview 2001-05-16).<sup>3</sup>

Many students also mentioned the lack of conformity in Indonesia's population as a problem when Dahl's first institution was discussed. To rely on people's power and a subsequent majority of votes in elections, seems to be a difficult ideal for the students as long as the question of stateness, i.e. the definition of the demos (Linz & Stepan 1996: 16-37) remains unsolved. Wayan 19, studies international relations at UGM and holds the following view:

There are very big problems connected to the concept of people's power in Indonesia. I look at Indonesia from a post-colonial perspective<sup>4</sup> [...] is there any solid concept of Indonesia as a nation? There are no strong bonds between for example Javanese and Madurese or Dayak people. It is a fragile nation. I think the most important agenda before we dream about democracy in Indonesia, is to find the lost nation (Wayan, interview 2001-05-17).

As was evident in the previous section, the students with an Islamic way of looking at democracy find it problematic to rely on majority solutions in politics. Their views on Dahl's first institution seems to have an in-built limitation as soon as the majority will goes against the laws and the moral principles of their religion. Whereas they believe that leaders and policies must be equipped with certain moral, intellectual and managerial capabilities before they are inaugurated, they also find it difficult to accept the idea that every citizen, irrespective of these abilities, must have equal right to contribute in the process of decision making. Amir 21, studies economics at UI and he is active in an Islamic student organisation:

In a democracy the voice of a professor will be just the same as the voice of an uneducated man. Is it good for a country? Is it good for Indonesia if people with different backgrounds and capabilities have the same right to vote? The fact is that their capabilities are different. Is democracy fair then? We need people who have a very big capability and are trustworthy and honest. This group of people should finally decide what is best for the country [...] democracy does not put forward the best people. The people could just have the will of having free sex, but is it good? In a democratic system free sex would be okay because the will of the people wants it, but is it good finally? We need people in the top who can analyse what the people want and then decide [...] (Amir, interview 2001-04-23).

Later during the interview, Amir told me that he thinks that there should be a "core group" in the government that makes the final decisions according to certain moral values that he regards as important. Instead of relying solely on the majority will, the core group should adjust the people's will on the basis of four moral questions before a policy is installed. These

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<sup>3</sup> The hierarchic nature in Javanese culture with its emphasis on obedience and loyalty towards the ruler, was an important tool for the maintenance of the Suharto regime (Mulder 1998: 79-119).

<sup>4</sup> Indonesia is the successor state of the Netherlands Indies that brought numerous nations, languages and cultures under one sway (*ISSEA* 1987: 418-430).



questions are the following: (1) Will the policy harm the people's mind? (2) Will it harm the people's health? (3) Will it harm the welfare of the state? (4) Will it harm the people's belief? According to Amir, the Islamic State of Iran constitutes a good example of how this system can work. A more distinct example of how Amir thinks those values could put into practice will be presented further on in section 3.6.

### 3.3 The Right to Vote

The idea that every adult citizen should have the right to vote is essential in a democracy as well as in Dahl's polyarchy. As with the regulation that the government must depend on a majority of votes, this principle also arrived rather late in the history of democracy. For instance it could be pointed out that in Switzerland, women did not have a constitutional right to vote in federal elections until 1971 (Dahl 1991: 73).

Almost all of the interviewees agree on the idea that every adult citizen should have this right. Many of them referred to human values and legitimacy of the government when discussing the issue. Irena 22, studies international relations at UI:

As human beings we also have the right to choose what we think is best for our lives. We must have a choice to decide which leader we think is best for us even if there are other interests involved also, but that is what makes democracy merry, with many choices and that people still have the right [*to choose*]. And that is also why the people support the government because they have the chance to decide [...] over their own lives (Irena, interview 2001-05-10).

Again, many students mentioned the insufficient level of education when their idealistic views were confronted with questions about Dahl's second institution with regard to politics in Indonesia. The majority of them, however, did not say that this problem should be a reason to put restrictions on the right to vote in the country. Budi said the following:

The level of education does not really matter. It is a moment for us to do something, to push the level of education to get higher. For me, the problem is there, yes, but it is our duty now to do something about it, to increase the level of education. Regardless of the inferiority of the people I still believe that they should have the right to vote and to participate (Budi, interview 2001-05-19).

Ihsan, a 24-year-old student in Japanese at UI thinks that the government should be active in the process of democratisation to make people aware:

As long as the citizens meet the requirements of age, they should have the right to vote. The government has a responsibility to make the people mature in politics. We are still in a process. Nobody is perfect in operating a democracy. Even America has its weaknesses. The people must get information, we live a modern life with media, like radio for instance. Or sometimes we can send delegations to the villages [...] to explain it [*the idea of democracy*] (Ihsan, interview 2001-05-09).

The Islamic students also said that every adult citizen must have the right to vote, even if they seem to have a different idea of the consequences. For them the authority of God and the moral values of their religion can not be called into question as a result of elections.

One argument for the right to vote is rather that *under* the rules of God, everybody is equal but society must still be governed according to Islamic guidelines. Raji 20, is a student in communication studies at UGM and active in a Muslim organisation:

As human beings we must have the right to vote [...] all human beings have equal rights under the rules of God (Raji, interview 2001-05-15)

When we discussed to what extent the votes should be transformed into policies, however, he said the following:

Democracy based on a majority will that goes against the rules of God is senseless for me as a Muslim. We have to be fair and follow the rules from the Koran (Raji, interview 2001-05-15).

Mustafa conveyed this reasoning in more plain terms and also implied the problems connected to the usage of votes as a foundation for policy making:

I think that everybody should have the right to vote but still, everybody must understand that God is the highest authority. Islamic laws should be referred to all the time because as human beings we are not stable emotionally, sometimes we are up and sometimes we are down, so we can not rely on policies that are based on ourselves. We need consistency in terms of morality [...] and that is a big challenge for democracy. For me the best way to choose a leader is by representatives. There are so many different kinds of people in society and everybody does not have the same consciousness. It is not fair to let all of them vote because then [*for example*] you make a similarity between those who gamble and those who want to banish gambling. There should be a difference in the treatment of these people (Mustafa, interview 2001-05-18).

The idea of letting representatives take the final decisions instead of relying solely on votes, was also evident in Amir's way of thinking about the right to vote. As was clear in the previous section, he prefers a "core group" that will analyse the people's will with reference to certain values before policies are installed. When I asked about his views on Dahl's second institution he said:

I agree with that principle but I still doubt that people have the same ability to make good decisions [...] and contribute to what is best for the national interest. [...] Let them [*the people*] voice what they want but at the same time, let the core group analyse what is best (Amir, interview 2001-04-23).

The core group should thus have the final say also in this context according to Amir.

### 3.4 Frequent, Fair and Free Elections without Violence and Coercion

Polyarchy includes the aspects of frequency and fairness in elections. It also comprises requirements that guarantee a political process free from violence and the idea about the secret ballot. The concept of the secret ballot was rarely employed in national elections in many countries until the beginning of the twentieth century and is therefore, like many of the other institutions of polyarchy, a rather late invention in the history of democracy (Dahl 1991: 73).

The majority of the students think it is very important that elections are arranged with frequent intervals. With frequent intervals they often mean three to five years. A common opinion about the frequency of elections is that the interval must create possibility for the government to carry out their plans and programmes. If the interval is too short there will be no scope for this, according to the students. Another argument to uphold a frequency of elections is that the people must have a chance to evaluate the leaders they have put in charge of the country. Yos is a 21-year-old student in communication studies at UI. He conveyed the following opinion:

Once every fourth or fifth year is fine [...] but it [*the elections*] should not happen too frequently. Every government has its own project, they have their own programme and it takes time to realise it, so if we have it [*elections*] too often their programmes will not work. It can not be too frequent but it has to be frequent enough to evaluate the result [*of the elections*] (Yos, interview 2001-04-16).

