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**Old Society, New Youths:
An Overview of Youth and Popular Participation in
Post-*Reformasi* Indonesia**

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**S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
Singapore**

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ABSTRACT

An outmoded conception of youth in post-*Reformasi* Indonesia had led to an essentialisation of the demography into a dichotomous characterisation between that of “demographic dividends” and “ticking time-bombs”. In contemporary Indonesia, futurists see youths as fiduciary members of the developmentalist state agenda while pessimists take opprobrium at their volatile and violent track-record. This paper rejects both premises as instances of “Old Society” intrusion into the perceptions of Indonesian youth. Instead it ventures into an in-depth, sober examination of their present state of affairs and predicament. Based heavily upon empirical data from a range of surveys, polls and census, it had been shown that state and institutional attempts at reclaiming/redefining youths as their own fell short of ground realities. Youth emanating particularly from the Y-Generation and beyond have more agency than conventionally felt and it is increasingly imperative that their opinions on democratisation and decentralisation, twin aspects of reform efforts in Indonesia, are urgently taken into account given their potential for growth and influence.

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Putting the “Demographic Dividend” and “Ticking Time-bomb” Arguments into Perspective

Only recently has there been much coverage and anticipation of the alleged “demographic bonus/dividend” that Indonesia would stand to reap, expected to occur sometime during the decade between 2020 and 2030. Referred to conspicuously as “the youth bulge” and “the new consumer class”, this promising new demography would have come of age within the next decade by 2025, making way for an unprecedented increase in the middle-class segment Indonesia had ever seen.¹ This “new consumer class”, buoyed by a consistent and steady GDP growth in recent years, have been well-propositioned as a potential driver of long-term economic growth that can elevate Indonesia’s standing on the world stage economically, *ceteris paribus*.² Prognostications have been rosy at the demographic front. Indonesia is slated to have a lower dependency ratio by 2025 as compared with most other advanced economies in Asia, boding well for the “middle-power” with aspirations of circumventing the much-hackneyed “middle-income trap”.³ According to a study, while demographic stagnation would tie G7 countries needlessly down to an imminent economic morass of lower savings, less spending and decreased productivity, the opposite will be seen in up-and-coming developing nations blessed with a relatively young population, such as that of Indonesia.⁴ Where infrastructure-building would have scuppered, political reforms sabotaged and trade relations thwarted, the “demographic bonus” would have been the promised panacea, envisioned as contemporary Indonesia’s saving grace. The “youth bulge” argument skilfully positions the upcoming demography as Indonesia’s best hedge, a silver-bullet, against

¹ Definition of the new Indonesian middle-class is measured by a per capita expenditure bracket of between \$2 and \$20 per day by adopting the “absolute approach” according to the National Socio-economic Survey (Susenas) and the World Bank (2011). This middle-class group grew from 37.7 per cent in 2003 to 56.5 per cent in 2010, amounting to about 50 million people and is expected to grow even further by 2025. See for instance “2008 again?” in *Indonesia Economic Quarterly* (March 2011), World Bank, Jakarta, pp. 38-41. Accessed 18/11/2013: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2011/03/18/000333037_20110318015637/Rendered/PDF/601520revised010IEQ1Mar20111english.pdf.

² See Chatib Basri “Indonesia’s Role in the World Economy: Sitting on the Fence”, in *Indonesia Rising: The Repositioning of Asia’s Third Giant* (ed. Anthony Reid), Indonesia Update Series (College of Asia and Pacific, The Australian National University), 2012 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, pp. 30-3. Average GDP growth rates in Indonesia have been maintained at 6 per cent since Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s presidency in 2004. See also Satria Sambijantoro “‘Dr. Doom’ predicts RI growth to exceed China and India” in *The Jakarta Post*, 6 October 2013. Accessed 25/11/2013: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/10/06/dr-doom-predicts-ri-growth-exceed-china-and-india.html>.

³ By 2025, Indonesia’s total dependency ratio will reached 0.456. It is a world of a difference when compared with that of Japan at 0.673 in 2025 but does not stand out as much to the other economies of Southeast Asia including Thailand (0.453) and The Philippines (0.458). See also Mason, Lee and Russo, “Population Momentum and Population Aging in Asia and Near-East Countries”, East-West Center Working Papers, Population Series, No.107, East-West Center, Honolulu HI, February 2000. For “middle-income trap” in Asia see “I.M.F. Warns of ‘Middle-Income Trap’ in Asia” in *The New York Times*, Global Business with Reuters, 29 April 2013. Accessed 25/11/2013: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/30/business/global/30iht-asiaecon30.html?_r=0.

⁴ See Kim and Lee “Demographic Changes, Saving and Current Account: An analysis based on a Panel VAR Model”, in *Japan and the World Economy* 2008, 20(2): 235-56.

potential economic gaffes, while adding impetus to the still moot concept of a “rising Indonesia”. Nonetheless, are such expectations placed on demographic numbers alone dangerously premature and perfunctory?

Although demography issues in Indonesia are rarely received with much sanguine fanfare, numerical size matters in today’s world. With approximately 62 million youths in Indonesia as of 2010, the figures are indeed eye-popping.⁵ While it may be surmised that the proposed “youth bulge” are seen through rose-tinted lenses more than it actually should, other more cynical views exist. These views have been socialised and informed by the tumultuous baggage of Indonesia’s youth – one that is very much associated with the mayhem of revolution, reform and activism in times of great polarity within Indonesian society. Some are concerned with whether Indonesia is truly able to utilise its working-age asset/bulge effectively in order to maximise their economic productivity, given that Indonesia always seemed to fall short.⁶ Others are more preoccupied with the deleterious effect such unprecedented “youth bulge” will wreck on society if left unattended or alienated by the state, perturbed by increased levels of unemployment among the young – a disastrous case that is often accorded status as a “ticking time-bomb” waiting to explode, capitalising on society’s fears of the unleashed potential for destruction among youths.⁷ Though still rather far-fetched and needlessly apocalyptic, the “ticking time-bomb” argument have captured the imagination of certain sectors of the public still fresh in their memories of *Reformasi*. Indonesian history, fought with social strife that has youth as its mantelpiece, also shows itself to be the more redoubtable mouthpiece of visceral youth insouciance and vigilantism when arcane statistics do not yet quite convince otherwise.

