



Interview with Jeffrey Winters
The Importance of Nation's
Intervention on Electoral
Quotas for Women

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Professor Jeffrey Winters is the founder and the director of the Equality Development and Globalization Studies (EDGS) Program at Northwestern University in Chicago (www.edgs.northwestern.edu). He is also the founder and the Chairman of the Board Trustees for the Indonesian Scholarship and Research Support Foundation (ISRSF) in Jakarta, which annually grants scholarships for Indonesian students to pursue their doctorates in the social sciences at Northwestern University. Professor Winters received his PhD from Yale University and he specializes in the study of oligarchs and elites, especially in Indonesia. Winters also studies international political

economy and comparative politics. His book, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2011; and *Oligarki*, Gramedia 2012), won the American Political Science Association's award in 2012 for the best book in Comparative Politics. He is also the author of *Power in Motion: Capital Mobility and the Indonesian State* (Cornell University Press, 1996), *Reinventing the World Bank* (Cornell University Press, 2002) edited with Dr. Jonathan Pincus. Both of these books have been published in Bahasa Indonesia. He also published another two books in Indonesian: *Dosa-Dosa Politik Orde Baru* in 1999 and *Orba Jatuh, Orba Bertahan?* in 2004.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): Do you think President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) made much progress in promoting gender equality and women's rights in Indonesia?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): Gender equality was not a significant priority during SBY's Presidency. During his ten years in office, SBY did not propose any major policy initiatives focused specifically on women. We could say that women neither made any major progress under SBY, nor lost a great deal of ground. In this regard, it is rather typical of SBY's presidency. It is hard to think of anything in which he made major strides or introduced significant change. In the area of women's empowerment and gender, he was true to form. It was different in the period before SBY. I think we saw a lot of changes between 1998 and 2004. But these advances went hand in hand with the broader transformations occurring in that era. It was a transformative moment—like a window of opportunity—when changes people had been fighting for a long time suddenly became a reality. We saw a lot of improvements during that time. But SBY's presidency was a major disappointment. A full decade with a president in the palace who didn't really care about leaving his mark on the country in any form, including in the important area of gender equality.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): What are your thoughts on gender and civil society? And how about the specific issue of equality for women?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): The issue of rights and equality is very contentious and confusing in this era of history. On the one hand, the world is getting smaller and we all know a lot more about each other, and women around the world have an opportunity to compare their status and rights with each other. On the other hand, we are also in a historical moment when cultural diversity and multiculturalism is to

be respected. The world is a very diverse place, and we cannot impose, for instance, Western standards on every culture. The two values—equality and multiculturalism—clash when women are oppressed using local cultural standards as the justification or excuse.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): Is there a moral strategy for dealing with this clash of values?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): I believe there is. It is possible for all of us around the world to adopt a universal approach or standard based on equality of treatment, but at the same time embrace diversity. What I mean is, I believe it is possible to have both universalism and pluralism. How might this be done? The first principle is to accept that not all places have the same cultural practices or values. Even within a single country, there can be many cultures, as in Indonesia. Let a thousand flowers of diversity bloom! But the second principle is one of absolute equality *within* each culture or society. One standard, one metric for all members of that community. It helps to have a concrete example. Let's say in a certain part of Indonesia, a law is passed that says women may not go out after dark, or women may not work in the evenings. According to the universalism-pluralism approach, we would say OK, if in your community there are to be rules regarding working after dark, all such rules must be applied the same to all—one metric, one standard with no discrimination on the basis of gender. If women may not go out at night, men are also forbidden. If women are not allowed to work at night, the same standard must apply absolutely equally to all members of that community. If you want to pass a law about riding sideways on a motorbike, men must also ride sideways if they sit in the back. If a rule is passed about covering heads, it should apply to women and men equally. Men must cover their heads also. If they don't want to, then there can be no restriction on women. No one in the world is saying you cannot have different rules or practices in your society compared to other societies and cultures. Go ahead, be diverse. But the second part of the principle simply states that it is unacceptable to discriminate on the basis of gender. Different practices and behaviors between societies. Great! But a single standard, a single principle for all within each one.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): Do you have any thoughts about Indonesian female politicians? And what about women politicians who are heirs of political dynasties founded by men?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): Patriarchy is a fact of life. There is progress being made thanks to the struggles of women. But men are still in dominant positions in every society in the world. This has blocked most women from positions of power. Out of 100 seats, there are only 17 women in the U.S. Senate. There have only been 44 women Senators in the U.S. since 1789. The record is terrible and embarrassing. And we have still not had a woman president. In Indonesia I think in some ways you are making progress faster. It is very important that women are in government even if sometimes they don't fight hard for women's issues. It matters that a young Indonesian girl turns on the TV and sees Indonesian women as ministers, as members of parliament, and as president—even if that woman president is Megawati, who did not really have a strong pro-woman agenda. The quota system in Indonesia is important. The first battle is to get women in the positions. Step two is to make sure they speak up for women's issues.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): Does it matter if those women politicians get there only because they are related to a powerful man?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): I realize that it is not the most ideal path for women to enter power, but I don't think there is much to be gained by attacking these women just because their father or husband was the key to their success. It is still better if the daughter or wife gets the position rather than the man's brother or son, right? Men have been handing power to their male siblings and heirs in political for centuries. It is a step in the right direction for related women to get the positions instead. And again, then we focus on what they do, not how they got there. Coming back to the U.S. for example, Hilary Clinton has a serious chance of winning the presidency in 2016. The fact that Bill was president has given her a lot of advantages in her political career. If the only way to break the gender barrier in the U.S. is for the wife of a former president to be the first women president, so be it. Better the barrier is broken as soon as possible, however we get there.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): What are your thoughts about the emergence of fundamentalist groups that strictly refuse the participation of female politicians? Where do you see this leading?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): The fall of the Suharto dictatorship and the rise of democracy has been a double-edged sword. There are more freedoms, but groups that previously did not dare to push for their narrow policies

