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The Localization of Power in Southeast Asia

VEDI R. HADIZ

The article analyzes the localization of power in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia after 1998, when the institutional frameworks of the authoritarian New Order of Soeharto quickly unravelled and new ones were rapidly constructed, associated both with electoral democracy and decentralization policy. Comparisons are made in the process with the trajectories of the Philippines and Thailand, two other major post-authoritarian societies in Southeast Asia (though the label can only problematically be applied to Thailand after the coup of September 2006), which have undergone democratization and varying degrees of decentralization. It is argued that the collective experience of these Southeast Asian societies displays some of the more tangible limits to technocratic power. In Indonesia, there are two sets of interests being marginalized under decentralized electoral democracy: class-based interests in opposition to the brand of predatory capitalism that has survived the demise of the New Order; and foreign and domestic supporters of decentralization as 'good governance' that threaten local coalitions of predatory power deploying money politics and developing greater economic and political aspirations and ambitions. While the rise of electoral democracy has meant broader political participation, political contestation remains confined to competing coalitions of local predatory interests.

Key words: localization; decentralization; post-authoritarian; Indonesia; Thailand; Philippines

Introduction

Somewhat paradoxically accompanying the processes of economic globalization, the localization of power is best expressed institutionally in the form of decentralization policy in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.¹ Promoted globally as a technocratic project within the scope of the good governance agenda and primarily initiated by international development organizations like the World Bank, decentralization denotes the reconfiguration of state power and its institutions to facilitate the integration of local economies with global markets.

The present article analyzes the localization of power, particularly in the case of Indonesia after 1998, when the institutional frameworks of the authoritarian New Order of President Soeharto (1966–1998) quickly unravelled and new ones were rapidly constructed, associated both with electoral democracy and decentralization policy. Comparisons are made in the process with the trajectories of the Philippines and Thailand, two other major post-authoritarian societies in Southeast Asia (though the label can only problematically be applied to Thailand after the coup of September 2006), which have undergone democratization and varying degrees of decentralization, although there are of course historical specificities to each case. This localization

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of power set in process a mode of electoral participation that was justified in terms of the perceived technocratic effectiveness of forms of politics analyzed in this collection under the rubric of administrative incorporation. However, this technocratic politics was constrained by the capture of the electoral process by oligarchic interests associated with the previous New Order regime.

It is argued here that the collective experience of these Southeast Asian societies displays some of the more tangible limits to technocratic power – in theory conducive to administrative incorporation – specifically as they concern the intended aims of decentralization.

This is because the localization of power in Southeast Asia is also associated with the emergence of powerful coalitions of interest at sub-national levels of governance that have developed a growing stake in direct control over local institutions and resources. As far as the localization of power has taken place in Southeast Asia, the main beneficiaries have been a range of predatory local elites that have no abiding interest in rule by technocratic notions of good governance associated with much of the literature on decentralization.² Initially nurtured within the state or located at the intersection between state and society, they have maintained their position by largely appropriating the institutions of local power including elections, parliaments, and parties. Electoral democracy, the main site of political participation and contestation following the demise of authoritarianism – as seen most strikingly in the changes taking place in Indonesia after 1998 – somewhat ironically has become the major avenue through which local predatory elites insulate themselves from potential challenges to their ascendant position,³ whether emanating from would-be populist re-distributional coalitions or from technocratic pressure. In other words, there appears to be an inherent tension between electoral democracy and technocratic participation that is exploited by these predatory elites even as the technocratic project of decentralization provides a means through which local power is to be captured.

This mode of participation works to exclude the claims of independent collective movements as well as managerial or technocratic interests, but reinforces predatory elements that are both ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the state. Their ability to capture political power depends on the mobilization of state resources but at the same time they need to draw support from civil society to ensure electoral dominance. Such a constellation results in an electoral mode of participation that hovers between what are called, in the opening article of this collection by Jayasuriya and Rodan, ‘societal incorporation’ and ‘civil society expression’.

A further effect of this mode of participation is that it has given rise to party and parliamentary politics, but of a kind that is distinctly harnessed to the interests of established local elites. Its main features include such instruments as money politics and, to varying degrees, the utilization of political violence by those endowed with material resources or access to semi-formal armies that provide physical intimidation. From this point of view, the kinds of conflicts that can be represented in electoral contests are by definition already constrained. This is the case generally whether in post-authoritarian Indonesia, Thailand or the Philippines.

As stated elsewhere, it is not possible to understand the actual outcomes of electoral democracy and decentralization in any society without taking into account the

factor of prevailing topographies of power within which certain interests tend to be more salient than others.⁴ In the case of Indonesia, for example, the legacy of civil society disorganization under the New Order in the 1970s and 1980s, and therefore its highly uneven development today, is clearly an important factor to take into consideration when explaining the predominance, in the post-authoritarian period, of predatory elites with significant social and political genealogies that can be traced to the heyday of the New Order. This is why political contests within the framework of electoral democracy have mainly involved conflict between different and shifting alliances of predatory elites, who were best positioned to take advantage of democratization and decentralization, though it is expressed on the surface as ordinary competition between political parties.

There are several consequences that can be observed. First of all, contests for local office under electoral democracy have mostly constituted struggles about opportunities for private capital accumulation on the basis of control over local institutions of governance. Second, as a further consequence, the widened scope of political participation since the demise of outright authoritarianism has not led to the emergence of the kind of broad-based politics that might more fundamentally contest predatory modes of control over public institutions and resources. Due to the New Order's legacy in Indonesia, reformist groups that might have challenged such predatory interests are simply too disorganized, fragmented, and ill-equipped to significantly have an effect in an electoral democracy primarily run by the mechanics of money politics. Thus, rather than ushering in new elites with new social and political backgrounds and interests, Mietzner suggests that electoral democracy in Indonesia at the local level has instead 'simply forced the old elites to play by new rules'.⁵ Significantly, he was commenting on the more recent innovation of local direct elections, whereby greater public participation in the electoral process is involved by definition, but in which the range of interests contesting power does not seem to have widened considerably due to the informal prerequisites of mounting successful electoral campaigns.

