

The Illiberal Turn in Indonesian Democracy

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Abstract: Two decades after authoritarian breakdown and democratic transition in 1998, how does the trajectory of Indonesian democracy look? By reflecting on the state of Indonesian politics in the last 15 years, this paper will argue that despite many improvements, Indonesian democracy has experienced a slow process of decline and a deepening of illiberal tendencies. This poses a major challenge for the quality of Indonesian democracy in the near future.



Jokowi (left) and Prabowo

Introduction

The series of mass protests that have rocked Jakarta and other major urban centers in Indonesia in September and October of 2019 and the state's repressive response to the protests are indicative of a worrying trend affecting Indonesian democracy.¹ On the surface, formal political processes seem to be working - the 2019 concurrent presidential and legislative elections, despite its massive scale and a deepening polarization among Indonesian voters, were held peacefully.² Furthermore, as a gesture of national unity after a polarizing presidential election, Joko Widodo, commonly known as Jokowi, controversially appointed his vociferous rival for the presidency in both 2014 and 2019 elections, Prabowo Subianto, as the defense minister in the new cabinet after winning a second term.

It is important to assess other recent trends. Toward the end of Jokowi's first term, the parliament, the People's Representative Assembly (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR) attempted to pass several controversial laws relating to the criminal code, corruption eradication, land, labor, mining, and natural resources. The new corruption eradication law, despite its name, will actually weaken the authority of the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, KPK). Moreover, the laws on land, labor, mining, and natural resources will pave the way for capital expansion into the countryside at high socio-ecological cost. The proposed new criminal code has the potential to criminalize social movement activists and infringe on civil and political rights in the name of preserving public order. For example, the code contains several draconian articles on the following matters: 1) insulting the head of state and state symbols, 2) treason, 3) blasphemy, and 4) consensual cohabitation and sexual activities outside of marriage, among others.³

Such political maneuvering, coupled with the

government's heavy-handed approach to mass demonstrations in Papua in protest of systemic racism have triggered the emergence of perhaps the biggest wave of mass protest since 1998.⁴ A new generation of university and vocational school students, with no memory of and direct experience in the 1998 reform or *reformasi* movement, have been at the forefront of this new wave of protest, joined by workers and a variety of civil society groups. Under the banner of #ReformasiDikorupsi (the reform era is corrupted), this mass movement has been protesting against the creeping curtailment of civil, political, and socio-economic rights via the controversial laws.

The government has responded to these protests with mass arrests, several killings, the criminalization of activists, and repressive measures against even emergency medical responders. The climate of fear created by such an approach is unprecedented in the last 20 years.

Although these developments are worrying, they are just the symptoms of a larger and possibly more disturbing trend affecting Indonesian democracy. While Indonesia can be said to be a functioning electoral democracy, there has been a significant contraction of democratic space, especially in non-electoral realms and in the periphery, accompanied by the continuing influence of oligarchic power in several policy arenas. Combined together, this trajectory slowly leads to an increasingly illiberal and oligarchic turn in Indonesian democracy.

The analysis here assesses the trajectory of Indonesian democracy over the past 15 years. The first section lays out the analytical framework to understand this trajectory. The second and third sections discuss the dynamics of Indonesian politics under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014) and Jokowi (2014-2019) respectively. In these chronological sections, this paper will assess

the quality of democracy under each administration in three arenas: democratic practices at the national level, oligarchic influence in politics, and local agrarian politics. The fourth section offers concluding remarks.

An Analytical Framework to Assess the Trajectory of Indonesian Democracy

To better assess the quality of a democracy, it is necessary to look at more than just institutional, attitudinal, and behavioral dimensions of democracy. Analyzing these indicators alone might give the impression that Indonesian democracy, generally speaking, is performing well. There is a regular alternation of power via electoral democracy as “the only game in town” with the possibility of not only winning but also losing the elections for competing parties.⁵ Moreover, public support for democracy remains high.⁶ However, this is just one side of the story.