Instances of organised youth rage in Indonesia in which the state had not been quite able to contain are a dime a dozen. Major ones include the violence that broke out shortly after the *Gestapu* incident trailing the estrangement of non-PKI groups, polarising the *pemuda* into

⁵ According to Indonesian Legislative Law No. 40 Year 2009 (Undang-undang No. 40 Tahun 2009) regarding youth affairs (Kepemudaan) Paragraph 1 Section 1 (Pasal 1 Ayat 1), Indonesian youths are defined to ranging between the ages of 16 to 30 years old. Figure of the number of youths for 2010 taken from *Statistik Pemuda Indonesia 2010: Hasil Sensus Penduduk 2010* (Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS), pp. 21.

⁶ See Riwanto Tirtosudarmo “The politics of a ‘demographic bonus’” in *The Jakarta Post*, 24 September 2013. Accessed 25/11/2013: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/09/24/the-politics-a-demographic-bonus.html>.

⁷ See Ratih Hardjono “A demographic bonus or time bomb?” in *The Jakarta Post*, 5 December 2012. Accessed 25/11/2013: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/12/05/a-demographic-bonus-or-time-bomb.html>. See also Endy Bayuni “Demographic Divided or Ticking Time Bomb?” in *Foreign Policy*, 28 June 2012. Accessed 25/11/2013:

<http://transitions.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/06/28/demographic-dividend-or-a-ticking-time-bomb> and “Indonesia’s demographic dividend might cause a ‘time bomb’” in *Antara News*, 23 December 2013. Accessed 24/12/2013: <http://www.antaraneews.com/en/news/91912/indonesias-demographic-dividend-might-cause-a-time-bomb>.

militant student coalitions.⁸ Another involved the Malari incident in 1974 whereby students, buffeted by a weak economy and egged on by agent *provocateurs* plying onto ultra-nationalist sentiments, mounted large-scale demonstrations during the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, descending into riots and pogroms.⁹ *Reformasi* was, in part, the concerted efforts of a sustained *mahasiswa* (university students) presence lashing back at the suppressive NKK/BKK policies, clamouring for an end to the corruption, collusion and nepotism or KKN (*Korupsi, Kolusi dan Nepotisme*).¹⁰ While events now are a far cry from those turbulent years, these historical threads and linkages have served as telling reminders of the lapse of the Indonesian state on its youths. It also presents classic cases of detrimental backlash when suppression and estrangement were chosen over engagement – a potent reminder when it comes to dealing with its current bumper crop of young people.

This paper seeks to examine and elucidate the present state and predicament of Indonesian youths a decade and a half into *Reformasi* to understand how youths had fared under a post-*Reformasi* state, in an attempt to provide an answer to the dichotomous “dividends”/“time-bombs” debate. Very often, vested interests, state monopoly and historicism over the definition of youths obfuscate their point of view, clouding out nuances that may have developed thus far. Post-*Reformasi* Indonesia presents a whole new vista when it comes to youths and their issues. With the collapse of the Suharto regime, Indonesia had committed itself on an ambitious project of greater democratisation and decentralisation. While neoliberal policies were at the forefront of economic, social and cultural reforms, they remained largely procedural. The new state had not totally wrenched itself from vestiges of the New Order. Post-*Reformasi* Indonesia remains mired in a limbo of patronage and clientelism carried forward.¹¹ The youth demography is very much part of this new state of affairs, encumbered between an old precedent and a new vision. This new demography differs from their predecessors in several aspects. Categorized collectively under demographic and generational circles as “Generation Y/Millennials” (under 30s), they have little or no memory of Suharto’s New Order regime. They are recipients of a more democratic and participatory climate and beneficiaries of a rapidly modernising and urbanising, and

⁸ See Jusuf Wanandi in *Shades of Grey: A Political Memoir of Modern Indonesia 1965-1998*, Equinox Publishing 2012, pp. 53-6. The feuding student groups at that time include the right-wing Indonesia Students Action Forum (or KAMI: *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia*) in collation with the Muslim Students’ Association (or HMI: *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*) against left-wing outfits Marhaen Youth (*Pemuda Marhaen*) and other groups and interests influenced by the Indonesian Communist Party (or PKI: *Partai Komunis Indonesia*) then.

⁹ See Jusuf *ibid.* pp. 112-21. See also Jeffrey Winters in *Power in Motion: Capital Mobility and the Indonesian State*, Cornell University Press 1996, pp. 107-13.

¹⁰ NKK/BKK (*Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus/ Badan Koordinasi Kemahasiswaan*) or Normalization of Campus Life/Bodies for the Coordination of Student Affairs refers to the set of policies by the Suharto government aimed at neutering student activism and politicking in campuses.

¹¹ See also Edward Aspinall in “A Nation in Fragments”, *Critical Asian Studies*, Volume 45, Number 1, p. 30.

some say, rising Indonesia. Having been exposed to a more politically open post-*Reformasi* landscape, they do not deviate far from western counterparts of the Generation Y: opinionated, cosmopolitan, change-seeking, challenging, better informed, mobile, savvy and connected. In other instances, however, they can be dissimilar, contradictory and hard to pinpoint. Studies have shown that the new crop of Indonesian youths display tendencies described as being more religiously-conservative and pious, compared with their western secular counterparts. Surveys have also revealed that many youths identify themselves as *golput*s (non-participants in the political process) – politically apathetic and passive despite having the advantages of a more liberalised political climate. They are also perceived to be less nationalistic.¹²

First-time voters of the 2014 general elections will amount to approximately 29.2 million or 17 per cent out of the 175 million voters.¹³ For young voters in general, it is estimated that about 59.475 million or 34.3 per cent of the total 175 million voters will go to the elections.¹⁴ With general elections just around the corner, how this group of Indonesian youths acts and vote will be indicative not only of their common likes and dislikes of the current state of affairs but also of their collective aspirations for a better *Reformasi* government. Before they cast their definitive vote, this paper would like to give a preliminary analysis or scorecard, if you like, of the incumbent post-*Reformasi* government – as graded by its Generation Y.

The Decline of *Mahasiswa*

Labels serve a particular point of demarcation and departure from preceding regimes. In Sukarno's Indonesia, "Oldefos" (Old Established Forces) were common political bywords utilised to demonise the collective forces of old colonialist and neo-colonialists as opposed to the "Nefos" (New Emerging Forces). "Old Order" was used by Suharto's own "New Order" to denote the obsolescence of Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" and the demise of policies that favoured the Left. "New Order" echoed the establishment of a new state of affairs that had centralisation, de-politicisation and capitalist reorientation as its primary core. *Reformasi* thus echoes the latest in a series of regime/era changes emphasising aspects that parted ways distinctively with the "New Order", with decentralisation and greater democratisation as its *raison d'etre*.

¹² Only 21.2 per cent of youth place national interest on top as their main priority. See Kompas 2010.

¹³ See Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) April 2013, MoHA and National General Election Commission (KPU), 2013.