Finally, the harnessing of decentralization to the interests of predatory local elites through political party competition shows that, regardless of the intense, allegedly homogenizing pressures of economic globalization, the framing of politics in technocratic terms – whereby the sphere of participation is narrowed in ways amenable to markets – does not necessarily take place in any wholesale and inexorable way. While the technocratic design of decentralization seeks to bring about 'administrative incorporation', what has actually emerged is a much less disciplined form of participation that combines features of what are referred to in this collection as 'societal incorporation' and 'civil society expression'. This is not surprising. For the main interests represented in conflicts over power at the local level today were either incubated formerly within the authoritarian state, or at the intersection of state and society, where the New Order nurtured a number of formal and semi-formal vehicles from which it produced a regular stream of local political operators, entrepreneurs, and enforcers. These include an array of paramilitary or youth and gangster organizations, the local branches of business associations or of the many other corporatist organizations that were a mainstay of the New Order. By contrast 'civil society' expression in

the form of contestation by those representing the interests of workers or the peasantry – systematically marginalized in the Soeharto era – remains considerably muted, also as a historical legacy of the New Order.

Decentralization and Governance

Of the Southeast Asian societies in question, Indonesia is at the heart of many of the academic and policy debates on decentralization and development. However, decentralization policy had already featured prominently in the Philippines as early as 1991 as part of its own set of good governance reforms, with the promulgation of the Local Government Code. In Thailand, the now defunct 1997 constitution was the first one to prominently underline the intent to decentralize many facets of governance from Bangkok to regional administrations, a position that was further reinforced by the passage of the Decentralization Act of 1999. In the Thai case, local technocrats appeared to take a particularly leading role in the decentralization push,⁶ while international consultants and advisers were more prominent in the cases of Indonesia and the Philippines. It was in that same year that Indonesia passed a set of legislation governing administrative and fiscal decentralization, which because of its extensive and abrupt nature became associated with a so-called ‘big bang’ approach.⁷ In spite of some important differences in terms of the way in which decentralization policy came into being in the respective cases, as well as in their administrative structures, decentralization has arguably been part of a broader, internally emanating democratizing impulse, but one to which the internationally promoted technocratic good governance agenda has latched on quite strongly. Though decentralization has hardly proceeded without hindrances in Southeast Asia, it has involved (varying degrees of) transfer of power and authority over budgets, personnel, service delivery, development planning and implementation from central to regional administrative structures of governance.⁸

It could easily be suggested that these Southeast Asian societies were only following a worldwide trend in pursuit of decentralization. Pranab Bardhan, who is a noted economist, is correct in observing that, ‘All around the world in matters of governance decentralization is the rage’, and that decentralization ‘has been at the center stage of policy experiments in the last two decades in a large number of developing and transition economies in Latin America, Africa and Asia’.⁹ The World Bank, a major advocate of decentralization policy in the last two decades as a central facet of pro-market good governance reforms, has observed that decentralization is ‘a global and regional phenomenon’, and that ‘most developing and transitional countries have experimented with it to varying degrees’.¹⁰ Crook and Manor, among the better known of scholars of ‘democratic decentralization’, specify that ‘more than 60 governments, mainly in developing countries’, had already experimented with decentralization in some way from the mid-1980s to the end of the 1990s.¹¹

As mentioned, what is essentially involved in decentralization policy is nothing less than the reconfiguration of state power in the context of pressures associated with neo-liberal economic globalization.¹² More specifically, decentralization is an integral part of the broader neo-liberal objective of rolling back central state authority

on the assumption that local state institutions can be more receptive to pro-market so-called 'good governance' reforms. In other words, decentralization is envisaged as providing the opportunity for technocratic ascendance, even if the literature also typically makes strong claims about decentralization's positive effects on broadening political participation and local community empowerment. Clearly, however, this would only work if technocrats actually presided over not just the design but the implementation and actual workings of decentralization. In reality, however, this has not been the case at all in Southeast Asia.

Still, Bardhan notes that 'free-market economists tend to emphasize the benefits of reducing the power of the overextended or predatory state', and that due to the prevalence of 'market failure', many have turned 'to the government at the local level, where the transaction costs are relatively low and the information problems that can contribute to central government failures are less acute'. To the social agents of neo-liberal reforms, decentralization also promises a range of benefits, as 'a way of reducing the role of the state in general, by fragmenting central authority and introducing more intergovernmental competition and checks and balances'. An added attraction is that 'In a world of rampant ethnic conflicts and separatist movements, decentralization is also regarded as a way of diffusing social and political tensions and ensuring local cultural and political autonomy'.¹³

This view of decentralization, significantly, is at the same time attractive to populist critics of neo-liberal reform, whose own agenda is to protect local cultures and knowledge from the homogenizing effects of globalization and the market economy.¹⁴ Thus a major association promoting the rights of (ill-defined) 'indigenous peoples' has emerged in Indonesia in the form of AMAN (*Asosiasi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*), which has a broad platform of advocating control of local lands and natural resources by local communities. However, the same sentiments are as easily espoused by local predatory elites who, while expressing concern for protecting custom and tradition, resist technocratic disciplining of governance practices in order to safeguard their control over local resources and institutions. For example, Syaokani A. R., head of the richest *kabupaten* (district) in Indonesia, forestry and oil-rich Kutai Kertanegara (and later to be embroiled in a major corruption case) bolstered his internal legitimacy by concocting the resuscitation of the region's largely irrelevant Sultanate as a homage to tradition. Thus a convergence of otherwise disparate agendas in support of decentralization can be observed.

Obviously such a fundamental process as the reconfiguration of the state was never going to be a wholly technical process devoid of serious conflict and contestations – most notably about the *kind* of localization of power that will take place. It is significant that conflict over local power in Indonesia and post-authoritarian Southeast Asia more generally has not been about 'rational' developmental technocracy, responsive to the requirements of global markets and pitted against the 'irrationality' of predatory politics. Nor has the conflict primarily been about local communities and citizenries struggling to protect or resurrect the 'authentic' or 'indigenous' against globalization's encroachment. In the Indonesian case, in particular, the contest has mainly pitted mutually shifting and fluid locally based coalitions of predatory power that are rooted in the former New Order's vast network of patronage

against each other. These coalitions have but selectively latched on to both the lexicon and imagery of technocratic good governance and that of localist populism when convenient, in both their dealings with technocrats based in Jakarta or with the local electorate.

Interconnected with locally rooted conflicts in the case of Indonesia are the interests of Jakarta-based coalitions that otherwise have their own motives for containing local power, or for attempting to shape it in certain ways, and often with considerable success. Such containment may be imposed in the form of laws pertaining to the exercise and scope of local governance, and also in the form of centralizing impulses within such instruments of contestation (associated with electoral democracy) as political parties. For example, the 1999 decentralization legislation, implemented in January 2001, was revised in 2004 in such a way as to cause concern for local politicians with growing ambitions because of the new scope envisaged for provincial-level authorities working more closely with the central government. More often than not, struggles will relate to access and barriers to opportunities for private accumulation on the basis of control over public resources and institutions.