In order to evaluate democratic quality more comprehensively, it is necessary to consider other dimensions. If democracy is understood as an opportunity for the expansion of rights, then the notion of democratic quality should also entail the deepening of political space as well as the extension of rights to previously marginalized groups, such as the lower-classes, minorities, and civil society groups.⁷ Indeed, while the institutional and electoral aspects of democratic politics are important, it is also imperative to look at the participatory and social dimensions of democracy.⁸

It is therefore inadequate to merely look at interactions and conflicts among political actors, both among elites and citizens alike. This section will examine the intersection between electoral politics and the broader dynamics of political economy to better understand the trajectory of Indonesian democracy. Political economy is defined here as the struggle over political power, especially

state power, and economic resources and benefits among competing social forces. Indeed, it has long been posited that domination over the commanding heights of political institutions and economic sectors can suppress democratic space and quality.⁹

This is why it is necessary to challenge some existing observations on Indonesian democracy and electoral dynamics. David Adam Stott's article in this journal which makes a case for cautious optimism for the second Jokowi presidency.¹⁰ While Stott's presentation of what he considers the key achievements of Jokowi's first term and their broader political, economic, and social context has value, he overlooks certain issues. For instance, how intra-elite competition masks their social cohesiveness as a class, the long-standing conflict between elites and the electorate's aspiration for more meaningful popular participation, and the impact of these phenomena on Indonesian politics. He also seems to be rather preoccupied with macro-indicators rather than providing a more convincing explanation of how Jokowi's second term might disrupt the old patterns of Indonesian politics that cripple its democracy.

Another assessment is put forward by two senior Indonesia watchers, Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner.¹¹ They argue that Indonesia is experiencing a slow process of decoupling between religious and cultural pluralism and democratic norms, where the commitment to protect pluralism might rely too much on arbitrary state power, thereby jeopardizing democratic norms. Although this assessment points to several factors leading to unhealthy polarization and democratic decline in Indonesian politics in recent years, it misses the influence of recent global and national dynamics of political economy on democratic decline and rising illiberal populism. This is a surprising omission given their other analyses of Indonesian politics actually pay greater attention to political economy.¹²

Here, this paper tries to offer a more nuanced view. It is fair to say that Indonesia under Yudhoyono's 10 year-tenure was in better shape politically compared to the tumultuous early years of the reform period (1998-2001). However, to ascribe either the slow stabilization of democratic process (2002-2004) or the institutional stability of Yudhoyono's years as "the golden years" of democracy would be an overstatement.¹³ Such an assessment overlooks the complex trajectory of post-Suharto Indonesian democracy. Behind the veneer of democratic stability lies a set of problems with serious consequences for the quality of democracy itself.

Hence, a more political economy-oriented reading of Indonesian democratic trajectory and quality is needed. In order to do so, this paper will look at three aspects of democratic politics in the last 15 years: national political trends, oligarchic influence in politics, and local agrarian politics. Regarding the first, how the presidents handled the structural challenges facing them and exercised their agencies amidst existing political constellations will be examined. With regard to oligarchic influence in politics, it will be gauged by looking at the interaction between the state, the capitalist class and wealthy politicians, and the influence of these moneyed interests on politics.¹⁴ Lastly, the state of local agrarian politics will be used as another important yardstick to measure democratic quality and illiberalism given the close connection between rural democratization and the democratization of the polity more generally.¹⁵ Furthermore, there is ample evidence to suggest that elite domination over land and rural resources have detrimental consequences for democratization and democratic deepening, a point that is especially pertinent in the Indonesian context.¹⁶

Democratic Stagnation under the Yudhoyono Administration

A closer look at the trajectory of Indonesian democracy during the presidencies of Yudhoyono and Jokowi reveals worrying signs. This is not to say that Indonesian democracy was not consolidated throughout this period. Again, looking at the major institutional indicators of democratic consolidation alone – peaceful transfer of power via elections, commitment to political (but not necessarily social and economic) democracy, and existing protection of basic rights in general – one can safely say that Indonesian democracy has been consolidated. However, its quality has been slowly compromised to the point of reaching a critical level. To understand this process of quality regression, one needs to look more closely at the state of national and local politics in the last 15 years, especially the last five years under Jokowi’s first term.