When it comes to politics in Indonesia, the greater part of the students does not see any difficulties with the ideal of frequency of elections. Some of them, however, once more mentioned the low level of education in the country as a problem and again emphasised the importance of government strategies that can educate the population and thereby facilitate for democracy in Indonesia. They often said that the people must have knowledge to be able to understand their political rights, the mechanisms of evaluation of representatives and elections as a means to exchange them for new ones. Henky said:

I think the government and every institution in this country has a responsibility to develop or increase people's knowledge and opinions about democracy and politics. I think they [*the people*] have a right to control their government and their representatives, that is the most important thing. People's knowledge must be increased so that there is a good will from society to control the government. For me the most important thing is not the frequency of elections but to what extent the people are eager to join the elections and they must have a good understanding so that they know their right to control when they give their vote (Henky, interview 2001-05-03).

The topic of fair elections was often discussed with reference to the phrase “one man - one vote” which was a useful concept during the interviews. Except from some of the students with an Islamic view on politics, all interviewees think that fair elections are indispensable in a democracy. This opinion remains firm also in the students views about how to arrange politics in Indonesia. This excerpt comes from the interview with Hariyadi:

Democracy means that everybody must have equal rights. If we group people [*and give them different rights*] because they are rich or powerful there would be bias, so I think one man – one vote is an ideal and a good condition for every democratic system (Hariyadi, interview 2001-05-01).

The students with Islamic conceptions of democracy conveyed reciprocally different opinions about fair elections to some extent.

For Amir it is not suitable with fairness in elections because of the different capabilities among the population that he thinks must be recognised. According to him, a mechanism that classifies the citizens and gives some of them more votes than others should be in force even if he thinks it is difficult to determine on which criterion it can be done:

Some people should have more votes than others because they might be more capable and at the same time they are more serious [...] and maybe more clever in deciding what is best for the nation. The very basic question is when do we have to give a different vote to different people? That is a thing that we have to find out. I agree that somebody should have more votes than others should. It is much fairer, but when? We really have to find out that criterion (Amir, interview 2001-04-23).

Amir’s views are similar to Mustafa’s who also thinks it is wrong to give all citizens the same opportunity to voice their opinions due to their different capabilities (Mustafa, interview 2001-05-18). Raji, however, thinks otherwise:

I agree with the concept of one man – one vote if he [*the voter*] fulfils the basic requirement of age and if he is married. The principle of Islam has no difference with the principle of democracy. If you relate it with fair elections there are no contradictions. All human beings [...] have the same position under God (Raji, interview 2001-05-15).

Apart from the left-wingers (see below), the majority of the interviewees support the idea that the political process must be free from violence and coercion. This view was steadfast even when the question of how to conduct politics in Indonesia was under discussion. Nico who is a 24-year-old student in computer science at UI said:

I think we have to throw away the idea of violence in politics. I think we have to start to see what other countries do [...] they do not use violence. It just makes conditions worse. The violence in Indonesia in 1998 must not happen again. It just makes things worse (Nico, interview 2001-05-08).

Lisa said the following about violence and coercion in politics:

I think [*violence and coercion*] is very rude and very inhuman. When a person wants to rule the country by using black politics many people will become victims. Even after they [*the persons using black politics*] have become leaders, the government does not go the way it should because someone who tries to get up at any cost usually does not have good intentions. So I think if they could, please try to do things without causing any harm to other people and try to play the political game cleanly. There should not be any violence under any circumstances (Lisa, interview 2001-04-30).

The leftist-radical students hold a somewhat different opinion. For them it is not unthinkable to use violence as a means to reach political goals. This opinion holds for their ideal political views as well as their views on how politics in Indonesia should be done. Furthermore, all of them seem to have a strong negative attitude towards the existing political system in Indonesia that they still regard as manipulated and influenced by the old regime from the days of Suharto. Alex said:

I think I can tolerate political violence as long as it reflects what the people in majority really want. A revolutionary way to achieve the political goals [*in Indonesia*] is fine for me because that is the only choice we have to oust the old regime. So if we don't do that in radical way I do not think the old regime will disappear. In this kind of situation it is those who act fast who win (Alex, interview 2001-05-16).

The idea of the secret ballot is widely supported by the majority of the students, irrespective of political affiliation. They do not believe that there are any special circumstances in the case of Indonesia that could make them think otherwise.

During the interviews many of them referred to the political environment under the Suharto era as an example of violation of the secret ballot. Irena has the following view:

It [*the secret ballot*] is important because it is about human rights. It is our right to choose. It is a choice for our lives. Especially regarding which party you prefer. Under the Suharto era it was easy to be detected and the people who worked in the public service had to vote for Golkar.<sup>5</sup> That will not happen again because we have more freedom now. No intervention in elections is one of the requirements for the right democracy (Irena, interview 2001-05-10)

The regulations during the period of authoritarianism are obviously still fresh in the minds of the students and often play the role of a bad example compared to their political ideals.

### 3.5 The Right to Run for Public Offices in Elections

Like the ideal that virtually all adults should have the right to vote, the right to run for public offices reflect a fundamental change in the concept of democracy. Until the twentieth century, all democracies have excluded a very large part of their citizens from participating in the political process and to take part in the formulation of laws (Dahl 1991: 73).

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<sup>5</sup> All civil servants were forced to vote for Golkar during the Suharto era (Lindahl 1998: 20).

Compared with the other institutions discussed so far, the majority of the students showed a great deal of scepticism when the right to run for public offices was under discussion. Many of them think that this institution always must be connected to certain predetermined requirements that the candidate has to fulfil, both in Indonesia and in other democracies. Only a small number of them hold the opinion that the right to run for public offices should embrace all citizens irrespective of their capabilities. Amlı said:

The people should have the right capacity or capabilities. If everybody can run for public offices without capacity or capability [...] there will be a disaster [...]. The continuity of programmes will not work. Everybody should have a chance to run for public offices as long as he or she has the capacity and capability (Amlı, interview 2001-04-24).

The requirements mentioned are often multiple. Lisa enumerated the following:

They [*who run for public offices*] have to be competent. They must have knowledge, education and ability to lead the people. There are certain requirements. Everyone has the right [*to run for public offices*] but they have to fulfil the requirements. He has to be an honest man [...] so that he won't cheat us on our money. He or she must have a lot of organisational experience and ability to communicate with people so there won't be misunderstandings among the people. He must also have a good leadership style. He must be able to understand what his people want and he has to be smart of course. No way I would like to have a fool as my leader (Lisa, interview 2001-04-30).

Many interviewees also believe that the citizens' right to run for public offices can function only in an ideal situation where the level of political awareness is high but not in Indonesia due to the low level of education and knowledge about politics. Nyoman thinks:

For me it [*the right to run for public offices*] is really a matter of an ideal situation. In reality it is very hard to achieve because certain positions need certain capabilities that can not be fulfilled by the average citizens here. Ideally it should be implemented but still we have to see the situation through the requirements that is needed for certain public positions. Education plays an important role [...] but also political experience (Nyoman, interview 2001-05-16).

