

SOFT ANTI-PARTY SENTIMENT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Recent works on anti-party sentiment mostly focused on established western democracies. The decline of voter's turnout, decrease of party membership, and the emergence of third parties were evidences of the symptom. Little attention has been paid to this existence of the phenomenon occurred in transition countries, such as Indonesia who has remarkably succeeded in replacing its authoritarian regime into a more democratic order. This work has at least three goals. At first, it seeks to prove that there has been an anti-party sentiment amongst Indonesians, even in the very early times of this nation-state formation years. Second, it tries to conclude that all the forms of public attitudes manifesting the anti-party sentiment according to Daalder theoretical framework, which are the denial of party, the selective rejection of party, the selective rejection of party system, and the redundancy of party can be founded in Indonesian party history. Third, by figures out the relation of the sentiment to democracy, this work tries to prove that the sentiment may be classified as a Webb & White's soft anti-party sentiment.

Keywords: Soft Anti-Party Sentiment, Hard Anti-Party Sentiment, Denial of Party, The Selective Rejection of Party, The Selective Rejection of Party System, and The Redundancy of Party

A. inTRoduCTION

The soft anti-party sentiment is a terminology that on one side, refers to a condition of public trust decrease toward political party, but on the other side, the expectation of public toward democracy is still relatively high (Webb & White, 2007:352). It differs from hard anti-party sentiment, since within the soft anti-party sentiment still there are trusts toward democracy. There is no hatred to democracy, and parties eventually still have roles to play. Meanwhile, the hard anti-party sentiment does not only express public disappointment toward parties, but also the disappointment may deconstruct the democratic system.

Nevertheless, soft anti-party sentiment is a strange phenomenon considering that anyway political parties are admitted as relevant institution in modern democratic system. The role and functions of parties may not be replaced by any other institutions such as civil society organizations and interest groups that also represent public interest as parties do. Political party can be described as a bridge connecting government institutions to elements of civil society and public in general. Party organizes any ideological

differences and interest dwell in society. The very importance of party within democracy encourages some academics to believe that there can be no single democratic political system that could be sustain without political party. (Macridis, 1996: 17).

Almost all of the mainstream works regarding democracy put party as inseparable element from democracy. The existence of party plays as indicator of degree of democracy of a country. Party becomes structure strengthen democratic building, meanwhile democracy permit party to execute its essential roles and functions in social and political life of society. There is a correlative relation between democracy and political party. It could be concluded that if there is a high public trust toward party, there should also a high public trust toward democratic system as a consequence, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, in the soft anti-party sentiment, it could be founded a symptom that the correlation of both is opposite. Webb and White found many of the symptoms in Eastern Europe and Latin American countries (Webb & White, 2007:352), meanwhile Meitzner beliefs that this phenomenon could also be found in Indonesia. Meitzner draws

such a conclusion based on many surveys held by research institutions resulting a fact that parties are public institution with the lowest degree of public trust, but the surveys also reflects high degree of public trust toward democracy (Mietzner, 2013:4).

The phenomenon is of course very worrying. As party fail to properly manage the sentiment there would not just a decrease of trust toward party, but furthermore there could be a public distrust toward democratic system as a whole. Based on this concerning fact, this article seek to prove that there has been an anti-party sentiment amongst Indonesians. Second, this article also seeks to prove that all forms of public attitude manifested from the sentiment classified by Daalder could be found in Indonesian party history. Third, by using Webb & White categorization this article seeks to prove that the sentiment amongst Indonesians could be classified into a soft anti-party sentiment.

B. *anTi-parTy senTimenTin indonEsiA*

Usually, anti-party sentiment discourse focuses on western democracies. Many research findings confirmed the existence of the sentiment. Nevertheless, this negative sentiment towards party that frequently happened in United States and European countries also exist in Indonesia. Many surveys discovered the negative thinking of public toward Indonesian parties. People perceived parties as ineffective, corrupt, and disable in understanding public interests. Degree of public distrust toward parties occupied the lowest rank as compared to another political institution.