¹⁴ See *ibid*.

Incidentally, popular perceptions/conceptions of youths and young people in general trailed such thematic regime developments within Indonesia, waxing, waning and evolving in use and popularity. The *pemuda* of Sukarno's era were cast as savant revolutionaries and freedom-fighters struggling for the cause of independence against colonialists and neo-colonialists with their designs.¹⁵ Following their demise, pockets of youth nationalists within Indonesian society took up the vacuum left behind of the eclipsing "Old Order" and the emerging "New Order", with anti-communism as their cause. Some evolved into far Right paramilitary organisations and a smorgasbord of pro-Suharto youth groups such as the *Pancasila Youth* (or PP: *Pancasila Pemuda*) and KAMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia).¹⁶ By the last leg of the "New Order", the *mahasiswa*, a select group of university students, emerged as *primus inter pares* among youths against a repressive New Order. They took over as youth archetype transiting into *Reformasi* and have retained a veritable presence since. With *Reformasi* now well-established, feeble attempts were made by the Indonesian state at appropriating symbols of *Reformasi* as well as its most ardent backers, the youth. Attempts at arresting aspects of contemporary youths were passé at best, contrived to idealised images and over-blown generalisations that drew inspiration from *Reformasi*. Such was the case in 2009 on the Act on Youth.

The Act on Youth was recently reinstated within the Ordinance Act of Indonesia in 2009; a decade after extensive reforms had been undertaken.¹⁷ It particularly spelt out the state's conception of the ideal youth, representative of the post-*Reformasi* generation. A few qualities stood out, among them "having a critical disposition" and being "reformist" are features unmistakably drawn from the legacies of the events in 1998.¹⁸ Indeed, the Act also states that state would actively seek to draw out these attributes by "increasing the participation and role of youth activism within the areas of self, society, nation and state".¹⁹

¹⁵ See John D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1972), pp. 197-202.

¹⁶ In particular KAMI was an anti-communist group that was formed on 27 October 1965. KAMI's primary functions at that time was to help strengthen General Suharto's position. KAMI was known to provoke open conflicts with the Sukarno government. *Pancasila Pemuda* functioned as semi-official political gangsters that staunchly supported the Suharto government. See Arief Budiman, "The Student Movement in Indonesia: A Study of the Relationship between Culture and Structure", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 6 (Jun., 1978), pp. 617-619.

¹⁷ See Undang Undang No. 40 Tahun 2009 Tentang Kepemudaan (Pasal 1 Ayat 1), Department of Home Affairs.

¹⁸ Article 6 of the Act on Youth reads: "*Pelayanan kepemudaan dilaksanakan sesuai dengan karakteristik pemuda, yaitu memiliki semangat kejuangan, kesukarelaan, tanggungjawab, dan ksatria, serta memiliki sifat kritis, idealis, inovatif, progresif, dinamis, reformis, dan futuristik.*" (Translated it means "Services carried out on matters pertaining to youth has to be in accordance with the inherent characteristics of youths, these include spirited effort, volunteerism, responsibility, having a critical disposition, idealistic, innovativeness, progressivity, dynamic, reformist and futuristic.")

¹⁹ Article 7 of the Act on Youth reads: "*Pelayanan kepemudaan diarahkan untuk: a. menumbuhkan patriotisme, dinamika, budaya prestasi, dan semangat profesionalitas; dan b. meningkatkan partisipasi dan peran aktif pemuda dalam membangun dirinya, masyarakat, bangsa, dan negara.*" (Translated it means "Services carried out on matters pertaining to youth has to be directed to: a. fostering patriotism, dynamism, greater cultural

By itself, the state-endorsed view on youth acknowledges the *Reformasi* legacy and by extension, affirms the role of the *mahasiswa*, the pedigreed reformists. Nonetheless, such logic is often taken to its full conclusion by encompassing all youths, with an implication that *Reformasi* is ultimately a homogeneous experience, equally shared among all Indonesian youths. Is this an accurate portrayal representative of the Indonesian youth of today, or merely a receptacle for a glorified past? How “reformist” or participatory are Indonesian youths with respect to the current state of Indonesian affairs? Should they even be painted with the same brush? How do Indonesian youths see themselves today, being direct inheritors of the *Reformasi* movement yet living in a very much reformed environment?

Reformasi has indeed left its mark on Indonesian society, but as far as the younger generation are concerned, its import goes no further than skin-deep. In many cases, reformist tendencies have fallen short of its fullest potential, although forms and rhetoric exist as an ironic reminder of the events of 1998. Lacking a hero to commemorate the momentous precedent, the *mahasiswa* class takes up as its vague exemplar. The memories of *Reformasi* in turn is narrowly rehashed and rehearsed among this small elite class. In a number of university campuses, re-enactment of the events of *Reformasi* were to be found exclusively within the domains of orientation and extra-curricular camps as a rite of passage among freshmen transiting into university life. Such student activities involved mock demonstrations and role plays that included chants, anthems and mass mobilisation in re-creating a familiar solidarity. Fidelity to such activities however is on the demise and it has gone from mere obligatory to optional. One thing is consistent: performing *Reformasi* remained the preserve of the *mahasiswa*, a small elite class among the youth, in only a few selected university campuses. Yet even the term *mahasiswa* and young people’s identification with it had undergone some considerable changes.

Once considered a badge of pride, the “eternal student” (or *mahasiswa abadi*) no longer carries the same panache or adulation it does in the past. Instead it is seen as a stigma of underachievement. Rather than “wasting their time in the streets” as echoed by Daoed Joesoef, education and culture minister during the 1980s at the height of mass student protests, Indonesian students are now opting to “fill it up with reading, writing, conducting research” with the intent of a fast-track graduation and a stable job.²⁰ Universities previously

achievements and a spirit of professionalism and b. increasing the participation and role of youth activism within the areas of self, society, nation and state.”)

²⁰ See Joesoef Daoed, *Mahasiswa dan Politik*, in *Mahasiswa Dalam Sorotan* (Jakarta: Kelompok Studi Proklamasi: 1984), pp. 65-72.

supportive of the Reform movement by the *mahasiswa* in the 1990s are now discouraging students from mobilising or participating in any demonstrations. Demands of tighter curriculums, project-work and shorter graduation periods have also replaced time previously allocated for student bonding and other activities. Outside of universities and elite institutions, the felt effects of shared history and solidarity of student-led, youth-based *Reformasi* among youths are even more negligible. Outside of Java, *Reformasi*'s casts of mahasiswa heroes have less of an imprint. While proximity and geography have played a part in the mythic construction of *Reformasi*, a current statistical overview of Indonesian youth may provide a clue to such disparities.

