

Electoral democracy in a divided society

The 2008 gubernatorial election in Maluku, Indonesia¹

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Abstract: This article analyses the 2008 gubernatorial election in Indonesia's Maluku province and puts its result – a resounding victory for incumbent governor Karel Ralahalu – into the broader context of the discourse on democracy in divided societies. Through a detailed analysis of Ralahalu's electoral strategy, the article illustrates how the incumbent used a combination of populism and comprehensive networking with key organizational stakeholders to secure an easy victory. The author also highlights the peaceful conduct of the election and the overall significance of the fact that key political, religious and ethno-regional actors seem to have accepted that democratic elections are now the only legitimate means to distribute formal political power. In short, it is argued that democracy can indeed work in divided societies, especially if it is based on institutional arrangements that promote cross-communal communication and cooperation.

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Just about 10 years after the end of the New Order regime, Indonesia has developed into one of South East Asia's most stable electoral democracies. Despite occasional setbacks, the country has made consistent

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progress towards democratic consolidation, as is evident in, amongst other things, far-reaching institutional change, the abolition of the military's role in politics, the opening up of political space for a burgeoning civil society and, of course, the regular conduct of free and fair elections. Direct local elections [*pemilihan kepala daerah, pilkada*]² in particular have become a trademark characteristic of Indonesia's young democracy since their introduction in 2005, not least because they have brought unprecedented levels of competition to local politics (Buehler, 2007a; Buehler and Tan, 2007; Choi, 2007; Erb and Sulistiyanto, 2009; Mietzner, 2008a; Vel, 2005, 2008). Although the new electoral rules have done little to combat structural problems such as elite domination and money politics,³ there can be no doubt that the *pilkada* have enhanced public participation in politics as well as the overall accountability of governors, mayors and district heads. As results from hundreds of local elections all over the country have shown, voters have rarely hesitated to replace unpopular or corrupt officials when given the chance, while in other places they have rewarded high-performing incumbents by re-electing them, often with extraordinary results.

This article tells the tale of one such election, in which the incumbent governor succeeded in getting re-elected with a huge margin. As the narrative unfolds, it will become clear that in some respects the gubernatorial election in Maluku, one of Indonesia's easternmost provinces, was not much different from the multitude of other *pilkada* that had previously been conducted in other regions. Indeed, as in so many other places, the election in Maluku too was characterized by the dominance of entrenched elites from the bureaucracy and big business, the widespread distribution of money and patronage resources, and, with one notable exception, the almost complete irrelevance of political parties as effective vehicles for campaign support and voter mobilization. Nevertheless, despite these similarities with other local elections, the *pilkada*

² Local elections take place at both the provincial and the district level. To differentiate between the two administrative levels, gubernatorial elections are sometimes called *pilkada gubernur* or *pilgub*. In Maluku, the election commission used yet another acronym (*pemilukada*), but in this article the word *pilkada* will be used generically for all local elections at the district and provincial level, including the gubernatorial election in Maluku that is the main focus of this article.

³ On the contrary, it may be argued that in many regions these problems have been perpetuated or even worsened since the introduction of direct elections. See Buehler (2007b) for a good depiction of how local elites in South Sulawesi have captured the political space by means of money politics and intimidation. See Hadiz (2004) for a broader argument about the dominance of predatory interests in local politics.

in Maluku does stand out from the rest, if only because of the socio-political environment in which it took place.

Maluku's particular significance for analysing electoral processes lies in its recent history of violent unrest. Between 1999 and 2002, the province was the site of a protracted communal conflict between Christians and Muslims, which, according to conservative estimates, left at least 2,000 people dead and more than 250,000 displaced from their homes (van Klinken, 2007, p 88). At the time, some observers regarded the brutal fighting as one of the most serious threats to Indonesia's national cohesion (Huxley, 2002, p 69), while others interpreted the events, along with similar occurrences of collective violence in Kalimantan and Sulawesi and the secessionist rebellions in Aceh and Papua, as 'signs that Indonesia may be facing at least partial disintegration' (*Jane's Intelligence Digest*, 2001). Contextualized in the global discourse about the so-called 'third wave of democratization' (Huntington, 1991), the events in Maluku and elsewhere appeared to vindicate all those sceptics who claimed that democracy was not only inappropriate, but actually dangerous for communally divided societies such as Indonesia.

A decade later, however, the critics have been proved wrong. Indonesia has neither disintegrated nor relapsed into authoritarian rule. Instead it has developed into a vibrant electoral democracy, which since 2006 has consistently been labelled as 'free' in the annual Freedom of the World index. Significantly, the incremental institutionalization of formal democratic rules and procedures over the last few years not only strengthened civil liberties and political rights, but also facilitated the end of communal violence in most conflict areas. Key political actors who, during the initial uncertainty of the democratic transition, might have regarded violence as a justifiable means to achieve political ends, gradually began to accept that the only legitimate way to gain access to power in the post-Suharto era was to contest free and fair elections.

This article uses the 2008 gubernatorial election in Maluku as a case study to argue that democracy can indeed function in a divided society and that elections can assist in paving the way for post-conflict reconciliation. Following a brief background section about theoretical approaches to democracy in divided societies and a concise recap of the history of the Maluku conflict, the analysis proceeds to illustrate how incumbent governor Karel Ralahalu used a combination of populism and comprehensive networking with key organizational stakeholders to secure an easy victory in the election. By applying this double-pronged

strategy, Ralahu demonstrated that he had adapted much better to the new electoral rules than his opponents, who largely failed to engage properly with their constituencies in the run-up to the poll. The decisiveness of Ralahu's victory, it is hoped, may now pave the way for renewed efforts in reconstruction and reconciliation between the religious communities of the province. While a final judgment on Maluku's medium- to long-term prospects for political and social stability will be possible only after the legislative election in 2009, it is fair to say that the *pilkada* was a major step for Maluku on its path back to normality.

Democracy in divided societies: consociational v centripetal models

John Stuart Mill (1958 [1861]) wrote that democracy was not a viable solution for multi-ethnic societies because of what he perceived to be a crucial lack of unity in public opinion. Some modern political analysts concur with Mill's critical assessment (Low, 1991; Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972), but most observers today agree that democracy can actually flourish in divided societies. In fact, democratization is widely regarded as a tool to overcome or prevent violent conflict in such societies. This approach is based on the belief that democracy, in contrast to authoritarian and totalitarian forms of government, provides institutional channels to manage political conflicts peacefully (Reilly, 2001, 2006). What exact form these institutional channels should take in order to exert their moderating influence most effectively, however, remains the subject of controversy. While proponents of consociationalism argue that the best way to maintain peace is to acknowledge differences and manage them through power-sharing arrangements within grand coalitions (Lijphart, 1977, 1991), supporters of centripetal models insist that differences should be devalued and eventually overcome by providing institutional incentives for vote-pooling and the creation of large centrist parties (Horowitz, 1985, 1991).

Electoral and party law reforms in Indonesia since 1999 have, as in many other Asian countries, been driven largely by centripetal imperatives (Reilly, 2007). From the choice of the electoral systems for parliamentary, presidential and local elections to requirements for the establishment of political parties, Indonesia's lawmakers have endeavoured to create a political system that provides incentives for parties and candidates to appeal to broad, cross-communal constituencies

According to Reilly (2009, p 10), 'Indonesia's current party rules are [...] one of the most extreme versions of centripetal incentives to be found anywhere in the world'. How these incentives have affected developments within the party system has recently been shown by Mietzner (2008b), but despite the overall trend, it should be noted that the direction Indonesian politics is taking is not quite as linear as Reilly and some other writers suggest.