Negative sentiment towards parties also indicated by parties' electoral support in 2014 election, where no single party succeeded in maintaining a relatively similar result compared to the previous 2009 election.. It shows that eventhough democracy opens up a space for various political alternatives, nevertheless the available alternatives is less quality. By analyzing the result of three postSoeharto elections, there were trends of decreases of support toward major parties,

resulting more equal support toward all parties. For instance in 1999 election, nine major parties successfully achieved 91,64% of votes, but in 2009 election it decreased to 81,70% vote only.Total vote to the party with more than 5% in 1999 election reached 86,69%, but in 2009 election, it turned to only 68,53% of votes(Tanuwidjaja, 2012).Those comparasions show that the disappointed voters began to have more nerve to vote for alternative party eventhough they have less opportunity to win elections. Parallel to that, decreasing degree of participation in legislative elections also shows the decrease of public trust toward parties, which are the contestants of elections.

In many polling conducted by LSI (Lembaga Survei Indonesia) and SMRC (Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting) since 2004, there could be found consistent facts negative sentiment toward parties and politicians. Since politicians fill parliamentary seats, public perception toward parliament also tent to be negative. According to LSI, in the beginning of 2015 is around 50 %. This is the lowest percentration compared to the degree of public trust to the present (83%), KPK (81%) and TNI 83%). After 2014 legislative and presidential election the percentage was even lower, where public trust to party and parliemant were just around 40%. What had happened in early 2015 may be perceived as positive trend, nevertheless itu could also may be translated as a high trust to the new administration. The public negative perception might have correlated with any information that had been heard and seen by the public regarding the party and politicians. When the public had been asked to describe party and politicians , three most remembered things were all negative. The politicians always care to their own interest, the politicians makes too much promises with little commitment to realize, and prefer to talk about thirself. With this negative memory like this, it is not surprising that the public trust toward party will always be at the low level (Hanan, 2015).

Negative sentiment and public distrust toward parties of course did not happen

instantly, but it reflects accumulation of public disappointment throughout democratic elections. According to Tanuwidjaja, the origin of the sentiment was in the early stage of democratic reform, where public perceived party failed in responding democratic euphoria, expectations, dan extremely high degree of public trust. The failure impacted to public distrust toward party and subsequently created pragmatism amongst society. Pragmatic people, just like the pragmatic politicians, have no more trust toward parties' promises. This situation exaggerates pragmatism pattern of the parties since by being more pragmatism, they could meet more pragmatism people. The cycle continues and as time goes by the negative sentiment toward parties fertilized by political pragmatism are getting deeper and broader (Tanuwidjaja, 2012).

In general, comparative political scientists actually agree that Indonesia has experienced amazing political change since the fall of Soeharto's autocratic regime in 1998. The most important of all was, the Army, who had been a key political actor in Indonesia since decade of 50's, has lost almost all of their institutional privilege (Diamond, 2010; Barany, 2012). Moreover, Indonesia has stepped at least a tremendous change in electoral realm, by holding free and fair elections in national level as well as in local polity. Those Indonesian elections does not just vote for legislatures, but Indonesian people also directly vote for their president, governors, and majors/regents, something that had never been dare to be imagined by most Indonesians in Soeharto's era. Jokowi's triumph over Prabowo in a head to head fair and free 2014 presidential election has confirmed the belief. Even within the issue of central-local government relation, Indonesia has successfully transformed from the most centralized government in the world into a quasi-federal regime by arranging a vast decentralization that give local government a lot of authorities and many discretions. The transformation experienced by Indonesia did not just became a precious notes of political scientist as reflected above, but it

has also been reflected in democratic index recorded by international institutions such as Freedom House, Polity TV, The Economist's Democracy Index, and the World Bank's voice and accountability index (Meitzner, 2014)

While most comparative scientists agreed to Indonesia's democratic advance, they at the same time also identified the weakest link within Indonesia's democratization process. Without any doubt they described that parties are the biggest obstacle for Indonesia's democratic reform. Dirk Tomsa, for instance, detected that parties in Indonesia are less-professionally managed and less rooted amongst society (Tomsa, 2010). Paige Johnson Tan described Indonesian party system as in the middle of deinstitutionalization process, and subsequently predicted that Indonesian parties will be weakened in uncertain ways (Johnson Tan, 2012). Besides, Andreas Ufen (2006) has also identified a symptom of Filippinization on Indonesian parties. Choi added a depressing picture on Indonesian parties by exposing their electoral corrupt behavior in both national as well as in local realm (Choi, 2007). Latest book based on research conducted by Aspinall dan Sukmajati focused on patronage and clientilism in 2014 legislative elections showed us how intensive and massive use of money politics exaggerates image of Indonesian parties.

