

Exerting influence from below : A case of oil and gas policy in contemporary Indonesia

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Abstrak

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Mass mobilization has often had a significant impact in Indonesian politics. Even without state power or financial resources, those who are capable of mobilizing the masses have continued to play a crucial role in politics. Nevertheless, the predominant literature on Indonesian politics has long underestimated the social actors' power even after Suharto's demise in 1998. According to them, powerful oligarchic domination has characterized Indonesian politics. In contrast to this account, there is a growing literature that demonstrates cases in which social actors and organizations exert significant influence on the elites and articulate changes in policies by leveraging voting power in direct elections. The focus of these studies, however, is largely limited to political negotiations during elections. This paper examines much broader efforts on the part of social actors to achieve policy change. In fact, such actors are not only utilizing the voting power of elections but also making good use of the judicial system, notably, a judicial review of the constitutional court. Through an analysis of the oil and gas policy after 1998, this paper demonstrates the various strategies that social actors deploy to achieve policy change as well as influence Indonesian politics. © 2018, Center for Southeast Asian Studies. All rights reserved.