Thus it is clear that the social agents of 'rational', neo-liberal technocracy have not triumphed at all in spite of the intellectual hegemony of the international 'good governance' agenda. The actually existing decentralization in Indonesia, and in Southeast Asia more generally, has had little to do with enhancing transparency and accountability. In Indonesia, for example, there has been much discussion about the decentralization (rather than the eradication) of corruption and of tug-of-wars between local and more nationally based predatory interests over such activities as illegal logging and the like.¹⁵

Again, this outcome has had to do with the specific topography of power. In Indonesia, where the social agents of neo-liberal reforms remain confined to middle class experts and consultants perched in their modern offices in Jakarta (as they are in Bangkok and Manila as well), neo-liberal reform is virtually unrepresented in local, concrete, struggles over power that determine the actual workings of decentralization. Rather than being swept aside by a tidal wave of 'good governance', decentralization has instead provided a lifeline to New Order-nurtured local elites even if their positions were threatened temporarily in the immediately uncertain period following the fall of Soeharto. Together with democratization, decentralization has in fact allowed them to reinvent themselves according to the exigencies of change, and to thrive once more, albeit within a new social, political, and institutional context.¹⁶ Better positioned and equipped to play the game of electoral democracy, due to better access to material resources and vehicles of political thuggery, these local elites have been able to subdue any genuinely reformist impulse to which the democratization process has given rise. As has been noted, a range of political parties, the main vehicles of political contestation in electoral democracies, are infested with predatory elites that have migrated from Golkar, which is the old state party, the bureaucracy, the military, and a range of associational groups through which the New Order had cultivated entire layers of regional political operators.¹⁷ Golkar itself has defied expectations of its demise following the fall of Soeharto. Still endowed with superior material resources and organizational

machinery, it re-emerged after the national elections in 2004 and is currently the most successful party in Indonesia's democracy.

A similar trajectory is arguably found in the other Southeast Asian cases insofar as the blunting of reformist impulses is concerned, and where electoral democracies run by money politics prevail. In the Philippines, even the most devoted proponents of decentralization today are prepared to accept the fact that old dynastic families still largely have a stranglehold on local power. In fact, they were the main beneficiaries of 'good governance' reforms following the fall of Marcos in 1986.¹⁸ In Thailand, it is widely accepted too that democratization from the 1980s onwards has helped to secure the social position of local notables, including that of the *chao pho* (or 'godfather') type, placed at the intersection between criminality, business, and the state, rather than eradicating their power.¹⁹ In these cases too, money politics has been famously the major instrument through which such interests appropriate local power and electoral contests. In the case of Thailand, however, this process was partly checked by the rise to power of Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai Party in 2001. This prompted a new impulse for centralizing the state, as seen for example in the idea of 'CEO governors' as appendages of Bangkok. Earlier, locally based coalitions of power had also been undermined by the 'deceleration of Southeast Asia's globalisation' caused by the 1997–1998 economic crisis, which had slowed 'the explosion of real estate values and government infrastructure investment that secured the conditions for the rise of local political bosses'.²⁰

In all these cases, local citizenries and communities have only been ambiguously empowered by decentralization. Nevertheless, as already noted, in Indonesia as well as in the region, localism has often been tied to atavisms that can be a valuable ideological weapon for some of the most socially conservative forces around. In Thailand, for example, Pasuk and Baker's otherwise sympathetic treatment reveals how inward-looking notions of 'Buddhist economics' that emphasize local community are conceptually linked to an idealized notion of village life, which appears to be equally attractive to NGO activists, monks, the Ministry of the Interior, and the King.²¹ In Indonesia, particularly conservative and rigid interpretations of Islam have been utilized by a range of forces since the advent of democratization in 1998 to provide ideological legitimacy to their struggle for power. Thus many 'Islamic' political parties have supported the strict implementation of Islamic law locally, at the same time that they cultivate enforcers in the form of paramilitary groups with ostensibly religious identities to flex their muscle, both with an eye to winning local elections.

Decentralization and Electoral Politics: Participation Without Contestation

Decentralization, combined with the rise of electoral democracy, has meant the growing importance of contests over local institutions of power in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Local politicians have therefore come to develop constantly rising local ambitions. In such a case as Indonesia, for example, it may no longer be necessary for a political actor operating at the sub-provincial level (that is, municipal or *kabupaten*) to aspire to a 'higher' level of political stage. Interestingly, in Indonesia today we even see actors formerly ensconced at higher levels of politics in the

New Order period willingly enter contests at provincial or sub-provincial levels. In Thailand too, Nelson notes that ‘the decentralisation process has enhanced the value of local executive positions to such a degree that some current and former MPs have their intention’ of running at the level of the so-called PAO or Provincial Administrative Organisations. Nelson suggests that success at a lower level may be better than ‘languishing on the opposition benches’ of the national parliament or being completely subordinated to the prime minister.²²

Indeed, the prize offered in lower arenas of Indonesian politics may in some cases be more attractive than at higher levels, given the transfer of various kinds of authority from the capital Jakarta to the regions. Rocamora’s comment on the Philippines that local ‘politicians naturally want more political control over resources generated by more rapid economic growth’²³ could be reasonably applied to each of the post-authoritarian Southeast Asian societies discussed.

Still, there will be variations within regions on a number of matters. For example, local contests over power will more likely take particularly intense forms in resource-rich regions and those more integrated with the global economy in other ways. Thus, being *bupati* in Kutai Kertanegara is a great prize, and one worth defending at a high cost; meanwhile local politics in more industrialized provinces like North Sumatra and East Java can get especially heated not just because of the economic stakes involved but also because of the more advanced level of social differentiation that can give rise to a variety of contending interests.²⁴

As mentioned, however, the combination of electoral democracy and decentralization has not resulted in a significant reshaping of the topography of power at the local level in Indonesia, Thailand, or the Philippines. What it has done is provide new avenues for the spread of systems of electoral democracy run predominantly through money politics. In the Indonesian case, this has allowed predatory elites to transform themselves from mere apparatchiks or enforcers into political actors with a genuine stake in the sustenance of Indonesia’s highly flawed democracy.