The ten years of the Yudhoyono presidency is commonly seen as the period of solidifying democratic consolidation.¹⁷ While this assessment is fairly accurate, Yudhono’s tenure of economic and democratic stability actually came with a cost, one that also shaped the course of Indonesian politics under the Jokowi administration.

Yudhoyono, a consensus-seeker and member of the late Suharto-era elite, succumbed to the cartelized tendency of Indonesia’s political party system, in which parties and politicians have miniscule programmatic orientations and prefer to share power liberally across political divisions. He did this by making concessions to the political elites by forming a grand coalition that included both his supporters and some of his competitors when he took power after the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections.¹⁸ He also gave cabinet positions to parties who previously competed against him including Golkar, the former ruling party of the authoritarian era.¹⁹

However, this moderate political stance and mode of governing also means that Indonesia

missed the opportunity to implement much-needed structural reforms to deepen democracy and move the economy forward from a commodity boom-driven, oligarchs-benefitting economy.²⁰ It is true that Yudhoyono as president operated under heavy political pressures from established political actors, but his indecisive governing style also contributed to an inability to push for reforms, a consensus shared by many observers of Indonesian politics.

The impact of this missed opportunity on Indonesian democracy is clearly visible in three sectors: the overall quality of democracy at the national level, oligarchic influence in politics, and local agrarian politics. At the national level, while Yudhoyono maintained a degree of democratic stability, his overly cautious approach on pressing issues and penchant for appeasing the political class meant that some hard-gained democratic gains were compromised.

Such appeasement was most visible in Yudhoyono’s response to the national parliament’s attempt to pass a regional election law scrapping direct elections for local government heads towards the end of his second term in 2014. The proposed law was controversial because it attempted to return the power to vote for local government heads back to the regional parliaments – essentially taking the voting power away from local citizens.²¹ After much public pressure, Yudhoyono eventually issued a government regulation in lieu of law (*perppu*) that cancelled the controversial measure.²² Although Yudhoyono eventually succumbed to the public pressure, his wait-and-see approach and the tug of war that he had with the parliament showed the tendency among political elites to bend the rules for their own benefit. As the political analyst Dirk Tomsa pointed out, Yudhoyono had several opportunities to make a clear stance on this issue, but most of the time he preferred to take a middle-of-the-road

position until it was clear that the Indonesian public did not welcome either the law or his indecisiveness.²³

Moreover, Yudhoyono's refusal to act more decisively on several critical political issues, often for the sake of strengthening his electoral base, also contributed to the normalization of illiberal tendencies in Indonesian democratic politics. This was apparent in the protection women's and minority rights, where Yudhoyono's seemingly reformist rhetoric was not consistent with his lack of effort to combat gender-based discrimination, improve the livelihood of poor women, and protect religious minorities.²⁴ Again, this lack of commitment was mostly a result of his appeasement of more conservative elements within his administration and some religious conservative groups and vigilantes such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) and the Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Islam*, FPI).²⁵ Yudhoyono himself saw the need for cultivating an Islam-friendly image - he founded a prayers' association (*majelis zikir*) and tried to build relations with several Islamic organizations.²⁶ Yudhoyono's own view of state-religion relations was neither secularist nor scripturalist.²⁷ But when it comes to dealing with rising Islamic conservatism, his administration opted to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, leaving the tensions between religious conservatives and largely progressive civil society actors unresolved.²⁸ Yudhoyono's appeasement and indecisiveness eventually contributed to a political climate that was supportive of social conservatism and enabled such conservatism to become increasingly embedded.²⁹

