

A Hundred Years of Feminism in Indonesia

An Analysis of Actors, Debates and Strategies

Gadis Arivia and Nur Iman Subono

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- This study deals with the rise of feminism in Indonesia which started a century ago. Feminism in Indonesia has a long history and has contributed to the discourse of equality as a critical project that brings social change. It is frequently accused as a proponent of western ideology or adopted from Western cultures; however, this study shows that Third World feminism stems from its own ideals and cultures.
- Although feminism has significantly progressed in Indonesia, there is still a strong rejection mainly among fundamentalist religious groups, conservatism and right wing populism. Gender, sexual orientation and religious minorities are confronted with discriminative laws and bylaws in various jurisdictions in Indonesia.
- Third World or Indonesian feminist scholarship should be supported to develop its own production, publication, distribution and consumption of ideas and be used as an analytical and strategic tool to develop its own gender knowledge and practices. Indonesian feminist scholarship can play a significant role in strengthening equality and gender justice in a conservative society or western hegemonic discourse.

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Foreword

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), the oldest German political foundation, commits to the core ideas and values of social democracy. At the center of FES work abroad in more than 100 countries, lies the promotion of gender equality as an integral part of social justice, democracy, peace and international solidarity. Throughout all fields of its work, gender equality is a central criterion for the way to address the topic at hand. The quest for gender equality is a highly political struggle, in which FES is willing to participate by building alliances and empower agents of change to overcome resistance to the idea of equal access to and equal control of resources for all members of society.

The feminist movement in many Asian countries has its roots in other rights-based movements. Hence, it tends to integrate feminist narratives with other social justice issues. Privileging a rights-based approach has resulted in a fragmented, unfocused movement that often lacks a strong political dimension, neglects political and economic empowerment, and ignores existing power structures. Ironically, the main stumbling blocks to strengthening the movement often come from within, namely its lack of inclusiveness and unity. In addition to this, there is only limited interaction between the feminist movement(s) and other social movements, scholars who are not explicitly feminists, the private sector and policymakers. This results in feminist claims being perceived as isolated and marginalized.

FES intends to promote a platform for a more inclusive and future-oriented feminist movement in the region as a nurture base for feminist demands and impulses. The roots in the social justice movement can be used to build bridges and forge new alliances between feminists and

other actors from society in order to create a broad base in society for gender equality.

In the light of this background, FES has launched a project on Political Feminism aiming to build bridges between established feminist activists and new-generation feminists, and between staunch advocates of feminism and “non-converts”, ranging from “elite feminists” to grassroots activists integrating people regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Moreover, the FES sees its role in providing a platform for coalitions between feminists, progressive thinkers and opinion leaders, civil society actors, social movements, trade unions, academics, representatives of the private sector, and policymakers. This can be achieved in part by shaping a new and more progressive feminist discourse in Asia that is more “appealing” to other progressive actors and will help to reveal common causes.

The study at hand shall serve as a starting point. It provides an analysis of historical roots and evolution of the feminist movement as well as actors, debates and strategy in contemporary Indonesia. In this opportunity we would like to thank our cooperating partners Dr. Gadis Arivia and Dr. Nur Iman Subono for their excellent work and efforts. We hope that this study provides valuable information and can contribute to regional debate in Asia.

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Introduction

To date, discussing feminist figures and movements, including its theories and history in Indonesia still have its particular issues. However, it should be acknowledged that the present day has seen many changes, in the sense that there is more liberty and openness in discussing feminism: its issues, thoughts, pros and cons. This relative freedom can be found particularly after the end of the authoritarian leadership of President Soeharto. One of the frequently mentioned complicating factors in feminism discussion in Indonesia is the assumption that feminist ideas, thoughts, and movement do not have social and cultural roots in Indonesia's society, or in other words, those ideas and thoughts originated from the West or are seen as having Western connotation.

In fact this situation is not unique to Indonesia. It can also be found in other Asian countries. There is an attempt to differentiate women from feminism, to be exact, the feminist movement from the women's movement. For instance, as recorded by Stivens (Stivens 2000: 31), Islamic women activists in Malaysia are more inclined to use the term "womanist" instead of "feminist." Even scholars and researchers in China prefer the term "feminology" to differentiate their conception from Western feminist theories (Edwards, 2010; 53). Apparently to date, the term 'feminism' remains to be considered as "something" from outside "themselves", thus many women, particularly scholars and researchers, are more comfortable to be part of Women's Studies rather than that of the feminist.

This raises the question whether there indeed is a "black and white" distinction between women, particularly women activists and academics in Indonesia and the feminists in the West. The fact at issue here is that there are many women activists and academic-researchers in Indonesia who are not comfortable being labeled

as feminist. Nevertheless, what they discuss and their political practices are in many ways in line with the knowledge and actions of feminist movement. It is within context to quote a scholar Susan Blackburn, who has written much on the women's movement in Indonesia (Blackburn, 2010: 22).

"Although few in Indonesia would claim to be feminists, it is legitimate to use the word to apply to much of the women's movement if we understand feminism in a basic sense as 'analyzing the problem of women' and 'acting to oppose discrimination against women'.

As a result, even though the term 'feminism' for many parties is yet to be used in a widespread manner, or despite the allergy to the use of the term, actually what has generally become many women activists and academics' field of research and area of struggle is the same or inherently related to the ideas and knowledge of feminism. Therefore, this paper is trying to expose and analyze the background of women's movement in Indonesia, in which feminist ideas and knowledge have been closely embedded in it, stretching back from the colonial era (liberal phase), the Social-Marxist phase under Sukarno regime, to the New Order authoritarian regime under President Soeharto (nationalist phase), and subsequent development until the period of *Reformasi* (Reform era). The women's movement was at the very center of the *Reformasi* movement, marked by the protest of *Suara Ibu Peduli* (The Voice of Concerned Mothers), a protest against injustice, towards democracy and equal rights for women. This paper attempts to raise the emerging and developing feminist ideas and knowledge with relation to political activities and practices among women in Indonesia.

Colonialism: Where were women?

As recorded in history books, Indonesia experienced the longest colonialist process under Dutch power. It could be argued that the colonisation started in the 18th Century when the Dutch government established VOC (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie – East India Company*) in 1602. Since then, VOC expanded to various regions in the *Nusantara* (read: current Indonesian territory), whether through trade, conquest, expropriation, or the practice of “pitting one against another” (*divide et impera*). This lasted until the end of 18th century with VOC’s bankruptcy and subsequent dissolution. However, Dutch colonialism lasted until Indonesia’s declared independence, which was politically proclaimed by Soekarno-Hatta on 17 August 1945.

During the colonial period, there were various resistance movements, both through armed and diplomatic channels, against the authority of the Dutch East Indies, which was considered to be the oppressor. Both avenues in their various forms formed part of a nationalist wave that resisted colonialism and imperialism, which also occurred in other Asian countries such as Vietnam and The Philippines. There were a number of national organizations with religious or ethnic flavor established during this period. Examples include Boedi Oetomo (Excellent Mind) which was established in 1908 with ethnical foundations or Muhammadiyah which was founded in 1917 with a religious basis. In their own ways and methods those organizations opposed the Dutch colonial authority. In addition, there were other hardline organizations with communist, socialists, and other ideologies; or organizations which opted for underground and guerilla methods.