The rise of money politics in local contests over power is particularly noticeable in Indonesia where, initially, the practice was largely prominent in the closed chambers of local parliamentary bodies – which were the institutions charged with electing the heads of local executive bodies of government at the provincial and sub-provincial levels. But democratization in Indonesia, as is well known, has resulted in a number of important changes in the institutional framework of governance – for example, reducing the powers of the presidency and increasing the power of parties and parliaments.²⁵ Among these changes was the promulgation of Law No. 32 2004 and Governmental Regulation No. 6 2005, which effectively created a radically new institutional set-up within which heads of local governments are *directly* elected by the local citizenry.

Though the change was broadly in the interest of local executives who needed to bolster their position in relation to local legislative bodies, the system obviously entailed the development of new political strategies for winning public office. The most tangible development was the dramatically escalating cost of winning local electoral contests, as money politics was diverted from a concentration on local parliamentary bodies to the public at large. Thus, the kind of money politics on a

massive scale associated with the Philippines and in particular rural Thailand has been an increasingly salient feature of Indonesian post-authoritarian local politics too. No less than 248 elections for sub-provincial and provincial heads of government were undertaken approximately between June 2005 and June 2006, out of a total of 472 scheduled till 2008–2009,²⁶ so giving rise to a veritable general elections industry, much of it underground in nature.

But local politicians were not responsible for drafting the legislation that made possible these local direct elections. This job was undertaken in Jakarta, where policy-making is at least partly influenced by ideas of good governance reforms. The institution of local direct elections may have been partly premised on the assumption that, being more participatory in nature, these elections will result in governments being more accountable to the local citizenry. According to Mietzner, 'the new system of direct elections was' even 'designed to close the door to excessive money politics in local legislatures and introduce transparency and accountability to the electoral process'. He suggests too that there were hopes that a new crop of leaders would somehow emerge 'to break the grip of entrenched bureaucratic elites on local government' by way of this new, more participatory framework.²⁷

There always remained strong reasons, however, to question the possible outcomes of this institutional reform. The resultant dramatically rising costs of winning office will probably, in the longer run, help tighten the grip on local power held by some of the most well positioned predatory elites. This is the case even though nearly 40 per cent of incumbents, who were elected on the basis of the prior system of voting by legislative bodies, were estimated to have lost office in the new direct local electoral contests.²⁸

For reformers within Indonesia, the defeat of so many incumbents was greeted as a positive sign, for it showed the limits to the advantage of incumbency. But there are good reasons to question this interpretation of the mixed success enjoyed by incumbents in local electoral contests. First of all, there is little evidence that defeated incumbents have been replaced by people representing essentially different kinds of social interests, as Mietzner had noted. More likely, the new victors represent social interests originating from the same pool created by the New Order's predatory, centralized authoritarian rule. This is indicated in the continued successes of former New Order bureaucrats and functionaries linked to Golkar in direct electoral competitions and the absence of candidates with organic links to social movements that could represent challenges to such interests.

Indeed, it is well known that none of the political parties has seriously accommodated the interests of organized labour, for instance. Although most have labour sections or 'departments', parties have not shown serious interest in developing strong labour constituencies and thus still no organic links exist between them and working class organizational vehicles. At the level of local branches, for example, one would be hard pressed to find functionaries of major political parties with interest and expertise in dealing with labour issues, even if they are located in industrial areas with large numbers of industrial workers and labour vehicles.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there is no record of local elections that have produced candidates with overtly pro-labour platforms anywhere. Thus, a recent study found

little difference in policies toward labour between a local government controlled by Golkar (Tangerang, Banten, which is just outside Jakarta) and one controlled by one of the 'newer' parties of the 'reform' era (Pasuruan, East Java, close to Surabaya).²⁹ Both are major industrial areas where a host of labour organizations have been active. Such a situation is of potentially great importance if one takes into consideration the role posited for organized labour in democratization processes, as described in the seminal works of Rueschemeyer et al. and Therborn.³⁰

Again, the Indonesian case is not unique within the broader Southeast Asian context. In 1990s post-authoritarian Thailand, Brown argues that 'lacking a strong organised voice, workers were isolated in a developing electoral political system dominated by big money, vote-buying and the entrenching of links between crime bosses and local and metropolitan business'.³¹ Ungpakorn also notes the absence of a political party of the working class in Thailand in spite of the objective expansion of the wage-labour force due to capitalist transformation.³²

In the Philippines too, the labour movement cannot be said to be a major player in the post-authoritarian context. Its activists have remained vulnerable to violence, as is true in Indonesia today. Workers in these countries frequently have to suffer the wrath of organized criminal elements attached to paramilitary forces during labour disputes; in the case of the Philippines, these are likely to be deployed at the behest of influential political clans.³³ Throughout post-authoritarian Southeast Asia, therefore, organized labour has remained only an ambiguous beneficiary of democratization and the localization of power, due to the relatively narrow confines of contestation established by the prevalence of money politics.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Mietzner estimates, on the basis of 50 local electoral contests in Indonesia in 2005, that 36 per cent of the victors were career bureaucrats. Another 28 per cent were entrepreneurs (again showing the increasing appeal of direct hold of political office to many local businesspeople), eight per cent retired police and military officers, 22 per cent party officials, and only six per cent academics or civil society leaders.³⁴ In other words, these are the representatives of social groupings without any likely connections with broad social movements, such as that of organized labour. Moreover, it is certain that a large portion of the 'party officials' will include those whose political socialization had taken place in one of the New Order-era electoral vehicles, or through the select number of mass organizations through which the Soeharto regime recruited its functionaries and operatives. It is worth recalling that such individuals would have been politically socialized to be hostile toward grassroots social movements representing re-distributional coalitions, given the New Order's domestication and demobilization of civil society forces and its ascension to power on the back of the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party in the 1960s. It is such individuals and the largely predatory interests they represent that are primarily represented in local government bodies and legislatures today.