In addition to such lukewarm support for democratic norms, Yudhoyono also undermined the quality of Indonesian democracy by leaning on oligarchics for support. As a member of the old political elite who had first served in parliament under the authoritarian New Order regime, he chose the route followed by many

other New Order-era elites post-Suharto politics: building his own oligarch-backed political party, the Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrat*, PD).³⁰ Later, he became an oligarch himself, extended his influence in politics through his party and related media outlets as a kingmaker, and finally built his own dynasty by promoting his children into politics - his oldest son, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, ran as a gubernatorial candidate in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, whereas his second son, Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono, has been serving as a national Member of Parliament (MP) from PD since 2009.³¹

Lastly, the trajectory of local democracy under Yudhoyono's two terms was hardly glowing, as seen in agrarian politics under his presidency. Yudhoyono branded himself as a champion of the rural poor armed with an expertise in rural economy - he holds a PhD in agricultural economics from Bogor Agricultural University, a premier university for agricultural and rural studies in Indonesia. But under his administration, Indonesia experienced a steep increase in instances of agrarian conflict. According to the 2014 report from the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (*Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria*, KPA), there were some 1500 agrarian conflicts involving almost one million agricultural households and more than 6.5 million hectares of land during Yudhoyono's tenure (2004-2014).³² Furthermore, the same report shows that the number of cases of agrarian conflicts also increased significantly, from 89 in 2009 to 472 in 2014, or more than five times. Most of these conflicts were disputes over land ownership and access between local communities versus state and corporate authorities. In addition, the share of employment in agriculture also dropped significantly while the total area of agricultural land remained more or less the same in Yudhoyono's second term, suggesting the increasing rate of agrarian dispossession in his second term.³³

These data reveal not only the severity of agrarian conflict under Yudhoyono's government but also the contraction of local democratic space due to the domination of rural political and economic resources by elite interests. It is important to note that many local regions, despite rapid urbanization across the country, retain small town and rural characteristics. Hence, the state of local agrarian politics has a major influence on the quality of local democracy.

In these agrarian conflicts, the contraction of local democratic space occurs mainly through the use of political manipulation and intimidation from state and corporate authorities against poor communities in land dispute cases. This form of soft repression might be sporadic and overall does not decrease the vibrancy and fairness of electoral politics at the local level. Nevertheless, the common deployment of elite-backed intimidation creates a sense of fear and vigilance among the local citizenry and civil society actors.³⁴

This might seem an unfair assessment of Yudhoyono's legacy in local and rural politics. After all, he implemented several policies designed to benefit the rural population in far-flung areas, such as conditional cash transfers and accelerated land title certification.³⁵ However, these policies are best seen as a semi-technocratic way to cushion the negative impacts of market forces and elite domination in local regions rather than an attempt to promote a more assertive citizens' participation and seriously address structural political economy challenges that limit such popular participation. Whatever benefits these policies brought were also offset by Yudhoyono's neglect of rural livelihoods to the detriment of the quality of local democracy.

In the end, the balance sheet for the quality of Indonesian democracy under Yudhoyono's ten-year presidency is a mixed one: Indonesian

democracy successfully consolidated at the cost of stagnation. This opened the way for an anti-systemic challenger to attempt to break the democratic system through authoritarian or illiberal means. This was manifested by the rise of an oligarchic authoritarian populist, Prabowo Subianto, who fought Jokowi in the 2014 presidential election.³⁶

A Dimming Hope under Jokowi's Presidency

The fiercely contested 2014 presidential election between Jokowi and Prabowo was seen as a watershed moment in Indonesian democracy. At that time, the two candidates provided contrasting political visions. The former, virtually an outsider in Indonesia's entrenched elitist politics, had a notable record in local governance as the mayor of Solo and the governor of Jakarta and was seen by some as a symbol of hope. The latter, by contrast, was a prominent member of the New Order elite with a questionable human rights record, a populist demagogue longing for a return to authoritarian rule. After a fierce electoral battle and a massive last-minute civil society mobilization, Jokowi won the presidential election, a sign of the continuation of democratic stability and the possibility of democratic deepening for many.