Census and Statistics

The much celebrated “demographic dividend” derived its resonance primarily from population statistics of youth. However, a deeper look at population growth rates, distribution trends, demographic spread and other indicators on youths presents a less compelling case for the “demographic dividend” argument and a more sobering understanding of Indonesian youths in general.

Although youth (defined 16-30 years of age) as a demographic segment is seen as sizable, its growth rate has not been as stellar. This is demonstrated in the most recent population census on youth taken in 2010. In comparison to three decades ago when the census was last taken (1971-1980), growth rates have slumbered from an astonishing 3.37 per cent to 0.41 per cent (2001-2010).²¹ The distribution of youth in Indonesia registered a heterogeneous trend. Java enjoys the highest concentration at 56.24 per cent while Sumatra (22.37 per cent), Sulawesi (7.16 per cent), Kalimantan (6.23 per cent) and other islands including Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku and Papua (8 per cent) trailed far behind.²² Proficiency levels in *Bahasa Indonesia* among youths as Indonesia's national language and literacy levels are at an all-time high at 98.4 per cent and 98.24 per cent respectively.²³ However, such rousing numbers are not reflective of greater access to higher education or better performance in schools. Although only 1.93 per cent of youths do not have any access to formal education, 80.96 per cent or close to 50.07 million youths do not advance beyond a basic, rudimentary education – with a consideration that education in Indonesia had not been up to par in recent years.²⁴ The

²¹ See Statistik Pemuda Indonesia 2010 *ibid*, pp. 22.

²² See *ibid*, pp. 25.

²³ See *ibid*, pp. 37, 43.

²⁴ See *ibid* pp. 38-9. On a less empirical aspect but nonetheless critical observation of the workings of the education system in Indonesia, see Elizabeth Pisani “A Nation of Dunces?” in *Inside Indonesia* 114: Oct-Dec

proportion of educational levels among youths at a glance is as such: no formal education (1.92 per cent), no formal education at the primary level (3.25 per cent), primary school level (24.07 per cent), middle school level (30.57 per cent), high school level (33.99 per cent) and tertiary level (6.2 per cent).²⁵ In summary, the bulk of education among Indonesian youth peaked at around middle and high school level.

Participation in the workforce among youths within the 16-30 age group stood at a fair rate of 51.78 per cent. Out of this percentage, males edged out at 65.42 per cent compared with females (38.08 per cent).²⁶ As level of education and age rises, so does workforce participation. The distribution of workforce participation among the various levels of education follows a similar pattern: no formal education (2.37 per cent), no formal education at the primary level (3.71 per cent), primary school level (26.97 per cent), middle school level (25.61 per cent), high school level (32.5 per cent) and tertiary/academic level (8.85 per cent).²⁷ Most of the youths employed were diploma graduates of middle and high schools, constituting more than half (58.11 per cent) of the youthful workforce population. Indonesian youths are employed in several notable sectors of industry. Among them certain industries and sectors stand out: agriculture and crops planting (15.75 per cent), processing industries (15.93 per cent), trade (16.08 per cent), social & government services and sole proprietorships (11.87 per cent).²⁸ Not surprisingly, a majority of young employees fell under the category of workers/labourers (46.84 per cent). There are also significant proportions of youths who are self-employed (16.18 per cent), free-lancing (11.22 per cent) or engaged in a family business (17.53 per cent).²⁹ Open unemployment among youths currently stands at 19.59 per cent.³⁰ Though significant, this percentage also covers youths who are still schooling or are unwilling and not unprepared for work. The distribution of open unemployment among youths among the various levels of education also follows a familiar pattern with middle- and high-schoolers constituting the majority: no formal education (10.57

2013. Problems cited in her article of the Indonesian education system include cheating, plagiarism, underpaid teachers, uncertified accreditation and a visible lack of standards in the teaching profession.

²⁵ See *ibid* pp. 45. A worryingly trend to note is that access to education in a few provinces are startling high. Foremost among them is the province of Papua with 311,014 out of a total 830,626 not having any form of education. That is almost one-third of Papua's province youth population. On another note, almost two-thirds of the youth population (550,564) is engaged in some form of work. See also *ibid* pp. 106, 109.

²⁶ See *ibid* pp. 53. The Workforce Participation Rate among Youth is also known as Tingkat Partisipasi Angkatan Kerja (TPAK) Pemuda. The formula for TPAK is as follows: Total number of population in the workforce/Total number of working-age population * 100 per cent. The working age in Indonesia is defined as above the age of 15 years old. Nonetheless, information provided is restricted to the population within the 16-30 years age group.

²⁷ See *ibid* pp. 54.

²⁸ See *ibid* pp. 55-7.

²⁹ See *ibid* pp. 58.

³⁰ See *ibid* pp. 61. The open unemployment rate among youth is also known as Tingkat Pengangguran Terbuka (TPT) Pemuda. The formula for TPT Pemuda is as follows: Total number of youth looking for work, in the midst of preparing for business and willing to work but have not found a job or have not started working/ Total number of working youth (16-30 years age group) * 100 per cent.

per cent), no formal education at the primary level (15.73 per cent), primary school level (18.29 per cent), middle school level (21.02 per cent), high school level (22.26 per cent) and tertiary/academic level (12.22 per cent).³¹

Distribution of the youth population among various provinces varies widely. With Java being the most densely populated island among youths, West Java took first placing as the province with the highest number of youths at approximately 11.4 million.³² East Java is a close second while Central Java comes in third at approximately 8.9 million and 7.6 million respectively. Incidentally, West Java enjoys the highest concentration of youth age 16-20 years of age at about 3.8 million (potential first-time voters).³³ This is followed by East Java (2.9 million) and Central Java (2.6 million). A significant proportion of the youths in the provinces of West Java, Banten, Central Java and East Java are engaged in industry work. Figures currently stands at approximately 1.5 million, 0.5 million, 0.9 million and 0.8 million respectively.³⁴ Another sizable sector derives from the trade and social service (*Jasa Kemasyarakatan*) industry. The top four provinces for trade include: West Java (1,097,832), East Java (742,807), Central Java (707,407) and Jakarta (432,910). The top four provinces for social service include: West Java (649,159), East Java (502,541), Central Java (427,255) and Jakarta (400,589).³⁵

On the whole, there is a greater distribution of youth (aged 16-30) in the cities/urban districts (*perkotaan*) at about 33 million over those residing or working in the villages/rural districts (*perdesaan*) at close to 29 million.³⁶ Java stands out distinctly as having both the greatest number of youth residing in its cities among other islands at 22,106,884 and a significantly larger urbanised youth population in comparison to its rural youth population.³⁷ Java and its provinces also claim monopoly over the highest number of school-going population, including those who are still schooling and those who have stopped school.³⁸ It possesses the largest number of graduates with a high school degree and beyond.³⁹ This inevitably translates into the highest number of working-age youth in the workforce.⁴⁰

³¹ See *ibid* pp. 62.

