

TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY AND THE POLITICS OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN INDONESIA: INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF EAST TIMOR REFERENDUM IN 1999

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Abstract:

Referendum—democratic balloting for self-determination in a certain territory—has gain currency to resolve intra-state conflict. This working paper seeks to examine under what conditions a nation-state resolve its territorial conflict and disputes through a referendum process. In the literature on referendum, theories such as social movements based on secessionist ideology, power-sharing, and reform of regional autonomy provide important perspectives as to how to cease hostilities in civil violence. The paper argues that both national and international institutions urged the Indonesian government and East Timor’s secessionist organizations to hold the referendum with an assistance of peacekeeping forces. In addition to the heightening international pressures, the regime changes, decentralization, and ceaseless elite conflicts in Jakarta paved a way to uphold referendum as a peaceful solution to territorial conflicts. Despite of the widespread perception that the East Timor is an “unsettled issue” of national integration during the Cold War, the case provides an important model of peaceful and democratic self-determination.

21 NOVEMBER 2019
14:00-15:30
BUILD. 19 ROOM 501
WASEDA UNIVERSITY

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