This subsequently raised into question where were women in the fight against colonialism? Were they “merely” described as a part of the soup kitchens behind the men’s armed struggles? Did they merely contribute as couriers or by serving coffee and snacks during political meetings of the resistance movements, which were generally constituted of men? Or were they merely parts of the refugee waves along with their children because they no longer had safe residence or lost their homes

due to the colonial armed forces’ attacks? Typically, in Indonesian historical literature, women, may it be their thoughts, activities, or struggles, are seldom recorded. At least there are two issues that are frequently raised in explaining the absence of women in historical literature. *First*, women in the national struggle were not in decision making positions nor acted as the ones determining the ongoing political processes. *Second*, in national struggle, women groups seemed to give way to their male counterparts and opt to “not be dominant in the circle of men”. It is obvious that such interpretations give meaning to history as “his” instead of *her story* or *our story*. The absence of women is definitely not accurate since historians have also recorded the existence of remarkable women as part of the armed struggle against colonialism. One may recall Cut Nyak Dien and Cut Meutia from Aceh, the northern tip of Sumatra. In Java several names are known such as Roro Gusik who with her husband, Untung Suropati, started an insurgency movement. In Maluku there was Martha Christina Tiahua who took part in the revolution led by Pattimura, while from South Sulawesi we can find Emmy Saelan, who was actively involved in the insurgency movement led by Wolter Monginsidi (Saskia, 1988; 71).

In the beginning, women groups’ activism or movements in Indonesia stemmed from their activities in mixed gender groups. Women who had the opportunity to pursue education in elementary and middle school, generally joined associations such as scout activities or regional based groups such as *Jong Java*, *Jong Sumatera*, and *Jong Ambon*. Through such channels, women became involved in the public arena and even took part in the Youth Congress Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*), which was declared on 28 October 1928. History also recorded that there were several women’s organizations which were highly influential and had a role in Indonesian revolution. One of the most prominent organizations was the first nationalist women organization in Indonesia, Putri Mardika (*Independent Women*), which was established in 1912. The organization was closely related with the first nationalist movement, Boedi Oetomo. 1920 saw the establishment of Aisyah, the

women wing of Muhammadiyah, which was an Islam-based organization. During the colonial era, aside from women who were involved in armed struggle with their male counterparts to fight against the Dutch, there were also several women who had the courage to demand and propose several resolutions to the colonial government, such as what is known as the resolution for Involvement in Indonesian Parliament (*Resolusi Berparlemen Indonesia*) in 1938. They rallied for and promoted the right to vote and to be voted for. The Dutch East Indies government responded by providing a room for native women to vote and to be Indonesian representatives in *Gemeenteraad* (Level II Regional Parliament). There were figures such as Emma Puradierda in Bandung, Sri Umiyati in Cirebon, Soenaryo Mangunpuspito in Semarang, and Siti Sundari Sudirman in Surabaya (Suwandi, 1993; 89).

It is also important to note that, regarding the involvement of women in the public domain during the colonial era, around the beginning of the 20th century, from 22 to 25 December 1928 to be precise, women's organizations conducted the first Women Congress in one and a half months after the Youth Pledge Congress on 28 October 1928. Attended by 1000 participants and 30 women's organizations, several women's issues were raised during the congress. The congress identified three challenges faced by women during that era, which were marriage-related, polygamy, and access to education. However, the underlying spirit of the congress was, due to the extremely strong influence of the wave of nationalism at that time, countering or managing the existing diverse ideologies and interests with the primary purpose of attaining liberty from Dutch colonialism (Aripurnami, 2013; 13-14). The subsequent Women's Congresses were held in Jakarta (1935), Bandung (1939), and Semarang (1941). In the third Indonesian Women's Congress (*Kongres Perempuan Indonesia/KPI*) that was held in Bandung, it was decided to declare 22 December as the Day of United Women's Movement in Indonesia to fight for the esteem and dignity of Indonesian women. The day is commemorated every year by selling white flowers, the profit of which is subsequently submitted to KPI (Kowani, 2009:99). President Soekarno set Mother's Day through Presidential Decree No.316 Year 1959. Unfortunately, the meaning of Mother's Day was then reduced, from commemorating the Indonesian women's movement, to the Western interpretation of Mother's Day. Feminists in Indonesia to date continue

their endeavor to clarify the meaning of the country's Mother's Day back to the original meaning, namely the struggle for women's equality in Indonesia, as intended by the first Women's Congress.

Japanese colonialism that only lasted for three and a half years (1942-1945) in Indonesia, caused considerable harmful effect towards the existing nationalist organizations or movements, including women's organizations. The Japanese colonial government took the decision to terminate as well as ban all women organizations. They only allowed one women organization called *Fujinkai* (meaning: women's group), with supervised and regulated activities based on what was dictated by the Japanese government. The organization was intended to fight against illiteracy, run soup kitchens, and join social works (Vreede-De Stuers, 2008;175). The organization lasted until the Japanese government lost the World War II, on 17 August 1945 with Indonesia immediately proclaiming its independence on the same day.

The collaboration between women's struggle and the Indonesian nationalist wave at the time resulted in a doubled edged sword, namely serving as an obstacle for Indonesian women on one hand while liberating them on the other (Blackburn, 2010; 22-23). On one side, female activists apparently had to be cautious or to strategize the connection of their ideas, knowledge, and movement with those of feminism developed in the West. This was due to the nationalist movement at the time that constantly suspected foreign or external ideas, more so if they had a direct impact towards women, who traditionally had always been considered as the bearer of good values and harmony in Indonesian society. This was proven to be on the contrary, as being part of the nationalist movement would also liberate women. Why so? Because this served as the legitimation for women to actively participate in the political and public sphere, to learn the skill of public speaking and participate among men, as well as within women's groups.

Pioneer of Feminist Thoughts

During the colonial era, particularly at the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century, in addition to women bearing arms and maneuvering within formal politics, there were several female figures who were highly prominent in fighting for access to education. They included Maria Walanda Maramis (1827-1924) from North Sulawesi, Dewi Sartika (1884-1947) from Pasundan, West Java, and Nyi. H. Achmad Dahlan from Yogyakarta. It is necessary to also mention here Rohana Kudus (1884-1972), the first female journalist from Minangkabau, West Sumatra, who managed *Soenting Melayu* in 1912. The newspaper at the time was considered very progressive and critical, because it raised sensitive issues such as customary problems which were not women-friendly, such as polygamy, the necessity of education and skills for women, and the sorts. The raised issues had surpassed the time period. A year before, in 1911, she established a vocational school named *Amal Setia* to empower women in the economic sector. In her era, Rohana was one of the few women who believed that the discrimination of women, including the right to access education, was an arbitrary action thus had to be resisted. Even though Rohana could not access formal education, she diligently learned from her father, a civil servant in the Dutch government; and also from her father's Dutch superior, who often times provided reading material from his office. Her strong drive and learning spirit allowed Rohana to quickly comprehend materials taught by her father. With her intelligence, bravery, sacrifice, and struggle, Rohana fought against injustice in order to change the living condition of women.

