CENTRO STUDI PER I POPOLI EXTRA-EUROPEI "CESARE BONACOSSA" - UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

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Asia in 2024: Fragile democracies amid global turmoil

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Articles meant for publication should be sent to Michelguglielmo Torri (mg.torri@gmail.com), Filippo Boni (filippo.boni@open.ac.uk), Diego Maiorano (dmaiorano@unior.it); book reviews should be sent to Elena Valdameri (elena.valdameri@gess.ethz.ch).

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libreria editrice
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I-00198 ROMA
tel. 06 84 17 758
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Contents

Indonesia 2023-2024: Jokowi's endgame and the politics of dynasty

Riwanto Tirtosudarmo and *Peter B.R. Carey*

Independent social researcher, formerly at the Research Center for Society and Culture, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PMB-LIPI).
tirtosudarmo@yahoo.com

Emeritus Fellow Trinity College, Oxford, UK and Adjunct (Visiting) Professor, Department of Humanities, University of Indonesia
peterbrcarey@hotmail.com

On 20 October 2024, former Indonesian President, Joko Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, came to the end of his second and final five-year term (2019-24) when he handed over the presidency to his preferred successor, Prabowo Subianto. Since the start of Jokowi's second term a strong authoritarian or illiberal turn had been evident, which became particularly pronounced during his final two years in power, analyzed in this article. Jokowi's authoritarian turn was functional to the implementation of grand infrastructure development projects, which needed substantial foreign investments. In order to realize them, Jokowi did not hesitate to create unfavourable conditions for local communities, in particular by the implementation of «National Strategic Projects», giving access to community and privately-owned land. One mega project above all others defined Jokowi's final two years. This was his attempt to build a new national capital – the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) – in the jungles of East Kalimantan (Borneo), a project still far from completion at his term's end. Also, the increasing illiberal turn characterizing Jokowi's actions during his last two years as president became evident when, after vainly attempting to have his term extended, he not only chose to back Prabowo, namely a politician with dubious democratic credentials, as his successor, but also manipulated the Constitutional Court to ensure that his eldest son, the 37-year-old Gibran Rakabuming Raka, could put his name forward as Prabowo's running mate. Nonetheless, the alliance with Prabowo was no guarantee that the fate of Jokowi's signature project, the building of the new capital, would be realized. The new President had his own priorities, the main one being his ambition to unite all political parties under his big tent «red-and-white» coalition. Fortunately for the future of Indonesian democracy, when the period under review was coming to its close Prabowo was far from achieving his goal, especially after Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDI-P) triumphed at the polls in the 27 November 2024 contest for the Jakarta Governorship. This opened the possibility that the PDI-P might fulfil the role of an effective opposition and thwart Prabowo's desire to return to an authoritarian military style government along the lines of Suharto's «New Order» (1966-98).

Keywords – Indonesia; Jokowi; Joko Widodo; dynasty; democratic decline; developmentalism; 2024 elections; authoritarianism.

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> *Yes, I'm desperate now. There's no hope anymore. The [moral] level [of the government] is already hurting democracy. I was an activist in 1998 fighting with other friends to build Indonesian democracy. Successfully building up until now, having a Constitutional Court, an Ombudsman, being able to control the police, that's the struggle of [us] 98 activist friends. [But now] continuously being betrayed, being tricked, who wouldn't be angry?*
>
> *Indonesian artist-activist, Butet Kartaredjasa,*
> *30 January 2024*[1]

1. *Introduction*

In the present essay, which covers the period January 2023 to December 2024, we focus on Jokowi's track record in government during his last two years in office. This saw him complete his ten-year incumbency (2014-2024) and prepare for his legacy by manoeuvring to ensure a desired outcome for the 2024 presidential election. Key here was Jokowi's success in securing his long-term political interests by arranging for his eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Rakabumi, to become the running mate of Jokowi's own successor, former general Prabowo Subianto (born 1951) (Section 4.3).

