Proliferating provinces: territorial politics in post-Suharto Indonesia

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Abstract: What explains the recent internal territorial changes in the Indonesian archipelago? Given the relatively constant number of provinces and districts during the New Order period, the sudden rise of new districts and provinces in post-authoritarian Indonesia is puzzling. This article argues that the phenomenon is driven by multilevel alliances across different territorial administrative levels, or territorial coalitions. It suggests that national level institutional changes explain the timing of provincial proliferation and that the triggers can vary, depending on historical and cultural contexts.

Keywords: democratization; decentralization; regionalism; territorial coalitions; Indonesia

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Out of Indonesia’s political upheaval in the late 1990s rose the spectre of its territorial collapse. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia had each splintered earlier in the decade, and observers in 1999 often referred to the prospect of Indonesia’s ‘balkanization’.1 Experts and pundits alike cautioned that transition and political reform could weaken the state, embolden the regions and lead to a domino effect beginning with the breakaway of East Timor, followed by a fragmentation of the archipelago into a dozen or so states.

Of course, Indonesia survived and has remained largely intact. East Timor gained independence in 1999, but the archipelago did not splinter

the way many had feared. However, Indonesia’s political transition did spur on a territorial shuffle of another, less expected kind. Instead of external fragmentation and collapse, Indonesia has been experiencing an internal fission in which provinces and districts are being divided into ever smaller units, resulting in the proliferation of new subnational units.

Why has Indonesia fragmented in this manner and what does it tell us about contemporary politics in that country? This article argues that despite the seeming free-for-all, there is an internal logic to today’s territorial changes. Instead of focusing exclusively on national level politics or local level demands, this article shows how national, regional and local levels are linked through webs of networks and alliances – what I call territorial coalitions. These coalitions help us to understand the redrawing of boundaries, the emergence of new provinces and the changing patterns of regional politics in Indonesia more broadly.

The next section defines the scope of the problem in more detail, highlighting the features of territorial change and its comparative elements. It then shows how democratization and decentralization implemented in the post-Suharto era can explain the timing of territorial change and the way it formed political coalitions. Three case studies that follow reveal how broad processes of democratization and decentralization affected the regions in significantly different ways and how that reveals distinct paths to new province formation. The article concludes by reflecting on the importance of territorial coalitions and implications for understanding regional politics in Indonesia.

Proliferating provinces

The process of territorial change occurring in Indonesia today, dubbed pemekaran wilayah [regional blossoming] or pembentukan daerah [new region formation] refers to the splitting or dividing up of provinces, districts and subdistricts into multiple new territorial units. Since 1999, the number of provinces in Indonesia has grown from 26 to 33 (see Table 1) and the number of districts from 290 to roughly 500, reconfiguring the political territorial map of Indonesia.²

² Close observers of Indonesia will note that this study focuses on the provincial level, while much of the power has been decentralized to the district level. Certainly, districts are the main units of autonomy in Indonesia today. But this study focuses on new province formation because that can capture both provincial level and district level politics, since the new province aspirants are usually districts or groups of districts. This then raises the question of why districts would want to become provinces in the first place, and here the answer is that provinces are still important. They
This process of territorial change can be distinguished from two related phenomena. First, this is not a proliferation of regions that results from conquest or other forms of territorial acquisition. The number of states in the USA, for example, has risen from the original 13 to the present-day 50, but most of the increase is accounted for by westward expansion and territorial acquisition. In Indonesia, the incorporation of Western Papua in 1961 and East Timor in 1975 technically represents a territorial change, but their annexation falls outside the realm of this study because they were added through expansion rather than internal change.

Second, regional proliferation is distinct from the practice of gerrymandering. Gerrymandering refers to the redrawing of political boundaries for electoral benefit. While there is an electoral component to regional proliferation, gerrymandering does not imply an aggregate increase in the number of regional or local territorial administrative units. In fact, the assumption behind gerrymandering is that the number of electoral districts stays constant, while their shape, size and composition may change, sometimes drastically.

Although regional proliferation may seem like a relatively narrow scope of inquiry, the phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia. In South East Asia, countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines have also experienced a similar jump in the number of new provinces. Malesky, for example, argues that new provinces in Vietnam are emerging as a result of conflict between conservatives and reformers in the national legislature.\(^3\) Stuligross sees the creation of new states in India as a way

that national parties can court new constituents in an effort to gain legislative advantage at the national level. Kraxberger elaborates on identity-based factors that led to the creation of new states in Nigeria, which he refers to as ‘subnational citizenship containers’.

In Indonesia, new districts and provinces appeared in a number of ‘waves’ from 1998, when there were 292 districts, to 2004, when there were 434. Most of the new provinces (West Irian Jaya, North Maluku, Banten, Bangka-Belitung, Gorontalo, West Sulawesi) were approved in 2000. Riau Islands province was approved two years later in 2002. Most recently, West Sulawesi province was approved in 2004. All of these initiatives for new provinces emerged in 1998 and 1999 and several others still remain shelved in the legislature.

While several scholars have written about the phenomenon both at the district and provincial level, much of the emphasis in these narratives is on how local elites essentially co-opted new institutional reforms for their own benefit at the local level. Others have highlighted the enormously contentious aspects of these splits. This article agrees with recent work that highlights the starkly political nature of the phenomenon, but argues for a broader perspective in understanding it. New territorial struggles go beyond local elite contestation and ‘horizontal’ struggles for power in decentralized Indonesia. They also indicate new ‘vertical’ linkages or alliances that span local, regional and national levels. The comparative cases highlight the inner workings of these alliances across different historical and regional contexts.

**Territorial coalitions**

Regional proliferation, I argue, is not the product of a single actor group,

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4 David Stuligross (2001), *A Piece of Land to Call One’s Own: Multicultural Federalism and Institutional Innovation in India*, University of California, Berkeley, CA.


but rather a collaborative effort among individuals and groups at multiple territorial levels. In other words, there is a coalitional politics that is taking place. This is in stark contrast to the way we normally think about territorial movements. Usually, we consider these movements to be conflictual, seeking to break away or gain more autonomy from the central state. In the context of provincial proliferation, I argue that the regional movements are not separatist, but rather ‘integrationist’: that is to say, reifying the larger Indonesian nation-state rather than challenging it.

Coalitions are typically defined as groups of individuals and organizations that work together towards a common goal. The concept has been used to analyse politics in a variety of settings. The field of legislative politics, for example, has explored how coalitions between political parties emerge and their implications for political outcomes.\(^9\) Coalitions between classes have been studied as a major force for political change.\(^10\) And political economists have explained outcomes such as open or closed economic policies or the rise of the welfare state as resulting from different kinds of sectoral coalitions.\(^11\) This field is also methodologically diverse, ranging from qualitative to quantitative to game-theoretic approaches.

The coalitions referred to in this study are territorial in character. They span different levels of territorial administration and in the process embody both the hierarchy and the different power relations embedded in that structure. While scholars typically highlight cross-class or cross-sectoral coalitions, territorial coalitions illustrate how alliances often cut across these groups. The main actors in such coalitions in the Indonesian context include local civil society organizations, local businesses, and various political parties.


local level political elites, provincial level political elites, national level political elites, political parties and different state institutions such as the military and national level ministries.