Nevertheless, women's activities and movements in Indonesia, both directly and indirectly, were getting more prominent due to the letters written by Kartini, addressed to her Dutch friends (such as Mrs. Abendanon, Stella, Mrs. Ovink-Soer, etc). The compilation of her letters were printed into a book titled *Door Duisternis Tot Licht* (1911), and later the book became very well known among Indonesian women when Armin Pane, a *Balai Pustaka* author, translated it into Indonesian and titled it "*Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*" (*From the Dark*

Light Rose). It seemed that the book inspired Indonesian women to fight for their esteem and dignity to be equal to men. At this point we grew to be familiar with the term "women's emancipation", and R.A Kartini herself was considered to be a feminist figure in her era.

R.A Kartini (1879-1904), was the second child of a Javanese royal family member who was the Regent of Jepara. Kartini initially lived in Jepara and then moved to Rembang, Central Java. In her letters, she recounted numerous times the traditional values that constrained women, made them dependent on men, thus being economically, socially, and culturally powerless. Subsequently, Kartini analyzed why such powerlessness occurred and she concluded that the cultural system in her community was the culprit behind the constraint of women. In brief, referring to Saskia Wieringa (Wieringa, 1998: 6), a professor in the *Institute of Social Studies*, Netherlands, Kartini's main ideas or proposals were; (a) education for women is one of the essential requirements to improve her people, since an educated mother could educate her children better; (b) not only poor women, women from a higher economic status had to be provided with the opportunity as independent breadwinners, and the opportunity to find an occupation that suits them, such as a nurse, midwife, and teacher; and (c) polygyny must be eliminated as it degraded the dignity of women.

Nonetheless, all Kartini's feminist ideas or thoughts created a polemic since she decided to marry The Regent of Rembang, who already had multiple wives and children in 1903. It is known that she frequently discussed with tones of hatred and anger the degradation of women who had no choice and were powerless and had to endure polygamous marriages. Did she sacrifice herself by agreeing to marry a polygamous man because of her dedication to her highly respected parents? Did she accept the marriage with the assumption that her role and position as "the primary wife" compared to his other wives, because her father's family's status and position was higher in Javanese communities, would provide her with the opportunity to realize her

dreams? Did she make the sacrifice as a strategy, as her husband's position would enable her to help Javanese women in accessing education? Did she finally consider feminist ideas that she had come to know through reading materials and correspondence with her Dutch friends were not as good as the traditional Javanese

values of harmony? There are indeed many questions which remain to be answered on this issue. However, despite all the polemics, Kartini was a prominent icon of women's struggle in her era, even though she was not the only one. In 1969, under Soeharto's regime, Kartini was declared as a National Hero.

Women and Feminism Post-Colonialism

Despite a growing number of women's organizations including the emergence of women's ideas and figures, historical record noted that in terms of strength, progressiveness, and member and sympathizer base, GERWANI (Indonesian Women's Movement/*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*) was one of those with the highest degree of all of the above. Its existence and role were so socially and politically prominent in the two earliest periods of democracy in Indonesia (since the end of 1940s to 1965), namely the constitutional democracy (liberal democracy) and the guided democracy (under the authoritarian leadership of Soekarno).

Initially, GERWANI was named GERWIS (Enlightened Women's Movement/*Gerakan Wanita Sedar*), established in 1950, which in the literatures was often times referred to as the socialist feminist movement, with only 500 women members who generally were highly educated and possessed more progressive political awareness compared to other women's groups. The organization could be considered as a cadre organization with selected members. However, more time passed, and by 1954 the organization's membership reached 80.000. GERWANI, through intense internal debate, decided to expand its constituent base by covering women from grass root level. The organization was highly concerned with the living and working condition of women workers who were laborers and farmers, and they in turn formed the majority of its supporters. GERWANI was also heavily involved in formal political activities, joining the campaign for parliamentary election, and was successful in securing seats for four of its members as elected representatives in 1955 election (Wieringa, 1998; 19-20).

Indonesian politics with all of its actors and institutions immediately experienced drastic change after the tragedy that became known as the 30 September Movement (*Gerakan 30 September*). GERWANI in its last moments had 1,5 million women members, which then became targeted for destruction by the armed forces under General Soeharto, during the power struggle in 1965. The New Order government, made clear its political

choice and military operation decision, namely to oppose and destroy all organizations that tried to mobilize the communities at the grass root level in Indonesia. To be more exact, all communists, leftists, "Soekarno-oriented" political powers were the general target of destruction by the New Order regime, both through military and socio-political forces. Without question, PKI (Indonesian Communist Party/*Partai Komunis Indonesia*), in which GERWANI had close ideological connection, was included in the list to be terminated. It also included other affiliated organizations such as SOBSI (Indonesian Trade Unions Centre/*Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia*), Youth of The People (*Pemuda Rakjat*), Indonesian Farmers Front (*Barisan Tani Indonesia/BTI*), Cultural Institution (*Lembaga Kebudajaan Rakjat/Lekra*), Indonesian Students Corp (*Corp Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia/CGMI*), Indonesian Young Students Association (*Ikatan Pemuda Pelajar Indonesia/IPPI*), and Indonesian Scholars Association (*Himpunan Sardjana Indonesia/HSI*). Arresting, detaining, kidnaping, murdering, and criminalizing communist or leftist people occurred every day in several regions in Indonesia, such as East Java, Central Java, Bali, Sumatera, and Aceh. Anti-communist movement both from religious and secular organizations were backed by the military.

Since then, independent, militant, progressive women's organizations which generally focused on the grass root level, with massive amounts of members and supporters, were practically eliminated from the political map of the Indonesian women's movement. This was the period when we came to know that the only women's organization which operated in villages, named the Family's Welfare Guidance (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/PKK*). The organization was established by the New Order regime with the mission to support and implement National Development, particularly to ensure the success of the family planning program to control the birth rate (Suyakusuma, 2011). This type of organization obviously cannot be categorized as a feminist organization nor claimed to have feminist ideas and practices, since all of its work constituted subordination to the power of the state, which was dominated by men. This was

visible from the organization's structure and leadership, which comprised of government officials' wives. This was also the case with other women's organizations which were closely controlled by the state, two of the most prominent were Dharma Pertiwi (an association of military officers' wives) and Dharma Wanita (association

of civil servants' wives of The Republic of Indonesia), which was the pair organization with Korpri (Republic of Indonesia Civil Servants Corp/*Korps Pegawai Republik Indonesia*), which has a parallel hierarchical structure with the hierarchy of the husbands' position.

The Emergence of Contemporary Feminist Thought

Subsequent to the end of the New Order authoritarian regime under Soeharto, how and what kind of feminist ideas or thoughts have been developing among the Indonesian women's movement scholars and activists? Although those ideas and movements started to develop in the New Order era, they were very limited. In universities and NGOs, feminist ideas or thoughts returned to prominence after the end of the New Order.