Soon, however, this hope was dashed. Jokowi might be the popularly-elected president, but he faced a hostile parliament as well as vested interests in his own political party and coalition. In other words, he was held captive by these political constellations since day one. Faced by this possible deadlock, Jokowi had two options at the start of his first term: either to push for a clean break with the old establishment and further mobilize his voters, who had been galvanized by his civil society-backed campaign, or play the same old game - capitulating to the oligarchic interests.

Jokowi opted for the latter option, a move that disappointed many of his supporters. Upon closer inspection, however, this should not come as a surprise: Jokowi, who is part of the emerging and increasingly politically-assertive middle class, has a penchant for technocratic and developmentalist solutions for political problems.³⁷ This means that while Jokowi's realm of action has been indeed limited by the political constellation surrounding him, his policy decisions are also shaped by his own agency and political preferences, as demonstrated by his performance at national and local levels.

At the national level, this interplay between structural forces of political circumstances around Jokowi and his own agency is reflected in two areas. First, Jokowi chose to form a grand coalition cabinet, a pattern that he carried on from his predecessors.³⁸ He decided to include some of the opposition parties into his cabinet. This implies not only the continuing decline of check and balance mechanism, but also the repetition of what has been termed 'promiscuous' power sharing among political elites.³⁹ Secondly, Jokowi quickly ignored elements of civil society-supported human rights and social justice agenda in his election campaign and subsequent policies and instead focused on a pro-investment, pro-infrastructure, and pro-stability agenda.⁴⁰ While a massive push for economic growth and social stability is needed for a middle-income economy such as Indonesia, such a push can only become sustainable if it also promotes popular participation among the lower classes and a social democratic, redistributionist agenda. Unfortunately, these participatory and redistributionist elements have been absent in Jokowi's developmentalism.

An example of this is Jokowi's refusal to take decisive action on a number of contentious issues, such as public debates surrounding the legacy of the 1965 massacre and the controversial construction of a cement factory

in Kendeng mountainous region of Central Java that dispossessed local communities from their land.⁴¹ Jokowi stayed silent for the most part when conservative groups tried to silence public discussion on the 1965 massacre or when members of the army tried to intimidate dissenting opinions by labelling them communist sympathizers. With regard to the controversial cement factory construction, he met some representatives of community members affected by the construction in Kendeng region, but did little beyond hearing their complaints and essentially let the construction proceed.

Another step that Jokowi took that contributed to the deeper illiberal turn in Indonesian politics was his heavy-handed response to the increasingly combative Islamist mass protests surrounding the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election.⁴² This mobilization, which was triggered both by the comment regarding the use of Koranic verses for political gains by the then governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok, and his massive urban eviction policy, was a reaction born out of social and economic marginalization that took increasingly nativist and racist undertones. While this wave of Islamist populism was indeed illiberal, the government's response toward it was also illiberal, indiscriminately prosecuting Islamist and populist figures, including those who express their dissent peacefully. In the words of the veteran Indonesia analyst Marcus Mietzner, "Jokowi's administration pursued a criminalization strategy against populists that violated established legal norms. As a result the government's attempt to protect the democratic status quo from populist attacks turned into a threat to democracy itself."⁴³

Moreover, Jokowi also did very little to balance oligarchic influence in politics. It is true that he promoted an expansion of basic public services, such as the public healthcare system and education expansion.⁴⁴ However, he did little to

promote a more redistributive development agenda. In fact, his first term coincided with growing inequality between both the rich and the poor and also between urban and rural areas. A report from Oxfam, a leading poverty eradication organization, shows that in 2016 “the wealthiest 1 percent of the population owned nearly half (49 percent) of total wealth” and in the same year “the collective wealth of the richest four billionaires was...more than the total wealth of the bottom 40 percent of the population.”⁴⁵ The same report also shows that unequal access to basic electricity services and road networks between rural and urban areas as well as land ownership domination by corporations and wealthy individuals exacerbate rural-urban inequality.⁴⁶ Other analyses have also echoed these findings and underlined how increasing inequality might hurt economic growth in the long run.⁴⁷ His emphasis on macroeconomic stability, an area in which he scored pretty well, overlooks how socio-economic inequality and dispossession can translate into further political marginalization of middle-class and lower-class citizens.