The notion of territorial coalitions relies on the concept of scale: the idea that territories of differing size are nested within one another, for example, at the global, national and local levels.12 Because scales are malleable and dynamic, politics can shift upwards and downwards along the scale. Marginal or peripheral territories or regions can transform themselves from what Cox calls ‘spaces of dependence’ into ‘spaces of engagement’ by allying with groups at different territorial levels through ‘scale jumping’, in which local issues are given national or international prominence through the construction of coalitions.13 International or national issues can also jump scales downwards, giving them local prominence. Scholars have used similar concepts to explain local NGOs or workers who ally with supranational organizations in order to put pressure on that national state.14 In these cases, ‘jumping scales’ provides a critical way in which local interests can become nationalized or internationalized.

The cross-cutting territorial alliances and ‘scale-jumping’ help us to understand territorial politics, but previous studies have generally assumed that in creating territorial alliances or other coalitions, the actors generally share a certain set of values and norms, such as about human rights, workers’ rights or other issues. The work of Keck and Sikkink, for example, is fundamentally a story about norm diffusion in which actors appeal to supranational institutions to put pressure on the national level.15 More generally, assumptions made in coalitional politics are that values and norms are either shared or need to be put aside in pursuit of specific goals.16

In contrast, the case of provincial proliferation suggests what I call a

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13 Cox, supra note 12.


15 Keck and Sikkink, supra note 14.

politics of difference. Simultaneous and differing values can form the basis for a coalition. Put another way, coalitions can work because of differences, not just despite them. This is particularly the case when we think about territorial or regional movements. There tends to be an assumption that territorial politics are inherently a zero-sum game and that the benefit of, say, national territoriality comes at the expense of local or regional territory.

One reason for this is that many scholars see territoriality in largely materialist terms. Areas rich in natural resources such as oil, minerals and timber benefit those who can access and control them. If natural resources are distributed unevenly across a territory of a given state, the central government may extract the resources either to redistribute them across other regions, or simply to plunder them for its own benefit. This in turn can lead to domestic imbalance and resentment.\textsuperscript{17} Even without natural resources, certain regions may feel marginalized by a central government, leading to a conflation of marginality, territory and identity, or ‘internal colonialism’, which then gives rise to separatism or rebellion.\textsuperscript{18} If territories are conceived in material terms, then it makes sense for them to remain inherently conflictual, because in a world of fixed goods, one side’s gain is the other’s loss. For that reason, most research on politics and territory has emphasized rebellions, civil wars, separatism and ethnic violence.\textsuperscript{19}

More recently, scholars have also sought to understand the symbolic dimensions of territory, including the sources of territorial attachments.\textsuperscript{20} While early work tended to assume attachments as primordial, more recent scholars have tried to understand why and how those attachments emerge.\textsuperscript{21} But understanding the sources of symbolic attachments that individuals and groups have to territories and the process by which

\textsuperscript{17} Michael L. Ross (2004), ‘What do we know about natural resources and civil war?’ Journal of Peace Research, Vol 41, No 3, pp 337–356.


they emerge also reinforces the incompatibility of territoriality between different actors. The moving of indigenous peoples from their land or building a development project on sacred places typically shows how materialist aspects of territoriality trump and overpower the symbolic or cultural dimension. In turn, it also shows how these kinds of symbolic attachments can be used as a way to mobilize and resist territorial encroachments by the state.  

A third dimension of territoriality is political or institutional: territory has political value that emerges out of the political institutions of a state. Where regional representation in the political system is institutionalized, territory means having a voice on state matters. For example, the total number of states or provinces can play an important part in determining the overall make-up of the legislative and executive branches of government as they form the basis of electoral districts. While legislative seats are distributed according to a party-list system, close attention is paid to the balance of representatives between different regions. Again, standing on their own, institutional views of territory might suggest competition rather than cooperation.

However, in critical moments, I argue that these differing notions of territoriality – material, cultural and institutional – can and do exist simultaneously, and open doors not just to conflict, but also to forms of cooperation. The point here is not that difference always leads to cooperation, but that one should not necessarily assume conflict. The multidimensional nature of territory forms the basis by which individuals and groups may decide to mobilize and form alliances around territorial issues. Interests along economic, political and social dimensions may often overlap in surprising and unexpected ways.

Similar observations have been made about environmental movements in Indonesia that bring together provincial and local actors in an alliance to protect natural resources, despite having significantly different views on the environment itself. Tsing argues that 'sometimes, difference can lead to new forms of unity and struggle'. That difference forms the basis of cooperation is thus a critical insight in understanding

Indonesia’s recent territorial changes. The next section elaborates more on these mobilizations in the Indonesian context.

The sources of territorial coalitions

If territorial coalitions form the basis of regional proliferation, where and how do territorial coalitions arise? In general, scholars have proposed two different theories of coalition formation. One school argues that they emerge under situations of extreme threat, which force groups towards cohesion and coalition. Another school argues that coalitions emerge in the context of opportunity and thus emphasizes ‘environmental conditions’ of coalition formation. This study leans on the side of opportunity and environmental conditions highlighting in particular the way institutional changes affect alliance possibilities.

In Indonesia, institutional change in the late 1990s helped align the interests of different actors in such a way that territorial proliferation became a highly desirable course of action. I focus in particular here on formal institutions of the Indonesian state, looking at electoral and representative institutions and bureaucratic authority. I highlight the twin reforms of democratization and decentralization after the fall of the authoritarian New Order in 1998. Democratization and decentralization provided a way through which actors could simultaneously hold different interests in territory, and for this reason, work together effectively to create new territories. The following section elaborates on how democratization and decentralization work to effect territorial change.

Democratization

One direct result of Indonesia’s political transition has been the liberalization of politics. The military and the police force no longer have the kind of impunity that they had during the New Order era. Where speaking out on political issues was considered subversive and dangerous before, it is not uncommon to see several demonstrations a week in central Jakarta now. This suggests a newfound ‘political opportunity’ for advocates of new regions in Indonesia. But democratization did more than simply provide an environment for stronger forms of advocacy. It also changed the institutional incentives for territory and laid the foundation for territorial coalitions to emerge.

On the one hand, the tightly controlled process of party formation under the New Order was loosened up considerably under reformasi.
Under the new rules, a new party required only 50 signatures of citizens 21 years of age or older, and registration with a court and the Ministry of Justice.\textsuperscript{25} As a result, dozens of new political parties emerged in 1999.