Contemporary feminist thoughts started to gain traction just before the onset of the Reform era, in the mid-1990s, and have grown to be very visible since 1998. There were two developing ideas prior to and at the start of Reform era, first, deconstructing sexist discourse and promoting feminist knowledge through activities that include the publication of journals, books, and literature as well as conducting relevant studies, and second, emphasizing the discourses on pluralism, equality, and transnationalism. The two ideas influenced how women's issues are affected by feminist perspectives. The feminist perspective in the contemporary era is distinct from the previous era. In the contemporary era, theories of feminism have a role; the intellectual basis of feminism is very evident in the movement. The feminist perspective is used to highlight those issues the movement fights for in the contemporary era, such as gender violence, trafficking, sexuality, polygamy, development, democracy, and human rights.

Contemporary feminist theories rapidly develop in women's organizations and universities. The theories provide intellectual tools which enable actors (agents) to examine the injustices they are facing, while at the same time allow for knowledge building on the oppression of women. The body of knowledge in turn forms the basis for strategies to refuse subordination and improve women's lives (McCann et al, 2003:1). As mentioned by McCann, feminist theories answer various emerging questions such as: Why and how women are oppressed? How can we understand certain occurrences are an intrinsic part of sex-based social oppression, instead of due to a woman's arbitrary misfortune? How can women fight against oppression and how can we change the

condition? Theories of feminism thus must be linked with politics. It means, since the beginning, we must be aware of the correlation between political theories and practices in assessing the whole process of injustice and gender inequality (McCann et al, 2003:2).

From the middle of the New Order regime until 1998, there were several women's organizations that were notably very concerned with Indonesia's condition, in particular the evident ever widening gap between the "have" and the "have nots", and the ever deteriorating poverty. This was despite the fact that Indonesia was always described by international institutions such as IMF and World Bank, as a successful model of national development, indicated by the massive foreign capital flow and high economic growth. Women in general, particularly who lived in villages, were the most harmed by such a national development model. A number of women's NGOs focused on assisting women to gain more empowerment and escape poverty by launching programs such as micro-credit schemes. However, other groups started to notice that this was not only an issue of poverty but also an issue of sexuality. The realization pushed several women's NGOs to launch anti-rape, harassment, and other forms of gender violence campaigns. This started in 1983 with the establishment of an NGO, *Yayasan Anisa Swasti* (Anisa Swasti Foundation/ Yasanti) in Yogyakarta, which focused on strengthening women's labor rights, including those who worked in *batik* industries as shop attendants. The tendency was then followed by other similar organizations in various cities such as Kalyanamitra in Jakarta which was really concerned with issues faced by laborers, by providing information on laborer's rights. These organizations since their establishment have taken the side of women in all their capacities, such as for laborers, farmers, fishermen, and informal workers (Aripurnami, 2013; 25).

The emergence of several NGOs during those years was heavily related with human rights violation cases experienced by community groups. All of those cases, may they be direct and indirect violations, were due to the power structure of the authoritarian New Order

regime, which collaborated with foreign capital or collusive capitalists and only prioritized political stability and economic development (read: economic growth) without paying any regard to the rampant exploitative processes and rights violations of the marginalized classes in the society in general. In the New Order regime, there were numerous human rights violations records, and those specifically targeted against women reached their political climax at a number of notable tragedies, one of them is known as the case of Marsinah. In the 1990s, on 8 May 1993 to be precise, a labor activist named Marsinah (born in Nglundo, 10 April 1969 and died on 8 May 1993, at the very young age of 24 years), who had worked at PT Catur Putra Surya (CPS) factory in Porong, Sidoarjo, Central Java, tragically was found dead after she had been declared missing for three days by her friends. The body was found in the woods in Jegong sub-village, Wilangan village, with marks of extreme torture as cited in her autopsy report. She allegedly had been kidnapped, raped, tortured, and then murdered. Marsinah's case was horrifying as well as scandalous as it was covered by domestic and international media, and was recorded by the International Labor Organization as Case 1773. Marsinah received the Yap Thiam Hien Award in the same year posthumously as an acknowledgement for her service, courage, and consistence in fighting for labors' basic rights, to the extent of sacrificing her life. There were some speculations that several military personnel were involved in Marsinah's case. It is not a surprise that the case strengthened and increased public antipathy against the military, which was the backbone of New Order regime.

During the last years before Soeharto's resignation as the president in the New Order regime, there were an increasing number of human rights violations in various regions in Indonesia, which were closely related to resistance movements, both at individual level and in groups. The resistance movements gained prominence and became increasingly open in challenging the government's authority. One of the peaks was the 27th July 1996 tragedy, known as the Kudatuli Tragedy (the July twenty seventh Riot) or the Grey Saturday Tragedy (the riot occurred on a Saturday). The tragedy was a hostile takeover of the Indonesian Democratic Party's headquarter (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia/PDI*) on Jl. Diponegoro no 58, Central Jakarta. The headquarters were managed by the supporters of Megawati Soekarno

Putri, who was elected as the Party's Chairperson, but whose leadership was not acknowledged by the government. The attack was launched by the supporters of Soerjadi, the Chairperson of the Party appointed in a government (read: police and military) backed counter PDI Congress in Medan. Based on the report of The National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), during the attack 5 persons died, 149 persons (both civilians and the police) were wounded, and 136 persons were arrested. Komnas HAM also firmly concluded that there were human rights violations committed in the tragedy. Meanwhile from the government's corner accusations were launched against Democratic People Party (*Partai Rakyat Demokratik/PRD*) activists as being the masterminds of the riot, leading to the pursuit and arrest of several activists from PRD being incarcerated. Budiman Sodjatmiko as the leader of PRD at the time received the heaviest punishment, which was 13 years of prison.

Deconstruction of Sexism Discourse and Involvement in Protest

Due to various human rights violation cases as described above, feminist organizations did not have much choice or aide for implementing their activities and programs. Several feminist organizations, both directly and indirectly, started to implement varied anti-New Order strategies and political maneuvers. Women's Journals Foundation (*Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan/YJP*), published the first feminist journal, *Jurnal Perempuan* (JP) in 1996, to empower women through knowledge. After observing the increasingly authoritarian New Order regime, JP took the initiative to hold intensive internal meetings from November 1997, to discuss multiple theories that could assist in explaining how and in what way civil society's power, particularly women's movement, could legitimize an overthrow of an authoritarian regime. During that period, JP also intensively campaigned against the violence inflicted upon women's movements, collaborating with the United Nation Development for Women (UNIFEM), and saw directly the implication of the violence towards democracy and women's rights.