For instance, some of the centripetal regulations that were introduced in recent years have proved rather ineffective, with the electoral threshold probably the most prominent example. Between 1999 and 2004, the effective number of parties in the House of Representatives did not decrease, but increased (Tomsa, 2008, p 187), and hopes that small parties might amalgamate if they failed to reach the threshold have remained largely unfulfilled. Furthermore, efforts to devalue narrowly defined communal identities through centripetal legislation have also been undermined by the constant formation of new provinces and districts in the wake of Indonesia's comprehensive decentralization process. Between 1998 and early 2007, almost 200 new districts were created and, especially in recent years, the newly designed regions have often been defined along ethnic or religious boundary lines. Unsurprisingly, disputes about the creation of these districts have, in some cases, led to communal tensions (International Crisis Group, 2005, 2007).

In light of the preceding discussion, it is clear that the exact format of Indonesia's democratic polity is still evolving. The general trend, however, appears to signify a shift towards a 'quasi-federal' system (Bertrand, 2007) in which some consociational elements are mixed with other, somewhat more dominant, centripetal features. For Reilly (2006), the strong influence of centripetal approaches in Indonesia forms part of a region-wide trend, which, he argues, has brought about the emergence of a distinct 'Asian model of democracy'. Whether his model is sustainable in Indonesia, however, may depend not so much on developments at the national level of politics, but rather on developments at the local level, especially in eastern Indonesia, where the confluence of ethnic and religious identity politics with a patrimonial style of power distribution has proved to be explosive in the early days of the transition process.

It is therefore imperative that the democratic institutions crafted in Jakarta address problems not only at the national level, but also at the local level. So far, arguably the most important institutional tool the Indonesian government has designed to try to steer local politics away

from primordialism is the law that regulates the election of governors, mayors and district heads. Drawing on the experience of the presidential election law, the *Law on Local Government* (Law 32/2004) also features a number of centripetal requirements, including provisions that candidates have to be nominated in pairs (that is, a candidate for governor, mayor or district head must be nominated together with a running mate for the deputy post) and that these pairs can only be nominated by political parties that have reached a certain percentage of votes or seats in parliament.⁴ These two passages in the law were clearly aimed at reducing the number of candidates and, especially with regard to regions with highly heterogeneous populations, at encouraging candidates to form cross-ethnic pairs.

By the time the election in Maluku was drawing closer, these requirements had already proved effective in a large number of provinces and districts, including multi-ethnic regions such as Papua (Mietzner, 2007) or North Sumatra. Islamic parties frequently coalesced with nationalist or even Christian parties during the nomination process,⁵ while individual candidates often sought running mates from across religious or ethnic dividing lines. But once again, a word of caution is necessary as there were also signs that in some areas the legislation did not quite produce the desired centripetal effects. In the former conflict province of West Kalimantan, for example, three mixed Muslim–Christian pairs were beaten by the only exclusively Christian pair contesting the poll (*Sinar Harapan*, 2007); and in North Maluku, another area that had been plagued by large-scale communal violence in the past (Wilson, 2008), the long-standing hostilities between the Makian and their ethnic rivals overshadowed the gubernatorial election in 2007, leading to legal disputes and violent demonstrations (International Crisis Group, 2009).

⁴ In 2007, the Constitutional Court overturned this requirement and mandated that independent candidates must also be allowed to run. Following this verdict, the Indonesian parliament revised the law, but for the *pilkada* in Maluku, these revisions came too late as there was insufficient time for the provincial election commission to implement the changes. Consequently, all candidates in the Maluku poll were still nominated by political parties or coalitions of parties.

⁵ Mietzner (2008b, p 451) quotes data from a non-government organization that covered local elections from 2005 until June 2007. According to these data, it was only in 2.4% of the cases covered that Muslim parties had forged exclusive coalitions with other Muslim parties.

The Maluku conflict and its aftermath

Both of the above-mentioned examples may be regarded as exceptions to an overall very positive trend, but they showed that ethnic sentiment was still running high in some of Indonesia's post-conflict areas. They also showed that in some places elites were apparently still determined to exploit these sentiments for their own political ends. In the run-up to the *pilkada* in Maluku, the volatile situation in neighbouring North Maluku in particular gave rise to concerns that the election in Maluku might also reignite communal tensions. As in North Maluku, the violence that had gripped Maluku for more than four years (1999–2002) had also been extremely fierce, with very high numbers of casualties. Moreover, the fighting in Maluku was protracted, resulting in severe and enduring socioeconomic problems after the conflict (Adam, 2008). While details of Maluku's communal conflict have been analysed elaborately elsewhere (Aditjondro, 2001; International Crisis Group, 2002; van Klinken, 2006; Toisuta *et al*, 2007), a very brief summary of the events that led to widespread religious segregation in a province that is almost evenly balanced between Christians and Muslims (see Table 1) is imperative here to contextualize the 2008 *pilkada* properly in its historical background.

It all began in January 1999, just a few months after the disintegration of Suharto's New Order regime. Triggered by a seemingly trivial altercation between youths from adjacent Christian and Muslim neighbourhoods in Ambon City, the violence rapidly spread beyond the confines of the provincial capital. The ferocity of the fighting, the emphasis on religious identities and symbols during the battles, and the overall pattern of mobilization all suggested that this was not just another brawl between rival youth gangs. Rather, as van Klinken (2007) has convincingly argued, this violence carried strong notions of deliberate mobilization by people with significant political interests. Key

Table 1. Demographic structure of Maluku by religion (2000).

	Urban		Rural		Total	
Muslim	124,918	43.1%	439,117	51.1%	564,035	49.1%
Protestant	145,055	50.0%	343,576	40.0%	488,631	42.5%
Catholic	19,325	6.7%	69,252	8.1%	88,577	7.7%
Other	661	0.2%	7,995	0.9%	8,656	0.8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>289,959</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>859,940</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>1,149,899</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

Source: Brown, Wilson and Hadi (2005, p 9).

actors within the respective religious communities, especially those now actively involved in the newly emerging political landscape, apparently regarded the breakdown of social order not only as a threat, but also as an opportunity to (re)assert their authority over local politics (van Klinken, 2007, p 105). Violence, in this scenario, quickly became politics by other means, orchestrated and directed by rationally calculating actors who cared little about the human cost of the fighting.

Whether these actors had indeed intended the bloodshed to turn into the kind of civil war that eventually ensued is of course debatable. Once the fighting was under way, new dynamics developed rapidly, arguably beyond the control of those who had initially mobilized the various combat groups. According to Brown, Wilson and Hadi (2005, pp 33–36), there were at least three escalating factors that contributed to the protraction of the conflict, namely the involvement of the security forces and external militias, the dubious role of the media in distributing (dis)information, and the growing desire for revenge against the enemy. Largely due to these inauspicious dynamics, the violence dragged on for several years (with various lulls in between) until in February 2002, mediation efforts in the small town of Malino in South Sulawesi at last resulted in a peace agreement.