We start with an overall view of the Indonesian economy in Jokowi's closing years before moving on to consider his track record in foreign policy, including the much-vexed issue of West Papua. Here we cover some of the ground already charted in the review essays by Kimura and Anugrah (2023) and Michael Buehler (2024) in *Asian Survey*. We then come to the core of this analysis, namely a consideration of the 2024 presidential and legislative elections and Jokowi's constitution-defying footwork around these key events. Our essay closes with a consideration of the first three months (October-December 2024) of Prabowo's presidency and his administration's prospects going forward, a theme which is further elaborated in our succinct conclusion.

During Jokowi's decade in office (2014-2024), infrastructure development was the prime mover of his economic policy. This required an all-out effort to attract foreign investment. One vehicle for attracting this investment was the so-called «National Strategic Projects (*Proyek Strategis Nasional*)» (henceforth: NSPs). These formed the heart of Jokowi's infrastructure development programme by designating specific areas as core economic resource points to attract domestic or foreign direct investment. They were designed

1. «*Iya, putus asa saya sekarang. Sudah nggak ada harapan. Levelnya sudah melukai demokrasi. Saya termasuk aktivis 1998 berjuang bersama kawan lain untuk membangun demokrasi Indonesia. Berhasil membangun sampai sekarang punya MK, Ombudsman, bisa mengontrol kepolisian, itu perjuangan teman-teman aktivis 98. Terus dikhianati, diakal-akalin siapa yang gak marah*?» [Huda 2024].

to enable foreign and domestic investors to secure development access to community and privately-owned land. As these NSPs were implemented in a crude and haphazard fashion across the country, it became clear that people and communities were being sacrificed in the name economic growth.

As Jokowi's term ended, one mega project above all others became his principal concern. This was Indonesia's new national capital, the IKN (*Ibu Kota Nusantara*/Archipelago Capital City). Hacked out of the Bornean jungles in distant East Kalimantan, this had long been planned as Jokowi's signature project. In his ambitious imaginings, he saw this as guaranteeing him lasting renown as the President who had finally exorcised the ghosts of the Dutch colonial past by abandoning the fast-sinking flood-prone Jakarta, former seat of Indonesia's Dutch rulers, for a new Indonesian capital built by Indonesian architects to traditional Indonesian norms and entirely shorn of the faded glories of the former Netherlands East Indies state with its pillared portico villas and tropical *ambtswoning* (government residences).

Although Jokowi's plan to start using the presidential palace of the new national capital to celebrate Independence Day on 17 August 2024 was not realised, he was determined that the project be continued under his successor, with his eldest son strategically placed to guarantee its longevity. Indeed, as we will see shortly, the new national capital rapidly became a fetish and an obsession, and its construction began to have an impact on the domestic economy, which had still not fully recovered from the 2020-2022 COVID-19 pandemic.

Pragmatic diplomacy was the hallmark of Jokowi's years in office with the development of the country's infrastructure taking pride of place. There was also a large overlay of image building. One thinks here of Jokowi's attempts to show Indonesia punching above its weight by acting as host to the November 2022 G-20 in Bali and engaging in bridge-building diplomacy between Kyiv and Moscow in late June 2022. Unfortunately, when it came to a dispute much closer to home, Papua, such bridge building was notably absent. Despite Jokowi's 2014 campaign promise to achieve a political resolution of the long-running Papuan problem during his first incumbency (2014-2019), human rights abuses in the troubled half-island continued. These ongoing abuses ensured Papua's continuing international prominence as a human rights hot spot. This in turn led to increasing international concern and awareness of the Papua problem, resulting in successive defeats for Indonesia at the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC). Here major powers like the United States became involved, unlike in the past when only the much smaller Pacific Island states showed any concern for the Papuan cause.