During the year 1997, the human rights violations worsened. There were reports of students being

abducted and to date disappearance cases remain unresolved. In late 1997, JP held multiple discussions on *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, which is an association of Argentinian mothers whose children were “disappeared” during the Dirty War under the military dictatorship regime from 1976 to 1983. They focused on how those mothers’ peaceful protests demanded answers about their missing children in front of Casa Rosada, the presidential palace in Buenos Aires, Argentina. These groups of mothers questioned the military regime about their children who never came home. They became a symbol of resistance to oppose the military regime in prolonging its power in the country. This case was discussed with several university lecturers mainly from the Philosophy Department at UI (among them were Karlina Leksono, Nur Iman Subono and Rocky Gerung), who were also a part of JP. They reached the point wherein the leader of JP (Gadis Arivia) and her closest friends took the decision to conduct a protest. The protest was intended to break the silence of the middle class, urging them to care about national issues and unite against the authoritarian regime. It was decided that the most effective way in fighting against the authoritarian regime was by mobilizing a women’s movement and using the “mother” figure to attract public sympathy. In January 1998, the plan to overthrow the New Order regime was getting stronger. On 13 February 1998, JP held the first meeting, inviting numerous feminist activists, to discuss the plan of protest. Around 15 people attended the meeting including JP’s staff and organizations such as *Solidaritas Perempuan* (Women’s Solidarity), LBH APIK (APIK Legal Aid Institution), and several individuals such as activists Myra Diarsi, Tati Krisnawati, Julia Suryakusuma, and Robin Bush (a student from United States who was writing her dissertation).

To actualize the camouflage of “mothers”, JP implemented a strategy called “The Milk Politics”. The strategy was necessary so as to make it appear that JP was very concerned about mothers who could not buy milk for their children due to the economic crisis. The distribution of milk boxes at JP’s office was intended to show the impact of the economic crisis towards mothers. On 20 February 1998, JP held the second meeting. That night more people gathered, including new faces such as Prof. Dr. Toeti Heraty (one of the founders of Women’s Journals and philosophy professor from University of Indonesia), Gayatri (an LGBT activist),

Dina (Walhi), Agung Putri (Elsam), and Dr. Kartini Sjahrir (an anthropologist from University of Indonesia). It was then the decision was reached that the word “milk” was to be the slogan for the rally to overthrow Soeharto under the strategy of “mother figures”, and it would be executed in the protest, planned at the Hotel Indonesia roundabout. The political strategy was to promote the word play of “milk” (*susu*) and “Soeharto”. It was also agreed that the protest would be called The Voice of The Concerned Mothers (*Suara Ibu Peduli/SIP*). The feminists in attendance of the meeting were demanded to commit to the planned protest that was planned to be held on 23 February 1998. At that time, the political condition was absolutely terrifying due to the economic crisis and the government’s order to activate alert status (*Siaga Satu*) during the period prior to the general assembly of People’s Consultative Assembly Republic of Indonesia; which meant there was a standing order to shoot anyone suspected of attempting to disrupt the assembly, rendering such action legally justified. Meanwhile, the cheap milk sale in JP’s office, which was intended as a political camouflage, triggered an uncondusive situation for the agreed protest as a high number of people were lining up to buy the product, even causing pushing and shoving to the point that the crowd broke the windows of the office. Although there might not be a direct correlation, due to the pushing and shoving incidence, as well as the harrowing political condition everywhere including *Siaga Satu*, most of the people who attended the meetings in YJP’s office canceled their participation in the protest, some of whom walked out. On 22 February 1998, the JP team held a small meeting and decided to keep protesting on 23 February 1998, although by that time there were only a few female activists committed to go ahead with the protest such as Wilasih, Julia Suryakusuma, Tati Krisnawati, Gayatri, Yuniyanti Chuzaifah, Myra Diarsi, Novi Andriyani, and some nuns.

The protest under the camouflage label of “mothers” named SIP, with activities of singing, giving flowers, and reading poems, lasted briefly and ended with the arrest of Gadis Arivia (JP), Karlina Leksono (JP), and Wilasih Nophiana (an activist from Salatiga who pretended to be a regular mother). The arrest lasted for 24 hours and a trial was conducted on 4 and 9 March 1998, with a guilty verdict given to the three arrested persons who were then fined for disrupting public order. The trial was

filled with visitors from elite groups in Indonesia, the middle class, and the general public, who then donated fund to pay the fine.

Gadis Arivia's defence speech clearly indicated SIP was a feminist movement with feminist ideas although the speech did not mention feminism and indicated the word "mother" was only a strategy considering Indonesia was governed by a dictatorship.

Chief Justice and the Court which we respect,

Freedom of expression is a unique anthropological trait in human kind. To have an "opinion" and "to be human", are identical. Dialog requires openness. Openness requires honesty. Freedom of expression also means "to have different views", and only with it humanity advanced. With different views, we open dialogue. With dialogue, progress achieved...For us the question is not whether we have broken the law but whether the law respects freedom of expressions...It is not how grave or trivial the accusations of our crime, what we are concerned, is whether this court respects human rights, or not (Central Jakarta District Court, 9 March 1998)

The case of SIP had an extraordinary impact. Mass media bought the label "mothers" and described the protest as a "mothers' protest" without any particular ideological interest (as the discussed strategy in JP's office). However, the sentiment reported by the mass media was inaccurate as the protest was fully conducted by feminist activists. At the same time, JP's office became the center of organizing a "Lunch Box" (*nasi bungkus*) to support students' protest in May 1998. Based on JP's accountability report to donors, there were 70.576 lunch boxes distributed and public donation reached the amount of Rp. 1.120.541.865,-. The fund was used for several activities such as for transportation cost, producing T-shirt with "Total Reform" written on it, and a publishing newsletter titled "Moving", a students' propaganda newsletter. Finally, President Soeharto who had lost his legitimacy and the support of his closest assistants resigned on 21 May 1998 (Subono, 1999).

In the later development, after the fall of President Soeharto, the SIP icon had produced support and

participation from "real" mothers" in developing SIP in their residence. Whereas, we now know that the SIP icon was a political camouflage for feminist movements in third world countries to fight against authoritarian governments. Here we witness the SIP icon was interpreted inaccurately by the public, including mass media and mothers in general. However, JP accommodated the demand of those mothers although at the end JP decided to not be involved further as SIP political strategy was to serve a purpose of a subversive project to overthrow Soeharto's regime, and it was considered already successful.

"Very few people reached the conclusion that "the milk politics" of SIP was actually a very strategic third-world-country women political movement. The selection of "mother" as a label which was thoroughly considered in the office of *Jurnal Perempuan* indicated a clever and extraordinary political maneuver within the country's repressive climate. Female activists are aware that the repressive climate is significantly influenced by the dominating role of men. Female activists and scholars understand that exploiting traditional elements in order to struggle for democracy can be done. And this was what SIP project did" (Gadis Arivia, 2006:208).