³² See *ibid* pp. 82. Actual figure for West Java stands at 11,416,358.

³³ See *ibid* pp.84-6. Actual figure for youth population age 16-20 in West Java stands at 3,828,623. A sizable number of them lie and work in cities (2,595,828).

³⁴ See *ibid* pp. 118. Actual figures are as follows: West Java (1,557,790), Banten (542,849), Central Java (946,756) and East Java (808,172).

³⁵ See *ibid* pp. 119.

³⁶ See *ibid* pp. 21. Actual figures stood at 33,378,741 (for cities) and 28,965,014 (for villages).

³⁷ See *ibid* pp.25. To note, the rest of the islands have a greater rural youth population than urban population.

³⁸ See *ibid* pp. 100. Only one province outnumbers the Java provinces in those without schooling opportunities and that is Papua.

³⁹ See *ibid* 106.

⁴⁰ See *ibid* 109.

A statistical overview of the youth population in 2010 raises red flags over certain aspects of youth often overlooked: (i) an uneven agglomeration of youth within the archipelago; (ii) a less than adequate educational provision; and (iii) a fairly high open unemployment rate. Among all these aspects, a worrying gap demarcates Java from the outer islands. Java Island stands out prominently with a disproportionately high concentration of young people, including urbanised youth and middle- and high-school graduates. Other aspects of youth are also skewed in favour of Java, notwithstanding that the island harbours the highest number of mega-cities, has the most developed infrastructure and contains the largest number of state institutions including schools, industries and public services in the archipelago. A case of “Java-centricity” underlies almost all aspects of the Indonesian youth demography including population, education and employment. While large waves of youth migrate into Java, the outer islands are correspondingly being depleted of its youthful population, losing out on the expediencies of regional development and growth. This carries large implications in terms of equitable distribution of resources and human capital throughout in archipelago. Social mobility in turn has narrowly been confined and predicated to the island of Java where most resources and opportunities are based.

Trends and Perceptions

While census and population statistics covers a bird’s-eye view of emerging demographic patterns among youths in Indonesia, timely studies and surveys featuring youth’s opinions achieves a different aspect: it assesses and reifies the performance of the post-*Reformasi* establishment under the eyes of youth. Over here attention is drawn upon a survey conducted by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in partnership and assistance with the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Education and Information (LP3ES) in Indonesia that features specifically on the perceptions of Indonesia’s current batch of “Generation Y”.⁴¹ Key areas of study include: (i) National Politics; (ii) Public Policy; (iii) Foreign Relations; (iv) Nationhood; (v) the Military; and (vi) Islam in Indonesia. This section

⁴¹ See RSIS/LP3ES Survey on Generation “Y” and Indonesia’s Future Outlook (2010). The survey incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches, involving youth aged between 16 to 30 years (in accordance to the Act on Youth) in five separate cities namely Jakarta, Surabaya, Makassar, Padang and Denpasar. The former mainly involved data-collection from face-to-face interviews of a sample size of 1000 respondents. The latter consisted of the use of focused-group discussions (FGD). The survey is available in hardcopy format and can be obtained from RSIS Indonesia Programme. For more information on the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Education and Information (LP3ES), refer to their website at www.lp3es.or.id or email: penelitian@lp3es.or.id.

will provide a summary on the general perception of a cross-sectional segment of Indonesian youth on the post-*Reformasi* state based on the RSIS/LP3ES Survey.

There has been a significant shift in how youth obtain political information over the years. Increasingly, trends are showing that youths are now more open to adopting newer modes of communications but are also sticking with mainstream notions of media. 87.7 per cent of respondents claimed to have obtained their information on political issues from the TV although the internet only accounts for 1 per cent. Newspaper/magazine accounts for 3.3 per cent.⁴² Frequencies vary over these three modes of media (TV, newspaper and the internet) where political information is communicated. For TV, over 47.5 per cent of respondents claimed to have watched it daily while 12.8 per cent reads the newspaper 7 days a week. On the other hand, 36.9 per cent claimed that they spent less than 5 hours per week using the internet.⁴³ Nonetheless, TV still remained a *de facto* source of political information among youths and this is also reflected in the high levels of trust they put on TV as the more reliable source over the newspaper and the internet.⁴⁴

On the issue of popular participation in political events among youths, the survey found that less than half had ever taken part in related events found in high schools, university or community-based organisations (44.3 per cent).⁴⁵ A majority of youth respondents report that they seldom took part in political discussions (on grassroots/local issues) or involve themselves with similar social activities in their localities, nor were they especially interested in political party seminars or training activities.⁴⁶ Active and visible participation in the public sphere by youths has diminished substantially. Only 5.9 per cent claimed to have ever written articles/comments for the mainstream mass media. A surprisingly low proportion of youth (5.8 per cent) admitted that they have utilised new media (writing blogs, etc.) on local/national political issues. Only about 7.5 per cent of youths had participated on the more visceral forms of protest in the public sphere, including demonstrations against government policies. 32.1 per cent were amenable to using Facebook in support of particular

⁴² See RSIS/LP3ES Survey *ibid* pp. 16, Chart 3.2.

⁴³ See *ibid* pp. 17-8, Chart 3.3, Chart 3.4 and Chart 3.5.

⁴⁴ For TV, 82.1 per cent opted for "Somewhat Trust" as compared with 70.4 per cent for newspaper and 44.6 per cent for the internet. The levels of distrust were also higher for newspaper and the internet, registering at 19.8 per cent and 35.5 per cent respectively in comparison to TV at 11.4 per cent. See *ibid* pp. 19, Chart 3.6.

⁴⁵ See *ibid* pp. 19, Chart 3.7.