The Malino Agreement put an end to the large-scale communal fighting, but sporadic outbreaks of violence continued to threaten the fragile peace. Several targeted bomb attacks as well as a series of sniper killings were among the most serious of these, and there were also a number of localized fights between neighbouring villages on Ambon Island and short-lived riots after the *pilkada* in Western South-East Maluku, one of the provincial districts (*The Jakarta Post*, 2007). None of these incidents, however, triggered renewed widespread communal conflict, indicating that people from both religious communities were no longer so easily provoked. From 2003 onwards, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts got under way and over the years that followed, Maluku gradually returned to normal.

The person who oversaw this recovery process was Karel Ralahu. A retired military officer with an untarnished reputation, Ralahu rose to the position of governor in August 2003 in a tightly contested indirect election in Maluku's regional parliament. Backed by the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan*, PDI-P) and sections of the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, PPP), Ralahu and his running mate Muhammad

Abdullah (Memet) Latuconsina won a narrow victory of 20:18 votes against their Golkar-supported opponents Zeth Sahuburua and Mohammad Taher Laetupa.⁶ Given his paper-thin majority, Ralahu initially seemed rather unlikely to become a powerful governor. But over the next five years, the former brigadier-general, who had come to office with little political experience, proved to be remarkably adept on the political stage.

When Ralahu began his first term, Maluku was still a province in shock. Barely a year after the signing of the Malino Agreement, calm had returned to Ambon and the surrounding islands, but the political, economic and psychological scars of the conflict were still omnipresent. Moreover, despite the peace deal, religious sentiment and social tensions were still running extremely high. Accordingly, two major themes dominated the political discourse in Maluku at the time of the 2003 election: security [*keamanan*] and balance [*perimbangan*] between the religious groups. Ralahu and his running mate Memet Latuconsina were well positioned to address these issues, not only because they represented both of the religious communities – Ralahu is Protestant and Latuconsina is Muslim – but also because Ralahu, as a retired military general who had come out of the conflict without being implicated in any of the transgressions committed by the armed forces during the fighting,⁷ seemed to symbolize hopes for a better and safer future. In many ways, one may argue, he was the right man in the right place at the right time.

⁶ Ralahu's victory came as a surprise because Sahuburua was jointly nominated by Golkar and PPP, which together controlled 19 seats in the provincial parliament (Golkar held 12 seats, PPP seven). Ralahu, on the other hand, was only nominated by PDI-P, which held 10 seats. With only the seats of the remaining three factions up for grabs (five from the military/police faction and five each from two coalitions of smaller parties), Golkar leaders were confident that Sahuburua would easily win the election. In the end, however, the PPP faction split and several members gave their vote to Ralahu and his running mate Latuconsina, who after all was also a PPP man. Six votes in the tumultuous election were declared invalid because the names on the ballot papers were misspelled.

⁷ It is widely known that sections of the military played a rather dubious role during the conflict. Rather than stopping the violence, members of the armed forces directly contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict through deliberate negligence, the provision of support to combatants, the instigation of violence and direct involvement in combat (Azca, 2006, p 432). Ralahu, however, was never implicated in any of this, even though he was district military commander [*Danrem*] in Ambon at the beginning of the conflict. He was later moved to Papua, where he remained until his retirement in 2002.

Consolidating power: how Ralahalu built his support base

Although the gradual restoration of security over the next few years helped enhance Ralahalu's popularity, there was much more to the new governor than just the image of a strong military figure able to bring back law and order. Indeed, for many Malukans, Ralahalu was a man of the people. When asked about the governor's main characteristics in the run-up to the 2008 election, friends and foes alike almost unanimously described him as modest, friendly and down-to-earth.⁸ Maybe the most obvious indicator of his humble attitude was his willingness to travel extensively around the province and visit even the remotest villages, some of which had never been visited by a provincial government official before. Local journalists who accompanied the governor on these trips reported that people literally cried when they saw him.⁹

What is interesting to note is that despite the obvious political calculations behind the visits, Ralahalu was also widely regarded as having a genuine interest in the living conditions of the people in his province. Ralahalu began his tours around the province as early as 2004, just about a year after his rise to the post of governor. At this time, the next election was still a long way off and the *pilkada* legislation that would eventually pave the way for direct local elections from 2005 onwards had not even been enacted. Thus, when Ralahalu started to show an interest in communicating with ordinary people, he could not yet have known for sure that at the end of his five-year term, this proximity to the people (what Indonesians like to call *merakyat*) would actually become a valuable asset in his campaign for re-election.¹⁰

Apart from direct contact with the people, Ralahalu also sought to use organizational vehicles to boost his prestige. Arguably, the most obvious of a number of initiatives in this regard was his entry into party politics. In April 2007, local PDI-P icon John Mailoa suddenly and unexpectedly passed away, leaving the position of provincial party chairman vacant. Almost instantaneously, Ralahalu declared himself ready to take over as caretaker leader, even though he had no organizational track record in the party. Just a short time afterwards, in October 2007, the party organized an extraordinary congress and, to the disbelief of a number of long-established local PDI-P politicians who

⁸ Author's observation from various fieldwork trips in 2008.

⁹ Author's personal communication with local journalists from Maluku, June 2008.

¹⁰ It should be noted, however, that his political instincts would certainly have told him that direct elections were likely to be imminent for the local level after the presidential election in 2004 was conducted as a direct election for the first time ever.

themselves had also eyed the chairmanship, Ralahalu was elected new provincial chairman.

By assuming the PDI-P leadership, Ralahalu also strengthened his bonds with Maluku's biggest and best organized social organization, the Protestant Church [*Gereja Protestan Maluku*, GPM], which has long been closely affiliated with PDI-P. According to van Klinken (2007, p 95), relations between the church and the party are so close that at the time of the conflict there were hardly any PDI-P leaders in Maluku that were not also involved in GPM. Today many organizational and individual linkages between the two organizations continue to exist. Ralahalu knew this – not least because his own wife was a minister – and thus he effectively killed two birds with one stone when he became chairman of the party's provincial leadership board.

But Ralahalu was not content with having secured support from PDI-P and, by implication, GPM. Well aware that Ambon was the only town of any size in the province and that in many villages traditional *adat* leaders were the most important political influence on people's lives, Ralahalu also sponsored a number of new organizations intended to help him develop closer links with Maluku's countless villages. One such organization was the so-called *Majelis Latupati*, which was founded in 2007 as an organization that brought together *adat* leaders from all over Maluku in an open forum. Set up with the support of respected NGO figure Ikhsan Malik, the *Majelis Latupati* was initially conceived as an organization that would be used to reduce the potential for conflict between villages and to revive traditional *adat* mechanisms of conflict resolution. Soon after its formation, however, the *Majelis Latupati* was virtually captured by Ralahalu and his campaign team, who saw it as a perfect opportunity for the incumbent governor to connect regularly with influential local power holders and build new patronage lines directly from the provincial down to the village level. Thus, as prominent reconciliation activist and religious leader Abidin Wakano observed, the *Majelis Latupati* quickly degenerated into little less than a 'tool for the powerful'.¹¹

In addition to the *Majelis Latupati*, which has a broad reach over Maluku, Ralahalu also sponsored the establishment and activities of other, more locally and sometimes ethnically confined *adat* organizations (so-called *paguyuban*). In particular, he focused his attention on the strategically important area of Ambon-Lease, which comprises the

¹¹ Author's interview with Abidin Wakano, NGO activist and member of the Indonesian Council of Ulema [*Majelis Ulema Indonesia*, MUI], 14 July 2008.

four main islands of the Ambonese cultural heartland, namely Ambon Island, Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut. The special significance of these islands can be traced back to the days of Dutch colonialism (Chauvel, 1990) and was reinforced throughout the New Order when key positions in the military and the bureaucracy were often allocated to members of traditionally powerful families from those four islands. In particular, a small number of villages on Haruku, collectively known as Hatuhaha, became the epicentre of power in Maluku during the New Order. With the rise of Karel Ralahalu in 2003, however, the balance had begun to shift towards the Leihitu and Salahutu areas on Ambon Island (collectively known as Henahetu) as Ralahalu hails from the village of Alang in the subdistrict of Leihitu.