Among the students who are leftist-radical in their political preferences, I found a somewhat deviant pattern in the lines of thought. They seldom mentioned any idea of requirements that should determine the citizens' abilities to compete for public offices in elections. Alex said:

If the people elect them [*the ones who run for public offices in elections*] then they should have the right to their positions. The most important is that we have a strong mechanism [*that supports this*] and that we give everybody the right [*to compete*]. For me this ideal situation has not been reached yet in Indonesia because the many explanations of our election system, the quality of the members of parliament and the manipulation in the parliament etc. (Alex, interview 2001-05-16).

The topic of participation also brought up questions about ethnicity and ethnic discrimination in Indonesia. Some of the students descend from Chinese origin and they were eager to put forward complaints about the norm that only thoroughbred Indonesians can aspire to the presidency in Indonesia. Tono feels resentment over the situation:

The ideal situation is no discrimination but I think this can not happen in Indonesia. I am a mixed Chinese-Indonesian. I am not a *Pribumi*.<sup>6</sup> I can vote but how many of my ethnic group can become a member of the parliament? Only a few. In the constitution of 1945 it is said that the president of Indonesia must be a native Indonesian.<sup>7</sup> This is discrimination against our ethnic group. The statement of a native Indonesian is confusing. Who are the native Indonesians? Are they Javanese? Are they Malays or are they Madurese? Do they come from Sumatra or Sulawesi (Tono, interview 2001-04-17)?

The width of participation in democracy thus seems to be limited by ethnic problems for these students.

### 3.6 Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression means that every individual or group of people should have the right to express their opinions or attitudes irrespective of the substance in those. Ideally this could be done in every possible way, in private as well as in public (Bregnsbo 1997: 296).

The right to freedom of expression was identified as a natural inborn law by among others John Locke but the idea can be traced as far back as to ancient times. It is a requisite for democracy to work even if states usually put restrictions on it in some way due to moral, religious or security reasons (Bregnsbo 1997: 296). As could be seen in table 1, the concept of freedom of expression is also an indispensable part in Dahl's polyarchy.

Only a few of the interviewees think that freedom of expression in a democracy should function without any prerequisites of what could be said or expressed. Instead many of them hold the opinion that freedom of expression is very important but it has to be guided by certain requirements. These requirements are often connected to the idea of freedom with responsibility and should, according to the greater part of the students, be effective in all democracies, even in Indonesia. This it not to say that they recommend any statutory restrictions on this right. Rather, they seem to be of the view that every individual or organisation acting in public must follow certain moral standards by their own efforts before using their freedom.

The concept of these moral standards varies among the students. Many of them think it is important that the press and mass media keep strictly to the truth and act without bias when they give voice to their opinions. Igor said:

If the freedom of the press is restricted [...] the government can do what it wants and it will not listen to what the people want. It is not wise to put restrictions on the press as long as (I am now back to the principle of democracy as freedom with responsibility) the press has responsibility. They [*the press*] should not lie to the people. They should stick to the truth (Igor, interview 2001-04-17).

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<sup>6</sup> *Pribumi* is an Indonesian name for a person who is of native stock without immigrant blood.

<sup>7</sup> The only constitutional qualification for office is that the president be a native-born Indonesian citizen (*USLC*).

Others believe that the moral standards should be built on good ethics. Wayan's view is the following:

I agree [*on freedom of expression*] in a framework of good ethics. When we criticise people we must also express it with good ethics. I think criticism is good as long as it is constructive but I think criticism is bad when we use it just to [...] speak disparagingly about a person. Freedom of expression has to be arranged with ethics, for example demonstrations are okay but riots are not. That is a simple ethic that we should hold on to (Wayan, interview 2001-05-17).

The idea of moral standards as guideline for freedom of expression is especially evident among the students with an Islamic view on democracy. While Raji (interview 2001-05-15) and Mustafa (interview 2001-05-18) both think that freedom of expression always must be adjusted to Islamic values, Amir is talking about the idea of the core group influenced by the Islamic State of Iran. His views are similar to Raji's and Mustafa's but more distinct:

I think this concept [*freedom of expression*] should be added by another phrase, i.e. freedom of expression within the framework of values. I feel that when people just voice what they want it will harm people with different opinions, so what we need right now is a value how to express our freedom and feelings and that is sometimes not included in a democracy. The value should be the filter for you as to know how much freedom of expression you have. If we implemented the system where there is a core institution [...] the values should be based on four questions: Will it harm the people's minds? Will it harm the people's health? Will it harm the people's welfare? Will it harm the people's belief (Amir, interview 2001-04-23)?

For Amir these values are universal and could be implemented in any country. This excerpt follows the previous one:

For example, if people want to have euthanasia like in Holland the very basic problem will be if it is against the four things. Is it against people's mind? I mean people could just be hopeless and finally say that they want euthanasia. Is there any special restriction then so that people won't go for it if they still are healthy? Will it harm the people's welfare? If it will, then euthanasia should not be implemented in Holland.

Some students also believe that a full freedom of expression without any prerequisites can function only in democracies where there is a high level of education. A common view among them is that Indonesia is not ready to let its citizens speak out freely until the population is better educated. Yos said:

I think it is important for the people to say what they want but the problem in Indonesia is that we are not educated enough. Only a fifth of the population made it to senior high school and media and other persons easily influence people. Some people can take advantage of it. From my point of view, people with no education perform the riots that are happening all around. They need money and there is this smart guy who has a lot of money and he lies to people and pays them so they can do all these riots. People should have the right to speak freely but... Sometimes in the future when the people is educated enough the limitation should be removed (Yos, interview 2001-04-16).



Thus, the level of education seems to be problematic also within the context of freedom of expression for many students.

### 3.7 Access to non-Monopolised Alternative Sources of Information

In the concept of polyarchy it is stated that the citizens must have an effectively enforced right to gain access to alternative sources of information. Like the right to freedom of expression this mechanism gives the people opportunity to take in different ideas of what may be for the benefit of everyone. It thereby creates an open environment for discussions about how to govern the society and is thus necessary if democracy is going to function well (Bolin 1996: 19; Dahl 1999: 126-127). As many other democratic ideas of our time, the right to gain access to different sources of information dates from the Age of Enlightenment shortly before the French Revolution and from the philosophical tradition of liberalism (Althoff 1995: 9-10; Sjölin 1994: 152). In some cases, like in Sweden and Japan for instance, the concept is connected to the principle of public access to official records which gives transparency into governmental affairs and enhance the citizens ability to control the political system (Bolin 1996: 18-20; Iwanaga 1995: 202-204).

The most frequently discussed issues in this section dealt with questions about transparency, i.e. public access to information about governmental affairs, and the scope of freedom of the mass media.

All interviewees think it is very important that the citizens in a democracy have access to information about governmental affairs. Most of them believe that this prerequisite should be effective in all democracies and thereby also in Indonesia. One common argument is that it is necessary if the people want to control their government. Arjuna said:

Transparency is a mechanism to see how efficient and how effective an institution, the government or the state is. So without transparency we can not see how efficient, for example, the bureaucracy is. Neither can we see how the presidency or the government is managed. Transparency is actually like a window [...] so that we can judge what is good and what is bad. I think it brings mutual benefits to both the people and the government (Arjuna, interview 2001-05-17).

While the idea that access to information about the government has high importance among the students many of them are eager to emphasise the problems of this ideal in the Indonesian context. The bureaucracy is often viewed as a very ineffective institution that constitutes a difficult obstacle for transparency according to the students. Jon 21, studies communication studies at UI. He said:

It [*access to information about the government*] does not exist in Indonesia. I mean they [*the bureaucracy*] can't even keep track of themselves. Things like pay checks and stuff get lost all the time. They sometimes can't keep track of who is really employed [...] and who is fired [...]. Sometimes people that are supposed to be in one working team actually work in another team. The bureaucracy just sucks (Jon, interview 2001-04-16).