⁴⁶ 41.6 per cent answered "seldom" for political discussion participation. 47 per cent answered "seldom" for social activities participation. 34.8 per cent never participated in a political discussion. A whopping 86.3 per cent reported that they did not participate in any seminars, training programmes or workshops organised by a political party. See *ibid* 20-1, Chart 3.8, Chart 3.9 and Chart 3.10.

movements.⁴⁷ While 50.7 per cent reported that they have never participated in any campaign activities, 25.6 per cent claimed to have attended political party campaigns.⁴⁸

Several views exist for the state of democracy in Indonesia. Many of the youth respondents felt that Indonesia had achieved only a superficial form of democracy.⁴⁹ A majority of youth (55.1 per cent) felt that Indonesia is moving away from a substantive democracy.⁵⁰ Perceptions on the implementation of the democratisation process and changes within the *Reformasi* system in Indonesia are also mixed. Although in certain areas sentiments were positive – such as combating criminality and creating a more secure environment Indonesia has performed well – many Indonesian youths felt that the state performed badly when it comes to organising free and fair elections (57.6 per cent reported as “bad”) or having adequate avenues allowing for freedom of speech and the formation of organisations (74.1 per cent reported as “bad”).⁵¹ Although accepting of the multi-party system in Indonesia, youths felt that the number of political parties should ideally fall within the range of 1-5 parties (49.9 per cent).⁵² In terms of party ideology, a majority of youths preferred one that is secular (63.9 per cent) as compared to one that is based on religion (28.8 per cent).⁵³

When it comes to the performance of the democratisation aspects of the post-*Reformasi* state, perceptions have not been as positive. Slightly more than half or a total of 52.7 per cent reported that they were dissatisfied with the performance of the legislature.⁵⁴ Youth views on the transparency of the decision-making process by the government have not been in the affirmative either. 49.8 per cent felt that the policy-making process was not transparent (the category used was “opaque”).⁵⁵ 58.6 per cent felt that the government did not bother to consult or ensure that there was adequate participation from the public when making decisions.⁵⁶ Youths had slightly more faith in certain judicial institutions. Almost 55 per cent reported that they were most satisfied with the Corruption Eradication Commission [or KPK: *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*], a relatively new feature of the post-*Reformasi* state. On the other hand, low levels of confidence were expressed for the mainstream law-enforcement

⁴⁷ See *ibid* pp. 22, Chart 3.11.

⁴⁸ See *ibid* pp. 23, Chart 3.12.

⁴⁹ See also Hariman Siregar “Procedural Democracy Perpetuates Social Gap” in *Sinar Harapan Daily*, 9 July 2008.

⁵⁰ See *ibid* pp. 28, Chart 3.18.

⁵¹ See *ibid* pp. 28, Chart 3.17.

⁵² 25.9 per cent preferred a range of 6-10 parties while 15.5 per cent preferred more than 15 parties. See *ibid* pp. 29, Chart 3.19.

⁵³ See *ibid* pp. 33, Chart 3.23.

⁵⁴ 34.1 per cent reported that they were “satisfied”. See *ibid* pp. 37.

⁵⁵ See *ibid* pp. 41, Chart 3.32.

⁵⁶ See *ibid* pp. 41, Chart 3.33.

institutions including the police (16.1 per cent) and the judiciary (9.7 per cent).⁵⁷ When it comes to the attributes of a good or ideal politician, honesty ranked the highest (52.1 per cent) while professionalism ranked second (34.2 per cent). Astonishingly, only 5.7 per cent of them felt that a good politician should be clean from corruption. Being well-experienced on the job is not a big issue as well (5.1 per cent).⁵⁸

On issues of decentralisation and greater regional autonomy, youth views were divided. 44.8 per cent believed that greater autonomy given to the regions may result in the imminent emergence of separatism as compared with 38.9 per cent.⁵⁹ Responding to the implementation of Sharia Law in some parts of Indonesia, opinions were split. 40.7 per cent agreed with Sharia Law implementation while 42.7 per cent disagreed.⁶⁰ Regarding issues of direct regional elections at the provincial, *kabupaten* [or regency] and district/municipal level known collectively as *Pilkada (Pemilihan Kepala Daerah)*, the same pattern occurs. There were a significant proportion of respondents who favoured an independent candidate (42.9 per cent) although the majority still preferred party-nominated ones (50.7 per cent).⁶¹ Given the long-standing and often tumultuous influence the Indonesian military or TNI [*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*] have on political matters of the state, it is a surprise that youths are not adverse to uniformed personnel participating in regional/national (72.0 per cent) or presidential elections (81.2 per cent).⁶²

In terms of national identity in the face of globalisation, an overwhelming majority of youths expressed pride in being identified as Indonesian (94.3 per cent).⁶³ Ironically, the source of their pride lies not in patriotism (5.8 per cent) or a love of national attributes such as “Unity in Diversity [*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*]” (4 per cent). Instead, it lies in the tangible abundance of natural resources and intrinsic wealth including culture (53.2 per cent). Others cited having grown up in the country as their source of pride (20 per cent).⁶⁴ On the other hand, top reasons for youths being ashamed of their Indonesian identity were bad governance/high corruption (36.7 per cent) and underdevelopment (33.3 per cent).⁶⁵ While a majority of the respondents proclaimed that they place their pride in identifying themselves as Indonesian, many felt that nationalism/nationalist sentiments are decreasing in Indonesia (63.2 per

⁵⁷ See *ibid* pp. 38, Chart 3.29.

⁵⁸ See *ibid* pp. 25, Chart 3.15.

⁵⁹ See *ibid* pp. 50, Chart 3.41.

⁶⁰ See *ibid* pp. 51, Chart 3.42.

⁶¹ See *ibid* pp. 52, Chart 3.43.

⁶² See *ibid* pp. 53-4, Chart 3.45 and Chart 3.46.

⁶³ See *ibid* pp. 57, Chart 3.50.

⁶⁴ See *ibid* pp. 58, Chart 3.51.

⁶⁵ See *ibid* pp. 58, Chart 3.52.

cent).⁶⁶ In terms of a preference over identity, 73.9 per cent responded that that they would rather be identified by their nationality rather than ethnicity (6.4 per cent) or religious beliefs (17.8 per cent).⁶⁷

When it comes to choice of careers, most youths aspired to become businessmen/entrepreneurs (45.5 per cent). Other career aspirations include professionals and/or civil servants at 17.1 per cent and 15.4 per cent respectively.⁶⁸

This section covered an expansive range of perceptions and opinions among post-*Reformasi* youths on their perceptions of the state of contemporary post-*Reformasi* Indonesia and how they view its performance. A few issues stood out; in particular views on the state of democratisation and decentralisation in Indonesia remain quite divided. After more than a decade into *Reformasi*, reform efforts were felt to be inadequate, even retracting. Low amounts of confidence were expressed by youths on symbols and institutions of the state and on transparency directed at the legislature as well as several other institutionalised bodies. Dislike for state institutions and symbols could be seen extended into their common aspirations with many opting for a path in business and entrepreneurship rather than becoming civil servants. The other concern comprised of conflicted views over how decentralisation policies have evolved. Quite a substantial amount of youths felt that Indonesia was perhaps going too far in its decentralisation attempts. A significant few were also not quite taken with the increased role political parties and its affiliations play in the *Pilkada*, with many opting to place their bets with non-affiliated independent candidates. The endemic problem of corruption continued to remain a long-standing obsession and a sustained source of disaffection for the post-*Reformasi* state among youths, however it was not a top concern. While many still felt Indonesia had a lot of catching up to do in terms of infrastructure development and improvement in the quality of life, a vast majority were nonetheless proud to be identified as Indonesian. Nationality ranked high as the aspect that they would like to be identified with. There were also slight shifts in how youth viewed common aspirations. Social and political activism was surprisingly not top of the agenda for most youths. Alleged influence of social media, though still paling in comparison to normative media outlets, is undeniably exerting its hold more definitively. In short, ambivalent views on the performance of the post-*Reformasi* state among youth meant that the

⁶⁶ See *ibid* pp. 60, Chart 3.54.

