



Advancing NGO Activism for Environmental Protection at the Age of Democratic Decline: A Cosmopolitan Perspective

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Abstract. To begin, we need to encounter the relationship between cosmopolitanism and the broader social and economic phenomenon called globalisation. From these argumentative links, conceptually and theoretically, we will be able to understand where and how to situate ecological stewardship and the role of NGOs in pursuing its objectives. Social scientists have generally agreed that globalisation is a process and outcome, transformative and effective in bringing almost all aspects of modern Western societies' lifestyles to become worldwide standards. This paper aims to present a conceptual analysis of the question of what makes it possible for the agenda of environmental protection to continue to work even though the underlying foundations and institutions of liberal democracy are declining. It proposes a cosmopolitan theoretical perspective to address the above puzzle, arguing that cosmopolitanism ideas and practices match the need for a larger space for the roles of non-state advocacy groups – non-governmental environmental organisations that can undertake more significant environmental efforts.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, democracy, environment, NGOs.

1 Introduction

Cosmopolitanism is an idea that upholds high morality as the universal essence of every human being's life, both in an individual context and in a group [2]. Based on that morality, the bearers of the ideas and advocates of the universalist movement envision the existence of a world order that prioritises the common good, prosperity, and social justice. Environmental protection is an essential element of this global struggle. It aims to eliminate real inequality present in international society due to ecological degradation.

Globalisation, perceived as a transformational current of constant social and economic changes [11] can raise global awareness so that individuals as citizens of the

same world will no longer uphold particular interests, but can recognise the same need for a better planet. This claim is the essence of today's environmentalism.

Departing from this general assumption about the recent phenomena of moves toward a global community, what is described as a global environmental challenge to all, provides academics and practitioners with rich resources of empirical social realities to assess and consider for at least the purpose of advancing theories.

This paper offers an academic discourse on the significance of non-governmental organisations' advocacy in defending ecological protection in an age of democratic decline.

The central conceptual question arising from the relationship between universal moral codes of conduct and the will to secure the environment is concerned with the ill-fated political system of democracy, which, for three decades since the collapse of the Cold War international order, has undergone a regressive trend. When democracy is declining, and the democratic actors cannot play their maximum institutional roles in saving common goods, whose responsibility is it to take care of the job of environmental protector? We remain to believe in the ability and tenacity of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), though some idealistic activism features must be recalled.

2 Theory

The term 'democratic governance' is recently in common use in the international development community and academic discourses. [14] states that this term was first proposed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as the 'new cure' both for development of transitional countries and the relative ineffectiveness of development aid. While the World Bank continues to use the term 'good governance' in the administrative and economic senses, the IDB has been forcefully advancing it by explicitly promoting a more political agenda. The difference between the two concepts is that while the term 'good governance' emphasizes policy and economic reform especially through policy based lending, the term 'democratic governance' underscores institutional and political reform. In short, the latter stresses the political dimensions of development and institutional environment in which public policies are made [5].

3 Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how NGO contribute to democratic in Indonesian Government. The research subjects were Indonesian peoples with in-depth interviews were conducted with research subjects obtained through incidental sampling. The adequacy of the number of research subjects is based on saturated data, meaning that there is repetition of answers or similarity of answers in each indicator of the interview questions. Through this interview, probing is carried

out to understand critical thinking, namely the subject's ability to reason. The ability to reason is understood. The results of interviews with research subjects, namely students, produced primary data. Apart from this data, the research also obtained secondary data obtained from interviews with community leaders. The data credibility test used is triangulation of interview data with author person, community leaders, and documents. Data triangulation helps in validating and strengthening findings from data collection methods and increases the accuracy and reliability of research results. In triangulation, cross-checking is carried out, namely comparing findings from interviews and documents to ensure consistency. Member-checking involves participants in verifying the results of the analysis to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the views and experiences of the research subjects. The steps for data analysis using because motive and in order to motive are as follows: data familiarization, data coding and application of because motive and in order to motive analysis to identify the reasons or background that cause certain actions or views (why something happens). The aim is to understand the reasons behind the actions. The activity carried out is reviewing data segments that have been coded and categorized. Identify the reasons participants give for their actions or views.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Cosmopolitanism

To begin, we need to encounter the relationship between cosmopolitanism and the broader social and economic phenomenon called globalisation. From these argumentative links, conceptually and theoretically, we will be able to understand where and how to situate ecological stewardship and the role of NGOs in pursuing its objectives.