When the issue of access to information concerned questions about freedom of the mass media some students had a hesitant attitude that reflects the opinions about ethics and freedom of expression conveyed in the preceding section. For them there should be certain limits to the information that can be published in Indonesia whereas the people has to be protected. This, however, must not always be the case in other democracies. Nico said:

Maybe we have to restrict for example pornography and violent movies in Indonesia. I have seen much on the Internet. It is just not good for the people in Indonesia. What other countries do is not of my business (Nico, interview 2001-05-08).

Lisa's view is similar but with the difference that she connects the idea of moral values to the reasoning:

Censorship is important for moral values [...] so that we won't ruin our generation with wrong or inappropriate information (Lisa, interview 2001-04-30).

### 3.8 Freedom of Association

Freedom of association the final requirement in Dahl's definition of democracy. Like the ideal of access to alternative sources of information its most significant origin can be found in the thoughts of liberalism whereof many have proved to be indispensable to democracy. Without the guaranteed right of all citizens to form and join associations that can voice their interests, democracy would be meaningless (Beetham 1999: 12, 34).

The interviewees gave a somewhat divided picture of their views when Dahl's final institution was under discussion. The greater part of them seems to believe that freedom of association could be a destabilising factor in a democracy if it is conducted without any reservations. Many of them were anxious to put forward arguments about the maintenance of security and order as a requirement that should regulate the right to form and join associations. As with their ideas about freedom of expression this does not mean that they recommend any retrenchments. Again it is demands about freedom with responsibility and moral values that are suggested as guiding principles when the citizens make use of their freedom and this should be effective in all democracies. Hariyadi said:

I believe that people must have freedom to make an organisation. Even in our constitution article 28, which we call *kebebasan berorganisasi*, [*freedom of association*]<sup>8</sup> [...] allows people to do this [...]. People must have their freedom to associate but this freedom must be connected to the common good. [*The organisation should*] not disturb other people, not make other people feel hate or irritated or something like that. It is about moral values and the common good (Hariyadi, interview 2001-05-01).

Some of the students who think that freedom of association have a potential to become destabilising factor also emphasised that there are special circumstances in Indonesia that may worsen this phenomenon. The many ethnic and religious groups are viewed as a sensitive issue that may cause problems if they will organise themselves and act inimically towards other groups (Igor, interview 2001-04-17; Tono, interview 2001-04-17). Other students mentioned communists groups as another problem that may cause problems in the same manner. Ihsan conveyed the following view:

The organisation that we are going to form must be on the same track as the purpose of the country. As long as they have the same purpose as the country any kind of organisation is all right [...]. But basically one should be free to make an organisation. There should not be any prohibition [...]. The communists do not believe in God, I do not agree with that. For Indonesia I do not think it is good because the atmosphere of religion in Indonesia is very strong, [*we have*] Christianity, Buddhism and even Hinduism [...]. There have been two rebellions of the communists in Indonesia, in 1948 and in 1965,<sup>9</sup> but they will never win. I don't know about other countries where the atmosphere of religion is not strong enough. Maybe they can accept it as one part of their democracy but I don't think it will happen in Indonesia (Ihsan, interview 2001-05-09).

As was mentioned above the students gave a divided picture of their opinions. Not all of them hold the same views as the ones presented so far. Some interviewees do not think that there are any problems related to freedom of association at all. This stance seems to be especially strong among the students who describe themselves as left-oriented. Budi said:

The right to form and join organisations is also a democratic freedom [...]. By making autonomy of organisations people can deliver and articulate their interests. I totally agree that people should have the right to organise themselves (Budi, interview 2001-05-19).

These kinds of opinions thus distinguish the leftist-radicals from other students on this issue.

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<sup>8</sup> In the constitution of 1945, article 29 states that "Freedom of assembly and the right to form unions, freedom of speech and of the press, and similar freedoms shall be provided by law". Yet, subsequent laws enacted did not fully carry out these rights (*USLC*).

<sup>9</sup> In 1965 an attempted coup was carried out that brought Suharto to power. The army blamed the communist party as guilty but nobody really knows who was behind it. At that time Suharto was a prominent general. He restored order and eventually took over the power from Sukarno who could not handle the situation. The attempted coup triggered an extreme reaction that led to the killings of up to one million known or suspected communists. Thereafter the communist party was forbidden and Suharto started to exterminate all ideas and organisations that could be related to communism. A communist phobia spread all over Indonesia. The other rebellion Ihsan is talking about happened in 1948 when a group of procommunist officers took control over the town of Madiun (Bresnan 1993: 7-48).

### 3.9 Opinions about the Future of Democracy in Indonesia

How do the students estimate the future of democracy in Indonesia? This question produced many different answers during the interviews and I will now try to outline the most common ones.

The majority of the students hope that the ongoing political process will continue and they are quite optimistic about the future of democracy in the country. A frequent argument is that since the citizens already have a great deal of experience of their recently acquired freedom, it would be difficult to restore an authoritarian system again. Igor said:

In such a condition like this [...] the freedom is open. Now the people are braver to criticise. If some regime or someone tries to take the power with violence I do not think the Indonesian people will repeat the same mistakes as in the past with the Suharto regime. So I do not believe there will be any regime that use violence to regain power [...] (Igor, interview 2001-04-17).

While the students tend to have a positive attitude towards the democratic future in Indonesia they are also eager to call attention to many problems that must be solved. One such problem is again the level of political awareness and education in the country. Knowledge about democracy and how to act in a democratic manner are two decisive factors if Indonesia's democratisation is going to be successful according to the students. This excerpt comes from the interview with Lisa:

I think it is still a long way before we can attain democracy, but it is not wrong to try even if it is very hard. We still have a chance and I think we must try to build our democracy by starting at the lowest level. [By] starting at home or in school [...] we can learn about democracy [...] and try to use democracy in our daily life. [Then] we would get a democratic culture and a democratic thinking [...]. I am optimistic about our future of democracy but not our present democracy [...] (Lisa, interview 2001-04-30).

Another problem that many students emphasise is the disintegration of Indonesia that may come as a result of the recent manifestations of democracy. Irena said:

[...] In Aceh they want to be free [...]. In my opinion I want Indonesia to be integrated, not disintegrated [...]. But again, that is the dilemma of democracy. You give the rights and the freedom to everyone and when it comes to such disintegration what can you do? Reconciliation, but what will happen if they do not succeed? It could be like in East Timor. That is what I am afraid of. [...] That is why I am afraid of democracy, [it involves] too much freedom. I enjoy it but...(Irena, interview 2001-05-10).<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the many problems that seem to be connected to the process of democratisation, the interviewees often look at the current situation with riots and violence as a period of appren-

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<sup>10</sup> The demands for autonomy in Aceh and East Timor have caused a lot of fighting between Indonesian military and separatist militia (Uhlin 2000 c: 55-57).

ticeship. To reach a stable and integrated democracy Indonesia must go through these difficulties and learn from them. Jon holds the following view:

I take lessons from the nations of South America. It usually takes about ten or twenty years of chaos before real democracy sets in. So I expect it to be a lot of chaos in Indonesia for at least ten to twenty years before any sort of order will come. The chaos is necessary because if you want peace right now, we should set up someone else like Suharto and then there would be instant peace because everything will be repressed. So right now I look at the chaos as a learning process for people to learn what exactly they can do without hurting other people and themselves. Over time hopefully everyone will learn what it is to be a democratic nation (Jon, interview 2001-04-16).