⁶⁷ See *ibid* pp. 59, Chart 3.53.

⁶⁸ See *ibid* pp. 24, Chart 3.14.

symbols and progress of *Reformasi* – democratisation and decentralisation – remained not only a work in progress but also represents a major source of debate and contention.

Youth and the Post-*Reformasi* State: Lost in Translation

This paper has so far given an overview on the census, statistics, trends and perceptions representative of youth under the post-*Reformasi* state based on current studies and surveys. Results that emerged were not always in line with official edicts.

With the *mahasiswa*-inspired reforms now a mere passing event, state, institutions and groups belated attempts at redefining and appropriating meanings and representations of the current “Generation Y” fall short of ground realities. New political constellations that emerged following establishment of the post-*Reformasi* state gave way to newer exigencies. Although corruption remained a bitter and intense subject of concern it no longer commands a centralised import, with well-received institutions like the KPK acting as a reliable stop-gap despite existing deficiencies. Attention is instead diverted to state structure, its arraignment and the effects of democratisation and decentralisation. In summary, three issues highlighted by surveys and studies above deserve special mention because of its relevance to the state, society and youth: i) vexation with political parties; ii) concerns on a lack of bureaucratic transparency; and iii) conflicts over greater regional autonomy (decentralisation process).

Vexation with political parties (or anti-party attitudes) had been a relatively recent phenomenon for Indonesia, considering that legitimate political parties have never been at the helm of politics since Guided Democracy was installed under Sukarno in 1957.⁶⁹ Recent efforts at reforms have since elevated the position of political parties to the fore. While political parties are an essential staple to the democratic scene of Indonesia, its history has been rocky. Its re-emergence has since been received with mixed reactions. Poor voter-turnout after the 1999 general elections was seen as a proxy indicator of what was to come. While more political space is opened up to allow for greater democratisation and participation of political parties especially after the *Pilkada* elections in 2005, their popularity plummeted further. Parties were increasingly viewed as “corrupt, without good programmes, concern for the public welfare or competent leaders”.⁷⁰ Recent corruption scandals among

⁶⁹ See also Marcus Mietzner in *Money, Power, and Ideology: Political Parties in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia* (ASAA Southeast Asia Publication Series), NUS Press 2013, pp. 44-6.

⁷⁰ See also Liddle and Mujani “Leadership, Party, and Religion: Explaining Voting Behaviour in Indonesia” in *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(7): 832-56.

notable party outfits further blighted the appeal of political parties.⁷¹ Some scholars have even officially associated Indonesia with a case of *Parteienverdrossenheit* (or “vexation with political parties”).⁷² Common consensus (even among youths) was that the number of political parties was too many and they were not seen as a positive force for change or reform.⁷³ A fully open-list PR (Proportional Representation) system introduced in the 2009 elections demonstrated an attempt to de-‘party’-ise national politics in a move towards greater political individualisation. Nonetheless, this did not mean a complete de-legitimisation of the party system. Youth, for that matter, have been more open-minded towards independent candidates and have shown a preference towards certain individual candidates over their represented party. While independent candidates are barred from running in the national level, provincial and regional elections have been indicative of a rising preference for the independent vote especially among youth.⁷⁴

Secondly, non-transparency and bureaucratic high-handedness are at the forefront of resentments among youths. Such grievances can be traced back to the call for an end to “KKN” [abbreviated in Bahasa Indonesia and translated as “Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism”] and the distrust they harbour for state institutions since the last days of Suharto. Nonetheless such distrust extended into the *Reformasi* era. Patronage/clientelism carried forward remained a tacit practice among institutions and parties in which reward and patronage, personal loyalty and other ascriptive norms remained entrenched in contrast to well-defined responsibilities or a strict adherence to western standards of rules and merits. To that effect, although the post-*Reformasi* state rather contradictorily presents itself as more open and transparent, many youths remain cautious with the participatory system and dissatisfied with transparency in the decision-making process at higher levels. The rise of decentralised dynastic polities at the regional and kabupaten levels is a further reification of

⁷¹ These cases include The Prosperous Justice Party’s (or PKS: *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*) beef graft case and The Democrat Party’s (or PD: *Partai Demokrat*) Hambalang scandal case. PKS is a major Islamic party while PD is the incumbent party to the 2009 elections. See “Prosperity from Injustice” in *Tempo* cover story, 11-17 February 2013 and “Democrats Divided” in *Tempo* cover story, 18-24 February 2013.

⁷² The case of *Parteienverdrossenheit* was brought to mind by Paige Johnson Tan in her analysis of anti-party attitudes in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. See Paige Johnson Tan “Anti-party Attitudes in Southeast Asia” in *Party Politics in Southeast Asia: Clientelism and Electoral Competition in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines* (eds. Dirk Tomsa and Andres Ufen), Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series, London and New York 2013: 80-100. This is also in line with the argument made by political scientist Poguntke, stating that parties were seen as “overly self-interested, eternally squabbling instead of striving for the common good, incapable of devising consistent policies, and prone to corruption.” See also Thomas Poguntke, “Anti-party Sentiment – Conceptual Thoughts and Empirical Evidence: Explorations into a Minefield” in *European Journal of Political Research*, 29(3): 19-44.

⁷³ There were 48 parties competing in 1999, 24 in 2004 and 38 in 2009. 15 political parties have been slated to run in 2014 elections. See also Jonathan Chen and Adhi Priamarizki, “Indonesia’s Democratic Evolution: Political Engineering Post-Reformasi,” *RSIS Commentaries*, 30 August 2013.

⁷⁴ The *Mahkamah Konstitusi* of 2007 forbids independent candidate from running at the national level.

the entrenched patrimonialism present at a more micro level.⁷⁵ Such a trend is worrying because it undermines trust in public institutions and the democratic process in Indonesia.