At the same time, reforms also constrained parties by laying out stringent rules about which parties could participate in the national elections. To prevent the emergence of regional or ethnic-based political parties, the rules established that in order to contest the 1999 elections, parties would have to have an office established in at least one-third of Indonesia’s provinces and at least half of all districts in those provinces.\textsuperscript{26} Election laws also eliminated the possibility of non-party candidates and gave a high degree of control to the central party leadership over the selection of regional and local legislative candidates.\textsuperscript{27}

The simultaneous loosening and tightening of the electoral system also had territorial implications. On the one hand, electoral districts designed along provincial lines (since changed) meant that provinces became a major arena of electoral contestation both for local actors and for national players. The rules were such that national parties had to build and maintain strong networks and connections with local party offices and candidates, often activating lines of patronage between Jakarta and the regions. In this sense, political parties formed a critical cross-territorial linkage between national and local level actors. Party success at the local level was critical to their success at the national level.

In certain contexts, it also made sense for national level party actors to support local initiatives for new provinces with the prospect of expanding and strengthening the party presence at the local level. In particular, if a minority party in one province could become a majority party in a potentially new province, it would be an opportunity to consolidate the party in the locality. Under early rules, legislatures also chose governors who in turn could distribute patronage downward in local offices. In this sense, national and local levels could find mutually reinforcing benefits to the creation of new provinces and districts.

Democratization and particularly the rules regarding political parties and elections thus had important territorial implications. They


\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.

strengthened the linkages between national and regional/local actors and in some circumstances gave important institutional incentives for territorial changes at the local level to national level actors. This then explains why national actors would push for new provinces, because they provided the possibility of legislative and political advantage.

**Decentralization**

The second pillar of reformasi after 1999, decentralization, complemented these institutional incentives with material and symbolic incentives as well. Initiated under the Habibie government, it was implemented by the administration of Abdurrachman Wahid in 2001. Two laws, Law 22 of 1999 on Regional Administrations and Law 25 of 1999 on Inter-Government Financial Balance, devolved almost all substantive power, except in a few key areas (foreign affairs, international trade, monetary policy, national security and legal systems) to the regency, a subprovincial level known in Indonesian as the kabupaten.

Law 22 on administration devolved a broad range of public service delivery functions to the regions. These included the planning, financing, implementing, evaluating and monitoring of such services. At the same time, the new laws also strengthened the role of the elected regional councils Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, or DPRD. The regions were to be given a wide-ranging autonomy and to be accountable directly to central government. Thus new responsibilities included work in the areas of environment, labour, public works and natural resource management. Local parliaments also gained power independent of the local chief executive. Law 25 on fiscal balance concentrated on empowering and raising local economic capabilities. Local government was given the power to tax, charge local fees and collect revenue from local businesses. It would also be allotted regional development or 'equalization' funds from central government to make up any budgetary shortfalls.

By shifting power, authority and resources downwards, it is easy to see why actors would then see an immense opportunity at the local level. Materially, the creation of new districts and provinces meant that these areas would receive larger infusions of development funds from the central government. At the same time, the fiscal arrangements of decentralization meant that localities would be able to retain more

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of the revenues from the locality rather than sending them to the central government. A new province also required certain start-up infrastructure, including a new governor’s house, a new legislative house, new bureaucratic offices and the like. Thus it had a tendency to promote small construction booms in the area and fill the pockets of those who controlled contract bids. And of course, new regional units provided new opportunities for patronage and rent-seeking. Malley argues that decentralization of power also decentralized corruption in some places. It is notable that many proponents of new regions were often elites who had lost political competition elsewhere and sought a new province as a place where they could become governor.

Decentralization also had an important symbolic dimension. By shifting power from the centre to the periphery, it was also seen as a way to quell calls for separatism and/or revolution. Giving power and autonomy to local level leaders would mean that the regions would be relatively free from the intrusive political machinations of the central government. But ironically, this also then triggered new regionalist movements that sought to create their own regions, provinces or districts, usually justified along ethnic lines. This is elaborated in more detail in subsequent cases, but many of these movements invoked historical claims such as adat and invoked a discourse of local marginality.

Institutional reform, I argue, thus helped to create the conditions for territorial coalitions for new regions to emerge. In particular, democratization and decentralization allowed groups to see territory in fundamentally different but complementary ways. Political parties saw the potential for political advantage in local and national political institutions, while local groups saw the material and symbolic advantages of new regions. Capitalizing on difference, these groups formed an alliance to push for new regions.

**Variation in coalition formation**

The national level picture shows how the foundations for territorial coalitions emerged in the context of institutional reforms. In-depth empirical cases, on the other hand, help us to see how these territorial coalitions actually worked. What the cases show is that, in fact, while territorial coalitions appeared in different cases of new province forma-

31 For example, see Roth, *supra* note 7.
ation, they operated in substantially different ways. In some cases, local actors ‘scaled upwards’ to create linkages with national groups. In other instances, national actors seem to have ‘scaled downwards’ to create alliances with local actors. A third case illustrates how national and local actors have together pushed for a new province, thereby ‘squeezing’ the middle. Despite these differences in triggers, I also show how the cases present a fundamental similarity in the way they highlight the multidimensionality of territory and provide the foundation for territorial coalitions.

Scaling up: Gorontalo’s popular struggle for a new province

The case of Gorontalo province breaking away from North Sulawesi illustrates a ‘bottom-up’ model of new province formation. The trigger for a new province movement emerged from a broad feeling of historical marginality based along ethnic and religious lines. When decentralization and democratization emerged at the national level, they created conditions ripe in Gorontalo for people to begin advocating a new province. The case also demonstrates the way in which national and provincial actors scaled upwards to join together with local actors to push the new province forward.

North Sulawesi itself had historically been a multi-ethnic province encompassing the Minahasa, the Gorontalo, the Sangir-Talaud and the Bolaang-Mongondow. But one of the long-running frustrations of the Gorontalo was the predominance of the Minahasa to the north, whom they saw as monopolizing many of the political and economic activities in the province. Aside from being a different ethnic group, the Minahasa are historically Christian and had been favoured under Dutch colonial rule. Their privileged positions continued through the Sukarno and Suharto era. Despite their regional rebellion, PRRI-Permesta in the mid-1960s, the Minahasa remained the dominant economic and political group in the province. In this way, the differences in ethnicity

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also came to represent Gorontalo’s marginality, leading to a latent feeling of regional resentment.36

During the national political turmoil of 1997 and 1998, sites of political organization and activism emerged in the form of student study groups and associations. Many local students studying in Jakarta and other parts of the archipelago began to return to the region during this time and joined local movements for reformasi and took to the streets. In Gorontalo, student demonstrations mirrored the broader national issues such as inflation, foodstuffs, economic security and corruption. However, as time passed, national demands became highly localized and frustrations came to be directed against the local district chief, who was seen as a lackey of central government and the Suharto regime. Demonstrations in front of government offices led to clashes with military and police and generated anger against the governor of North Sulawesi as well.

It was in this environment that students and local activists began to organize actively for the creation of a separate Gorontalo province. One focal point became the Musyawarah Besar (MUBES) meeting in 2000. Here student organizers officially demanded the creation of a new province and in turn garnered the support of other groups, including student Islamic groups (HMI) as well as religious and cultural groups in the region. This in turn led to the creation of an even more formal organization explicitly designed to promote new province formation, called the Committee to Prepare for the Separation of Gorontalo Tomini Raya Province (P4GTR for short).