We then proceed to the core of this essay which analyses the 2024 presidential election, the electoral appeal of Prabowo and his youthful running mate, and the former general's family background, career and resilience. In particular, we look at his post-May 1998 comeback and the ways in which he rebuilt his political career after the disasters which befell him at the time

of Suharto's resignation. At the same time, we also look at Jokowi's pragmatism in navigating treacherous waters of Indonesian politics, a theme already addressed in our previous essay [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, pp. 179, 183, 194]. But here the story takes a more dramatic turn with Jokowi's willingness to violate the Indonesian constitution on full display. We see how he worked to achieve his desired outcomes in the 14 February 2024 presidential, legislative and local elections, thus ensuring the smooth transfer of power to Prabowo Subianto as president and Jokowi's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as vice president on 20 October 2022. Far from shunting Jokowi to the side-lines and relegating him to an obscure provincial retirement in his native city of Surakarta, the presidential election contributed to secure his political future. Relinquishing his «king maker» role was not on Jokowi's agenda. A President, once seen as a bright hope for Indonesian democracy, had metamorphosed at the end of his ten-year incumbency into a despot prepared to bend the political establishment to his will [Aspinall and Berenschot 2019; Davidson 2018; Power and Warburton 2020].

2. *The concluding phase of Joko Widodo second term as president*

2.1. *The «New Order» legacy*

Indonesia is a child of the Pacific War and came of age after suffering crippling damages during the Cold War. Like its ASEAN partners Vietnam and Burma (post-1992 Myanmar), the Republic is a product of a decolonisation process rooted in an early 20th century nationalist movement. Indonesia's achievement of physical *merdeka* (independence) coincided with the end of World War II in Asia. Like Vietnam, which brought the French to defeat at Dien Bien Phu (7 May 1954), Indonesia had to fight for its freedom against the former colonial power. Although it waged an eventually successful guerrilla war against the Netherlands, its independence owed as much to diplomacy as prowess on the battlefield. Always outgunned by the 102,000-strong Dutch army in Java [Van Reybrouck 2024, p. 466], Indonesia relied on the support of foreign countries to secure its eventual independence. Here the post-war superpower, the United States, played a critical role. Faced with Dutch intransigence and mindful of the need to present a united NATO front against the USSR, Washington pressurised The Hague to reach a diplomatic agreement (2 November 1949) on pain of suspension of Marshall Aid [Soelias 2015]. This fact should always be borne in mind. Indonesia is a country whose destiny has been determined and shaped by global events.[2]

2. As Indonesia's first prime minister, Sutan Sjahrir (1909-1966; in office 1945-1947), put it in his September 1945 pamphlet *Perjuangan Kita* [Our Struggle], «the fate of Indonesia, more than any other country, depend[s] on the international situation and [global] developments», Sjahrir 1946, p. 19.

Just a decade after its independence, Indonesia was again remade by global conflict. This time it was the Cold War (1947-1991), which pitted the socialist and capitalist blocs against each other. Deep political cleavages, in the making since the late colonial era, had already fissured the Indonesian body politic. The forces of the Left, socialism and communism, the nationalist Centre, and Islam and the military on the right were all radicalised by the experience of the independence struggle (1945-49). In the last decade of Sukarno's presidency (1945-1966), these forces collided with fatal consequences as Indonesia became a proxy in the Cold War [Kahin 1963]. With the malign intervention of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the forces of the Right prevailed over the Left in Indonesia in what became known as «Operation Jakarta» [Bevins 2020, 18 May]. Sukarno's government, his nationalist supporters and the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) were all destroyed in what the CIA later acknowledged as a massacre which «ranks as one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century» [Aarons 2007, p. 81]. Conservative estimates put those killed at between 500,000 and a million, others suggest two to three million. Many thousands more were detained and imprisoned without trial. This political tsunami produced General Suharto's «New Order». A post-independence Indonesia, which had previously leaned toward the socialist and communist bloc — as witnessed by the April 1955 Bandung Conference and the subsequent Jakarta-Peking axis[3] – was now squarely in the Western capitalist camp.

While Indonesia continued to be presented as «free and active (*bebas aktif*)», to all intents and purposes it had become a prisoner of the economic policies imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. In Indonesia's case, this was brokered through the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI, post-1992 Consultative Group on Indonesia, CGI), the international consortium of donor countries which financed Indonesia's development until the consortium's formal dissolution in 2003.