Nowhere is this more visible in the influence of oligarchs on both local and national elections in recent years. Numerous civil society organizations and coalitions report that mining and energy corporations, plantation estates, and oligarchs with ties to them have been the primary source of campaign financing for many candidates in local executive head elections. These are the local politicians that have the power to grant licenses for mining and plantation operations once they enter office.⁴⁸ At national level, such corporations and oligarchs also provided a large part of campaign financing for both Jokowi and Prabowo in both the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections.⁴⁹

Such oligarchic influence, combined with Jokowi’s emphasis on political and macroeconomic stability, confines the scope of

policy influence of ordinary citizens and civil society by tilting the balance of power even further in favor of powerful established interests. This leaves little or no room for more progressive candidates from civil society to contest elections. Jokowi was initially seen as such a candidate but has himself been co-opted by oligarchs having entered national-level politics. It also means the continuation of the same pattern of freewheeling patron-clientelism in which the “free market” logic of vote buying reigns, connecting politicians and voters in a non-programmatic, transactional relationship.

Lastly, Jokowi’s record in agrarian politics also contributes to the deterioration of local democracy. He claimed that his flagship agrarian policies – land titling, social forestry and budget allocation for village governments – would solve the many problems that local communities face. However, these policies do not address the structural inequality in land ownership and access and the contraction of democratic space that it creates, not to mention that are merely just the continuation of Yudhoyono’s agrarian policy package.⁵⁰ Jokowi’s pro-capital orientation in rural development also outweighs the supposed benefits of his agrarian policies, as demonstrated by the continuing eruption of agrarian conflicts, many of which emerged in protest at his signature infrastructural projects during his first term.⁵¹ In many cases, Jokowi’s administration has responded to these rural protests rather repressively, thereby reviving the climate of fear that limits the development of a more assertive and autonomous rural civil society in local democratic spaces.⁵²

Herein lies the irony of the Jokowi presidency: elected as a political outsider with a pro-reform platform, he has succumbed to pressure from oligarchs and other conservative elites. Admittedly, Jokowi’s position within his own political party, the Democratic Party of Indonesia-Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi*

Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDI-P) has been tenuous, as he had to secure support from the long-time matriarch of PDIP, Megawati Soekarnoputri, for his nomination as a presidential candidate in 2014.⁵³

Inadvertently, this capitulation to elite vested interests paved the way for the resurgence of illiberal tendencies in Indonesian politics and led to perceptions of a decline in Indonesian democracy. This also meant that the 2019 presidential election was conducted in a different atmosphere to that of 2014: far from being a battle for a more democratic future, the 2019 presidential election represented an intra-oligarchic competition, albeit couched in pluralistic or populist rhetoric.

The 2019 Presidential Election and Its Aftermath

The popular enthusiasm that animated the 2014 presidential election and the early days of the Jokowi presidency now have been replaced by increasing cynicism across Indonesia's political spectrum. In the regional context is especially noteworthy that the logistically challenging election was held successfully and peacefully. Moreover, the mass mobilization of the Indonesian public to participate in the 2019 concurrent presidential and legislative elections demonstrates the depth of popular support for the post-Suharto democratic process. According to Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC), a leading pollster in Indonesia, the voter turnout rate reached 80 percent, well above the 2014 elections (69 percent for the presidential election and 75 percent for the legislative election).⁵⁴ However, as in 2014 the electoral process was marred by misinformation and fake news, and was noteworthy for the lack of substantive policy debates between the Jokowi and Prabowo camps.