Some students seem to believe that the foundations of democracy in Indonesia must be reconstructed before a satisfying political system will appear. The interviewees with a leftist-radical view on politics have their own explanations to this. For them the problem is connected to the current political elite in Indonesia that they regard as self-seekers and characterised by a lack of responsibility for the rest of the population. Therefore the whole system has to be rebuilt before a good democracy can be achieved. An is a 21-year-old law student at UI who belongs to the leftist-radical faction of students at her faculty:

To really change the rottenness in this country you should cut it from the root of all the problems [...]. If you want to have a democracy you have to create a new one from the beginning. You have to start all over again. If you just change the president now the next one will use his or her power in the same way. They always have their own political aims and their own purposes, not for the people but only for their own advantages (An, interview 2001-04-24).

The students with an Islamic point of departure also think that the current foundations for democracy in Indonesia have to be changed if the future is going to be bright. For their part, however, it is a religious advancement in the concept of democracy that is needed. Raji said:

For the future we have to be optimistic [...] that democracy will be implemented in this country, [...] a democracy defined on the principles of God, a religious democracy. We should not only glorify humanity and what we have done for our civilisation. We must also consider other aspects that are built on the principles of God. The principles of God work as a guideline. For example if we make a policy on a certain issue like gambling, we have to be really strict on it since God said that there should not be any gambling on earth. In the American style of democracy it could be decided that gambling is allowed if the people agree on it. But if you have a principle of religion in democracy then it will not happen, especially if it is a Muslim principle because it is very strict [...] (Raji, interview 2001-05-15).

The bias towards religious ideas in politics should thus be essential also in Indonesia's future democracy according to these students.

## 4 Theoretical Reflections

The primary goals of this study are to portray how Indonesian university students view the concept of democracy and how they look at the future of democracy in Indonesia. Robert Dahl's definition of democracy has been used as a guide to point out what democracy is, both during the field work and in the analysis, but apart from that no other theory has significantly coloured the result yet. With the exception of my own interpretations as a researcher, it is the conceptions of the interviewees that have shaped the description until now.

As a student in sociology, however, it is hard to just leave the result without any further analysis that may help to relate the findings to a broader social context and give a more abstract understanding of the students' views. For that reason, I will now present some possible theoretical explanations and try to widen the question of how the students look at democracy. Whereas the scope of the students' opinions is extensive, it is beyond the bounds of this thesis to analyse every statement presented in the previous chapter. Owing to these circumstances I will use one of the most common themes conveyed during the interviews and let it be the subject of analysis. My ambition therefore, is not to present an all-embracing theoretical understanding of the students' ideas but rather to highlight some tendencies that I find interesting.

### 4.1 Political Identities in the Era of Globalisation

A common and interesting topic that runs all through the analysis is the need for phenomena like moral values and freedom with responsibility if Indonesia is going to succeed in its democratic endeavour. Many students also think that these factors should influence all democracies and not only Indonesia. The students who said they have an Islamic political stance conveyed similar ideas but usually within the framework of religion. I think it is interesting to investigate the possible existence of certain political identities that lies beyond these expressions in a global perspective. Therefore the theories of Manuel Castells about the information age will be placed in the centre of the presentation but other theories will also be referred to. I will begin with an analysis of the Islamic students' opinions and then extend the discussion to

a broader perspective that also includes other students by looking closer at the Indonesian national ideology that has influenced the social and political life during many years.

#### 4.1.1 Islam as a Resistant Political Identity

As was evident during the description of the interviews, the students with an Islamic point of departure often have distinctive opinions about democracy compared to the other students. The notion of morality and values that is identifiable among the interviewees, is often referred to as religious values by these students. The idea of Islam as a guiding principle in democracy seems to be important for them. Furthermore, they express a clear demarcation between the basic democratic idea of people's power and their religious views if the majority principle is contradictory to the rules of Allah. Thus in the Islamic interviewees political identity lies an opposition towards much of the content in polyarchy.

I would like to put these views in relation to what Castells (1998: 19-27) denominates as an *identity for resistance* which, according to him, is typical for many social movements in the world today, including Islamic fundamentalism. Actors who regard their positions as depreciated or stigmatised by unfamiliar social institutions or values often create this kind of identity. It is usually built upon concepts of collectivism or jointly-owned feelings of identity that can be defined by factors like history, geography, religion or other features that facilitate a clear demarcation towards the forces of society that are considered as oppressive.

According to Castells (1998: 25, 78-79, 137-138) the force of globalisation is the main reason to the rise of religious fundamentalism. It dissolves the autonomy of local political and societal institutions that traditionally have been used by people to create meaning and identity. With modern telecommunications these institutions can nowadays be created, conducted and spread at distance. They could thereby build upon ideologies and values that may be regarded as unfamiliar in a certain religious, cultural or political setting. The process that people use to create meaning and identity with reference to institutions, norms and values that have a local anchorage is therefore undermined. As a result, the search for identity today is often done in opposition against indefinable flows of information and identities or life styles that may be regarded as unfamiliar. In this process the search for identity has a defensive purpose. It is set up to protect the individual from the artificial reality as it is transmitted by the new structure of communication. To succeed with this endeavour and shrink the world to make it reachable again, the actors must find sources of identity that are contradictory to the new impulses and reachable in their own local surroundings. They must find non-artificial, unbreakable and

eternal codes that can be used as a framework in their identity and these codes often build upon determined historical or cultural traits like for example religion.

The growth of religious fundamentalism can according to Castells be viewed as a defensive reaction against the world structure in the era of globalisation since the network society, where capital, power and competition means everything, has created a strong individualisation of the identity. This erases the boundaries of affiliation to typical religious values like God's will, patriarchy and familiarity, i.e. collectivist values that traditionally have been fixed and not threatened. Adherence to religious fundamentalism could therefore be seen as an effort to create meaning and identity by the upholding of these values. It will become an identity for resistance in Castells terms since its growth is rooted in a counter-offensive against the new individualistic world order. Whereas I am working with political identities here, it is suitable to add the word "political" to Castells conception. Hence I will refer to Castells concept as resistant *political* identity.

If the views of the students with an Islamic stand point are analysed in the light of Castells reasoning we might have an explanation to why their political opinions often are connected to religious values. The spread of liberal democracy which Dahl's polyarchy build upon could in many aspects be interpreted as a result of globalisation. It has experienced a strong breakthrough during the last decades of the twentieth century, partly as a result of the fundamental change in the technological structure of communication (Johansson 1998: 239). Today the idea of liberal democracy holds global dominance and it is sometimes viewed as an export commodity from the Western world (Arvidson 1998: 66-69). From this perspective liberal democracy has a potential to be regarded as an institution that is created and spread at distance if we follow Castells reasoning. Thus, its values and norms may not necessarily be in tune with all the different political or cultural settings it is spread to. This makes it hard for the individuals in these settings to adapt to the institutions of liberal democracy when they are about to create their political identity. Instead, the concept of liberal democracy may be viewed as an unfamiliar dominating social institution that makes the individuals feel depreciated and dispossessed of their norms and values that traditionally have been used for creation of identities. As Castells reasoning implies this could certainly be the case, and I think it is appropriate to interpret the ideas of the Islamic students against the background of this phenomenon.