Under Suharto, the management of the Indonesian economy was taken over by a group of economist-technocrats led by Professor Widjojo Nitisastro, the New Order's long serving head (1967-83) of the National Planning Agency (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional, BAPPENAS) and coordinating minister for Economics, Finance and Industry (1973-83). Widjojo and his fellow technocrats had been trained at the University of California at Berkeley in the early 1960s; this explains the «Berkeley mafia» sobriquet by which they became known. Their watchwords were pragmatism, economic growth and trickle-down economics. To them is due the elaboration of a national development plan focussed on the promotion of economic growth, which aimed at restructuring the Indonesian economy through centrally controlled five-year

3. Also known as the Djakarta-Peking-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Phnom Penh Axis inaugurated in January 1965 as part of President Sukarno's foreign policy during the last phase of Indonesia's «Guided Democracy» era (1959-66).

development plans. Starting from the early 1970s and ending with Suharto's fall on 21 May 1998, these development plans were sequentially implemented. Under Suharto's dispensation, three principles of development were adopted – known in Indonesia as the «*Trilogi Pembangunan*» *(Development Trilogy)* – namely stability, growth and equity, which became the lodestars for the state economy and for Indonesia's progress.

Widjojo and his fellow technocrats believed, like free marketeers the world over, that tax-cuts and other benefits for the rich would eventually benefit the impoverished masses through a supposed «trickle down» effect. While they may have succeeded in reducing the number of people living below the poverty line in Indonesia to the current 9% (in reality, as noted below, 30%), statistics showed the gap between the few rich and the economically challenged mass becoming ever wider. What was happening under Suharto was a trickle up rather than a trickle down.

The pursuit of the *Trilogi Pembangunan* was predicated on the New Order's guarantee of political stability enforced by the military. This was seen by Suharto as the sine qua non for the achievement of growth and equity. Hence, from the early 1970s political development was tightly controlled. At the same time, a basic restructuring of Indonesian politics was undertaken. From 5 January 1973, only three parties were allowed to exist – the state party, Golkar, the Islamic United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, PPP), and the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI). The last two represented a merger of four earlier Islamic parties and five non-Islamic parties respectively. It was assumed these three parties, established to appeal to Muslim (PPP) and non-Muslim/*abangan* (nominally Muslim Javanese) voters, adequately represented the political aspirations of the Indonesian people. The government ensured that these parties never developed into an effective opposition by controlling their leadership and «recalling» (dismissing) outspoken legislators.

For three decades, general elections were conducted every five years (1977, 1982, 1987, 1992 and 1997), with Golkar, the ruling party, always winning by massive landslides. The elected Peoples' Consultative Assembly (MPR) then unanimously re-elected Suharto as president for no less than five consecutive terms of which he served out four complete five-year periods. In this fashion, the second Indonesian President ruled Indonesia «constitutionally» for 32 years (1966-1998) in what Herbert Feith described as a «repressive developmentalist regime» [Feith 1982b]. In May 1998, Suharto was toppled by a combination of factors, the most important of which were the impact of the Asian financial crisis (June 1997-July 1998) and massive public protest.

2.2. *How the post-Suharto era betrayed the hopes of an escape from the legacy of Suharto's New Order*

Following the fall of Suharto in May 1998, various changes occurred in Indonesia's political landscape. They included the adoption of a multi-party

system, decentralisation, direct elections and the creation of a Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi) (Ellis 2005); yet the structure of the country's political economy remained largely intact. As Robison and Hadiz [2004] noted succinctly, there was only a «reorganisation» of power. Joko Widodo (aka Jokowi) was the fifth president after the fall of Suharto, succeeding Habibie (1998-1999), Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001), Megawati (2001-2004) and Yudhoyono (SBY, 2004-2014). Perceived initially as the bright hope for Indonesia, Jokowi claimed to have no connection whatsoever with Suharto or the 1965-66 events, having been born in 1961 and thus only four years old when the Indonesian Second President's «creeping coup» against his predecessor began. There were thus high expectations that Jokowi would make Indonesia a new country, democratic, just and prosperous. But these expectations were severely disabused.