There are parallels here with the other Southeast Asian cases. In Thailand, Achakorn, who studied PAO elections in two provinces in 2003–2004, concluded that long established and powerful members of parliament and their relatives accounted for nearly 19 per cent of elected PAO mayors.³⁵ Furthermore, established

local politicians accounted for the remaining 81 per cent, so demonstrating formidable hurdles for political newcomers and reformers.³⁶

Interestingly, some scholars working on the Philippines had warned of the possible advent in Indonesia of what Tornquist calls Philippine-style 'bad guy democracy' run by established predatory elites with local fiefdoms.³⁷ Thus, Hutchcroft, writing on the Philippines after Marcos, emphasizes the clannishness of electoral politics that are stained by money politics and intimidation. He points also to 'the enormous expense of running for election' that serves as an 'effective barrier to the entrance of reformist forces into the political arena', and argues that 'many so-called new faces often retain strong connections to old centers of power'.³⁸

Such observations are relevant to Indonesia, where many local politicians regularly have come to observe how the political arena will in the future be more distinctly the domain of the rich and powerful, given the ever-escalating costs of waging a successful campaign. Anecdotal evidence, including some from recent fieldwork in parts of North Sumatra, suggests that winning a local election can now cost anything from several billion to tens of billions rupiah depending largely on the socio-economic profile of the locality in question (they will tend to be more expensive, for example, in large cities). In Thailand, Arghiros has noted a local Thai politician's estimate that during the course of three elections between 1985 and 1999 his personal campaign expenses had grown by no less than 25 times.³⁹ Shatkin cites an estimate by one prominent Thai NGO that US\$4 billion was spent on vote buying in the 1996 elections.⁴⁰ In other words, the expense required for winning elections is as much a barrier for interests that may tend to challenge the status quo in Indonesia and Thailand as it has been in the Philippines, where dynastic families have traditionally exercised a strong hold over local politics.

Nevertheless, many in Indonesia had pinned their hopes on direct local elections and believed, initially, that they would not be overtaken by the proliferation of money politics. Prominently situated among the hopeful, not surprisingly, has been the NGO community. NGO activists in Indonesia, along with many of their counterparts in Thailand⁴¹ and the Philippines⁴² are attracted to the civil society-embracing jargon of otherwise technocratic good governance. For such activists with populist dispositions, local direct elections had the potential to break the dominance of old social forces in local politics, if local communities and citizenries could be politically mobilized in the desired direction.

Aware of their inability to challenge political party machines based in Jakarta, some NGOs were supportive of the idea of developing local political parties that would only contest elections in particular localities.⁴³ The belief was that local political parties would allow them to channel activities into building viable, albeit smaller, 'genuinely reformist' electoral vehicles, on the basis of earlier vast experience in grassroots social work, through which access to local communities had been established during the New Order years. Whether such a strategy, encouraged in part by the apparent progress of Akbayan in the Philippines,⁴⁴ would have been successful is now only a moot point, given the broader context of policy-making.

Significantly, technocratic quarters in Jakarta have been consistently against the idea of local (as opposed to nationally organized) political parties. Forty-eight

parties contested Indonesia's parliamentary elections in 1999, and while only 24 contested them in 2004, the hustle and bustle world of electoral competition has been increasingly presented as dysfunctional to the objectives of pro-market, technocratic, good governance.⁴⁵ It is no wonder that the further proliferation of political parties through the invention of 'local' ones finds few supporters within technocratic planning circles, though an exception will be made for resource-rich Aceh where a separatist rebellion had been brewing for decades.

This is the case even though it is clear that political parties have functioned increasingly like auction houses for the rich and powerful. For example, candidates for local office typically have had to pay off political parties to obtain the position of official party nominee. This is partly because the present law states that only a party or combination of parties that have 15 per cent or more of seats in any legislature possess the right to advance candidates for local government head, whether *bupati* or mayor. If the aim of the technocratic restriction was to create a semblance of order in electoral competition, the real effect has been to induce political parties to simply auction off nominations and support to the highest bidder, almost regardless of programme or ideological issues.

The end product has been a very rambunctious system whereby prospective candidates negotiate 'prices' with various parties before a 'sponsorship' deal is made, even though he or she has no connection whatsoever to the party of choice. Even individuals who are known as cadres of Golkar or the PDIP (Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle, headed by former president, Megawati Soekarnoputri) – the two largest parties – would easily jump ship when convenient. This will happen if the 'asking price' of the parties they belong to is too high or if these parties had already struck an agreement with someone else, who not infrequently is a financially well-endowed outsider. Another obvious consequence is that electoral campaigns are never fought primarily according to party programmes or ideology even though candidates typically produce vague election platforms, but instead in a very ad hoc and opportunistic way. Even the Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS), widely regarded as the most ideological and staunchly Muslim of all the main parties, has backed non-cadres when convenient. In the case of the mayoral election in Binjai, North Sumatra, for example, the PKS backed local businessman Indra Bungsu, although in fact he hails from a family of local aristocrats and supporters of 'secular-nationalist' Soekarnoism and not one with a strong Muslim-oriented pedigree.⁴⁶ In the more strategic mayoral contest in the North Sumatran capital city of Medan, also in 2005, the PKS backed career bureaucrat and former Golkar functionary mayor, Maulana Pohan, who had also served as deputy mayor.

Indonesia's political parties have therefore not emerged as 'natural' political entities, carrying out 'aggregating' and 'articulating' functions of the sort that the basic theory of parties would suggest. Instead, these parties are but the contemporary institutional expressions of tactical alliances that draw from the same pool of predatory interests developed during the heyday of the New Order.⁴⁷ In this sense, they are similar to major parties in the Philippines and Thailand, who are also largely pragmatic alliances by nature, devoid of distinctive programmes or political vision. Indeed, the logic of party politics in post-authoritarian Southeast Asian

societies is quite fundamentally different to that associated with liberal forms of democracy.

No less than Aquilino Pimentel Jr, a prominent senator, political party leader, and well-known champion of decentralization in the Philippines, has suggested that:

In my country, today, crossing over from one party to another can easily be done because the political parties are not differentiated by ideologies. They are differentiated only by the depths of the pockets of their political leaders and the charisma that their financial fortunes create. And sad to say, what passes for their political platforms are mainly motherhood statements that have no bearing on the real needs of the people.⁴⁸

Shatkin's analysis of local leadership in Thailand, meanwhile, displays how informal power blocs, sometimes linking local bosses engaged in a range of illegal economic activities to Bangkok elite figures, lie beneath the surface of electoral and party politics and determine such matters as candidate selection.⁴⁹ That the abrupt fall of Thaksin was followed by the mass exodus of Thai Rak Thai stalwarts and members to rival parties was not a surprising development if one accepts Nelson's view that Thai politics is much less based on parties-proper than on underlying *phuak*, or informal networks of patronage.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the Southeast Asian cases do not exhibit 'political parties-in-transition', or some sort of 'hybrid' condition where the 'modern' and 'rational' come together with the 'traditional' or 'patrimonial' in some sort of curious admixture. In fact, political parties as they are constituted presently in the context of contemporary post-authoritarian societies in Southeast Asia, where money politics, and to varying extents, political thuggery predominate, are quite well-suited for the purposes and aims of the predatory interests that preside over them. In other words, there is an internal logic to political party life and electoral competition in post-authoritarian Indonesia, and arguably the other Southeast Asian cases as well, which does not lend itself easily to transformation. This situation is linked to the kinds of social interests that preside over the parties. Indeed, the Western liberal-pluralist model of the political party may be viewed as being increasingly exceptional given the experience of democracies in the region and around the world that have emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, which is when the most recent 'wave' of democratisation was *supposed* to have swept the globe.