One reason for doing so is that the political and societal institutions of Islam are very different from the institutions of liberal democracy. Moreover, the individualisation of the identity in the new world order that Castells describe as conducive to the rise of religious



fundamentalism is also extremely contradictory to Islamic values and this may have instigated the Islamic students aversion towards liberal democracy even more. The issue of individualism could namely be viewed as a watershed between liberal and Islamic democracy in many ways. A short examination of the Islamic form of democracy will highlight these problems.

The concept of Islamic democracy is based on a majority of Muslims and embraces all aspects of society. Reforms are made according to the guidelines of Islam and new political challenges should always be interpreted with reference to these whereas the Koran defines the limits of democracy. Furthermore, the primary target of all policies is the Muslim community rather than the individual and the leaders are viewed as deputies of God that should act within the framework of the religion (Nilsson 1998: 203-204). Thus, compared with liberal democracy where the individual is the primary political unit and politics is matter of rivalry between different interests rather than consensus (Nilsson 1998: 203), the Islamic form of democracy takes a somewhat opposite stance. The Islamic aspiration for communitarianism and the usage of untouchable religious values as guiding principles in politics are very different from the Western democratic discourse.

If the opposing views of the students with an Islamic stand point are seen in the context of globalisation where the dominating individualistic centred liberal democracy is contradictory to many Islamic values, we may get a better understanding of why they are sceptical towards much of the content in polyarchy. Castells description of the collectivist values that are threatened by the new world order with its focus on individualistic values are clearly represented in the Islamic notion of democracy. The Islamic students' passion for religious values as opposite to the individualistic bias in liberal democracy could then be seen as a sign of a resistant political identity. It may be viewed as an effort to relate themselves to the values of their indigenous political and cultural surroundings in the presence of liberal democracy that they regard as unfamiliar for their political identities.

Another factor that must be taken into account if we want to understand the Islamic students is that political Islam is a world-wide movement that functions as a source of inspiration for alternative political ideas that are very different from secularised political philosophy. International forces that may bring self-confidence when they formulate their political ideas thus support their views. According to Castells (1998: 27-34) the Islamic fundamentalism in the world today is connected to an Islamic cultural revolution that has spread all over the Muslim world. Its roots are to be found in the failure of capitalistic or socialistic modernisation within the setting of the post-colonial notion of the nation state. During the last decades of the twentieth century the state-aided economic modernisation in

many Muslim countries failed when their economies were unable to adjust to the competition of globalisation and the new conditions of the technical revolution. This gave rise to a situation where many urban intellectuals felt betrayed when the economy became impaired and new forms of cultural dependency began.

They were soon followed by thousands of impoverished people who were forced to enter the cities as a result of the unbalanced agricultural development. In these events the Islamic identity was resurrected and the project of modernisation and the idea of the nation state was often considered as Western inventions. In some cases, like in Iran, this led to an Islamic revolution where a purification of the society started and specific religious adjudicators were set up to punish non-pious behaviour like homosexuality, gambling and atheism. Why? Castells gives the following explanation: In the visionary thoughts of Islam as it has been developed during the twentieth century, the state is always subordinated to religion. The concept of the nation state with its secularised political culture is therefore considered as alien or superficial and in practice constrained in many Muslim societies. It is among other things viewed as a source of disintegration that challenges both the universal fellowship of Muslims and the traditional power of the Islamic clergy. The subsequent result has, according to Castells, been an Islamic cultural revolution that has spread all over the Muslim world and also to Indonesia. The effects there, however, have been small-scaled due to the authoritarian nation state of Suharto that integrated the Islamic pressures by means of guaranteed economic growth and promises about a prosperous future.

This cultural revolution has probably influenced the Islamic students as a source of political inspiration. Among other things this evident in the interview with Amir who often referred to the Islamic State of Iran as an example of good governance (see section 3.2 and 3.6). Furthermore, ideas of the purification of society are evident in Raji's and Mustafa's opinions about gambling (see section 3.3 and 3.9.).

As Castells portrays it, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is a reaction against the idea of the nation state that is viewed as a threat against the universal brotherhood of Muslims. If the concept of liberal democracy is viewed in the light of this phenomenon there is a clear potential conflict and this may give a further explanation to the Islamic students' scepticism towards polyarchy. Liberal democracy can only function within the framework of the nation state. To create a global pluralistic order of the same kind is very difficult (Giddens 1994 b: 315-316). The demos that is democracy's subject can not be extended from the nation to human kind. It would involve the same effort as during the eighteenth century when democ-

racy was extended from town meetings to the level of the state. Such an effort on a global level is probably possible only in our imagination (Beetham 1999: 137).

#### 4.1.2 Indonesia's National Ideology as a Source to Resistant Political Identity

So far it could be concluded that the Islamic students eagerness for religious values in the concept of democracy may be explained as a resistant political identity towards the global domination of liberal democracy that has been inspired by the Islamic cultural revolution in Castells terms. As was evident in the analysis of the interviews, however, other students also express a deep concern for specific values that are similar to the ones that are typical for the Islamic lines of thought. The ideas of communitarianism and predetermined values that should govern the freedoms of democracy are recognisable also among the other interviewees even if they do not refer to these as explicitly religious values. Among other things this is identifiable in their call for orderliness and freedom with responsibility as it was described in section 3.1. What can explain this phenomenon?

First of all it must be pointed out that the influence of Islam as it is described above probably plays an important role also for more secularised students who do not express any pronounced Islamic political attitude like Amir, Mustafa and Raji do. Even if the religious landscape of Indonesia is diverse in its nature due to the many different cultures in the country, well over eighty-five percent of its population adheres to Islam (Mulder 1998: 13). There is reason to believe therefore, that the other students' concern for specific values that are similar to Islamic values could be explained in the same manner as above to some extent.

However, there are other factors in the case of Indonesia that have to be taken into account when discussing the desire for morality and freedom with responsibility that are mentioned as important guidelines for democracy by many students. One such factor is the influence of the Indonesian national ideology, *Pancasila*. This ideology may explain why the students hold these views and since it is a national ideology it also comprises students with a more secularised religious stance. According to Niels Mulder (1998: 91-92) Pancasila has preoccupied nationalists and governments alike from before independence and into the present. Since Indonesia is the successor of a Dutch colonial empire that brought a vast number of diverse cultures and languages together, the early nationalists used the notion of "unity in diversity" to find a suitable ideal that could bring the new nation together. In this effort the founding fathers of Indonesia had to find an underlying commonality and Indonesia's first president Sukarno eventually created the unitary concept of Pancasila. As Mulder describes it, the Indo-

nesian community is therefore distinctly invented and does not build upon a natural cultural composition. The concept of Pancasila consists of five guiding principles that have precedence over both religion and political ideology: (1) the belief in one God Almighty; (2) humanity that is just and civilised; (3) the unity of Indonesia; (4) democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation; and (5) social justice for all (Mulder 1998: 18, 92).

Over the years Pancasila has together with the constitution of 1945 developed into a holy formula in the nationalistic project of Indonesia. Mulder describes this process as sign of Javanisation of the Indonesian culture whereas the goal has been to create a Pancasila personality that builds upon salient features of Javanese culture and behaviour:

[...] this inner component of the national effort is to create the Pancasila personality, the Complete Indonesian Man, inhabiting a harmonious, stable, yet dynamic society. Always guided by the common interest, his ego-drives effaced, he is active for the benefit of all, making the country a better and more beautiful place. To me the surfacing of such patterns of thought – perhaps purely ideological, yet powerfully promoted – is a sign of the Javanization of Indonesian culture (Mulder 1998: 94).