The emerging rivalry was fuelled by the stark socio-demographic differences between the two regions. While sparsely populated Hatuhaha has long punched well above its weight in terms of political and economic power, Henahetu is comparatively densely populated, but has long had less political influence than Hatuhaha. Even when Ralahalu ran for governor for the first time in 2003, he consciously took a running mate from Hatuhaha in order not to alienate powerful interests from this area. In other words, he endeavoured to guarantee not only a religious but also an ethno-regional balance. For the 2008 election, however, he changed his strategy. Well aware of the changing electoral dynamics precipitated by the replacement of indirect elections with the *pilkada* regulation, he sought to mobilize more support at the grass roots rather than simply to appease the Hatuhaha elites through power sharing at the top. His vehicle of choice to reach out to voters was the local *adat* organization. Thus, based on the calculation that winning support from traditional local leaders at the grass roots would later translate into broader support at the ballot box, he and his campaign managers systematically approached key *adat* figures from Hatuhaha and offered them better access to patronage resources.¹²

A final factor that shaped Ralahalu's first term in office, and probably impacted positively on his growing popularity, was the fact that Maluku experienced an enormous influx of reconstruction funds in the aftermath of the conflict. National and international donors contributed

¹² Significantly, Ralahalu used the same strategy in Henahetu, where he also sponsored a local *paguyuban* to drum up support for his re-election bid. Given that this area is basically his own back yard, his task there was substantially easier from the outset, but the incumbent still left nothing to chance, as indicated by the appointment of Ismael Titopela, a close ally of Ralahalu, to the chairmanship.

huge amounts of money to Maluku, much of which was administered directly by the provincial government. Most prominently, a special presidential instruction issued in 2003 by then President Megawati Sukarnoputri (Inpres 6) provided more than Rp4 trillion for reconstruction and reconciliation measures in line with the provisions of the Malino Agreement. After initial administrative problems (Wilson, 2005), the funds were eventually allocated over a three-year period between 2005 and 2007. Awash with money, Ralahalu easily endeared himself to many segments of society, missing few opportunities to open newly established churches, mosques and community centres.

Dents in the governor's crown

Thus, Ralahalu had clearly become a well connected and fairly popular governor over the years. But not all that glittered was gold. Along with the widening networks and the growing budget came new opportunities for nepotistic favouritism and the misappropriation of funds; and while Ralahalu himself was never implicated in any corruption scandals, several of his protégés in the bureaucracy did come under anti-corruption scrutiny.¹³ The fact that none of these top bureaucrats was held accountable for their alleged transgressions invited criticism about Ralahalu's commitment to the rule of law and, more generally, about his selection of personnel. Few positions in the highest layers of the bureaucracy had actually been filled according to merit or competence in 2003. Given the frequently expressed demand for a power balance between Christians and Muslims after the conflict, religious orientation appeared to be a more important consideration during the staffing of the various government offices. Moreover, patron–client connections determined many personnel decisions, as both Ralahalu and his deputy governor were keen to ensure that supporters and friends were rewarded for their loyalty. As a consequence, the capacity of the bureaucracy to deal with the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation was severely limited.

This became particularly evident in the debate over the distribution of the reconstruction funds. Even though an enormous number of

¹³ The heads of at least three provincial government departments (Health, Social Affairs and Information and Communication) were implicated in corruption scandals during Ralahalu's first term. The head of the Infokom department was eventually arrested shortly after the election and officially declared a suspect in a corruption case worth rupiah1.9 billion (*Metro TV News.com*, 2008).

potential projects warranted government assistance, Ralahalu's bureaucrats failed to commit to enough projects by the time the money from Inpres 6 had to be spent, leading to allegations of misappropriation and corruption (*detik.com*, 2008). Critics also questioned the government's priorities. NGO activists in particular argued that Ralahalu had spent far too much money on physical reconstruction rather than genuine reconciliation between the religious groups. For example, no serious efforts were made to prevent religious segregation in Ambon when internally displaced people returned to the city after the conflict. According to Muslim intellectual Hasbollah Toisuta, it is this religious segregation that poses the single biggest long-term threat to Maluku's recovery, mainly because it does not only happen in a physical sense, but it also pervades people's minds. Toisuta therefore has urged the government to tackle this issue head-on and 'help forge a new Maluku identity that transcends religious bases'.¹⁴

In sum, by the time the 2008 election drew closer, the reconstruction of post-conflict Maluku was well under way, but under the surface social tensions and political problems continued to simmer. While most local observers agreed that another eruption of widespread communal violence was highly unlikely, some activists argued that there was still a possibility that especially young people who had been directly affected by the previous conflict could again fall prey to demagogues and provocateurs who, it was feared, might resurface in the run-up to the election. Indeed, religion and its potential for manipulation by political interests was an omnipresent factor in many political discussions in the months and weeks before the election. In order to help minimize the risk of renewed conflict, leaders from the different religious communities repeatedly issued joint statements, urging their followers not to be provoked by external forces (*Ambon Ekspres*, 2008a and b).

From RASA to ASLI: introducing the candidates for the 2008 *pilkada*

When the election was eventually held, people had a choice between four pairs of candidates, all of which were promoted to the public through catchy acronyms (see Table 2). The first candidate to be confirmed was incumbent Karel Ralahalu, who, unsurprisingly, was nominated

¹⁴ Author's interview with Hasbollah Toisuta, NGO activist and Islamic intellectual, 5 July 2008.

Table 2. Candidates in 2008 Maluku *pilkada* (following order on ballot paper).

Names of candidates	Acronym	Supporting parties	Religious background	Regional background
Karel Ralahu & Said Assagaff	RASA	PDI-P, PBR, PDK, PD, PPNU, PKB, PKPI, PBB	Protestant & Muslim	Henahetu & Henahetu (family from outside Maluku)
Abdullah Tuasikal & Septinus Hematang	TULUS	PKS, PAN, PPD, PKPB	Muslim & Protestant	Hatuhaha & Western South-East Maluku
Asis Samual & Lukas Uwuratuw	ASLI	PPP, PDS, Partai Pelopor	Muslim & Protestant	Henahetu & Western South-East Maluku
Abdullah Latuconsina & Eduard Frans	MADU	Partai Golkar	Muslim & Protestant	Hatuhaha & Western South-East Maluku

by PDI-P.¹⁵ He was joined by Said Assagaff, a softly spoken yet capable career bureaucrat with a long history of service in various provincial departments.¹⁶ Promoted with the acronym RASA ['feeling'], the two men combined the populist appeal of a benevolent father figure (Ralahu) with the administrative skills of a seasoned bureaucrat (Assagaff) and thus neatly fitted the pattern of what Feith (1962) once called the 'solidarity makers' and 'administrators'. Moreover, they represented both religious communities, as Ralahu was Protestant while Assagaff was Muslim. As far as their ethno-regional backgrounds are concerned, Ralahu is from Leihitu on Ambon Island, whereas Assagaff's most important identification marker is his Arab lineage, which, together with the fact that he is married to a woman from Sulawesi, has helped him develop special bonds with some parts of Maluku's economically influential migrant community from Sulawesi (widely known as BBM – Buginese, Butonese, Makassarese).¹⁷ Thus, Ralahu and Assagaff possessed not only highly complementary personal charac-

¹⁵ Later on, a large number of smaller parties joined PDI-P in declaring their support for Ralahu. In the end, a coalition of eight parties backed the incumbent, including a number of Islamic parties such as PBB, PBR, PKB and PPNU, which hoped – and were hoped – to bring in some additional votes from the Islamic community.