But this surely does not mean that 'successful' elections cannot take place in Southeast Asian democracies. Indeed, local direct elections were on the whole smoothly implemented in Indonesia starting from mid-2005, in spite of a host of technical problems, and conflicts intermittently arising that sometimes led to outbreaks of violence.⁵¹ The level of violence concerned, however, was quite minimal, apart from a few instances. Even in areas previously torn by ethnic or religious strife (e.g., North Maluku, Poso in Sulawesi, and West Kalimantan), elections proceeded in a relatively orderly manner. For a huge, diverse archipelago like Indonesia, often portrayed as a violence-prone, fragile, entity following the end of the long Soeharto era, this was indeed a significant achievement. Whatever the label to be applied to Indonesia, it is by no means the 'failed state' that some security analysts fear will emerge

against the current background of primarily Western concerns about the 'war on terror'.

It is an entirely different matter altogether, however, to suggest that the successful implementation of the elections in Indonesia signalled the end of the 'transition' stage and the beginning of the 'consolidation' of Indonesia's democracy in the sense associated with the still influential 'democratic transitions' literature. It is more fruitful instead to view the newly instituted local direct elections as being a potentially important part of the broader process of development of a particular *kind* of democracy related to the workings of Indonesia's predatory form of capitalism.

Local Direct Elections in Indonesia

Such a view of the significance of direct local elections presumes kinds of political participation and contestation far removed from the jargon of good governance reforms. Nevertheless, the strategies through which elites maintain their ascendance have been changing dramatically since 1998, and this has some important social ramifications. In spite of their staying power, local elites have, in fact, had to be very adaptable to changing circumstances. In this they have been quite successful, for they have come out on top repeatedly in spite of various governance reforms, which include anti-corruption drives that might have been expected to undermine their position.

A good example of the adaptability demanded of local elites is the relatively diminishing importance of overt violence and intimidation in winning local electoral contests, especially when viewed in relation to the dramatic escalation of money politics. Highly prominent in the old system of electing local executives through local parliamentary bodies, the use of outright violence has been notably absent in the vast majority of direct local electoral since mid-2005. This can be understood in relation to the current interest of local elites to guarantee the relatively peaceful running of elections, in order not to tarnish the legitimacy of the political process that now ensures their ascendant social position.

Thus, Barron, Nathan, and Welsh point out that in many places local elites made public appeals to supporters to refrain from violence.⁵² This would appear to substantiate the claim made by political gangsters or militiamen in North Sumatra, where local political contests have traditionally been notoriously rough and tumble, that they were asked by the candidates they backed to adopt a lower profile in the campaign process. Many were even asked not to appear in their intimidating organizational uniforms during public mobilizations of support and to avoid clashes with rival groups of enforcers and thugs.⁵³ Even if the ready availability of an apparatus of violence can still be very useful subsequently in the business of running everyday government, its prominent exhibition during elections was obviously regarded as detrimental. Indeed, any excuse for a greater military role in politics (such as in the name of maintaining order and security) is the last thing required by ascendant local predatory elites, who now present themselves as born-again democrats and reformers.

Significantly, major outbreaks of disorder during election time would not only damage the standing of Indonesian democracy and the actors presiding over it, but could potentially entice the military to demand a more significant part in the workings

of politics. It must be remembered that even if the military as an institution has retreated from many of its former roles since 1998, decentralization has in fact provided many local military commanders with greater opportunities to forge semi-autonomously political and business alliances at the local level.⁵⁴

Moreover, as an institution, it is the military that is poised to 'restore order' should electoral contests give rise to acts of violence and destruction on a large scale. Then local commanders would be in an even better position to demand more of the spoils of local power. It is ironic, therefore, that an array of local interests once nurtured within the vast system of patronage protected by authoritarian means has now developed the greatest stake in the survival of Indonesia's electoral democracy.

Nonetheless, there have been some notable exceptions to the general rule of orderliness, which indicate some brewing tension beneath the surface of calm in a variety of places. In 2005 in Binjai, North Sumatra, Ali Umri, the incumbent mayor, was victorious in a local election his rivals alleged to be marred by a number of serious irregularities (pertaining especially to the twice-delayed polling day). Protests on their behalf led to mob action in the form of violent attacks on the offices of the local electoral commission. Moreover, the supporters of all four candidates apparently did come to mobilize gangs who were involved in several vicious brawls, something that had been avoided all through the electoral campaign period. Indeed, the rejection of poll results by losing candidates occurred quite frequently in a variety of places. In North Sumatra alone, where 12 local elections took place simultaneously on 27 June 2005, 11 produced disputed poll results.⁵⁵

More prominent instances of election-related violence have in fact occurred in East Java. No less than in the provincial capital of Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, mobs protested under the banner of an ad-hoc group calling itself the People's Movement for Democracy and Justice against the victory of the incumbent mayor, Bambang Dwi Hartono. The protest took a violent turn as supporters of the mayor's rivals attacked the local parliament building,⁵⁶ again complaining about alleged polling irregularities.

In 2006 in Tuban, also in East Java, protesters burned down the local election commission office and property belonging to incumbent Haeny Relawati, who won re-election with Golkar backing on top of allegations of vote rigging.⁵⁷ Here the violence, instigated by supporters of a losing candidate became so widespread that a curfew was put in place, while 'shoot to kill' orders were issued to agents of the security apparatus. Tuban is notably an area that has been rapidly developed industrially and infrastructurally, and one which will likely grow in importance because of the highly prized Cepu oilfield located within its boundaries. It is interesting as well that much of the anger expressed against the incumbent is believed to be actually directed against her husband, a prosperous local businessman, whom critics accuse of abusing the power of his wife to win business contracts.⁵⁸

But again, these have been somewhat exceptional cases. One implication is that the rise of political gangsters and militiamen in struggles over local power may be constrained. Already brakes have appeared that have stalled their further rise and may reveal the limits of political thuggery as a base of social power, unless accompanied by the possession of substantial financial resources.