This concept of behaviour as a guideline for Indonesia's citizens has been widely spread through a constant indoctrination. All people are expected to become Pancasilaists, all must be united in one stream of thinking and together they will form the Pancasila society. To promote this goal the schools in Indonesia have established a course in Pancasila morality that is compulsory in all grades up to university level. Furthermore, great national efforts have been made to convey the message to the older parts of the population through the Directive for the Full understanding and Practise of Pancasila in which all civil servants also are obliged to attend (Mulder 1998: 95).

As Mulder describes the concept of Pancasila and the guidelines for how to behave according to its principles, it is clear that there are certain characteristics that may explain the eagerness for freedom with responsibility and moral values in democracy that the students often emphasise. Especially if we take into account the processes of indoctrination that the students are raised with. From the quotation above it is evident that the individual must be subordinated the public good and refrain from too much individualism if he or she is going to meet the requirements of Pancasila. The indoctrination of this decree could certainly be a conducive factor to the students' views that democracy must involve an awareness about communitarianism and build upon certain values that support the benefit of all. Liberal democracy where the freedom of the individual is in the centre of politics may then be seen as problematic.

If we take a look at how democracy is viewed within the framework of Pancasila this phenomenon will become even clearer. With excerpts from course material of the four highest

grades of high school, Mulder describes how the official perception of Pancasila democracy is conveyed. In that material the following is stated:

[...] Pancasila democracy reflects the values of the Pancasila. Connected with these values is the idea that everybody enjoys the freedom of association and expression. We solve problems by talking about them; we negotiate until we reach unanimous agreement. Opinion that expresses the will and interest of the people must come out on top. [...] Of course, reaching agreement must be done in ways that avoid conflict and confrontation. Our press is responsible, and as a people we have reached maturity. We thus negotiate in the spirit of familism and cooperation. This means that we depart from the premiss that the national interest always takes precedence over individual or group interests. Finally, to reach dynamic stability, we need a well-regulated society, and everybody must submit to, obey, and be obsequious to the regulations concerned. It is through obeying the prevailing regulations that we express our respect for our fellows. In the end this will lead to a just and prosperous society based on the Pancasila (Mulder 1998: 111).

If this notion of democracy is an integrated part in the students' political identity it could be an explanation to why they sometimes show a great deal of scepticism towards the imbued freedoms of liberal democracy. The notion of Pancasila democracy does not leave any space for individualism in same way as liberal democracy does. In this perspective of democracy it is more important to avoid conflict and confrontation and to maintain consensus than it is to put forward individual ambitions if they oppose the common good. With the government's heavy promotion of Pancasila in mind we may get a better understanding of why many students expressed a concern for moral values and freedom with responsibility when the concept of polyarchy was under discussion. For example, if we compare their views about freedom of expression and association with how Pancasila democracy is described above, this phenomenon becomes very clear (see section 3.6 and 3.8). Moreover, it also brings a better understanding about Asian-style democracy that was discussed in section 2.1. As Mulder (1998: 122) points out it, this behaviour is said to be typically Asian and Pancasila democracy could therefore be identified as built upon specific Asian values that pave the way for a harmonious and peaceful society.

If we return to Castells reasoning about globalisation and look at the concept of liberal democracy as an institution without local anchorage in the political context of Pancasila, the opposition towards much of the content of polyarchy could be identified as a resistant political identity in the same manner as with the students who have an Islamic view on politics. The collectivist values of Pancasila are very similar to the ones that are threatened by the forces of globalisation and constitute the foundations for religious fundamentalism in Castells terms. If the aspirations for freedom with responsibility and morality that the students show have their roots in the ideology of Pancasila, these expressions could thus be seen as an effort to create meaning and identity in opposition to the unfamiliar idea of liberal democracy. We

are then dealing with another example of a resistant political identity. As this discussion shows there is much reason to believe that Pancasila, since it has been so heavily indoctrinated, may play the same role as Islam in the students' endeavour to find non-artificial, eternal and unbreakable codes for identity in the era of globalisation. The codes of Pancasila are, like the codes of Islam, contradictory to the impulses of individualism that hold a prominent position in the liberal notion of democracy and this may be an explanation of the students' views. As we have seen, they are also an integrated part of the political culture of Indonesia and constitute familiar institutions that may be used in the students' search for identity.

## 5 Summary and Conclusions

How do the students view the concept of democracy and how do they look at democracy with regard to their opinions about the political situation in Indonesia? As the analysis of the interviews demonstrates the students have many ideas and thoughts concerning this issue. In section 3.1 it was evident that the principles and institutions with high importance often concern individual freedom, parliamentarianism and a political environment where different interests can be accommodated. On the other hand, the concept of freedom seems to be connected to an in-built limitation where notions about responsibility and morality are salient features that must function as guidelines when the citizens make use of their liberties. A certain consciousness about what is good for the public interest is a hallmark in this reasoning for many students. One cause that lies beyond this seems to be uneasiness over the violence that has occurred together with the call for democracy and political reform in Indonesia. Another feature of democracy that is viewed as important is a concern for equality. This is particularly significant for the students who regard themselves as left-oriented in their political views. Thus, their views could be said to have a bias towards the maximalist definition of democracy that wants to highlight societal inequalities and not only focus on elite institutions in the analysis of democracy (see section 2.1). The students who hold on to the Islamic notion of democracy have a somewhat different opinion. Their main objection towards democracy is that the majority principle runs the risk of creating a society that is contradictory to the rules of Islam and that is unthinkable for them. Therefore the Western concept of democracy has to be modified to fit in the Indonesian context.

In their ideal image of democracy, most students hold the view that politics should be based on the will of the people and that the leaders must act on behalf of the people when they make policies. In section 3.2 this was very clear. In Indonesia, however, there are certain problems that makes this ideal difficult to carry out according to them. The lack of education and political awareness is often mentioned as one such problem and several interviewees suggested that special programmes and initiatives must be created to change this situation. Other problems that seem to be regarded as problematic for the reliance on people's power are the paternalistic nature of the Indonesian society and the disintegration of the nation. For the Islamic students it is again the majority principle that makes people's power impossible.

Another factor is that democracy is open for everyone to give their equal voice to the process of decision-making and this is viewed as unfair due to the different moral, intellectual and managerial capabilities that people have.

The right to vote seems to be important in a democracy for the greater part of the students. A common argument presented in section 3.3 is that everyone's right to vote is indispensable if the basic human values are going to be met properly. Furthermore, it brings legitimacy to the government according to the students. When it comes to politics in Indonesia, the low level of education is again mentioned as a problem but they do not think that the inferiority of the people should be a reason to put restrictions on the right to vote. If we compare their views about people's power, which they see as difficult to carry out in Indonesia, it becomes clear that they are very ambiguous on this issue. On the one hand they believe that everyone should have the right to vote but on the other hand, they find the reliance on the will of the people very problematic. Why is it so? A possible answer to this question lies in their call for initiatives that can help to raise the level of education and political awareness. It seems to be a matter of process where the problems are to be solved gradually without disturbance of the democratic ideals. If we look at the excerpts from the interviews with Ihsan and Budi in section 3.3 for example, it is clear that they define the low level of education as a problem. At the same time, however, they emphasise that it is something that has to be purged *within* the framework of democracy and this may give a better picture of the students' ambiguity. The Islamic students hold a more steadfast view about the right to vote. It is once more the ideas of religious principles and capabilities that must be in the centre of politics to avoid unwanted effects of the majority principle.