As the only president with a business background, Jokowi knew well how a national economy works. But he was also acutely aware that his hands were tied politically by the need to protect the interests of the Indonesian oligarchs. This means that, despite his popular mandate, Jokowi was unable to make any fundamental changes to macroeconomic structures or shift the economic policy towards a more people-friendly economic agenda. Differently put, Jokowi could not but continue the enhanced growth model bequeathed by his predecessors. This was made abundantly clear when, in July 2016, Jokowi summoned former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Finance Minister Sri Mulyani (in post 2005-2010) to take on the same role. Sri Mulyani – managing director of the World Bank in the years 2010-2016, the first Indonesian to hold that prestigious office – was widely considered as an ideological «granddaughter» of Professor Widjojo. The economic and fiscal policies she implemented were straight from the playbook of the Berkeley mafia.

By the end of Jokowi's second term in office in October 2024, the Indonesian public had become aware that their hope for a new Indonesia was just an illusion. Indeed, with the election of Prabowo as Jokowi's successor, they began to fear that the return of Suharto's repressive New Order regime was just around the corner.

2.3. *Symptoms of democratic decline*

The implementation and eventual failure of Joko Widodo's socio-economic policies is discussed below. Here we want to highlight the symptoms of democratic decline which became apparent under his dispensation. A first one is represented by the growing number of agrarian conflicts – namely contestations over land and local resources. According to the Agrarian Reform Consortium (*Konsorsium Pembaharuan Agraria*) and other expert observers, agrarian conflict increased due to the sharp rise in the economic activities of a growing number of industries requiring more land. Most of these agrarian conflicts occurred in plantation industries and in forestry, pitting local peo-

ple against foreign and domestic companies. Conflict also occurred because of plain bad management. This was especially the case in palm oil plantations and mining, where land and economic resources in various locations, particularly in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua, but also in Java, became increasingly contended. Some observers argued that the acceleration of conflict was directly related to the implementation of the new Job Creation Laws (on which, more later), whose enactment caused widespread popular protest in September 2019. The two Ministers most directly involved with these agrarian issues – Minister of Agriculture Syahrul Yasin Limpo (2019-2023) and Minister of the Environment and Forestry Siti Nurbaya Bakar (2014-2024) – were both from the Nasdem (National Democrat) Party.

Another symptom of democratic decline – which, once again involved a member of the Nasdem Party – was the corruption scandal involving Johnny Gerard Plate, the minister of Communication and Information Technology in office in 2019 to 2023. Plate was accused, along with six senior officials in his ministry and local businessmen of defrauding the state to the tune of Indonesian rupiahs (IDR) 8 trillion (US$ 510,000,000). The peculation was reported to have occurred in a government project to develop internet infrastructure in remote regions like Plate's native Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) [*Jakarta Globe* 2023, 8 November]. Given that the Nasdem founder and leader, Surya Paloh, was at the time in a situation of open conflict with President Joko Widodo (on this more later), rumours began to circulate that the President had had a hand in accelerating the prosecution of both Yasin Limpo and Johnny Plate by the Corruption Eradication Commission.[4]

2.4. *An economic policy in line with Suharto's «New Order»*

During his last two years (2022-2024) in power, Jokowi began implementing economic policies which had been made possible by the creation of the so-called Omnibus Law. Named, in Orwellian fashion, «Job Creation Laws (Undang-Undang [UU] Cipta Kerja)», but widely criticized as inimical to labour and indigenous land rights, Jokowi's legal reforms facilitated the increase of deforestation and defanged the powers of the Corruption Eradication Commission. The creation of the Job Creation Laws was claimed to be driven by a desire to simplify the bureaucratic processes, which so frequently stymied the realisation of development projects in Indonesia. The revision of the laws governing the working of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) had a similar goal. They originated from the need to make bu-

4. Plate was given a 15-year custodial sentence on 8 November 2023 by Jakarta's Anti-Corruption Criminal Court for personally embezzling US$ 1,000,000 [*Jakarta Globe* 2023, 8 November]. Meanwhile, Limpo was handed a 10-year sentence for blackmailing and extorting bribes from his subordinates in the Agriculture Ministry amounting to IDR 44.5 billion (US$ 2,700,000) [*Antara News* 2023, 11 July].

reaucrats feel more secure in implementing government projects given that a very large number of bureaucrats had earlier been prosecuted by the KPK for alleged corruption. These two regulations, the Undang-Undang Cipta Kerja (Job Creation Laws) and KPK reforms, elicited strong public protests when they were enacted in September 2019. Yet Jokowi was able to push them through, given his control of Parliament and the Constitutional Court.