With the formation of P4GTR, the role of students folded into the wider movement for a new province. As student influence waned, P4GTR came to be dominated by cultural and societal leaders and groups. In this sense, local elites came to join the movement and push their own political agenda. The first set of elites we might call ‘out of power’ or ‘aspiring’ elites, which included prominent educators, religious figures and business leaders. Aspiring elites lent the movement credibility as efforts to lobby and socialize became more important. In fact, the competition among local elites led to the creation of competing organizations promoting new province formation, including P4GTR, Presnas and KP3GRT, in which each group’s leaders seemed to have gubernatorial aspirations.

36 Interview with Jamal Modooeto, former student activist, Bappeda, Gorontalo, 26 July 2005. This translates roughly as ‘Two from five that are brothers’ and refers to the different subethnic groups that together form the larger Gorontalo community.
Local officials also saw the potential economic benefit of creating a new province. This would mean increased development projects from which elites typically benefited through fixed bidding processes and the like. The prospect of these kinds of material benefits, as well as the potential rise in status from a locality to a province also played an important role.

In order for local aspirations to succeed, local actors also needed to link up with national level allies. At the national level, two kinds of actors contributed to Gorontalo’s success. Individual political elites with roots in the region offered strong symbolic and material support. For example, then-President Habibie gave both financial support and political lobbying support for the cause. Others included business and military elites who resided in Jakarta and had strong economic and political clout, such as Rachmad Gobel, a prominent businessman, and General Wiranto, a prominent general under the Suharto regime.37

But aside from individual elites, party politics also played a critical role. Institutionally, Golkar was still the strongest political party at the national level in 1999, and Gorontalo – among other regions in the outer islands – was a stronghold for Golkar. At the provincial level, out of 25 members, 13 were from GOLKAR, two from PAN, one from PDI-P, one from Kebangkitan Bangsa, one from Partai Bulan Bintang, four from PPP and three from TNI/Polri.38 In addition, because many saw President Habibie as a local Gorontalo who had become president, many people supported his Golkar party in the elections. This highlights the degree to which we can see that a strong national party seeking to maintain its legislative dominance would have a strong incentive to carve out provinces that would clearly provide electoral gain at the national level.

While local groups were able to gain the support of national level actors to form a coalition, there did emerge initial reluctance at the regional or provincial level. Members of the provincial legislature were initially reluctant to support the movement because they saw their own seats as secure in the North Sulawesi legislature and did not want to risk losing their seats in the context of a new Gorontalo province. Realizing the danger of this opposition, the pro-Gorontalo forces

37 Note that this was when the army still had seats in the legislature. Some suggest that Wiranto may have even been the one to broach the subject. Interview with Pitres Sombowadile, activist, 4 February 2005.

brokered a deal. They agreed that if the legislators supported the push for a new province, they would be allowed to move automatically to a new Gorontalo legislature and fill the seats without having to contest them in the first election cycle.\(^\text{39}\) Out of the eight, seven agreed and supported the regional split, while one remained in his seat in Manado. Once the provincial leaders had been bought off, other opposition was relatively subdued and there was little coordination or mobilization to oppose the province.

At the same time, the other elites at the provincial level did little to oppose the split, in part perhaps because they saw Gorontalo’s departure as an opportunity to create an ethnic province of their own. A revivalist movement for the Minahasa, for example, proved quite popular at the time and, in some crude way, the exit of Gorontalo might have been thought of as ‘good riddance’. In 2001, Gorontalo achieved its dream of new province formation and proved to be one of the smoothest such cases.

The provincial split between Gorontalo and North Sulawesi is a case in which historical marginalization led to underlying popular resentment, which was then activated by the economic and political changes of 1998. The movement for a new province was decidedly initiated from the bottom up, in contrast to the experience of some other regions, and the success in achieving a Gorontalo province meant it was critically important to forge multilevel coalitions with groups at different levels of administration from the local and provincial to the national level.

**Scaling down: West Irian and the imposed pemekaran**

If Gorontalo’s experience was one of the ‘bottom-up’ pressures forming the initial trigger for new province formation, West Irian provides a starkly different experience where forces from the national level triggered the move and scaled downwards to localize a national level interest in a new province. West Irian’s experience can be seen in the larger context of the debate about the province of West Papua and its place in the Indonesian nation-state. For this reason, the national security apparatus that objected strongly to Papua’s separatist struggle played a key part in the push for a new province. Put differently, creating new provinces on Papua proved, among other things, a strategy of ‘divide and rule’.

The issue of Papua has long been contentious in Indonesian politics. The region was colonized in the mid-nineteenth century, largely as a

\(^{39}\) Husein Mohi, journalist, Gorontalo, 29 July 2005.
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strategic buffer against other encroaching powers. After the Indonesian revolution, the Dutch refused to hand over the territory and sought to make it a Eurasian homeland. After years of wrangling between the two countries, the Dutch transferred the province to the United Nations in 1962, and the UN handed it over to Indonesian rule seven months later. Indonesia in turn agreed to hold a plebiscite, dubbed ‘The Act of Free Choice’, in which representatives of Papua could vote for or against integration into Indonesia. However, the vote was highly controversial and remains a major point of dispute between separatists and integrationists today. Separatist sentiment ran high in much of the region, along with Aceh and East Timor, posing a major problem to the New Order government.

In marked contrast to the Gorontalo experience, the announcement of the creation of West Papua province came about suddenly, with little warning, and with little discussion at the local level. The formal decision was announced by then-President Megawati Sukarnoputri through the presidential directive INPRES 1/2003. On the one hand, Megawati’s decision can be traced to her ‘red and white’ credentials and her emphasis on national unity. But in addition to her personal perspectives, her actions should also be seen in the larger context of the Indonesian state’s imperative.

In particular, there was broad concern at the national level that Special Autonomy Laws passed for Papua under the previous Wahid administration were a first step towards Papuan independence rather than any final agreement on autonomy between West Papua and Jakarta. Many saw the 2001 law as promoting nationalism through its endorsement of ‘Papuan values’ such as the Papuan flag and Papuan anthem. There was also broad concern that the Governor of Papua, J.P. Solossa, supported the separatist movement and OPM’s activities, particularly in recruiting international backing for the West Papuan cause in his frequent trips abroad. Furthermore, government officials worried that the Papuan independence movement had gained momentum after the success of East Timor’s independence.