Even though some members of crime and paramilitary organizations have contested local elections as political party candidates, it is believed that they were not particularly successful. Although a definitive assessment is difficult to make due to the paucity of data. But such a lack of success was already indicated in the 2004 national parliamentary elections, when many of their leaders failed to win seats in legislative elections.⁵⁹ In a nutshell, though they have been among the beneficiaries of electoral democracy combined with decentralization, individuals who are mainly hooligans and thugs seem to be finding it difficult to establish a strong niche in the new direct electoral system, unless they also have the financial capacity to play the game of money politics – like the entrepreneurs and bureaucrats who have entered local political contests. In other words, because they no longer undertake the once vital role of coercing and intimidating legislators to vote a particular way during elections for local heads of government, such individuals are struggling to find new roles. Thus, an interesting development seems to have taken place in Indonesia where the local capitalist, who may also be a thug, will appear to have better prospects of being a major force in the local political arena than a thug who is not also a successful businessman. Money politics seems to have gained in importance in relation to sheer political thuggery in terms of defining the terms of representation and contestation in Indonesia's democracy. This point reinforces a central argument made by Jayasuriya and Rodan in the opening article of this collection that modes of participation involve a process of political inclusion and exclusion. In the case of these local modes of participation, the importance of money politics and the capacity of predatory elites to mobilize state resources serve to limit political contestation even as they enhance political participation.

Conclusion

Though it should be reasserted that direct local elections have been carried out in most cases without violence reaching serious levels, instances of dispute similar to those described above have occurred in many places right across the sprawling Indonesian archipelago. As mentioned, this may indicate that deep-seated tensions simmer beneath the surface of orderliness in the implementation of local elections. That such tensions exist is not surprising given the stakes involved in any single electoral contest. Because of the high cost of engaging in the direct polls, the amount invested by losing candidacies can be quite ruinous financially for them. This fact alone will tend to further ensure that future local electoral contests will mostly be the purview of those particularly well endowed with material resources (and if necessary, instruments of coercion). In other words, the process of further entrenchment of a class of local politicians over the arena of sub-national politics seems to be well underway, which will likely produce a further narrowing of the kinds of conflicts that can be expressed within Indonesia's electoral democracy.

The further question is whether this process of entrenchment is leading in the direction of the formation of more distinct local oligarchies centred on individuals and groups of more genuine 'strongmen' or dominant local notables, as has historically taken place to a greater degree in Thailand and the Philippines. As Sidel notes, the particularly centralized form of New Order authoritarianism tended to

stifle their emergence.⁶⁰ A thriving locally focused electoral democracy from which coherent and genuinely reformist forces able to challenge the dominance of established elites are largely missing is, however, conducive to the emergence of coalitions of power that more distinctly constitute local oligarchies. Such local oligarchies will have an abiding interest not just in maintaining their position vis-à-vis potential challenges, but also in safeguarding a substantial degree of autonomy for local arenas of power, including from the encroachment of the internationally promoted neo-liberal 'good governance' agenda.

On the one hand, this is obviously bad news for would-be populist redistributive coalitions that might want to challenge the corruption and abuse of power that fuel increasingly localized patronage networks. The consequences, however, are as serious for the purveyors of decentralization as good governance reform, for whom the reconfiguration of the state was to have paved the way for the entrenchment of the discipline of the global marketplace. Because the social agents representing neo-liberal technocracy are unable to seriously contest the main site of political participation in Indonesia's decentralized democracy, namely, local elections, genuine good governance reforms will take a back seat to the real contests over power taking place between competing coalitions of predatory interests. It is likely that these will continue to refuse to give in to a good governance agenda that is overtly threatening to their position, except when it is possible to appropriate that agenda in furtherance of their own objectives.

In summary, there are two sets of interests being marginalized in local politics in Indonesia. They are class-based interests in opposition to the Indonesian brand of predatory capitalism that has survived the demise of the New Order, and the technocratic ideologues who potentially threaten coalitions of power deploying money politics in order to safeguard their predatory interests. In other words, post-authoritarianism has certainly been characterized by broader political participation through the institutions of electoral politics; however, political contestation remains confined to coalitions of local predatory interests.

All of the above, it must be emphasized, does not imply successful resistance to the disciplining forces of globalization per se. Instead it indicates local attempts to negotiate how the integration of local economies with world markets takes place. Predatory interests will in fact embrace many aspects of economic globalization – given that new rent-seeking possibilities are potentially opened up by the resultant expansion of economic activities generally. Rather than entailing the wholesale acceptance of the good governance package, however, this can be achieved by usurping aspects of neo-liberal reform and by forging localized new business alliances with investors. After all, it is well known that investors, both international and domestic, have worked quite well with a range of corrupt, predatory regimes across the world, including in Southeast Asia when such regimes were the only ones available. Displaying the pragmatism of the international business community, one of its leading figures in Indonesia proclaimed at a national forum for investors and local officials that doing business outside of Jakarta required 'a firm and committed relationship with the *Bupatis*'.⁶¹ This matter-of-fact statement probably constitutes as strong a signal as any of future directions in the localization of power.