now try to do so. One thing all conservative religious groups around the world have in common is men dominate them and they are obsessed with controlling women. They try to pass laws that restrict women, keep them out of sight, keep them out of political power, and if possible keep them home. I am happy to say that every time conservative religious groups try this in Indonesia, they have failed. They tried it against Megawati. They try it in local political elections. Thus far it has not been a strong strategy. But the trends worry me. I have been observing Indonesia for 30 years, and the power of fundamentalist groups is stronger than it has been in a long time. More and more women feel they must cover their heads than decades ago. This is a subtle visual sign of conservative influence. Independent women need to speak up to make sure, as I stated before, that anyone trying to impose restrictions on women must, in the name of fairness, consistency, and equality, impose identical restrictions on men. If they are not willing to do so, then they admit they are discriminating on the basis of gender and their proposals should be rejected as biased against women.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): Back to the matter of gender and quotas in Indonesian politics. Do you have further thoughts on that?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): Quotas are an important instrument for any minority trying to break through limitations that have been in place for generations. A 30% quota for women was a good starting point, but it should be required to increase by 5% every election cycle until 50-50 is reached. Once this happens, the quota can be removed. When women get positions of power, it is not uncommon for them to imitate men in terms of dress or politics. Sometimes they can only win as women by giving the impression they "think like men." This is regrettable but it happens in the U.S. as well. Women in DPR or DPRD are often criticized because they do not put enough effort into fighting for women's rights and issues. I am more patient. The first step is being there and visibility. Males, but also women, need to get used to seeing them there. With time they will step forward and defend a pro-women agenda. The pattern happens in all societies where women break through and get into positions of power.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): What should we do to push the number of quota gender?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): The government holds the key to this. They should intervene, like in other developed countries, to make

affirmative efforts. For example, they should encourage women to become officials—directors, commissioners, ministers, rectors of universities, and CEOs of companies. The government can give favorable treatment to corporations that are owned by women, for example in city or government projects for development. For example, in my city of Chicago in the U.S., the city government gives preferences for companies that are owned by women and minorities to make sure they get a piece of the pie, so they can survive and grow. Indonesia can do the same thing—for example, passing a regulation that 10% of projects must involve a women's organization or company. This can increase every three years by 5%.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): You write a lot about oligarchs and oligarchy. What is the gender angle there?

Jeffrey Winters (JW): Oligarchs are people who are powerful because they are super rich. The world of oligarchs is one of the most patriarchal in the world. At least 98% of the richest people on earth are males. Nearly every dollar billionaire is a man. The vast majority of CEOs of corporations are men as well. The world of wealth and business remains heavily male dominated—even more male dominated than political positions.

Jurnal Perempuan (JP): What do you hope for Indonesia's political map in the future?

My hope for the future is that Indonesian women will rapidly reach their gender equality goals in every dimension. And not only limited to women, but also other groups who face discrimination and inequality based on race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. They all are human beings who deserve the same rights and opportunities in life as everyone else. However, based on my experience as a political analyst, dominant groups do not surrender easily. They enjoy their position of domination. This means there will be resistance and the progress might sometimes be slow. We cannot be discouraged and give up the struggle just because it is hard or disappointing. We struggle because it is the right thing to do. All around the world, women's movements have understood this. Even if hard work and sacrifices now don't seem to produce results, remember that a foundation is being laid for future generations. The freedoms and equality they will enjoy will be because of the struggles we make now. So, fighting for justice is never in vain.