What came after the election, however,

surprised many especially those active in civil society. Prior to the parliament's passing of several controversial laws, the government arrested several activists in a workers' demonstration criticizing the pro-capital direction of the proposed revisions of the existing law on labor relations and at another protest demanding the end of militarism in Papua and racism against Papuans.⁵⁵ In both cases, the police arrested the protesters on dubious pretexts and by doing so might have undermined the rule of law and civil rights of the demonstrators.⁵⁶

The situation then worsened when the parliament proposed several laws that would weaken the power of the KPK and the broader anti-corruption campaign, substantively limit civil and political rights, restrict workers' right to strike and ease the expansion of corporate investment in rural areas. The parliament also refused to approve an anti-sexual violence bill and a domestic workers' rights bill, two draft laws seen as crucial for many in civil society. This, coupled with parliament's lack of transparency in discussing the laws, soon triggered a cross-class protest movement, one of the biggest mass protests since the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime in May 1998.

The Jokowi government responded to these mass protests repressively, in a manner not seen since the anti-Suharto protests of 1998. However, this response also escalated the initially sporadic protest movement into a nationwide campaign to return to the heyday of the 1998 post-Suharto democratic reforms. The movement made several demands of the government - to uphold the hard-earned achievements of democratic reforms; end militarism and criminalization of activists including in Papua; address corporate-led environmental degradation; and resolve human rights violations.⁵⁷ This movement garnered substantial public support and sympathy. A recent empirical study shows that Indonesians across the political divide support tougher anti-

corruption measures and feel unrepresented by the existing political class, a sentiment shared by many who active in the mass demonstrations.⁵⁸ Indeed, the protest movement, at least in its initial stage, was backed by a wide range of groups that typically do not get along with each other in politics.

It is not difficult to gauge the logic behind the government's repression of the protesters. It is simply the extension of Jokowiomics: political stability through electoral means and economic growth driven by a commodity and infrastructural boom. Bitter quarrels between the president and an assertive parliament have been replaced by a coalescing of interests and governing notions between the two that also reinforces the dominance of the oligarchs. Jokowi also stressed that he will not issue a government regulation in lieu of law or a *perppu* regulation to replace the newly-passed corruption eradication law that hampers the work of the KPK, despite criticism from the public and civil society.⁵⁹ While Indonesia still has a robust electoral politics, this growing reactionary conservatism nonetheless shows the longevity of what the late Benedict Anderson called "bourgeois electoralism."⁶⁰

Jokowi's new developmentalism is also reflected in the make up of his new cabinet.⁶¹ While some old faces remain, some of his new ministerial appointments have sparked intense public debate.⁶² The former general-turned-businessman, Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, retains his portfolio as the coordinating minister of maritime and investment affairs, suggesting that he will continue to serve as the unofficial political adviser for the president. The market-friendly economist, Sri Mulyani Indrawati, also continues as finance minister, showing Jokowi's commitment to macroeconomic stability. But Jokowi also appointed some new figures. Some new appointments show Jokowi's continuing commitment to a stable investment climate. For example, Bahlil Lahadalia, the current chairperson of the Association of Young

Indonesian Businesspeople and a self-made entrepreneur focusing on natural resources, becomes the new head of the investment coordinating board. Jokowi also surprisingly appointed Nadiem Makarim, the young founder of the ride-hailing service start-up, *Gojek*, as the new education minister, presiding over a ministry which, critics argue, is the symbol of the deepening of market logic in the education system.

Other appointments potentially threaten the practice of participatory politics. For instance, Jokowi appointed Tito Karnavian, the national police head who had gained notoriety for his handling of various mass demonstrations, as the internal affairs minister. He also tapped another former general, Fachrul Razi, as the religious affairs minister. These appointments are controversial because these are supposed to be held by civilians. The appointment of former high-ranking military and police officers to these portfolios violates the spirit of civilian supremacy and harks back to the Suharto era.