42 Saltford, supra note 40.
44 Ibid.
In January of 2002, the National Resilience Institute Lemhannas, a military political think tank that conducts in-depth studies on national resilience, issued a report entitled ‘The Partition of Irian Jaya: A Solution to the Threat of National Disintegration’. It also argued that the current elite in Papua were essentially pro-autonomy and therefore posed a threat to national unity. It also argued that the partition of Papua would have three benefits for Indonesia. First, it would divide the ‘pro-disintegration forces’, and in particular, would make it more difficult to hold a referendum on Papuan autonomy in the region. Second, it would fracture Papuan identity and symbolically undermine Papuan nationalism by fostering three different cultures and identities and giving them political representation and territory. Finally, by reducing the nationalist threat, it would stabilize the region, protect it from violence and promote more business and economic development.46

The security apparatus of Indonesia thus clearly played a critical role in both conceptualizing and implementing the idea of creating new provinces and hence dividing up Papua. In particular, BIN, the National Intelligence Agency, coaxed, threatened and bribed local leaders to go along with a plan to create new provinces on Papua. According to newspaper reports, the head of the agency, Hendropriyono, instructed then Vice-Governor Abraham Atururi on 4 February to establish the new province of West Irian, noting that ‘I don’t want to have to use a passport to visit Papua’.47 Hendropriyono also pressured others including Andreas Anggaibak, the district chief of Mimika, who then declared his intent to establish a Central Papua province. Reports allege that in addition to BIN, officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs exerted pressure and encouragement on Anggaibak as well as others in Papua’s provincial legislature.48

In addition to the national security apparatus, clear incentives for a Papua split emerged at the national level among particular political parties. Megawati’s PDI-P party saw the splitting of Papua as a way to break up the Golkar party’s political stranglehold over the province and Golkar’s political machine in the Outer Islands more generally.49

48 See Chauvel and Bhakti, supra note 46, at p 41; and ‘Provinsi Irian Jaya Barat Diresmikan’, Kompas, 7 February 2003.
49 ‘Ada Apa di Balik Inpres Pemekaran Provinsi Papua’, supra note 47.
In 1997, Golkar received 86% of the vote in Papua versus 7.1% for PDI.\textsuperscript{50} In 1999, Golkar managed to hold on to a plurality of seats (15 out of 45) in the provincial legislature as well as the governorship. But the implications of a West Irian province were not likely to help Golkar. Given the changed political climate since the general elections in 1999, Megawati would be likely to gain the political support of two new governors, distribute PDI-P patronage in the new provinces, and also make sure that related business, covering contracts and concessions in the region, would be secured, including ties to British Petroleum and Pertamina in Bintuni Bay where they were establishing the Tangguh natural gas plant.\textsuperscript{51}

The marriage of PDI-P and the military/security apparatus at the national level to push for the splitting of Papua thus makes sense at several levels. On the one hand, Megawati herself claimed the mantle of her late father Sukarno and emphasized national unity more than any other viable presidential candidate. This ideology fitted well with the military, as evidenced by the way Megawati surrounded herself with military brass. The military had thrown its support behind Megawati during her presidency and thus actively supported and shaped the new post-Wahid policy towards Papua. The military/security apparatus for its part also pushed along ideological lines that matched Megawati’s. At the same time, they had their own institutional and economic incentives in a new province. The military, for example, had strong ties to multinational companies such as Freeport, which had large mining operations in the region. New provinces would mean building new provincial commands in each of these regions. This would potentially bring them closer to Freeport mine as well as BP’s Tangguh natural gas development at Bintani Bay in Manokwari.\textsuperscript{52}

\textit{Working with local actors}

But the division of Papua was more than simply the central government exerting its influence unilaterally. To be sure, national players did pressure local actors to go along with the plan for a new province. But it is worth noting that they saw it as necessary to enlist their support at all. Furthermore, it is critical to point out that they chose to link up with actors who could potentially benefit from the creation of a new

\textsuperscript{50} ’Prediksi Pemilu di Irian Jaya Barat’, \textit{Kompas}, 6 March 2004.
\textsuperscript{51} Jaap Timmer (2005), ‘Decentralisation and elite politics in Papua’, \textit{State Society and Governance in Melanesia} No 6, p 449.
\textsuperscript{52} King, supra note 25, at p 92.
province. Local incentives for a new province varied, but key elites supported the process because they saw an opportunity for political advancement.

For example, several of the strongest proponents of new provinces were former deputy governors eyeing the possibility of new governorships that would appear with the creation of new provinces. Abraham Atururi, John Djopari and Herman Monim were all deputies to Governor Freddy Numberi in 1999, and Monim and Atururi were allegedly frustrated because they had been promised governorship of the new provinces back in 1999, which never materialized. Both men ran as unsuccessful candidates for governor in 2000. Djopari went so far as to note in public remarks that the advantage to partition was that ‘three Papuans could become governor’.

These local elites in turn worked closely with local civil society organizations that opposed Papuan separatism and independence. Organizations such as the Irian Jaya Crisis Center (IJCC) even opposed the special autonomy status granted to the province back in 2002. In July 2002, leaders of IJCC allegedly contacted BIN in supporting the partition of Papua. In 2002, IJCC assembled Tim 315, a lobby group made up of people from the Sorong and Manokwari regions, as well as Papuan students in Yogyakarta and Jakarta who supported Atururi’s bid to negotiate a plan with BIN and the Ministry of Home Affairs. In a meeting set up by General Hendropriyono of BIN, Tim 315 met the President and the Minister for Social, Political and Security Affairs, General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, to support the idea of a new province. Newspaper accounts suggest that bribes in the sum of $320,000 were exchanged, which went to officers in the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as to the Irian Jaya Crisis Center.

Finally, in terms of local actors, it is important to point out that at the broad societal level, migrants on Papua are critical of Papuan independence and thus more likely to be supportive of the new provincial divisions. Migrants have already felt the brunt of much ethnic nationalism in Papua, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the 2001 decentralization laws, when affirmative action programmes prioritized the appointment or election of puteri asli daerah, or ‘native sons of the...

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53 Timmer, supra note 51, at p 6.
54 Chauvel and Bhakti, supra note 46, at p 41.
55 Chauvel and Bhakti, supra note 46, at p 6.
56 Timmer, supra note 51, at p 6.
57 King, supra note 25, at p 92.
58 Timmer, supra note 51, at p 6.
soil’ to most government jobs. Although there were no migrant organizations *per se* that openly demonstrated to support or oppose the splits, the opposition that did emerge was almost completely ethnic Papuan.

Certainly, there was also a broad spectrum of groups that opposed the division of the province. In particular, these included groups that supported independence and/or special autonomy. Papuan representatives in the national assembly, local civil society organizations, religious leaders, academics and student groups all voiced their opposition. The governor and the speaker of the parliament, both from Golkar, were also staunch opponents of new province creation.\(^59\) Golkar as a party also came out strongly against dividing the province, in large part because it saw the Megawati-led government’s strategy there.\(^60\) However, none of these opposition forces was ultimately able to overpower the national/local coalition to create the new province of West Papua.

West Papua’s case shows that new province formation and territorial change in Indonesia follow different kinds of paths. In contrast to a popular push by local groups who sought assistance from national actors, the West Irian case suggests a ‘top-down’ path in which intense national level interest emerged with the support of key elites and organizations at the local level. At the same time, it shows that even such a strong push from the top down required complicity and cooperation with key local actors, thereby creating a territorial coalition. The allies at the local level helped to legitimize and justify the move in a way that national actors could not.