¹⁶ By the time of the election, he held the position of provincial secretary, which is usually regarded as the third most powerful position in the provincial government.

¹⁷ Just like local communities on the Lease Islands, the BBM community is also organized in various *paguyuban*, most prominently the so-called *Kerukunan Keluarga Sulawesi Selatan* (KKSS), which has branches all over Maluku. And just like Ralahu

acteristics, but also highly complementary patronage networks. Add to that the advantages of the incumbency and it was clear that RASA was well positioned to contest this election.

The second aspirant to announce his candidature was the incumbent deputy governor and provincial chairman of the Golkar Party, Mohammad Abdullah (Memet) Latuconsina. Although he had formed a fairly successful team with Ralahalu since 2003, Latuconsina apparently declined an offer to become Ralahalu's running mate once again. Driven by his own ambitions and by growing demands from his party, Latuconsina joined the race after a largely prearranged party convention in Golkar's provincial headquarters. Despite the smooth nomination process, however, his candidature was overshadowed by deep frictions within the lower ranks of his party. These frictions had their roots in the controversial circumstances under which Latuconsina had wrested the party chairmanship from his predecessor Abdullah Tuasikal in 2006.¹⁸ At the time of the *pilkada*, many Golkar cadres were still loyal to Tuasikal and refused to endorse Latuconsina's bid for the governor post – especially after Tuasikal announced that he, too, would join the race (see below). And even those party members who had initially supported Latuconsina now expressed increasing doubts about their candidate's leadership qualities, particularly when he announced a largely unknown intelligence officer as his running mate. In the eyes of many party cadres, the nomination of Eduard Frans was a major mistake, not only because they were concerned that nominating an active intelligence officer would harm the party's overall reputation, but also because Frans had spent most of his life outside Maluku and had practically no electoral appeal.¹⁹ Given these less than favourable credentials, few observers gave Latuconsina and Frans, who ran under the acronym MADU ['sweet'], a real chance to win the *pilkada*.

did with the *adat* organizations in Henahetu and Hahahutu, Assagaff too used the KKSS and other ethnically defined *adat* groups to mobilize support for RASA's election campaign. See van Klinken (2008) for a detailed discussion of the role of the KKSS in Indonesian politics.

¹⁸ Back in 2006, Golkar suffered various internal problems, which Abdullah Tuasikal was apparently unable to solve. Latuconsina, who back then was still a member of PPP, saw the turmoil as an opportunity to defect from PPP to Golkar, which he regarded as a more suitable organizational tool for his ambitions to run for governor in 2008. Offering direct access to the government's lucrative patronage resources, he lobbied enough district branch officials eventually to topple Tuasikal at an extraordinary party congress. For more details on this episode, see Tomsa (2009, p 12).

¹⁹ Author's interview with Fatani Sohilauw, member of DPRD Maluku, Partai Golkar, 1 July 2008.

As indicated above, Latuconsina's predecessor as Golkar leader, Abdullah Tuasikal, did not let his ouster from the party chairmanship stop him from pursuing his own power ambitions. True to his image as a 'bulldozer' who would do whatever it took to achieve his goals, he approached the Islamist Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS), the third strongest party in Maluku at the time of the *pilkada*, to secure his nomination. The manoeuvre left political observers somewhat bewildered because, just a year before the election, Tuasikal had exchanged insults with PKS leaders after he had accused the party of being radical and jihadist. But all that now seemed forgotten, and despite the controversy, Tuasikal eventually received the nod from PKS.²⁰ The party justified the selection by claiming, somewhat unconvincingly, that Tuasikal had promised to change,²¹ but most observers believed that Tuasikal had simply bought his candidature by direct lobbying of the PKS central leadership board in Jakarta.²²

The fourth and final candidate to be announced was Asis Samuel, a relatively little known businessman from Liang (Ambon Island). Like Tuasikal, Samuel owed his nomination primarily to his generous financial donations to the parties that nominated him and, at least in the case of PPP, to chaotic internal dynamics within the party. Deeply divided over the question of whether they should actually nominate a governor candidate at all, or support the incumbent governor and attempt to push through a PPP-supported deputy governor candidate, the party leadership made the decision that indeed a governor candidate should be nominated only when the three most ambitious candidates had already registered with other parties. In the end, Asis Samuel appeared to be the best (that is, the most generous) of the rest, but he was hardly a serious contender.

A businessman and Golkar member by background, he had spent much of his life in West Java and in Jakarta where he developed close bonds with the family of former President Suharto. Obviously proud of these bonds, Samuel placed numerous advertisements in Maluku newspapers in the weeks before the nomination process, showing him in photos with Suharto's daughter Tutut and other New Order figures.

²⁰ In addition, three small parties (PAN, PPD and PKPB) joined PKS in supporting Tuasikal.

²¹ Interview with Abdurrachman, member of PKS fraction in DPRD Maluku, 12 July 2008.

²² Estimates of the money he offered for the nomination ranged from rupiah8–12 billion, which was apparently much more than other potential candidates were willing to pay.

Apart from this relationship with the Cendana family, however, very little is known about what exactly Asis Samual did during his time in Jakarta. The one thing that was abundantly clear, however, was that he had little political experience. In an effort to counter that weakness, he chose Lukas Uwuratuw as his running mate, a seasoned Golkar politician and former deputy district head of Western South-East Maluku. In his home district, he was widely known as the 'oil king' [*raja minyak*], but in the rest of the province, he was, just like Eduard Frans and Abdullah Tuasikal's running mate Septinus Hematang, a largely unknown quantity.

All in all, the candidate selection processes revealed a number of important insights into Maluku's local politics. On the one hand, they reflected a highly familiar pattern of pragmatic opportunism and money politics that had already been observed during numerous other local elections in Indonesia (Buehler, 2007a; Buehler and Tan, 2007; Choi, 2007). As elsewhere, for example, huge amounts of money had to be generated by the candidates in order to seal their nominations from the political parties, which in turn were determined to make the most of their gatekeeping position by effectively auctioning off the right to be nominated to the highest bidder. Another familiar phenomenon was that loyalty to a party usually played no role in the nomination process. Most parties split into two or more factions, as individual members and supporters often felt that their interests were better accommodated by a candidate that was nominated by another party. Defections and shifting loyalties were commonplace in the run-up to the election, especially in Golkar, PPP, PAN and PKS. Interestingly, however, PDI-P seemed to defy this trend. Despite rumblings of dissatisfaction amongst some of the party's longest serving local cadres, the party appeared remarkably solid behind its candidate, and as the election would soon demonstrate, this solidity was by no means insignificant.