Important fact came along was the voters shared anti-party sentiment. Reflected by opinion surveys to some key state institutions, parties almost always inhibit the lowest rank in the surveyed institutions. In May, 2011, Lembaga Survei Indonesia published a poll reflected how the military received highest public trust, followed by presidential institution, police, and the court. The parliament, which is inhibited by party people, took second from the last, while parties took the tail position (LSI, 2011).

a. PuBliC ATTiTudE in AnTi-PARTY sEnTiMEnT

Hans Daalder argued that anti-party sentiment could be observed from the manifested *public attitude*. Daalder classified

those public attitudes into four manifestations, which are the denial of party, the selective rejection of party, the selective rejection of party system, and the last one is the redundancy of party. The denial of party based on a thinking that neglecting legitimate role of party, and perceived party as a threat to the society. The selective rejection of party initiated from a thinking that categorizing parties into the good and the bad type. The selective rejection of party system is almost similar to the second one, but it operates on the level of party system. So, there are some systems that have been categorized as the good systems, meanwhile there are party systems that have been categorized as the bad ones. The redundancy of party perceived anti-party system as a logical consequence of a period where parties lost their relevance since the birth of other actors in political system, such as mass media, interest groups, as well as pressure groups. The new actors take over main functions previously belong to parties. (Daalder, 2002: 39).

By using Daalder's framework, Sigit Pamungkas has identified those all of the public attitudes had been found in the history of party politics in Indonesia (Pamungkas, 2010). The denial of party had been occurred as President Sukarno in one of his speech asked the people to bury political parties. Soekarno's attitude manifested as a reaction toward parties' behavior which perform more as power-seekers rather than consensus-makers. Anti-party sentiment in the period had been more concreted as Sukarno emitted a July 5th 1959 decree that subsequently brought Indonesian polity to some kind of a Guided Democracy. Shifting to contemporary cases, Pamungkas borrowed Armunanto's research finding discovering anti-party sentiment in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi (Armunanto, 2006).

The selective rejection of party in Indonesia can be traced down since the era of Sukarno's presidency where some Islamic parties, especially Masyumi and NU rejected PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) to join coalition cabinet. The more contemporary illustration of this attitude presented in the

New Order period while the regime structurally and systematically put communist or Marxist oriented parties and their underbows as common enemies for the nation. Nowadays it is still impossible to create a communist party since there are many laws restricting its revival in Indonesian contemporary polity.

The selective rejection of party system also presented in Indonesia party politics. It could be found in New Order Indonesia. The allowed party system was only hegemonic party system where the number of parties and what the parties are was strictly determined by the New Order government (Imawan, 2004). Multi-party system was considered as a liberal influence toward Indonesian party politics that did not fit the characteristic of Indonesian people. New Order regime had also used propaganda to create anxiety among society regarding a potential chaotic situation if Indonesia had a multi-party system. As a result, people had been conditioned to be familiar to a hegemonic party system that put Golkar as the ruling party. After the fall of Soeharto selective rejection of party system has been found convincingly since there is a discourse to simplify multi-party system by employing a relatively high percentage of both electoral threshold as well as parliamentary threshold, and by narrowing district magnitude (Pamungkas, 2010). A survey conducted by CESDA – LP3ES prior to 2004 election confirmed the existence of the public attitude. Most of the respondents agreed with discourse regarding limitation of the number of party (64%). The number of party tolerated by the respondents was between 1 to 5 partai (55%). In other word, the expected party system by the people was limited pluralism.

The redundancy of party in Indonesia showed by many surveys conducted to indicate public trust toward party. The survey of Asia Barometer (2004) stated that level of trust of society toward party occupied the last rank under the parliament, police, and legal institutions. Meanwhile Army, central government, and local government occupied upper position. Polling by Kompas, an influencing national coverage newspaper in

Indonesia (2007) that seek to figure out what institution that has been trusted by the public to be a channel of aspirations put party in the last institution as public articulation agency. According to the respondent mass media and NGO became a new actor of public interest articulation. This negative party image recorded more massively in many researches and discussions held by universities as well as student organizations.

