

ELITES, INFORMAL RULES, AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN INDONESIA

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Democratic consolidation is a contested concept that entails various definitional components. In academic circle, this very concept has produced a lively debate and has dictated a research agenda among scholars in comparative politics. Many of their studies are based on “large-n” cases for testing their theory (or theories) of democratic consolidation. However, how far and how useful this concept can help us understand problems of democracy in a single case? This paper surveys the literature on democratic consolidation and subsequently assesses the usefulness of the concept for understanding the work of democracy. With Indonesia as a specific referent, the paper argues that the notion of democratic consolidation can illuminate as well as divert our attention from the real problems of Indonesia’s developing democracy. In Indonesia, it is the political elite, and not the mass public, that has posed problem for creating a “consolidated” democracy.