**Squeezing the middle: Island Riau and the mixed case**

In addition to Gorontalo’s ‘bottom-up’ experience and West Irian’s ‘top-down’ path, the case of Kepulauan Riau (Archipelagic Riau), or Kepri, illustrates a third path that has both bottom-up and top-down forces squeezing a reluctant middle in the process of creating a new province. In Kepri, the bottom-up forces were not as strong or as resonant as in Gorontalo; and the top-down forces of national security were not as pressing as in West Irian. But together, these two forces, while weaker individually than the previous cases, linked together to create a strong coalition for a new province.

Whereas in Gorontalo, most people saw themselves as having little in common with their Minahasan counterparts in Northern Sulawesi, the situation in Riau proved to be more complex. For one, both the

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\(^59\) ICG, *supra* note 47.

\(^60\) ‘Prediksi Pemilu di Irian Jaya Barat’, *supra* note 50.
mainland and the islands had a strong Malay heritage as both were ruled under the Sultanate of Melaka in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And while the Malay Peninsula ultimately fell to British colonial rule, Sumatra, including the mainland and islands of Riau, fell under Dutch rule and subsequently joined the Indonesian Republic. Riau province, both the mainland and the islands, thus came to be commonly characterized as Indonesia’s Malay province.

This ethnic distinctiveness, paired with the region’s strong economic growth, fed a historically growing rift between Jakarta and Riau province, a movement distinct from the effort to create Kepri province. During the 1960s and 70s, the New Order government invested heavily in the petroleum industry in Riau, developing and selling oil concessions in the Minas oilfields. By the 1970s, Riau had become the largest source of oil in the country, producing a revenue of about $4.2 billion, or one-sixth of the entire Indonesian GDP by 1974.

But whether from oil or other natural resources, only a small percentage of the province’s revenue remained in the region, and this, coupled with frustration about Jakarta’s overcentralized political rule, erupted into new demands towards the end of the New Order. In March 1999, amidst the demonstrations for reformasi, students from the University of Riau and other local universities in Pekanbaru, its capital, called for Riau Merdeka, an independent Riau. To be sure, Riau Merdeka should not be mistaken for a broad popular nationalist movement on the scale of East Timor. Others in Riau stopped short of calling for independence, but demanded more autonomy, more oil revenues, and threatened violence if not accommodated.

The new province movement for Archipelagic Riau should be seen as a reaction against the move for an independent Riau province. For activists of Kepri province, the notion of Kepri joining the Riau Merdeka movement largely rang hollow. While there were no clear lines of ethnic or religious difference, there was still the sense of lost status vis-à-vis the mainland among Kepri’s activists and elites. Joining a Riau Merdeka

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63 L. Y. Andaya (2008), *Leaves of the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka*, University of Hawai‘i Press, Honolulu.
movement would do little to recover that status, while new province-
hood would break relations with the mainland and recover some degree
of lost status and power. Kepri residents felt that with more resources
flowing from Island Riau to the mainland than vice versa, there was
little advantage in joining a separate sovereign state, which would, as
Wee notes, ‘lead to only a change of masters but no change in the cur-
rent relationship’.

65 In other words, Kepri’s movement should be
understood as part of a triangular politics, in which the protagonists
sought to restore lost political and cultural status by linking directly
with Jakarta rather than joining an independent Riau.

The aspirations for a new province of the Riau Islands were thus offi-
cially articulated at a large societal meeting, the Musyawarah Besar
Masyarakat Kepri, from 15–16 May 1999, and another in 2000 that brought
together representatives from all the subdistricts of Kepulauan Riau.

66 The original proposal at that time called only for creating new districts out
of the single Kepulauan Riau district. However, at one of the large regional
gatherings, there emerged a sudden push for a new province: one that was
’sesuai dengan program reformasi’, or ‘consistent with the reformasi
program’. To address the problems of poverty and to promote prosperity,
participants decided a new province was necessary.

67 In this sense, the movement for a new province had similar charac-
teristics to Gorontalo’s. Proponents felt that Kepri was not adequately
represented in the government bureaucracy on the mainland. This lack
of integration also created the perception that the provincial govern-
ment in Riau was unresponsive to the needs of the people on the
archipelago. In other words, there were clear issues of status, and those
on Archipelagic Riau claimed to feel like political second class citi-
zens. What makes the Riau case distinct from Gorontalo is the relative
lack of economic disparity between the two regions, and the more com-
plex aspects of ethnicity and identity between the two regions.

Nonetheless, with a declaration on the need for a new province made,
proponents established a new organization, Badan Persiapan Pembent-
tukan Provinsi Kepulauan Riau [Committee to Prepare for the Creation
of Island Riau Province], or B3PK. The organization was headed by
local leaders such as Abdul Razak and the vice-head, Sarafuddin Aluan,

65 Vivien Wee (2002), ‘Ethno-nationalism in process: atavism, ethnicity and indigenism
66 ‘Rekomendasi Pembentukan Provinsi Kepulauan Riau Diminta Segera Dекeluarkan’,
Koran Tempo, 10 January 2002.
67 Interview with Idris Zaini, 16 July 2007, Office in DPD Building, Jakarta.
both well regarded community leaders in Riau Archipelago. Like its counterparts in Gorontalo and elsewhere, the organization also had representatives in Jakarta to support lobbying efforts in the national legislature. Claiming to represent a broad swathe of society, leaders argued that ‘the desire for a new province is through all components of society including Kepri, Tanjung Pinang, Batam, Karimun, and Natuna’.

In addition to civil society organizations, two sets of local elites worked closely together to promote the formation of a new Kepri province: the local aristocratic elite and the political elite. The former recognized a new province as an opportunity to recreate some aspects of the old Malay kingdom; the latter saw the obvious benefits of moving to being district officials rather than remaining provincial ones.

The strongest proponents among the aristocratic elite were those who could trace their lineage back to the traditional Riau-Lingga kingdom. They saw a new province as an opportunity to revive the old sultanate and, among other things, to reintroduce traditional social practices such as Sharia’ or Islamic Law. At the same time, the Malay/Bugis aristocrats on the archipelago often saw themselves as distinct from the mainland Malays. A Kepri province would reintroduce a truly ethnically ‘Malay’ region. Thus some of the raja-raja, or local kings from the area, were especially supportive of Kepri province. These raja were revered for the study and preservation of the Malay language. Hundreds of aristocrats participated in the mass rallies and lobbying efforts of the local organizations.

A second set of supporters were the secular elites who saw political opportunities in the creation of a new province. One of the key proponents of a new Kepri province was Huzrin Hood, the district chief or bupati of the Kepri regency. Hood played an active leadership role in BP3K, the civil society organization calling for a Kepri province. He also worked closely with the Malay aristocrats, encouraging them to

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70 ‘Lebih dari 2.000 Warga Kepri ke Jakarta Senin Ini – Mendukung Pembentukan Provinsi Kepri’, supra note 68.
72 Ibid.
73 Faucher, supra note 71, at p 135.
lobby Jakarta and Pekanbaru and join in the demonstrations to show their support.