Low level of public trust toward party contributed to the decrease of voter's turnout from 92.74% in 1999 election to 84% in 2004 election. There was a 8% decrease within voter's turnout records, a relatively big deal in Indonesian elections considering multi-party system operates in Indonesia produces many party in the parliament with relatively low vote distribution for each parties. Related to what factors influencing public distrust toward party, LP3ES' survey may answer the question by focusing on party functionality. The survey pointed out that 64% of respondents did not sure that party will articulate their interest. Only 16 % of the respondents optimistic about that party function, and the rest opted not to answer. Kompas polling in April and September 2007 seemed to confirm LP3ES survey above. In April and September 2007 polling absolute majority of the respondents unsatisfied with party functions. In five months there was a decrease of public dissatisfaction but nevertheless the percentage is still high since it was still above 60%. The performance of party functions such as control to government, political education, and program socialization should have been tools for party to obtain sympathy from the public. But in reality party seems to face a serious trouble in performing its functions.

C. *anTy-parTy senTiment and democracy: BeTWEEN The hard and The soft*

In recent days almost in every democracy there is a similar paradox. In one side people are free to express their articulation and people perceive and committed to democracy as a form of best governmental system. On the other side people begin to ask the

existence of parties as the main pillar of democracy. And when people failed to figure out a party to which they could express their political preference and since party failed to substantially influence polity, it is a condition that is called as "*crisis of party*". One possible consequence of the crises is the decrease of voter's turnout in elections. (Mair, Muller, Plasser, 2004:8). Another consequence is there is a symptom of party membership decrease in those countries. Meanwhile according to Pamungkas the terminology of party crises is popular to describe a low trust to party and usually it goes along to the criticism towards other democratic institutions, including the government, legislative, political elites and also politicians (Pamungkas, 2010).

In Germany, *parteiverdrossenheit* or *party disaffection* became the terminology of the year to illustrate a concentration of aggravation or support crises to political party. Further, Eric Hobsbawm found a public opinion, ideology, sentiment and anti-party movement between 1914 to the end of USSR (Pamungkas, 2010).

Eventhough initially some empirical researchs were skeptical in dealing the phenomenon in European countries (Reiter, 1998; Poguntke, 1996), nevertheless the symptom of this phenomenon became much more clearer in the decade of 1990-an (Mair, 1998). The recent case of Italy was obviously a strong example of the symptom. In Belgium and Austria, the parrallel trend also occurred (Mair, Muller, Plasser, 2004:8). All the symptom eventually point out to on thing, there is a minor attitude or negative attitude toward political party, an attitude that has also been well known as anti-party sentiment. For general, the minor attitude is manifested as a people responds to dissatisfaction of party performance in government, party management, and party in the grass roots.

In one way, the response is occurred as a logical consequence of excessive promises made by the politicians in campaign that raising the expectation amongst people. In another way the anti-party sentiment also related to people responds to the essential failure of party and political elites in performing what they should perform. So many social,

political, and economical problems failed to be solved; mostly of those party leaders were irresponsible; some of them may abuse of power toward government's resources and their privileges and similar other activities (Pamungkas, 2010).

In some literatures concerning anti-party or other similar terminologies, there are at least three focuses of study. The first are studies that focus on organizational structure, functions, party membership, and its performance in government or representative body. The second are studies that focus on voter participation in election. And the third are studies that focus its analysis on agreement or disagreement of the citizens toward existence of party as a pillar of democracy (Torcal, Gunther, Montero, 2002: 257-258). In the first focus of study, anti-party sentiment perceives how party performs its functions. To assess party performance what could be done is by asking the people concerning their satisfaction toward party behavior dan public trust toward the performance of party in executing its substantive functions. In the second focus of study, what considered as an important element is voter's participation, the swing votes, and the change of social-traditional bond between party and its constituents. The focus of this study is by analyzing public respon from their voting behaviour. Fluctuation in *voter turnout* that tend to decrease, the loose and strengthen of party identification, and split voting phenomenon are vindicators to assess anti-party sentiment in this focus area. The third focus of study put its analysis to agreement or disagreement of public toward the existence of party as pillar of democracy. Torcal, Richard Gunther, dan Jose Ramon Montero in this focus of study developed six survey questions to assess the sentiment.

From those six questions, Torcal et al. classify them into two series of indicators. Those are cultural indicators of anti-party sentiment and reactive indicators of anti-party sentiment. In research they conducted in southern European democracies such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece, they found inconsistencies or ambivalence of citizen's

attitude toward two series of indicators. It said as ambivalent since those two series of indicators proposed by Torcal et al. showed a different result. Cultural indicator serie showed the existence of anti-party sentiment, meanwhile in reactive indicator serie showed a pro-party sentiment.