Apart from these factors, which were in many respects little different from other Indonesian regions, the nomination process also displayed a number of trends that were somewhat particular to the Maluku context. First, religion was an omnipresent though not always openly expressed concern during the selection of candidates, thus imposing an important structural constraint on all actors. In a political environment in which balance between Christians and Muslims was perceived to be paramount, all four candidates had no choice but to choose running mates from 'the other' religion, whether they liked it or not. Yet, de-

spite the promotion of all candidates as cross-religious pairs, it was primarily the governor candidates (rather than their running mates) who were recognized in the public perception. Accordingly, many locals saw the election essentially as a contest between one Christian candidate and three Muslim candidates. In view of this public perception, the legal provision that forced candidates to be nominated together with a running mate appears to have been even more important. If ordinary voters apparently still tended to see the pairs primarily through a religious lens, one can only speculate how the candidates would have presented themselves if there had *not* been an institutional incentive to reach out to the other community.

A similar argument can be put forward with regard to ethnicity (or place of origin), which also strongly influenced the selection of candidates. As mentioned before, politics in Maluku has long been dominated by a small group of powerful families from the Lease Islands in central Maluku. It was therefore of little surprise that all four governor candidates were indeed from this area. In contrast to previous years, however, when the power struggle had taken place behind firmly closed doors, this first ever *pilkada* now forced the candidates to look for running mates who promised to be able to mobilize broader support in regions outside the Lease Islands. For three out of four candidates, this imperative resulted in the selection of a running mate from the fairly populous yet politically rather marginalized Western South-East Maluku region. Only Karel Ralahalu opted for a different approach, although he too chose a deputy candidate who would appeal to a different ethnic group (the BBM migrants).

Here the power of the electoral institutions to shape the behaviour of political actors became abundantly clear. Driven by the belief that people in Western South-East Maluku would almost habitually vote along primordial lines, Latuconsina, Tuasikal and Samual all chose deputy candidates from this region, simply because the demographics suggested that a large number of votes were to be won there. That none of the candidates who offered themselves for nomination as deputy governors actually had broader electoral appeal seemed to be lost on the three governor hopefuls and their advisers. Ironically then, the laws fulfilled their function of promoting cross-communal cooperation and communication, but in interpreting the letter rather than the spirit of the law, the three candidates did not really enhance their chances for election.

The campaign

The time between the announcements of the teams and the beginning of the official election campaign was characterized by the candidates' frenzied efforts to assemble effective campaign teams. Incumbent governor Karel Ralahalu had a distinct advantage in this race for financial and material support, not only because he possessed the most comprehensive patronage networks, but also because he was the first contender to be officially confirmed as a candidate. While the other potential candidates were still busy outbidding each other in their quest for an organizational vehicle, Ralahalu had long secured his nomination from PDI-P and was already actively involved in courting key stakeholders from his various political, religious and economic networks. By the time the campaign eventually got under way, thousands of RASA posters and stickers all over the province were reinforcing the impression of Ralahalu's dominance. Of the other three contenders, only Abdullah Tuasikal seemed reasonably determined to take on the incumbent in this poster war, but compared with the RASA onslaught, even Tuasikal's efforts looked rather pathetic.

Overall, in fact, the official campaign was a rather muted affair. Although some incidences of intimidation and 'black' campaigning were reported in the media (*Suara Maluku*, 2008a; *Ambon Ekspres*, 2008c and d; *Mimbar Maluku*, 2008),²³ the overall atmosphere was peaceful and the general mood between the contenders almost amicable. This was epitomized in a public debate between the candidates that was broadcast live on TVRI Maluku a few days before the election. Largely void of political content, the debate was laden with platitudes, prompting one observer to liken the event to the popular reality show *Indonesian Idol* rather than a political debate (*Suara Maluku*, 2008b).

It was only in the last two days of the campaign that it finally came to life, at least in the city of Ambon, where all four candidate pairs were scheduled to hold large rallies. A common feature of any election in Indonesia, these rallies usually reveal relatively little about the real levels of support for a candidate, but in this particular *pilkada* they were actually a remarkably accurate reflection of the popularity of the individual contenders. Whilst MADU and ASLI struggled to fill at least half of the local football field, TULUS attracted a fairly decent crowd. By far the biggest number of

²³ In the context of Indonesian elections, the term 'black campaign' refers to attempts to bring certain candidates into disrepute, usually through the spreading of rumours and the distribution of false statements and manipulated images.

people, however, turned up to the rally held by RASA (*Suara Maluku*, 2008c). Braving incessant rain and knee-deep puddles on the half-flooded pitch, thousands turned up to see Ralahalu and his main guest speaker, PDI-P chairman Megawati Sukarnoputri.

This rally demonstrated once more why Karel Ralahalu was about to enter election day as the red-hot favourite. Significantly, and in contrast to the other contenders, Ralahalu actually succeeded in transforming his rally into what it was intended to be – a colourful show of force. While the other three candidates struggled to mobilize sizeable crowds, the RASA rally did live up to its promise of turning the football field into a sea of red. Ralahalu could probably have achieved this success even without luring a star attraction of Megawati's calibre to Ambon. Well attended rallies in smaller towns and villages indicated that Ralahalu himself was a major drawcard for the masses. However, the presence of the hugely popular Megawati,²⁴ who eagerly jumped on the opportunity to campaign for her own presidential candidature in 2009, was a personal coup for the governor because it seemed to indicate that Karel Ralahalu was so influential in PDI-P circles that his voice was actually heard at the highest level of the party hierarchy in Jakarta. In a province such as Maluku, which had felt neglected by Jakarta for decades, this was a factor that was not to be underestimated.²⁵

The election, the result and the reasons behind the result

The campaign ended on 5 July and, after a three-day lull, the election was finally held on 9 July 2008. Initial estimates had voter turnout at 85%, and even though this figure was later downgraded slightly, electoral participation in this *pilkada* was much higher than in most other gubernatorial elections.²⁶ The high turnout showed that Malukans were

²⁴ Back in 2004, Maluku had been one of the few provinces in which Megawati won against Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in the second round of the presidential election (she came in second in the first round after Wiranto).

²⁵ While Megawati lent her support to Ralahalu, no prominent Golkar leaders followed an invitation to Maluku. Although several names circulated in the press before MADU's final rally, the party elite eventually snubbed Latuconsina and preferred to gather in Bali to show their support to their candidate in that province's *pilkada*, which was held on the same day as the election in Maluku.

²⁶ According to survey data quoted by Fatah (2007), the average turnout in gubernatorial elections between 2005 and 2007 was around 65%. More recent elections held in 2008 in East Kalimantan (68%), Central and East Java (55 and 59%), Lampung (69%), Riau (59%) and South Sumatra (74%) have all confirmed the fact that the turnout in Maluku was remarkably high (all 2008 turnout data from Website: <http://www.lsi.or.id>, accessed 18 January 2009).

Table 3. Final result of the 2008 *pilkada* in Maluku.