NOTES

1. John Harriss, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Tornquist, 'Introduction: The New Local Politics of Democratisation', in John Harriss, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Tornquist (eds), *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 1–27.
2. For example, Jennie Litvack, Junaid Ahmad, and Richard Bird, *Rethinking Decentralization in Developing Countries* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1998).
3. Vedi R. Hadiz, 'Decentralisation and Democracy in Indonesia: A Critique of Neo-Institutionalist Perspectives', *Development and Change*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2004), pp. 697–718; and Vedi R. Hadiz, 'Indonesian Local Party Politics: A Site of Resistance to Neo-Liberal Reform', *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2004), pp. 615–36.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Marcus Mietzner, 'Local Democracy: Old Elites are Still in Power, But Direct Elections Now Give Voters A Choice', *Inside Indonesia*, January–March (2006), pp. 17–18.
6. Interviews with Somkhit Lertpaithoon, vice-rector of Thammasat University and member of the 1997 Constitution Drafting Assembly as well as Decentralisation Committee, Bangkok, 28 September 2006; and with Wuthisarn Tanchai, Director of the King Prajadhipok's Institute, and member of the Thai Decentralisation Committee, Nonthaburi, 26 September 2006.
7. Marco Bunte, 'Indonesia's Decentralization: The Big Bang Revisited', in Michael H. Nelson (ed.) *Thai Politics: Global and Local Perspectives* (Nonthaburi: King Prajadhipok's Institute, 2004), pp. 379–430.
8. In Indonesia, the design of decentralization policy has meant power being distinctly shifted from Jakarta to sub-provincial *kabupaten* and cities/towns – with the provinces in danger of being overlooked – though recent changes have now strengthened the hand of provincial governors. In the Philippines, it has meant the establishment of a tiered system of supervision involving the president, provincial governors, as well as heads of municipalities. In Thailand, there exist separate administrative bodies responsible for the same territorial areas, one linked to the Ministry of the Interior, and the other being units of elected local governments. Thus, provincial governors are basically functionaries of Bangkok while Provincial Administrative Organisations (PAO) are elected bodies, along with municipal administrations governing urban areas and the rurally based Tambon Administrative Organisations (TAO).
9. Pranab Bardhan, 'Decentralization of Governance and Development', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2002), pp. 185–205, p. 186.
10. World Bank, Decentralization Homepage, available at <http://www1.worldbank.org/wbiep/decentralization/>.
11. Richard C. Crook and James Manor, *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa: Participation, Accountability and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 83.
12. For example, Harriss, Stokke, and Tornquist (note 1), p. 2.
13. Bardhan (note 9), p. 185.
14. For example, David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2000), p. 84.
15. Paul K. Gellert, 'Oligarchy in the Timber Markets of Indonesia: From Apkindo to IBRA to the Future of the Forests', in Budy P. Resosudarmo (ed.), *The Politics and Economics of Indonesia's Natural Resources* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2005), pp. 145–61.
16. Hadiz, 'Indonesian Local Party Politics' (note 3).
17. For example, Richard Robison and Vedi R. Hadiz, *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).
18. Interviews with J. Prospero De Vera, Senior Consultant, Office of Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr, Quezon City, 5 June 2006; and with Professor Eduardo Gonzalez, former president of the Development Academy of the Philippines, Quezon City, 6 June 2006.
19. For example, interview with Nakharin Mektrairat, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, 28 September 2006.
20. Gavin Shatkin, 'Globalization and Local Leadership: Growth, Power and Politics in Thailand's Eastern Seaboard', University of Michigan, Urban and Regional Research Collaborative, Working Paper Series No. 03–05, 2003, p. 31.
21. Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand's Crisis* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2000), specifically Chapter 8.
22. Michael H. Nelson, 'Politicizing Local Governments in Thailand: Direct Election of Executives', *King Prajadiphok's Institute Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2003), pp. 6–9, p. 8. Achakorn Wongpredee,

- studying Buri Ram and Pathum Thani provinces, sees a different dynamic emerging from decentralization: already powerful and wealthy local politicians are increasingly being provided with patronage and resources by the more powerful of national MPs who seek to expand their local vote base – and that the process frequently includes the securing of projects for local level politicians who are often also contractors. See Achakorn Wongpredee, 'Decentralization and Effect on Provincial Political Power in Thailand', *Asian and African Area Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2007), pp. 454–70.
23. Rocamora, Joel, 'Introduction: Classes, Bosses, Goons and Guns', in Jose F. Lacaba (ed.) *Boss: 5 Cases of Local Politics in the Philippines* (Pasig: Metro Manila, 1995), p. xix.
 24. For this reason, much of the empirical discussion on Indonesia here centres on these two provinces.
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 26. Asia Foundation, 'Democracy and Elections in Indonesia', 2006, available at http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/Indo_Democracy-Elections.pdf (accessed 8 March 2007).
 27. Mietzner (note 5), p. 17.
 28. Jeremy Gross, 'Direct Local Elections Truly Change the Political Culture', *Jakarta Post*, 22 June 2006.
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 31. Andrew Brown, *Labour, Politics and the State in Industrializing Thailand* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 105.
 32. Ji Giles Ungpakorn, 'A Marxist History of Political Change in Thailand', in Ji Giles Ungpakorn (ed.), *Radicalising Thailand: New Political Perspectives* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2003), pp. 6–40, p. 20.
 33. Alfred W. McCoy, 'The Restoration of Planter Power in La Carlota City', in Ben Kerkvliet and Resil Mojares (eds), *From Marcos to Aquino: Local Perspectives on Political Transition in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1991), pp. 107–42, p. 131.
 34. Mietzner (note 5), pp. 17–18.
 35. Provincial Administrative Organisations and other local elected bodies are typically inhabited by local politicians and entrepreneurs, while provincial governors head organizational units, which as mentioned earlier, are vertically linked to the Ministry of the Interior.
 36. See Achakorn Wongpredee (note 22).
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 38. Paul Hutchcroft, 'Sustaining Economic and Political Reform: The Challenges Ahead', in David G. Timberman (ed.), *The Philippines: New Directions in Domestic Policy and Foreign Relations* (New York: Asia Society, 1998), available at <http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/philippines> (accessed 8 March 2007).
 39. Daniel Arghiros, *Democracy, Development, and Decentralization in Provincial Thailand* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), p. 209.
 40. Shatkin (note 20), p. 16.
 41. Kevin Hewison, 'Resisting Globalization: A Study of Localism in Thailand', *Pacific Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2001), pp. 279–96; Michael Kelly Connors, 'Ideological Aspects of Democratisation in Thailand: Mainstreaming Localism', City University of Hong Kong SEARC Working Papers Series No. 12, 2001.
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 43. For instance, at a seminar on the 2004 elections in Indonesia organized by NGOs in North Sumatra, 22 July 2002.
 44. Akbayan is a grassroots, cross-class movement that has established a party vehicle to contest elections with some success.
 45. *Kompas*, 5 May 2003; *Jakarta Post*, 22 January 2003.
 46. Interview, Binjai, 15 June 2005.
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 48. Aquilono Pimentel Jr, 'Multi-Parties Strengthen Democracy', Speech, 4th International Conference of Asian Political Parties, Seoul, 8 September 2006, pp. 8–9.

49. See Shatkin (note 20).
50. *The Nation*, 3 October 2006; Nelson (note 22), p. 9; Michael H. Nelson, 'Analysing Provincial Political Structures in Thailand: Phuak, Trajun and Hua Khanaen', City University of Hong Kong, SEARC Working Papers Series No. 79, 2005.
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52. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
53. Various interviews with members of paramilitary groups and youth and gangster organizations, in Medan, North Sumatra, June 2005.
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59. As pointed out by Tengku Erry Nuradi, victorious candidate for *bupati* of Serdang Bedagai, North Sumatra; interview, 14 June 2005. He is a local businessman and brother of the late governor of North Sumatra, retired Lt. Gen. Teuku Rizal Nurdin.
60. John T. Sidel, 'Bossism and Democracy in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia: Towards an Alternative Framework for the Study of "Local Strongmen"', in John Harriss, Kristian Stokke and Olle Tornquist (note 1), pp. 51–74.
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