Lastly, youths displayed divided opinions on how greater regional autonomy should proceed. Decentralisation measures by the state had proceeded apace hastily in the shadow of an imminent national crisis, with the initial intention of coping with the growing threat of disintegration in 1999 under Habibie, but had remained unchecked. The landscape of Indonesian politics had changed significantly since direct transfer of authority and resources to the district level were initiated.⁷⁶ The recent institutionalisation of *Perda* (short for *Peraturan Daerah* or local regulations and laws) among various provinces further consolidated the autonomy each province has over its populace. Although the impetus for regional separatism lost its potency soon after *Reformasi*, increased regional powers and “special autonomy” accorded to local elites benefitted a few and led to an abuse of the system among some of them, sometimes to the detriment of the centre. While most of the *Perda* were designed to be idiosyncratic to the respective provinces, some were clearly manipulated in favour of local oligarchies while others represented clear signs of political hubris and absurdity.⁷⁷ Increased regional autonomies may have decentralisation of powers as its goal, but its unchecked advance had since benefitted a few, leaving most of its constituencies at the behest of local elites and dynasties.

⁷⁵ See Yoes Chandra Kenawas in “The Rise of Political Dynasties in Decentralized Indonesia”, unpublished RSIS dissertation.

⁷⁶ For an excellent treatise of the decentralization process since 1999, see Harold Crouch in *Political Reform in Indonesia after Suharto*, ISEAS Publishing Singapore: 2010, pp. 90-110.

⁷⁷ Among them included a *Perda* (also known as *qanun*) that disallowed women to straddle behind motorcycles in Aceh. See Julia Suryakusuma “View Point: Straddle babble and legal tangle in Aceh” in *The Jakarta Post* Opinion, 9 January 2013. See also Robert Endi Jaweng (Executive Director of Regional Autonomy Watch (KPPOD), Jakarta) “Dynasties and the Local Election Bill” in *The Jakarta Post* Opinion, 1 November 2013. Another prominent case involved Banten Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah (part of the Atut family dynasty) charged with graft over grants and social aid into infrastructure projects. See [Camelia Pasandaran & Jonathan Vit](#) “Constitutional Court Corruption Scandal Shakes Banten Dynasty” in *The Jakarta Post*, 11 October 2013.

Conclusion: Old Society, New Youths

The emergence of youth as a significant *tour de force* in Indonesia is not without its precedent. Nonetheless their import had never been fully addressed nor compensated beyond the merely symbolic or archetypal. Even in the post-*Reformasi* state, connotations and imageries of youth could not escape its teleological inevitability – as a fiduciary digit in the developmentalist state (“demographic dividend”) and a historical liability in the collective consciousness (“ticking time-bomb”). For one, the state’s penchant for homogeneity over heterogeneity facilitates the obfuscation of the demography as a cornucopia of originality and diversity. Blanket generalisations on youth based on an outmoded compendium of attributes forged in the wake of *Reformasi* obfuscate matters even further. While youths have moved beyond the cookie-cutter fit of a *mahasiswa* trope, the Indonesian state lacked behind. This paper has shown that youth are more than just an artificial state-sanctioned construct. In an increasingly participatory climate within post-*Reformasi* Indonesia, youth can no longer be construed as passive takers of society or participants in name. As a collective, they transcend mere economic “dividends” or metaphorical “time-bombs”. Their collective is heard more assiduously in opinion polls and sentiment barometers, and will be reflected evidentially on their eventual political choice.

One can derive a general sense of the youth demography’s predilection on how politics could have taken shape with more heed – less party more personality, greater transparency and a caution towards the unmitigated effects of decentralisation. Jokowi’s immense popularity lies at the heart of such expectations.⁷⁸ His rise to political stardom, attributable to the effects of social media, was partly the result of a contrarian stance towards the reigning clientelism and entrenched prejudice of the day.⁷⁹ Strong support for Jokowi has been quantified by recent popularity polls, showing him ahead of heavy-weight figures seen to be representative of the old.⁸⁰ However, his chances at the elections running on the PDIP ticket hinges upon the blessings of Megawati. One thing is for certain – interpreting sentiments of the youth have

⁷⁸ See Jonathan Chen and Emirza Adi Syailendra, “Indonesian Youth and the ‘Jokowi Effect’” in *The Jakarta Post* Opinion, 28 June 2013.

⁷⁹ This was demonstrable in his handling of the Tanah Abang reallocation project as well as his stance on the Lenteng Agung sub-district. See for instance Corry Elyda “Lenteng Agung protest rumbles on” in *The Jakarta Post* Headlines, 26 September 2013. Jokowi’s impartial stance on Christian candidate Susan Jasmine Zulkifli in Lenteng Agung Sub-district incident also deserves some mention. See Sita W. Dewi “Jokowi stands by Christian subdistrict head” in *The Jakarta Post*, 29 August 2013.

⁸⁰ According to a survey from the United Data Center (PDB), Jokowi is currently in the lead with a 36 per cent electability rate, followed by Prabowo Subianto at 6.6 per cent as his closest contender. Another survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) suggests that Mr. Widodo is at the top with an 18 per cent electability rate followed by Prabowo Subianto (6.9 per cent), Aburizal Bakrie (5.7 per cent) and Wiranto (4.2 per cent).

already become an increasing necessity with the demography becoming ever more influential in numbers.

Granted, the “demographic dividend” argument will probably still materialise. The same can be said for the demography’s propensity in culminating as eventual “time-bombs”. Quibbling over equally plausible spectrums serves only to perpetuate the exemption of a thorough survey of their present state of affairs. Primary among them is the ease of social mobility into middle-class status which will form the bulk of the country’s so-called “dividends”. Majority of Indonesian youths are still trapped in low-skilled, lower wage jobs with many unable to keep up with the job market – notwithstanding their different stances on democratisation and decentralisation the Indonesian state had undertaken since.⁸¹ This paper had endeavoured to deliberate on the intense and inconclusive “dividend” and “time-bomb” debate. More importantly, it had strove to illuminate the existential inadequacies of both arguments while anchoring itself on the more contemporary predicaments and qualities of the current Indonesian “Generation Y”. Given the lackadaisical coverage of youth-related issues especially after *Reformasi*, it is hoped that both empirical and analytical aspects of this paper may contribute towards a fuller understanding of the complexities found in the interactions between youths and the contemporary Indonesian state.

⁸¹ See Angela Erika Kubo “Indonesian Education Falls Behind its Economic Growth” in *The Diplomat*, 26 December 2013.

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