As was pointed out in section 3.4 frequent, fair and free elections and a political process without violence and coercion are ideals that most interviewees agree on. The low level of education, however, was again mentioned as an obstacle if the citizens of Indonesia are going to understand the meaning of these ideals. One exceptional case is the leftist-radical interviewees who seem to believe violence can be motivated if it reflects what people want. In the case of Indonesia they seem to be very sceptical towards the existing regime that they regard as false and still influenced by the old regime from the Suharto-era. For them violence could be a means to change this. Another exception is the students with an Islamic view on politics. While not supporting violence in any sense, they regard the idea of "one man – one vote" as unfair due to the different capabilities among the population but they do not totally agree with each other on this point. Raji does not see any difficulties with fair elections in the same manner as Amir and Mustafa do. Instead he thinks that it is more important that the



voter is married and has reached the proper age. His main argument is that every human being has an equal position under God.

Everyone's right to participate in politics through the possibility to compete for public offices in elections seems to be a hazardous principle for many students. This was evident in section 3.5. Apart from the leftist-radicals who do not see any problems with this ideal, they often insist that certain predetermined requirements such as education must be fulfilled before a candidate can be considered as suitable. Other students agree with the ideal but emphasise that it can function only in a country where the level of education is high and therefore it is impossible to use it in Indonesia. The topic did also highlight the problems of ethnicity in Indonesia today whereas the students with Chinese origin feel discriminated by the norm that only pure Indonesians can run for the presidency in the country.

Section 3.6 shows that the notion of predetermined requirements is evident also in the students' opinions about freedom of expression but in this case these are connected to moral standards and a good ethic that people should adhere to by their own effort. While the majority of the interviewees do not support any prescribed restrictions others believe that full freedom of expression is possible only in democracies with a high level of education and therefore not in Indonesia. Over all their views on this issue resemble their thoughts about the basic principles of democracy where the concepts of freedom with responsibility and morality are well integrated. For the students with an Islamic point of view, freedom of expression must always be guided by the religious principles of Islam.

With a somewhat hesitant attitude towards the ineffective bureaucracy in Indonesia that is considered as an obstacle to transparency, all interviewees think it is very important that the citizens have access to information about governmental activities and affairs. As was pointed out in section 3.7 this is said to be an important mechanism if the people want to control the government. The notions of ethics and moral values were once more reflected in some students' views about the freedom of the mass media. According to them the people of Indonesia must be protected from certain kinds of information like pornography for instance.

The final institution in polyarchy deals with freedom of association and in section 3.8 it was evident that many students regard this principle as a potential danger if it is not treated in a correct manner. Again it is the ideas of freedom with responsibility and moral values that must play the role as a regulator to maintain security, order and a just society. Many students also see a great deal of complications in Indonesia with freedom of association. The variety of ethnic and religious groups may cause problems if they organise themselves and act hostilely towards other groups. Some of them view the ideology of communism as a similar threat.

Other students, however, do not see any problems with freedom of association at all. The ones who describe themselves as leftist-radical are among those.

What are the students' conceptions about the future of democracy in Indonesia? The majority of the students are rather optimistic about the idea of democracy and its future in the country. This attitude was clear in section 3.9. They often say that it would be difficult to stop the ongoing process of democratisation since the people already have a great deal of experience of what freedom means. At the same time, the students also emphasise many difficulties that must be solved if Indonesia is going to succeed in its democratic endeavour. Among these are again the problem of education and the potential danger of disintegration of the country. While many interviewees tend to look at the current problems as a learning process others think that the rules of the game must be totally changed if a good democracy is going to arise in the future. The leftist-radical students think that new people must replace the current political elite to reach this situation. The Islamic students on their part believe that a religious democracy is necessary.

In chapter 4 the ideas of moral values and freedom with responsibility that the students often emphasise was analysed with reference to political identities in the era of globalisation. This theoretical adventure was an effort to extend the question of how the students look at democracy to a more abstract perspective. By looking at the concept of liberal democracy as an export commodity in the light of Manuel Castells reasoning, I found that the students' passion for morality and communitarianism may have its roots in an effort to create meaning and identity by adherence to social and political values with an indigenous anchorage in Indonesia. The values concerned were Islamic values and Pancasila values. For the students with an Islamic view on politics, the emphasis on religious values can be seen as a reaction towards the dominating individualistic centred discourse of liberal democracy that has experienced a world wide breakthrough as a result of globalisation and the fundamental change in the structure of communication. Moreover, their opinions may also have been inspired by the Islamic cultural revolution and its scepticism towards the secularised West as Castells describes it. Their sometimes anti-liberal views may therefore be seen as signs of a resistant political identity in Castells terms.

Indonesia's national ideology Pancasila could also be considered as conducive to the students' passion for morality and communitarianism. Its values are contradictory to the notion of liberal democracy whereas it put the individuals' duty to the community ahead of individual rights. The maintenance of these values among the students is among other things evident in their call for democracies that build upon a personal behaviour that supports the

benefit of all at the expense of individual rights. With the heavy indoctrination of Pancasila in mind and the fact that liberal democracy could be considered as an export commodity in the era of globalisation, these expressions might also be classified as a sign of a resistant political identity. The upholding of values that may have their roots in either Islam or Pancasila could thus be viewed as a counter-offensive against the dominating individualistic centred concept of liberal democracy as the forces of globalisation today spread it.

While these traits in my view are interesting, they are not representative for all the ideas and thoughts conveyed during the talks with the students. Nevertheless, the values of Pancasila viewed from Castells identity-perspective are important in the current debate about Asian values. As Mulder argues, the Pancasila democracy is said to rest on values that are integrated in the cultures and traditions of Asia and these are commonly known as Asian values. From the perspective above, however, the upholding of these values could also be considered merely as a reaction towards the modern forces of globalisation. They do not necessarily have to be so deeply rooted as their proponents suggest. This issue could be a subject of further sociological research.

# Appendix

## General Interview Guide

1. When you are thinking about democracy, which principles and/or institutions do you regard as most important? What does democracy mean to you?
2. What do you think about the idea that politics should be based on the will of the people through a majority of votes in elections, and that officials should act on behalf of the people when making decisions about policy?  
What do you think about this idea when it comes to politics and society in Indonesia?
3. What is your opinion about the idea that everyone should have right to vote?  
What do you think about this idea when it comes to politics and society in Indonesia?
4. What is your general opinion about frequency of elections?  
What do you think about this issue when it comes to politics and society in Indonesia?
5. What do you think about the idea of fair elections, like the notion of “one man- one vote” for example?  
What is your opinion about this idea when it comes to politics and society in Indonesia?
6. What do you think about violence and coercion as a means to reach political goals?  
What do you think about this issue with reference to politics and society in Indonesia?
7. What do you think about the idea that individual ballots should be secret in elections, i.e. that nobody else but the voter knows what political party or politician he or she voted for?  
What do you think about this idea when it comes to politics and society in Indonesia?

8. What is your general opinion about the idea that all adults should have the right to run for public offices in elections, i.e. to compete for positions in the government or in the public administration?  
What do you think about this idea when it comes to politics and society in Indonesia?
9. What is your opinion about the idea of freedom of expression?  
What do you think about this idea with reference to politics and society in Indonesia?
10. What do you think about the idea that the people should have right to gain access to all kinds of information, and that information should not be monopolised or censored by the government or other groups?  
What do you think about this idea with reference to politics and society in Indonesia?
11. What is your opinion about freedom of association, i.e. that the people should have right to form and/or join all kinds of associations that can voice their interests?  
What do you think about this idea when it comes to politics and society in Indonesia?
12. How do you estimate the future of democracy in Indonesia?

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