It is such a pity that in historical books on the contestation for the reform space, the feminists' role in the SIP project is not included as a formative political actor in the transition to democracy, despite the fact that the protest on 23 February 1998 which was labeled SIP was a brilliant strategy. Unfortunately, SIP is "boxed" as a mothers' movement and not linked with feminism and *Jurnal Perempuan*. The SIP icon has been described as an expression of the inability of mothers to buy milk for their children due to the monetary crisis. The closest depiction of the real nature of SIP is that it was as an attempt to empower mothers. Scholars and intellectuals from various domestic and international universities also failed to understand the phenomenon of SIP as a strategic movement in third world countries. Several published books used as a reference such as the one written by Kathryn Robinson (2009), *Gender, Islam, and Democracy in Indonesia*, addressed the SIP protest in February 1998 and described it as the following:

In February 1998, the “dying days” of the authoritarian regime of President Suharto, a group of women occupied the roundabout outside the Hotel Indonesia (HI), a hectic road junction on one of Jakarta’s busiest streets. The motorists whose passage was impeded were handed roses, packets of milk powder and pamphlets protesting the rising costs of basic commodities consequent on the Asian financial crisis. The protesters faced by women in meeting the basic needs of their families. The group organizing the protest called itself Suara Ibu Peduli (SIP), or the Voice of Concerned Mothers... Two of the women arrested Karlina Leksono and Gadis Arivia, were among the organizers of the demonstration, but the third, Wilasih, was a passerby who had spontaneously joined the protest. Her action symbolized the extraordinary and immediate appeal the protest had for a wide range of Indonesian women and its powerful engagement with the symbolism of women as mothers that was part of New Order hegemonic ideology (2009:2).

Interestingly, quite a similar description was mentioned by Susan Blackburn (2006), a scholar from Australia, with these words:

On February 23, 1998, in the midst of the Asian financial crisis, a group of about fifty women identifying themselves as “housewives and mothers” (some of whom also happened to be prominent intellectuals) staged a demonstration in a conspicuous Jakarta location under the name Suara Ibu Peduli (SIP, Voice of Concerned Mothers). The purpose of their “prayer of milk” protest was to draw attention to the failure of the state to provide for the basic needs of Indonesian citizens, particularly mothers and children...

It did not stop at Kathryn Robinson and Susan Blackburn. Even Indonesian scholars such as Melanie Budiarta (2003), a professor from Cultural Studies, University of Indonesia, also described the SIP protest on 23 February 1998 as a middle class women’s protest and did not categorize it as a feminist protest that fought against the authoritarian state. Most of the explanation in her article described the SIP protest as an attempt to empower and inspire mothers. Whereas as explained, the SIP protest

was a political action, intended to overthrow President Soeharto. All the descriptions are simplistic, failing to explore further the process behind the SIP.

Why in all analyses on SIP, particularly from foreign scholars, SIP is always categorized only as a “mothers’ action” and not a feminist movement? The fact is most of the women who were protesting were feminists, including the ones who got arrested (Karlina Leksono, Gadis Arivia, and Wilasih). Is there a hesitation to admit, even a resistance, to acknowledge that Indonesian feminists had a role in overthrowing Soeharto and urging the reform process? Are they as scholars aware, consciously or unconsciously, more comfortable to conceptualize Indonesian women as “mothers” who fell victim to the economic crisis? Thus it is quite accurate to conclude that there is a hesitation in admitting that Asian women (brown skin) also comprehend feminism, are from intellectual groups, and are able to publish feminist journals and engage in a political fight against an authoritarian regime. The fact is, the imagination of “mothers” politics is more dominant in western studies or analyses, which negates Indonesian feminists’ ability in resisting and deconstructing repressive authoritarian politics. Indonesian feminists are considered as the “victims” (object) and not as the “agents” (subject). As an important note, it is necessary to mention that there were men, for ease of reference, they may be termed as *male feminists*, who were actively involved in the SIP movement. They were aware since the beginning that they were a part of feminist movement, and acted as a support group without any tendency or interest to dominate or take over, nor to form an exclusive organization.

Therefore, the phase of women’s movement in the Reform era can be considered to be filled with critical thoughts from educated women and men. They are proficient in feminist theories. As mentioned, it is necessary to note a women’s organization named Kalyanamitra, established during the New Order regime in 1985, which stood independently after Anisa Swasti Foundation (*Yayasan Anisa Swasti/Yasanti*) in Yogyakarta. Initially, Kalyanamitra focused on labor issues but then concentrated on data collection on various women issues and thus became the center of communication and information on women (Kalyanamitra.or.id). The feminist knowledge building Kalyanamitra engaged in significantly contributed to the

progress and discussions on feminism in Indonesia. One of its greatest contributions was the publication of Saskia Wieringa's book, "Historical Facts of The Destruction of Women's Movement in Indonesia" which was published in 1999. The book is a dissertation capturing research conducted in 1982-1985 on Gerwani (Indonesian Women's Movement/*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*), which in the 1965 tragedy became the political victim of the New Order regime. The leader of the New Order regime manipulated the symbol of women sexuality (Gerwani) to destroy the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party/*Partai Komunis Indonesia*) that was considered to have committed a treason. Wieringa exposed the fact that Gerwani, a prominent women's organization in Indonesia, had been defamed and its members were tortured, raped, and even murdered.

The book was published while discussions on Gerwani and PKI were still considered a taboo. Kalyanamitra's decision to publish the book is a courageous act. In addition, the book contributes critical thinking, which was halted in the New Order regime era. Comprehending the history of Indonesian women is crucial to change the patriarchal way of thinking, which has depicted the Indonesian women's movement not as political but rather merely ceremonial. Kalyanamitra's collaboration with Saskia Wieringa, a Dutch scholar generated a good result. The effort to gain justice for Gerwani members who were falsely accused and imprisoned persists. Wieringa with Nursjahbani Katjasungkana, a human rights lawyer, filed the 1965 tragedy before the International People's Tribunal in The Hague, Netherland, on 10-13 November 2015.

Critical publications generate critical thoughts. In the reform era, knowledge played an important role in women's empowerment. Besides the Women's Journal (*Jurnal Perempuan*) as the first feminist journal in Indonesia, there is also the Affirmation (*Afirmasi*) journal, published by the WRI (Women's Research Institute) in 2002. The WRI focuses on research and training. Much training has been held there such as on reproductive health and the development of feminist methodology. An NGO which also focuses on feminist-based education is the Women's Vessel Institute (*Institut Kapal Perempuan*), which was established in 2000. This NGO has a specific mission to develop feminist critical education with various strategic issues to be disseminated

to the public. *Kapal Perempuan* develops methodology, studies, publication composition, and research reports including critical reading materials. Undoubtedly there are many more feminist organizations that later were established in the period approaching and during the Reform era, which enrich and strengthen the correlation between theories of feminism and political practices in the struggle of women's movement, both presently and in the future.

Sexuality and Conservatism

Feminist contemporary thoughts in Indonesia are closely related to the emerging feminist novels that deconstruct patriarchal culture. In 1998, Ayu Utami published her first novel, *Saman*, which raised discourse on sex. The novel won many awards including champion of the annual competition of the Jakarta Art Board (*Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*) and it was translated to many foreign languages. In addition to Ayu Utami, there is another feminist fiction writer named Djenar Maesa Ayu, with a short story titled *Breastfeeding Father (Menyusu Ayah, 2001)*. Both writers present an extraordinary feminist perspective on sex and women's bodies. Their works are able to deconstruct the sexual taboo within society. Not only that, their works are also able to deconstruct the submissive description of women. The description of women in their work is that of a confident woman, who is able to decide her own life as a strong individual.