Social scientists have generally agreed that globalisation is a process and outcome, transformative and effective in bringing almost all aspects of modern Western societies' lifestyles to become worldwide standards. Globalisation readers [5] both optimists and scientists, tend to agree that it has many faces and facets, affecting the stability and continuity of the triangular interactions among humans, nature and wildlife. Therefore, in its very elementary implications, though the whole elements of the living environment actually pass through the road toward a globalising world. As derived from, as well as impacted on, the economic means of the evolving modern populations, globalisation has intensively brought goods, services and ideas that progress the quality of many, but at the same time, substantially limit opportunities and accesses for the rest. Ironically, the latter are significantly more significant than the former. For one thing, critical social scholars observe the propensity of the unjust globalised world society.

In this context of scepticism, and even rejection, of the favourability of globalisation as an economic current, cosmopolitanism's thinking and methodological instruments grow. They have not only become an attractive theoretical innovation for some but also put down the too much abstractive philosophical revolution that was believed to have

advanced our society to this time. Four core intellectual substances of cosmopolitanism are

1. The view is that the political borders among countries remain there, yet they no longer stay as the restricting physical lines to human movements and identities. This worldview is also known as universalism or world citizenship [3].
2. Along with the fading of the meaning and control of state authorities and material blocks in international social relations, cosmopolitans have doubted the necessity and legitimacy of the old Hobbesian form of state governments. The radical cosmopolitans even argue that the world's citizens could and should develop globally inclusive and per cent governance institutions under which whole aspects of the global community's life would be served and maintained better [4].
3. Still related to the first and second types of cosmopolitan approaches to the implications of globalisation and the rising significance of non-state actorship is that the coming of so-called cosmopolitan democracy is getting real. Political theorists standing by cosmopolitanism often relate the discourse of cosmopolitan democracy to variants such as deliberative democracy, despite some practices that have demonstrated different challenges and results to the ongoing procedural democracy [9].
4. The most relevant contribution of the cosmopolitans to building our understanding and practical tools of environmental protection is the proposition contradictory to the fundamental wisdom of modernity, which states the unavailability of exploitation of natural resources and ecosystems for fulfilling the interests of modern society in various advancements of life. According to pro-industrialist modernism, the economy first is nature and the environment second.

This paper argues that even though the last point is the most directly consequential on how we may start to think about the exigency of ecological protection, all four are interrelated and helpful to each other in enforcing a cosmopolitan perspective on securing the environment.

4.2 Cosmopolitan-environmentalism

We argue here that cosmopolitan-environmentalism is the highly likely model of environmental struggle in the age of globalisation. It is also relevant to talk of cosmopolitan-environmentalism when the founding norms of liberal democracy underpinning the political systems in Europe and North America are decoupling. The democratic institutions, including the check-and-balance mechanisms, competitive elections and the press, remain existent. However, they do not function as expected by the founders and thinkers of liberal democracy. Political scholars also call for the decline of democracy and blame the rise of illiberalism [18]. The illiberal aspects of democracy are thriving, while the liberal ones weakening. In East Asia, where some emerging democracies have

taken significant international roles in promoting democratic values, they have, to some extent, contributed to aggravating the defective practices of illiberal actors. Of course, this trend too has something to do with the broader infectious 'political disease', for instance, ultra-nationalism and populism, yet, socio-culturally, East Asian societies are vulnerable to the return of new authoritarianism.

Indonesia is undoubtedly an intriguing case. The ideals of Reform, which have founded the post-Suharto political arena and pushed democratisation since 1998, are now waning. It happened even only after six years of the democratic political project began. More ironically, the downgrading of democracy in the country goes hand-in-hand with advancing the elements of electoral democracy. Indeed, Indonesia has performed well in its five rounds of direct presidential elections, also followed by direct elections of regional heads of government, beginning in 2004. However, this procedural democracy has not been accompanied by the consistent implementation and improvement of values suggesting the undertaking of clean and honest elections. The setback in Indonesian democracy is closely related to the re-emergence and enhancement of the anti-democratic forces. The three most influential are the business oligarchs, the military and the religious fundamentalists/conservatives [17]. As a consequence, there is a regular election. However, there is no real elite succession. The old authoritarian components of the past New Order regime reappear to become essential actors on the democratic stage.