By far the biggest surprise has been the appointment of Prabowo Subianto as the defense minister. This is alarming not only from a human rights viewpoint, but also from an accountability perspective - what was the point of having an election if the leader of the opposition accepts a major appointment in the government instead of performing the role of watchdog from outside the government? Prabowo's appointment also nullifies the rationale of supporting Jokowi as the lesser-evil between the two, since the lesser-evil has now appointed his authoritarian rival to his cabinet. Prabowo's fiery persona, military background, and familiarity with international affairs might help Jokowi's handling of defense affairs, but his brashness might also pose a challenge to Jokowi's dream of stable governance.⁶³ Observers have rightly warned that Prabowo might overstep the boundaries beyond his ministerial portfolio in his attempt to dominate security affairs and prepare his political

comeback.⁶⁴ The omens for Jokowi's second term and, more importantly, Indonesian democracy, are not good.

Concluding Remarks

A reassessment of Yudhoyono's legacy and Jokowi's track record shows how the long slow process of democratic stagnation, increasing illiberalism, and declining quality unfolds over time. Initially there were high hopes for the improvement of democratic quality under the supposedly pro-reform president, Jokowi. Alas, these turned out to be empty hopes. Jokowi capitulated to oligarchic and conservative interests instead of pushing for bold reforms that characterized his term as Jakarta governor. He has matured as a politician, but not as a reformer that many expected him to be. Worse, his administration countered illiberal Islamist mobilization with its own version of nationalist and statist illiberalism. Therefore, in the span of five years, Indonesia went from an energized democratic polity to a low-quality democracy. For example, from an institutionalist perspective, the Freedom House annual report now ranks Indonesia as a "partly free country."⁶⁵ This erosion of the institutional quality of democracy is a sign of the broader democratic decline stemming from structural issues affecting Indonesian politics.

Indonesia still performs relatively well compared to many of its regional neighbors and other Asian democracies. After all, Indonesia has twice elected Jokowi as president rather than someone like the Hindu nationalist Modi in India.⁶⁶ There is a degree of truth in this assessment. Indeed, with the notable exception of enduring anti-Chinese sentiment and its uncivil political implications, the politicization of ethnic sentiments for illiberal political ends has largely subsided.⁶⁷ Indonesia also fares better than some other Asian democracies, despite - or perhaps because of - the

endurance of its patronage politics.⁶⁸

However, stability itself does not guarantee that democratic *quality* will remain stable and unchanged. This is the point of this article. While post-authoritarian Indonesia has not produced a Rodrigo Duterte, Hun Sen, Jair Bolsonaro, or Viktor Orbán, Jokowi is not a committed pluralist and reformist democrat. His track record so far shows that he is more than happy to discard democratic norms for ad hoc technocratic solutions and political appeasement. This approach, a result of enduring intra-oligarchic competition, ultimately contributes to a further decline in Indonesian democratic quality. Viewed from both regional and global perspectives, Indonesia is part of the new wave of illiberal populist mobilization in both established and newer democracies.⁶⁹

It might be too soon to predict the trajectory of Indonesian democracy under the second Jokowi presidency. However, looking at the current political situation, it seems that state elites and their associated economic backers are positioned to promote their own narrow self-interests at the expense of popular participation, as shown in the government's repressive handling of mass protests of October 2019. This deepening of oligarchic and illiberal currents in Indonesian politics - two sides of the same coin - is likely to continue throughout the remaining period of Jokowi's second term. The proof? The government's proposed pro-capital omnibus laws that aim to promote investment expansion by sidelining public participation, a move that triggered another wave of demonstrations by labor unions and civil society organizations.⁷⁰

Students, activists, and members of various community organizations and unions have already expressed grave concern about the future of democratic rights in Jokowi's second term. I am afraid that they might be right.

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Notes

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