There are many critics of women authors with a feminist vision. They are labeled as "fragrant literature" authors due to their middle class and urbanite background, with expansive and global life experience. Both Ayu and Djenar refuse the label, which they consider sexist and discriminative. One of the frontal critics to their work came from a writer named Taufik Ismail, who objects to their vulgarity in discussing sex within their books. Taufik labels their work as "crotch literature" or "genital literature" (Arimbi, 2009).

There is a misconception or even a failure to conceive feminist works. For some male writers, Ayu's and Djenar's works are considered to be only about sex, whereas through discussion on sexuality, especially in the case of Djenar, they address the issues of reproductive rights and gender violence. Observe the power of Djenar's composition in the following sentences:

I wonder, why father never breastfed me again. Although I am parched. Although I yearn. Father denied it. He said he never breastfed me with his penis. He said that I made things up. Even when I explained to him that I could still remember occurrence after occurrence when I was a baby, he beat me up with his belt and banged my head, saying that I inherited my late mother's dirty thoughts. One of mother's traits that he hates. "Your mother is a whore! Fortunately she quickly died. If not her aura of promiscuity would have affected you (2001:49).

In this quote, it is evident how the oppression of women is buried in patriarchal sex/gender system. Taufik Ismail argues that sex is extremely taboo to be discussed while Djenaer does not think so. She exposes the power relations paradigm in the relation between men and women. Men control both private and public lives, thus to deconstruct men's oppression, the private life must be exposed to show that this is a form of patriarchal culture's dominance. Sex is then political (Millet, 1970).

Another thing that is evident in both Ayu Utami's and Djenaer Maesa's feminist short stories and novels is how they are inspired by their own life experiences, as can be seen from Djenaer's account of her life story:

I have a friend whose vagina was inserted with a piece of wood and to this date she cannot bear children. From that incident, I feel that my parents did not let me to be stupid. They did not commit a huge mistake. I feel that parents who are not open about sex to their daughters are doing a big mistake. Because thanks to my parents, I know exactly what to do with my reproductive organs. When having a sexual intercourse, I have already been informed of its risks by my parents. When I was 18 years old, I lived freely, and the freedom made me a responsible person, not making a fool of myself. I am aware of everything thus I am not harmed like most women, I did not die due to a shaman's practice, or I do not have any prolonged regret. Hypothetically, if I have to do an abortion, I have to know why it is imperative, therefore it would not be something that I regret, since I know the reason. (An interview with Djenaer Maesa Ayu at JP 41, 2005).

Critics and condemnation, as well as slurs towards feminist novels and short stories were also gaining in number during the reform era. Openness does not only support democracy but also provides space for groups with anti-gender issues, democracy, and human rights. If pro-democracy groups base their arguments on constitutional clauses, conservative groups base their arguments on holy books' clauses. An example is the pornography bill.

In 2006, feminists pushed back on the pornography bill introduced by congress which was regarded as restricting minority's freedom of expression. They organized a huge protest at the roundabout Hotel Indonesia (HI), Jakarta, where 6000 people participated. The protest was festive with music and dances from different traditions, showing Indonesia's diverse cultures. Prominent figures such as the first lady Sinta Nuriah Abdurrahman Wahid and Inul ("dangdut" singer) joined the protest. Unfortunately the protest did not stop the bill to become law, however it was clear Indonesians that day sent a message to oppose fundamentalism and favor freedom of expression, equal rights and plurality.

A growing conservatism movement is on the rise in Indonesia. Those groups gain support, both directly and indirectly, from people sitting in the parliament, such as one of the Islamic political forces, PKS (Social Welfare Party/*Partai Keadilan Sosial*). Generally speaking, Islamic parties object to issues such as sexuality, reproductive rights, and gender equality. The words gender equality and justice are still problematic, mainly noticeable in what happened to the attempt of the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection to push for the passage of the Law on Gender Equality and Justice. To this date, the draft bill is still not deliberated due to the great resistance from Islamic parties which are strongly allergic to those words (JP 86, 2015). Sri Danti MA, the secretary of the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection at the time mentioned:

... the fear of the term gender equality, (is a) fear that women will one day surpass men. This is our assumption. The fear that women will forget their destiny (Interview with Sri Danti, JP 86, 2015).

Not only the draft bill on Gender Equality and Justice, the one on Sexual Violence is also pending deliberation

by the parliament. Rocky Gerung who is part of the advocacy team from the academic circle of the Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women for the draft bill on Sexual Violence argued:

The draft bill is not considered urgent because it only focuses on "women's issues". Thus the legislative's mindset is still conservative in considering types of crime. (Interview with Rocky Gerung, 11 December 2015).

Regional government also promotes conservatism or at least allows it. This is visible in the number of regional regulations containing discriminative policies, which reaches 342. Those regional regulations contain various stipulations that regulate various women's matters, such as how they should dress, that are based on religion and morality sentiments, said Andy Yentriani, former commissioner of National Commission on Violence Against Women (Andy Yentriani, VOA: 23 August 2013). The number of discriminative regulations increased from 282 in 2012 and 207 in 2011. Out of 265 policies, 76 regulate how to dress based on a particular interpretation of Islamic teaching. There are also 124 regulations on prostitution and pornography, 27 policies on separating men and women in public places, 19 of which use the word "*khalwat*" or immoral. Another matter of concern is there are 35 policies which constrain women from going out after dark. Regions which issue numerous discriminative policies are West Java, West Sumatera, South Sulawesi, Aceh, South Kalimantan, South Sumatera, and East Java.

It is true that under President Joko Widodo administration, 3143 local laws were annulled recently. However, these are local laws not pertaining to discriminative regulations. They are regulations concerning tax, retribution, or business bureaucracy. Local laws related to gender and religious intolerance are still alive and well.

State Feminism

The era of reform also encourages the establishment of a government institution, the National Commission on Violence Against Women, which has feminist leaning since its founders are feminist figures in Indonesia. The commission was established as a government institution to enforce the human rights of women. It is established

through Presidential Regulation No. 181, 1998, and reaffirmed by Presidential Regulation No. 65 Year 2005.

The commission was established as the result of persistent efforts by several feminists such as Prof. Saparinah Sadli, who at the time was the Head of Women's Studies in University of Indonesia. In addition to Saparinah Sadli, there were other prominent names such as Ita F Nadia, Sinta Nuriyah, Kuraisin Sumhadi, Mayling Oey, Mely G Tan, Kamala Chandrakirana, and Smita Notosusanto. Their names are well-known in the women's movement. In the era of this commission, it is accurate to say that there is an agency of policies on women within the government/state or what is referred to as state feminism/*femocrat*. They are feminists who work within state apparatus. They work to enforce women's rights, improve pro-women policies, and act as political representatives (Lovenduski, 2005:3-4). *State feminism* was unimaginable during the New Order regime due to the massive suspicion of the government which wanted to silence women's rights.

Hannah Pitkin (1967) identifies four types of political representation: *authoritative-representative* who has the right to act on behalf of the state due to its legal position, *descriptive-representative* which exists on the basis of similarity in characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, and origin/place of residence, *symbolic-representative* based on national ideas (ideology), and *substantive-representative* which promotes the interests and policies on women. The commission manages to promote women's rights and represent the feminist movement. However, it stopped from being a facilitator and it is not an institution that has a mandate to produce feminist concepts or knowledge. Therefore, this commission needs to collaborate with feminist NGOs to gain in depth knowledge on concepts and theories, as well as data with in depth feminist analysis.