Democratic backsliding in Indonesia and globally is an alarming phenomenon for environmentalists. First, it has been part of intellectual and practical debates around the world that democracy – even in its liberal manifestation – is controversial to the environmental protection agenda. Whether democracy matters in saving the environment continues to be a polemic. Democracy provides a large space for everyone to express their concern and do what they can to help protect the ecosystem. However, the democratic institutions must bring them to a long cycle of public discourse and policy-making. As a result, the rhetoric of pro-environment is loud; the action is mute and slow [16].

Second, from the developmentalist world, like China, a trend of environmental authoritarianism emerges and is getting more impressive. Unlike in democracies, environmental decision-making and application in undemocratic states are efficient [1]. Furthermore, its implementation seems to be more effective than those in democracies. Quality is an important and interesting question. Yet, it is comparable and debatable. Although there is a lack of policy transparency in undemocratic countries, in fact, the projects of environmental protection work. The rules governing the environment are enforceable. For this reason, the counter-force of liberal democracy and 'liberal environmentalism' can be a challenging alternative to the established democratic order.

The solution we propose in this paper is cosmopolitan-environmentalism [5] [14]. It is not the entire copy of liberal interests but has to some extent developed from them. Cosmopolitan-environmentalism idealises the widening room and access for non-state protectors of the environment. NGOs matter as the vocal point of advocacy as well as implementers of ecological protection. This proposal is based on three considerations. First, the significance of volunteering movements, either moved by individuals or groups, in chasing anti-hegemonic goals in world politics is undoubtedly. For instance,

the fourth wave of democratisation in the Arab Spring in the early 2010s was galvanised by angry people, organised by skilful activists, and succeeded by international civil society networks. Second, NGOs have flexible abilities and tools, are equipped with borderless experiences, and are enlivened by social funding, all of which allow them to act independently. This characterisation of NGOs means to be the power of non-bureaucratic actions. When globalisation has brought about the transnationalisation of bureaucracy, see, for example, the European Union, the nexus of global NGOs counters it by building a loosely binding arrangement of activism. This stream of social movement is favourable for environmental advocacy. Third, generally, environmental protection agendas involve deep interactions and participation in local communities affected by the anti-environment hands and deeds. The state authorities are unspiringly reluctant to approach the locals with a pro-local measure. Instead, even though it is Developed states, the governmental approaches to local concerns are no longer the extension of bureaucratisation. Therefore, it is necessary to advance community-oriented appeals, and NGOs can best undertake them.

The role of NGOs in pursuing the objective of cosmopolitan-environmentalism are also matched with the spirit of keeping democracy alive. Under the rising semi- and truly authoritarian leaders around the globe, accompanied by their business clients, the only hope for continuing democratisation relies on the shoulders of NGOs. We notice that in many cases of new authoritarianism, NGOs' activity in support of democracy has been tamed by co-optation and coercion. Nevertheless, they do not die. They are substantially feeble, but not paralysed. The global social media, among others, are still hopeful for cosmopolitan-environmentalism. Understandably, the intervention of governments in internet technologies, particularly to repress dissents, is another issue. Yet, even in states like China, which can control almost all aspects of the society's political behaviour, anti-authoritarian figures and groups grow inside and outside the communist government's territory. Hence, NGOs have the transformative potential as an idea, ideal and option for future environmental performance.

5 Conclusion

This brief conceptual analysis and proposal for advancing NGO advocacy to protect the environment under the expansive move of illiberal politics have underscored the importance of searching for alternatives. Continuous reliance on liberal democracy is not an option, given the argument of inefficiency and ineffectiveness that has overshadowed the relationship between liberal democracy and the environmental protection agenda.

The discourse of cosmopolitan-environmentalism is familiar and applicable to some situations. Reasonably, it needs a strong basis of social traditions where non-state activism has become a good practice beyond formal politics. Extra-parliamentary activity has its problems. One is how to make it in a long and persistent mode. More importantly, it has to be supported by a significant source of modalities, including the material ones. It does have the ground of ideational resources, but empirical cases

demonstrate that only the combination of ideational and material capital can run and change.

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