Candidate	Number of votes (absolute)	Number of votes (percentage)
Ralahalu–Assagaff (RASA)	452,711	62.14
Tuasikal–Hematang (TULUS)	192,112	26.37
Latuconsina–Frans (MADU)	44,700	6.14
Samual–Uwuratuw (ASLI)	38,998	5.35

Source: *Kompas.com* (2008a).

eager to have their say and, as had been widely expected, most came out in support of Karel Ralahalu (See Table 3).

The impressive figures were evidence that Ralahalu's electoral strategy had been planned and executed to near perfection. There can indeed be little doubt that at the time of the election Ralahalu was a very popular leader. By restoring a sense of security, he had successfully addressed the province's most pressing problem of the last five years. Perhaps equally important though, he not only delivered this most basic of needs but, supported by a professional consultancy from Jakarta,²⁷ he also proved highly adept at selling this success during his image-building campaign. This campaign took him to some of the remotest places in the province, including islands that had never before been visited by a provincial government official. It was in these places in particular that Ralahalu easily secured mass support by presenting himself as a benevolent leader who took a genuine interest in the fate of his constituents. In the run-up to the election, the governor and his campaign team masterfully exploited this image as they highlighted Ralahalu's proximity to the people and his experience as a proven leader.²⁸

How broad and widespread his appeal indeed was by the time of the election could be seen when the pollsters from LSI released their data on the distribution of votes along selected demographic indicators. As shown in Table 4, Ralahalu and his running mate Said Assagaff not only received the majority of votes from people of (almost) all age and income groups, but also from all districts and municipalities. Similarly,

²⁷ Like many other local politicians all over the country, Ralahalu had used the services of a well known professional consultancy firm to sharpen his profile and promote his campaign. Incidentally, this consultancy was the same company that also conducted the quick count on election day (*Lingkaran Survei Indonesia*, LSI), which prompted some challengers to question the accuracy of the quick count. As it turned out, however, the margin of error in the quick count was negligible.

²⁸ One of the campaign slogans of RASA was 'Bukan Janji, Tapi Bukti' (Not [just] Promises, but Proof), which directly referred to Ralahalu's track record as governor.

Table 4. Distribution of votes along demographic indicators (%).

	Ralahalu– Assagaff (RASA)	Tuasikal– Hematang (TULUS)	Latuconsina– Frans (MADU)	Samual– Uwuratuw (ASLI)
Age				
19 or under	40.9	45.5	9.1	4.5
20–29	51.6	37.6	3.2	7.5
30–39	59.8	28.4	2.0	9.8
40–49	64.3	24.3	8.6	2.9
50 and above	63.8	27.5	5.8	2.9
Income				
Less than Rp 400,000 per month	60.9	32.3	3.2	3.6
Rp 400,000–999,999 per month	53.5	31.0	2.8	12.7
Rp 1 million or more	57.4	24.1	13.0	5.6
District				
Ambon	73.94	16.24	6.41	3.41
Buru	63.69	26.22	4.68	5.41
Aru and South-East Maluku	69.30	22.93	3.55	4.23
Central Maluku and East Seram	50.49	38.38	4.84	6.28
Western South-East Maluku	55.70	9.65	11.34	23.32
West Seram	65.08	23.14	9.14	2.64
Sex				
Male	57.8	30.6	4.4	7.2
Female	58.5	31.3	5.1	5.1
Urban/rural				
Urban	63.7	22.5	6.9	6.9
Rural	55.9	34.3	3.9	5.9

Source: Adapted from LSI (2008).

RASA secured almost equally overwhelming support from both men and women and from people living in both urban and rural areas.

But popularity alone does not account for these impressive figures. On the contrary, Ralahalu's immense support from key organizational stakeholders including political parties, religious and ethno-regional organizations as well as economic interest groups was perhaps even more important. Support from these groups was established through complex patron–client relations and, unlike in Java, where the impact of patron–clientelism on voting behaviour seems to be in decline,²⁹ the

²⁹ Several studies on recent Indonesian elections have shown that while patron–clientelism may persist in Java as well, voting behaviour on Indonesia's most populous island seems more determined by the two axial trends of enduring *aliran* structures

prevalence of such clientelistic structures continues to play a huge role in determining electoral choices in eastern Indonesia, including Maluku. The significance of patronage and its utilization through communal organizations in Indonesia's outer islands has been highlighted by van Klinken (2007, 2008, 2009), who observed that '[t]he most striking feature of provincial town life is [...] vigorous organisational life, which combines themes of "traditional" family-like ethnic or religious community with modern techniques of mobilisation and a great interest in capturing the institutions of the state' (van Klinken, 2009). As the biggest Indonesian town east of Makassar, Ambon is certainly no exception to this phenomenon and, after five years at the top of the government, Karel Ralahalu was no doubt highly conscious of the importance of the plethora of political, economic, religious and ethnic organizations operating in and around Ambon. In order to take full advantage of their existence – and their potential to mobilize voters – Ralahalu showed little hesitation in playing the incumbency card.

Indeed, the governor had always laid great emphasis on the development of close linkages with a number of influential non-governmental organizations. This clientelistic dimension of Ralahalu's leadership style had been evident since the very early days in 2003,³⁰ but it seems that it was only after his rise to the provincial PDI-P chairmanship that he actually embarked on a systematic campaign to build ever wider patronage networks. The most important pillars of this emerging web of pro-Ralahalu groups were a number of political parties (chiefly PDI-P, but also some smaller parties), the Protestant Church and many of the *adat*-inspired *paguyuban* from Ambon Island and central Maluku. With the backing of these crucial power brokers, the incumbent could be reasonably well assured that the image he had built over the years would be incessantly reinforced at the grass roots through countless speeches and sermons given at party meetings, church services and community gatherings.

The effort to get these groups on board paid off handsomely on the day of the election. In a rare show of party solidity, for example, PDI-P mobilized nearly its entire pool of members and supporters to vote

on the one hand and increasingly rational decision making amongst voters on the other hand (Aspinall, 2005; Ufen, 2008).

³⁰ On taking up the post of governor in 2003, he appointed a number of close confidants to important positions in the bureaucracy, despite questions about their qualifications. Favouritism was also alleged in Ralahalu's handling of the distribution of reconstruction funds from Inpres 6, even though it should be stressed here that no evidence is available to prove this.

almost unanimously for Ralahalu.³¹ One of Ralahalu's key campaign strategists, provincial party secretary Lucky Wattimury, later singled out the great work of the party's campaign team as one of the main reasons why Ralahalu was able to achieve such an extraordinary result.³² Thus, in the broader context of local politics in Indonesia, one may argue that PDI-P in Maluku became the exception that proved the rule. In contrast to the countless other cases in which weak and fragmented party organizations had neither the capacity nor the motivation actually to support their candidates, PDI-P in Maluku showed that where local organizational structures are strong and coherent, a political party can actually be a very useful tool for campaign support and voter mobilization.

In addition to solid PDI-P support, the GPM connection proved crucial for Ralahalu. No less than 83% of all Christians in Maluku voted for the incumbent (LSI, 2008), confirming the impression that many voters perceived the election primarily as a contest between one Christian and three Muslim candidates. Significantly, GPM was widely believed to have played a highly strategic role in creating and continuously reinforcing this perception through its far-reaching network of churches at the grass roots. And even though GPM leader John Ruhulestin insisted that there were no formal instructions for GPM members to vote for Ralahalu, he also noted that such an instruction would not have been necessary anyway. 'They do not need instructions, they already know whom they should vote for', he said with a broad grin,³³ indicating that the traditional bond between GPM and PDI-P (and by implication, Ralahalu) was still very much intact. The third pillar of Ralahalu's organizational support base comprised the increasingly influential *adat* groups, especially those from Ralahalu's home turf on Ambon Island. Although their direct influence on voting behaviour is difficult to quantify, anecdotal evidence suggests that encouragement and subtle pressure from these *adat* leaders did occur in the run-up to the election, and that these measures helped Ralahalu secure the extraordinary average of more than 80% of the votes in areas such as Ambon Island and Saparua (LSI, 2008).