There are only a few excellent *femocrats* in the promotion of women's rights. The National Commission on Violence Against Women frequently considers itself as an independent body, although it is undeniable that part of its operational cost is funded by the state through state budget (APBN). *Femocrats* who are within the government face various challenges. One of the *femocrats* who should be noted due to her success in

promoting gender-sensitive policies is Sri Mulyani, the Minister of Finance in 2005-2010. Before acting as the Minister of Finance, she acted as the Head of the National Planning and Development Agency (BAPPENAS), which succeeded in producing a National Long Term Development Plan (*Rencana Perencanaan Jangka Panjang National/RPJPN*), the one for 2005-2025, which emphasizes women empowerment policies, which are:

1. Improving women's quality of life and role in development sectors;
2. Reducing the number of gender violence, exploitation, and discrimination;
3. Strengthening the gender mainstreaming institutionalization network.

The significant role of the Minister of Finance at that time was the issuance of the Minister of Finance's regulation (*Peraturan Menteri Keuangan/PMK*) No.119/2009 on the Instruction for the Preparation and Evaluation of State Ministries' Work Plan and Budget. In addition to fighting for gender budgeting, Sri Mulyani implemented affirmative action to promote women to echelon 1 level (JP, No.72, 2012). She believes that state administrators must have gender perspective so that promoted government programs can be effectively implemented, specifically if the programs are intended to counter poverty. Her view is visible in her words during an interview by Women Journal:

What is referred to as Gender concept in governance indeed does not exist yet, unless in the form of stereotyping, for instance women as leaders are tidier, meticulous, and think for the long term. However, actually governance (should) take into account the gender concept. For example, the concrete solution has to be real, for instance the design of cash transfer must be thoroughly reviewed. When I was in Bappenas, I mentioned that the recipients of cash must be the women, not the husbands, because there are many studies that find that if a woman manages the finance, the cash would be better (managed) and would be allocated for her children, and thus the program would be more effective. If the

minister does not understand gender approach, the design would not consider such matters. (Interview with Sri Mulyani di JP 72, 2012).

Unfortunately, *femocrats* in the government are individualistic, inconsistent, and figure-dependent. There are only a few women in bureaucracy who engage with women's organizations as work partners, not to mention to discuss feminist issues with. Several women's organizations have participated in strengthening government programs by also emphasizing the gender dimension such as in economic and health sectors. Organizations such as Hapsari, Pesadar, and ASPPUK, as well as JPRP that focusses on the clean water sector, sometimes face a challenge in reaching out to the government thus they prefer to collaborate with companies through CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), although with many objections. As mentioned by Yati from JPRP:

...on challenges of clean water, the government did not allocate the budget. Then we pursued a CSR from Bank of Lampung. We were enraged, and brought 30 mothers to the mayor. (Interview of WRI, 14 Mei 2012).

In law enforcement, figures such as Irawati Harsono and Maria Farida Indarti (the first appointed female judge in the Constitutional Court) are worthy of appreciation. Irawati Harsono, a police officer, established DERAP-WARAPSARI (an NGO which was established and is funded by retired Women Police Officers), which fights for RPK (Special Service Room/*Ruang Pelayanan Khusus*) to be the reporting center for women who are victims of violence. Irawati also explained the difficulties in developing feminist ideas within a bureaucratic working frame. Feminist ideas in bureaucracy often times are realized through personal network. Irawati used her friendship with Mrs. Rusmanhadi, the wife of the Chief of Police Republic of Indonesia at that time, to realize RPK. It is interesting what Irawati mentioned during her interview with Women's Journal as follows:

The Chief of the Police Resort was called by the Chief of the Regional Police; the Chief of the Regional Police was called by the Chief of Police of the Republic of Indonesia, and he was persuaded by Mrs. Chief of Police of the Republic of Indonesia...(Interview with Irawati Harsono at JP, No. 49, 2006).

Despite several figures in the government who are committed to feminism and try to make pro-gender policies, feminist ideas are not systemized nor standardized in the government and in the parliament. Feminist policies can only be born and last if there is a strong feminist network and concept among feminist activists, scholars, *femocrats*, and representatives in the parliament.

Conclusion

In the development of feminist thoughts in Indonesia, there are three phases. The first, namely the colonial phase or feminist liberal phase, in which ideas in marriage law and rights to education were developing as well as strong grass roots organization in the Sukarno era (Socialist/Marxist feminism). In the second phase, feminism was paralyzed due to the state's dominance (New Order regime), the discourse on feminism were produced by the State. In the third phase, the contemporary phase, it is filled by various critical discourses and studies produced by women's organizations.

Specifically in the third phase, scholars who join women's organizations develop individual theoretical perspective through various forums outside of the universities and some of them have risen to be *femocrats*. Thus the source of feminist discourse in Indonesia does not come from universities. International meetings were also a source of feminist perspective, and became the forum that sharpened theoretical sensitivity among numerous feminist activists and academic feminists. In the 80s and 90s, a number of journals and books were limited at that time, thus scholars self-taught themselves, outside the university's curriculum. This phenomenon is distinct from western countries, in which in the 70s, feminist scholars have a role in universities to produce critical discourse to be used by grass root movements (McDermot, 1994:2-3).

One may shed light on this condition by understanding the university system in Indonesia at the time, which acted as an extension of the state's interest. Universities' curriculum was directly regulated by the state and heavily monitored so that it did not – using a political term of the period– “disrupt national stability”. The era is known as one of NKK (Campus Life Normalization/ *Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus*) and the coercion of P4 doctrines (Guidelines for the Internalization and Practice of The Five State Principles/*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*), which in a nutshell, was an attempt to distance universities from politics. This was when the ongoing strengthening of feminist ideas acted as a critique against the patriarchal state politics. There

were attempts to introduce a feminist perspective in several university subjects, however they were more in the form of “subversive attempts” from several academics who had first been involved in “feminist politics” outside of their universities.

It is essential to understand that contemporary feminist perspective in Indonesia is only a discourse in a limited circle since it does not have any basis in universities, while feminism is inherently an academic exercise that requires theoretical knowledge. Meanwhile the women's movement emphasizes more on handling real issues on political injustice and gender inequality which brings together the two activities, academic and political. The scholars and activists face a ‘common enemy’, namely the authoritarian state, patriarchal culture, and religious fundamentalism in society. This is why women's organizations trainings also include sessions on the theory of feminism.

Therefore, it could be surmised that the collaboration between feminist scholars and women's movement activists in Indonesia has grown together in their collective effort to criticize patriarchal culture since the beginning of the reform era. A misconception of several western observers is evident through their erroneous conclusion that the development of “feminism” in Indonesia is an activity of “middle class university educated women” (Western) or when they “romanticize” it as a reaction from poor oppressed women (victims). This study has shown that the feminist movement in Indonesia since its emergence has been characterized by both theoretical analyses and political movements, using local and global feminist perspectives.

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