Huzrin Hood headed the *Forum Solidaritas Reformasi Kabupaten Kepulauan Riau* founded during the *reformasi* period, as well as BP3KR, which emerged later as a successor. Several interviewees noted that Hood’s leadership and abilities were critical to Kepri’s success in new province formation. Hood intended to become governor of the new province, and he himself claimed to be the strongest candidate for the governorship. However, in November 2003, the authorities found Hood guilty of swindling Rp4.3 billion from the local budget. He was given a two-year prison sentence and ordered to repay Rp3.4 billion of the funds, since when he has lost all of his legal appeals.

Local activists had ample reason to reject the Riau Merdeka movement and push for their own province. But they realized that they could not achieve province-hood on their own. Thus activists for a new Kepri province saw a potential alliance to be had with national elites, and hence fanned the flames of Jakarta’s apprehension with *Riau Merdeka*. Supporters of Kepri province went so far as to present evidence showing how well prepared the groups in mainland Riau were in declaring independence. This raised concern with the President (Megawati at the time), who allegedly called together military advisers to voice her concerns.

This resulted in the involvement of two intelligence agencies who aided local groups in the process of Kepri’s split. The first of these was the National Intelligence Agency, or BIN, the same organization involved in the creation of West Irian. Reports in the local media suggested that leaders such as Hood worked to pay off legislators by employing agents of BIN, who then carried out the actual pay-offs. Allegedly, the acting agent was a two-star Army officer. The money used for pay-offs originated from the government office of Kepri Regent Huzrin Hood. At the same time, in an unusually public move, Major General Muchdi PR, a high level official in BIN, noted that he strongly supported the creation of a Kepri province and called for patience as the administrative details were finalized.

The *Badan Inteligens Abri*, or BIA, also took a strong interest in new developments.

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75 Interview with Idris Zaini, Jakarta, 16 July 2007.
77 Ibid.
province formation. The commandant of Satuan Tugas at the time lent its support to local activists. Abri’s intelligence unit had closer connections to local leaders of the movement and offered a quid pro quo. Specifically, it exchanged support for Kepri as long as Kepri was willing to oppose initiatives from Riau Merdeka.78 Thus, in its official declaration of a new province, it explicitly stated its rejection of Riau Merdeka at the very beginning of the document.79 Also, activists from Kepri staged a walk-out at a general meeting on Riau Merdeka organized in Pekanbaru.80

The involvement of BIN and BIA shows how the creation of Kepri came to be framed as a national security issue and, more precisely, as a way to undermine the Riau separatist movement. This logic of divide-and-rule makes sense because of the potentially complementary economic resources between Riau and Kepri. The Riau mainland is rich in natural resources, while Kepri has focused on foreign investment, manufacturing and export growth. Furthermore, the military may have had an interest in new provinces and kabupaten because the process increases the number of postings and hence provides more places where officers can be posted.81

As in the previous cases, national parties also had an interest in creating a new province. Golkar, for example, was one of the major beneficiaries of a new Kepri province. It ended up having a plurality of the seats in the provincial legislature. PDI-P, which also supported the bill, emerged with the second largest number of seats in the legislature. In the end, Golkar candidate Ismeth Abdullah also won the election for governorship. Abdullah had also been Habibie’s successor at the Batam Industrial Development Area (BIDA) on Kepri after Habibie became Suharto’s vice-president. Thus he had close connections not only with Golkar, but also with the New Order figures invested heavily in Batam.82 Activists for Kepri also lobbied other political parties, including a large meeting dubbed Musyawarah Partai Partai Politik Kepulauan Riau in Jakarta in September of 2003. Representatives of the major parties were all invited, including Golkar, PBR, PNBK, PBB, PKB, PAN, PKS, PDIP

78 Interview with Zulkar Nain, 20 July 2007, in Tanjung Pinang, Kepulauan Riau.
79 The first point of the declaration states ‘Menolak Negara Riau Merdeka’ and is signed by representatives of the people of Kepulauan Riau, signed on 15 May 1999.
82 Nankyung Choi (2005), Local Elections and Democracy in Indonesia: The Case of the Riau Archipelago, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore.
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...and PPP. This meeting sought to address and alleviate any perceived problems to new province formation for the national level legislators who would ultimately be voting on the bill to allow Kepri to become its own province.

National actors thus also saw the creation of Kepri province in the context of the larger Riau–Jakarta tensions emerging in post-Suharto Indonesia. These flames were fanned by actors in Kepri and central government actors who then supported the mainland/island split through direct and indirect means. Other national actors, including national level political parties, also saw the benefits of a new province and supported the split even against the wishes of provincial leaders. It is to these provincial actors that we now turn.

The movement for Kepri province did face strong opposition among actors in the ‘mother province’, particularly those based in the capital of Pekanbaru. In particular, the main disapproval stemmed from the governor, though the provincial legislature was also split on the issue. As noted earlier, the provincial opposition must be understood in the context of the movement within Riau for more autonomy. The opponents of a new Kepri province were able to organize and mobilize. But ultimately, they were not able to build as strong a coalition as the proponents. The best they were able to do was to slow the process down.

The provincial level actors were more isolated from allies at the national level because of their support for either independence or federalism. And there was scant collaboration between provincial elites and local level opponents of proliferation in Kepri proper.

The case of Kepri province illustrates a third path, neither ‘top-down’ nor ‘bottom-up’, but a mix between the two. While neither the national nor the local level transpired to be overwhelming triggers, their simultaneity proved enough to overcome the reluctance of the provincial level. All three cases have illustrated the importance of local context and the way in which national level institutional changes filtered down to the regions in different ways. The three cases also show how, once triggered, each movement built a series of multilevel coalitions in order to achieve its goal.

The politics of territorial coalitions

Given these varied experiences of new province creation, what can we then say of the common thread that ties them together, namely the emergence of territorial coalitions? This section draws out more generally
the way territorial coalitions seem to work. The arguments presented speak against an exclusively statist interpretation of proliferation as well as exclusively populist ones. Certainly, the creation of new administrative boundaries at the subnational level typically falls within the authority of the central state, and for this reason, support from actors in the centre is critical. But national actors cannot simply create new provinces on a whim, particularly in the context of a democratic and decentralized state. Some kind of legitimating rationale is necessary, and this often takes the form of local popular demand.

At the same time, the cases above also demonstrate the limits of purely bottom-up or popular movements for new provinces. Local actors may push hard for new provinces, but in most cases actors in the centre must also have some sort of incentive to change local boundaries. In this way, the framework of territorial coalitions incorporates the logic of state power as well as social forces. Instead of understanding centre and periphery as unitary actors, it recognizes the fragmentation of actors and interests in both the centre and the periphery. And it is this fragmentation that allows territorial alignments to occur.

In this context, the aforementioned cases offer a glimpse at the different ways in which national, regional and local are linked and how they function across the ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ or ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’. Adapting from Sinha, I explore three kinds of linkages: institutional, social and personal. For example, in all three cases, we saw how political parties based in Jakarta have relationships with local level political parties that are formal and institutional. There are also social linkages, links between social groups at both the centre and the periphery. One example of this is the ethnic diaspora groups that form in places such as Jakarta and which play an important role in lobbying and pushing for change, including new province formation. Finally, personal linkages also play a critical role in linking actors between centre and periphery. Although these linkages may emerge in the context of an institutional or social context, they are independent in the sense that links between actors can play an important and independent role in seeing new province creation succeed.