Indeed, reactive attitude is easily changed. The main factor is usually inconsistency of party behavior and incapability of party in performing its functions. Meanwhile a cultural anti-party sentiment manifested as a result of a long social and historical experience related to bad behavior of party. This kind of anti-party sentiment is rooted amongst society and has become a political culture of a society. According to Torcal, Gunther, dan Montero (2002) the reactive anti-party sentiment occurred in southern European countries gave a little influence toward the legitimacy of democracy, meanwhile cultural anti-party sentiment gave negative impact toward the legitimacy of democracy.

In this point of relation between anti-party sentiment and democracy Webb and White (2007) entered the discourse and divide anti-party sentiment into two kinds, those are *soft anti-party sentiment* and *hard anti-party sentiment*. Basically, the terminology of soft anti-party sentiment is more or less similar to a condition in which reactive indicators proposed by Torcal, Gunther, dan Montero is met. Meanwhile hard anti-party sentiment is a condition in which cultural indicator is met. Moreover Webb & White suggested that soft anti-party sentiment differs to hard anti-party sentiment in the sense of its influence toward democracy legitimacy. Parallel to Torcal et al., White & Webb agreed soft anti-party sentiment is a phenomenon that in one side is manifested as people disappointment toward party performance and party people behavior, but there is still a high trust of the public toward democracy. It means this sentiment is temporarily and will be loosen as the party performs its functions better. But in the *hard anti-party sentiment*, minor attitude toward party has also been followed by distrust of the public toward ongoing system of democracy.

d. *soft anti-party sentiment* di indonEsiA

Recently references on anti-party sentiment in Indonesia are still luxurious since there were only few studies available. Most of the research on anti-party sentiment even paid no attention toward the relation between the phenomenon and democracy so that dichotomy between hard and soft anti-party sentiment are rarely discussed. Some study on anti-party sentiment tended to neglect a fact that there is still a high degree of trust toward democracy in Indonesia and left it untouched even though party and democracy is closely related and inseparable.

Within a study conducted by Marcus Mietzner (2013:4) in Indonesia, he believes that according to some notes concerning a relation between track record of party support and support to democracy he drew a conclusion that Indonesia is in the middle of soft anti-party sentiment, using a terminology coined by Webb dan White. Mietzner came to the conclusion by observing the low support to party in Indonesia does not correlate with the decrease of public support to democracy. It means people still trust democracy, still trust to the existence of party, and still hope that party will perform better.

Although the assessment of political scientist and many surveys produced blurred images concerning parties, nevertheless there are a lot of scientist stated that democracy polity in Indonesia is extraordinary stable, especially since the implementation of electoral reforms in the middle of 2000's (Aspinall, 2005). Many people slapped parties so hard by giving a negative assessment toward parties, but still there is a high degree of support toward democracy. It is reflected for instance in the survey result of LSI in May 2011 that showed 77% of people still believe that democracy is the best system for Indonesia. According to Mietzner, there are no any serious fluctuation in the support. Lowest level of support occurred in April 2004 (71%), meanwhile the highest support reach 90% in September 2009 (Mietzner, 2013).

Webb and White had found those kind of phenomenon in their study in new

democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Similar to Indonesia, enthusiasm at the beginning of transition had opened public disappointment toward party, the main actor in a new political system. Nevertheless, anti-party sentiment is not a shocking phenomenon in established democracy. Recent literatures on party system in western democracies offers effort in tackle down the decrease of membership and electoral participation. (Kopecky, 2006)

Mietzner focused on an effort to proof that the cause if the sentiment is more on the failure of party in performing its functions and meet public expectations. Mietzner also used and also criticize the assumptions of theoretical approach used in elaborating and observing party problem in Indonesia, those are institutionalization theory and cartelization theory. Unfortunately Mietzner gave no further attention toward the anti-party sentiment itself and tended to consider the phenomenon is caused by an internal factor within party.

E. CLOSING REMARKS

By analyzing the track record of anti-party sentiment in Indonesia, it could be drawn some conclusions as follows: First, public disappointment toward party had been emerged in the very early time of this nation-state formation years. Many surveys conducted recently obviously have a strong root within Indonesian history. Second, it could be concluded that all typology of public attitude manifested from anti-party sentiment proposed by Daalder has been occurred in Indonesia. Third, this writing is trying to proof that in the relation between anti-party sentiment and democracy give birth to a *soft anti-party sentiment*. The conclusion has been drawn since in one side there is a negative perception toward party but in other side the public trust toward democracy is still high.

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