

Abstract of Doctoral Thesis

Peace for Sale: The Cost of Post-Conflict Stability in North Maluku, Indonesia

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This is a study to examine the post-conflict political development in North Maluku, Indonesia. The country's democratic transition after the fall of President Soeharto who had led his authoritarian government (1966-98) provided an unintended consequence of erupting violent conflicts in many parts of Indonesia, for example in Aceh, Poso, Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua. 'Balkanization' of Indonesia was a concern among observers of Indonesian politics both domestic and international at that time. Two decades later, in 2020, political stability in Aceh, Poso, Maluku, and Papua' remains fragile because violence has regularly destabilized these communities. In contrast, the situation in North Maluku has been significantly conducive and stable. Why it is that the post-conflict North Maluku can maintain stability? What are the keys to the success of peacebuilding? This thesis examines these questions.

Indonesian politics scholars observed the war in North Maluku, but their attention shifted to other conflict areas when peace agreements were made in North Maluku. Thus, the post-conflict North Maluku has not been studied in-depth until today, and important questions—such as why peace has been sustained there, and what lessons can be learnt—are largely neglected in the scholarship. To fill this academic gap, my thesis investigates the post-conflict political development in North Maluku.

Mainstream peacebuilding studies in Indonesia have a tendency to evaluate the impact of peace initiatives only by observing a few years after the conflict. Such a short-term perspective is not always helpful if we want to understand deeper impact beyond superficial institutional changes. My study employs a long-term analysis of the politics of peacebuilding in North Maluku and tries to

elucidate a pragmatic nature of sustained peace in the region. It is commonly understood that the post-conflict initiatives, including recovery assistances, local autonomy, and democratic elections, all contributed to the stabilization of local politics and peace in North Maluku. However, we argue that it is *not* precisely because of the intended impact of these initiatives that are expected to bring a good governance in the post-conflict North Maluku, but because of the unintended impact that has incentivized the newly emerging local political elites to exploit politico-economic opportunities being available during the post-conflict era and to maintain their intra-elite balance of power for the effective preservation of these vested interests. In other words, peace is sustained at the cost of good governance. 'Peace for sale' should be understood as the best term to identify such an irony of the post-conflict North Maluku.