Finally, another factor that explains Ralahalu's decisive victory was

³¹ According to the quick count results, 96.7% of PDI-P supporters voted for Ralahalu (LSI, 2008).

³² Author's interview with Lucky Wattimury, speaker of the municipal parliament in Ambon, and leader of Ralahalu's campaign team, 16 July 2008.

³³ Author's interview with John Ruhulestin, Chairman of GPM, 4 July 2008.

the overall weakness of his three opponents. Neither Memet Latuconsina nor Abdullah Tuasikal nor Asis Samual possessed significant popular appeal or organizational support. What is arguably even more noteworthy, however, is that none of these candidates even tried particularly hard to gain either of those two key assets. Approaching the election in the misguided belief that primordial sentiment and the support from political parties would mobilize an electorate that was apparently still perceived to be largely immature and irrational, they revealed a serious lack of understanding of what is needed to compete in local elections these days. Memet Latuconsina epitomized this antiquated vision of politics. When he replaced Abdullah Tuasikal as chairman of Golkar's provincial branch in 2006, he seemed to believe that the former regime party's organizational apparatus would instantly accept him and work for him. Numerous elections in recent years, however, have shown that Golkar's once notoriously effective party machine has lost much, if not all of its former prowess.³⁴ Unsurprisingly then, by the time of the election, the party actually did very little to support its candidate. Another indicator that Latuconsina was trying to transplant outdated New Order ideas into the election was his justification for choosing Eduard Frans as his running mate. Alleging that all military men are held in high esteem in Maluku and that the people need a firm hand to guide them,³⁵ Latuconsina gave the impression of an old-style career bureaucrat who underwent his political socialization in the New Order and who has been unable to adapt to the changing times in Indonesia.

Conclusion

Karel Ralahu won Maluku's first ever direct gubernatorial election by a huge margin. He was sworn in by Indonesia's Minister for Home Affairs Mardiyanto on 15 September 2008 (*Kompas.com*, 2008b), endowed with an unprecedented mandate to shape the future trajectory of the province. As this article has shown, Ralahu's resounding victory was a result of a combination of populism and the incumbent's astute instrumentalization of powerful patronage networks. By relying on these two factors as the key pillars of his campaign strategy, the old and new governor demonstrated that he, in contrast to his rivals, fully understood what it takes to win local elections in contemporary Indonesia.

³⁴ See Buehler (2007a) for evidence from South Sulawesi, or Tomsa (2006) for evidence from the 2004 presidential election.

³⁵ Author's interview with Memet Latuconsina, 1 July 2008.

First, the nature of the electoral institutions for local elections has led to an increasing emphasis on personalistic populism, which requires candidates to engage increasingly more directly with their constituencies. Extensive campaigning at the grass roots, often beginning several years before an election, is a must in order for candidates to establish a well constructed image for voters. Especially in a province such as Maluku, with its far-flung archipelagic geography and poorly developed infrastructure, candidates run the risk of low name recognition if they do not travel around the province. Ralahalu knew that and spent much of his time visiting remote communities, consistently cementing his image as a governor who cared about his people. Second, candidates need to be able to build effective patronage networks in order to engage successfully with influential community stakeholders. This may sound straightforward, but given the complexity of organizational life in many Indonesian towns, great tactical deftness is often needed to identify which groups will really be beneficial in an electoral campaign.³⁶ As van Klinken (2008) has shown, ethnic clientelism has its limits, and even the biggest *paguyuban* may not always help a candidate's cause. In Maluku, Ralahalu's assessment of community life in his province turned out to be very accurate and he used it to his advantage.

With the *pilkada* now history, Malukans have turned their attention to the 2009 legislative election [*pemilihan umum, pemilu*]. Indeed, many of the political manoeuvres during the *pilkada*, such as, for example, the PPP's decision eventually to nominate its own gubernatorial candidate, or of so many small parties jumping on the bandwagon with Karel Ralahalu, were obviously conducted with a view to the upcoming redistribution of parliamentary seats. Therefore, it is probably fair to say that a final judgment on Maluku's medium- to long-term prospects for political and social stability will only be possible after the legislative election in 2009. However, the orderly conduct of the *pilkada* was an important step for the province and it gives good reason to hope that the *pemilu* will proceed just as peacefully.

What the *pilkada* demonstrated more broadly was that Indonesia's electoral institutions have proved very effective in the communally charged environment of a post-conflict area. Most prominently, the legal

³⁶ To illustrate the point, Latuconsina secured the support of the military-affiliated lobby organization Communication Forum of the Sons and Daughters of Indonesian Veterans [*Forum Komunikasi Putra-Putri Indonesia, FKPPi*], a rather insignificant actor in the overall picture of Maluku's organizational landscape.

requirement for gubernatorial candidates to run in pairs with a nominee for deputy governor ensured invaluable levels of cross-ethnic communication and cooperation at the elite level. Although most voters apparently took little notice of the deputy candidates, the discouragement of ethnic exclusivism at the elite level significantly reduced the potential for the electoral process to be hijacked by radical demagogues. Following on from this, it is important to emphasize that the democratic procedures introduced over the last few years are apparently now widely accepted as the only legitimate means to gain political power. All the key players showed that they were willing to play by the rules and to desist from using non-democratic means. In the few instances when episodes of thuggery or intimidation did occur, they were either condemned immediately or simply ignored so that they could not be exploited to stir up tensions in the wider community.³⁷ Equally important, all candidates readily accepted the result, although it should be noted that the clarity of Ralahalu's victory probably helped to prevent any kind of post-election dispute. Last but not least, the voters for their part showed their support for democratic elections by flocking to the polling booths in huge numbers. The high turnout was clear evidence that people were determined to have their say and to express their endorsement of the incumbent governor.

Maluku's local democracy may be neither consolidated nor of particularly high quality at this stage. There is no doubt that politics in this former conflict area now revolves around populism and patronage rather than policies and programmes. In the years to come, the government will need to work very hard indeed if it is to deliver improved standards of living for the people of Maluku.³⁸ But at the most basic level, the new democratic institutions have brought enhanced levels of vertical accountability, and they provide critically important channels for the peaceful contestation for power. Ten years after the fall of Suharto and three years after the first ever direct local election in Indonesia, the rules that regulate these channels are still somewhat in a state of flux, but they are becoming increasingly institutionalized and their power to shape the behaviour of political actors could readily be observed in the *pilkada* in Maluku. In light of what happened in this region during the

³⁷ According to the International Crisis Group (2009, p 9), similar elite behaviour was also observed in the much more controversial *pilkada* in North Maluku, where elites also acted decisively to prevent smaller incidents of violence from spreading.

³⁸ See Tomsa (2009) for a discussion of some of the challenges Ralahalu faces in his second term.

time when there were no institutionalized rules, this conclusion is a very positive sign indeed.

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