Aseema Sinha (2004), The Regional Roots of Developmental Politics in India, a Divided Leviathan, Contemporary Indian Studies, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN. Sinha has suggested that one way to look at linkages is along lines of authority, institutions and personnel. Sinha’s linkages are more formal and bureaucratic, but in the Indonesian context, there are also more informal and personalistic ties, suggesting a need for a slightly different conceptualization of linkages.
These territorial coalitions function through different kinds of coordination and collaboration. One clear way is that they pool resources. Politicians and business leaders in the ‘centre’, for example, may give money to the provincial cause. Habibie’s endorsement and financial support on behalf of local groups in Gorontalo is perhaps the best example of this. But beyond merely pooling resources, these groups may coordinate mobilization at different levels of administration. For example, demonstrations to show support for new provinces may occur in the locality where the new province is proposed and in the capital of the ‘mother province’ as well as in the capital. Finally, there may be a functional division of labour among different groups at different levels. In the locality, for example, organizations supporting proliferation may socialize and garner support for the initiative. In the centre, the activities may consist of lobbying the state for approval in creating a new state.

The presence of and need for coalitions implies that there are forces opposed to provincial proliferation, without which a coalition would be unnecessary. Opponents of proliferation are also often present at every single level of administration. However, as the case studies show, many of the opponents to proliferation are particularly clustered at the provincial level. Many provincial level actors are likely to lose out when a new province is carved out of their own territory. For example, the province may lose revenue generated from the territory. Incumbents may lose important electoral districts, which could hurt them and help their opponents. Local legislators could lose their seats altogether if their districts are allocated to a new province. And if the provincial split occurs along ethnic lines, then ethnic groups in the mother province may resent their new-found minority status.

Provincial level opponents may also try to align with groups both above them in the centre and below them in the locality. For example, at the local level, bureaucrats and other public officials from outside the area may be concerned about their sudden status as minorities. This reflects a concern throughout Indonesia that decentralization and regional proliferation would lead to an ethnification of politics in which native sons, or putra asli daerah, would be given preferential policy positions over outsiders. Interview with Tommi Legowo, Head, Department of Politics and Social Change, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta, 12 November 2004.
Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI), the concept of the Unitary Republic of the Indonesian state. While these opponents of new province creation also align vertically, they often do not pool resources or work collaboratively to the same extent as their counterparts.

In sum, by positing the importance of territorial coalitions and alliances, this argument avoids a long-running debate about whether societal conflict in Indonesia is elite-led or bottom-up. Instead, an institutional approach looks at the way in which political changes gave both societal groups and elites different kinds of interests and incentives such that they decided to work together to create new territorial boundaries. In other words, instead of arguing for an ‘either-or’ explanation, a territorial coalitions approach has examined how each interacts with the other.

**Implications for Indonesia’s local politics**

Having discussed regional proliferation at some length, it is worth reflecting on how this issue can help us understand the changing nature of Indonesian politics after the fall of the New Order. Some scholars see Indonesia on a linear path of political development well on its way to a modern democratic system. Others argue that Indonesia has begun to consolidate from a dictatorship to an ‘oligarchy’ where the elites have shifted but the people remain unempowered. Yet another interpretation sees the importance of bossism in understanding the local politics of Indonesia today.

This article highlights the intense competitiveness of politics that has emerged in Indonesia over the last decade. In fact, it is this competitiveness at the national and local level, in Jakarta and in the regions, that motivates the linkages highlighted in this article. Competitiveness also goes beyond the simple question of whether Indonesia today is a ‘strong’ or ‘weak’ state. It is safe to say that the state in Indonesia is not as strong as it used to be, but not as weak as, say, many African

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85 Aris Ananta, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Leo Suryadinata, eds (2005), Emerging Democracy in Indonesia, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.


states. Rather, it may be characterized as divided. While all states have some fissures in them, Suharto’s New Order was remarkably resilient in its ability to keep those internal rifts to a minimum.88

This new-found competitiveness manifests itself most clearly in the conflict and competition between Indonesia’s political parties. During the New Order era, President Suharto formed his own government party, Golkar, and then effectively dismantled the remaining political parties. Elections were thus uncompetitive, with the only real question the margin of victory for Golkar. Today, Indonesia’s party system is vibrant and highly competitive, if still uninstitutionalized.

Nor is this new-found competitiveness exclusive to the national level. A second and burgeoning literature in Indonesian politics explores the rise of local politics.89 Moving from an authoritarian and centralized regime to a democratic, decentralized system has had enormous implications for the emergence of local political actors. Scholars such as Okamoto and Ito have highlighted how local politics have essentially been captured by elite actors.90 But with decentralization has also emerged intense competition among political elites as well as social actors. Again, elections highlight this competition between elites at the local level, and this in turn is often accompanied by societal level conflicts along lines of identity such as religion and/or ethnicity.

Territory, I argue, is a critical component of this competitiveness. The local, regional and national level actors have divergent but often overlapping interests around territory. The competition at these different territorial levels induces the linkages that I have called territorial coalitions. As groups seek to gain advantage at their particular level of competition, they draw on the resources and strengths of actors above and below them. I am arguing that this territorial change is a manifestation of competition and specifically a result of the coalitions and alliances that emerge in the context of intense competition at both the national and local level.

88 To be sure, there were disagreements among key military elite. And as Suharto’s base waned, it is now commonly accepted that Suharto looked towards other sources, such as radicalized Islam, to strengthen his regime. But overall, the regime was solid and unified relative to the intense competition today.

89 See Aspinall and Fealy, supra note 28; Choi, supra note 82; and Harriss, Stokke, and Tornquist, supra note 87.

Conclusions

To recap briefly, this article has suggested that there is method in the madness of what seems to be a territorial free-for-all in post-Suharto Indonesia. A new framework on territorial change emphasizes the importance of territorial coalitions in which both national and regional factors influence the ways actors think about provinces and how, under certain conditions, enough actors’ interests can overlap to create coalitions in order to achieve the status of a new district or a new province. Furthermore, this phenomenon is new and results from institutional changes after the New Order.

A coalitional approach dispels the idea that this phenomenon is simply driven by national state interests or local agitation. Instead, it is the marriage of the two through coalitions that have made these changes possible. To be sure, triggers can come from either the national level or the local level, depending on the particular regional context in which territorial change is being proposed. But eventually there must be support beyond the single territorial level.

It is important to note that because of the weaknesses of existing theoretical foundations, this framework has been constructed inductively, looking closely at contrasting and comparing different experiences. In this sense, it does not claim to explain all kinds of proliferation everywhere. Seeing how well this framework works in other contexts will require further research. However, given the examples explored in sample cases in Indonesia, this framework seems to provide a more complete explanation of the phenomenon of provincial proliferation. Examination of the phenomenon, moreover, provides valuable insights into the changing character of central–regional relations in the world’s fourth most populous state.

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