While Jokowi could brush off the criticism and public protest at that time, he could not hide the negative impact of his government's development projects on local communities. Indeed, the Indonesian public eventually realised that Jokowi's legislation was essentially a continuation of the economic policy of Suharto's New Order, only now with new euphemistic names, such as the «Job Creation Laws». In the final analysis, the results were the same: the extraction of natural resources and the privileging of foreign investors to the detriment of local stakeholders. These twin policies amounted to a continuation of the «repressive developmentalist regime» of the not-so-distant past.

2.5. *The waste of natural and human resources*

A decade on from the high hopes which accompanied Jokowi's successful presidential bid in 2014, the majority of Indonesians continued to live in very poor economic conditions. They also had low educational opportunities. According to the 2022 PISA score, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment, which measures the levels of educational attainment in reading, maths and science amongst fifteen-year-olds, Indonesia was ranked 69 out of 81 in maths, 67 in science and 71 in reading. Only the Philippines and Cambodia, among the ASEAN countries surveyed by OECD, ranked lower. Indonesia also had the lowest number of teachers with the requisite certifications from teacher training colleges of any of the countries surveyed [PISA 2023, 5 December]. This was all very far from the just and prosperous country promised in the 1945 constitution, where, following the four Amendments of 1999-2002, Article 28H stipulates that «every person shall have the right to live in physical and spiritual prosperity, to have a home and enjoy a good and healthy environment and shall have the right to obtain medical care» [Constitution 1945].

As a country blessed by rich natural resources and biodiversity, it is perhaps easy to blame Indonesia's current predicament on a «resource curse», the result of an *embarrass de richesses* making indigenous populations lazy – shades of Montesquieu's social and moral theory, articulated in his *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), of the influence of climate on the virtues and vices of a particular people [Shackleton 1955, pp. 321-322].

Maybe there is some truth here, but it is still no excuse for a state leader to fail to pursue the transformation of his country's human resources through effective educational policies. Yet this is what seems to have

happened under Jokowi as infrastructural spending soared; in the penultimate two years of Jokowi's incumbency (2021-2022) the budget for his core policy, infrastructure development, increased by 22.2% to US$ 30 billion [Febrianto 2024, 16 August], while spending on education fell 4% from 17.94 to 13.93% ['Indonesia Education Spending']. In this self-same period, as spending on infrastructural projects intensified, the construction of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), the future new capital, got under way in earnest in East Kalimantan.

Again, in the last two years of the Jokowi administration (2022-2024), following the banning of all exports of unprocessed minerals in 2014, the expansion of extractive industries continued apace with new commodities such as nickel pellets coming into full production from the new PT Gunbuster Nickel Industry smelter in North Morowali, Central Sulawesi. Established in 2019 and inaugurated by Jokowi in December 2021, its activities run parallel with Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP), operated by a Chinese company, Tsingshan. Here lateritic nickel resources were extracted for the manufacture of batteries for electric vehicles (EVs), Indonesia having now become the world's largest lateritic nickel producer with 15% of the world's proven resources of this crucial commodity in 2024 [Lotulung 2024, 21 March].

Another development policy involving high environmental costs involved the case of sand exports. On 17 September 2024, apparently in a desperate attempt to boost the government's income, Jokowi amended Government Regulation No.23 of 2023, which had banned sea sand exports, thus reopening them. It was a decision which involved potential damage to the environment and provoked much public criticism [*Tempo* 2024, 17 September].

2.6. *The human and ecological cost of Jokowi's developmental policies*

Unfortunately, the human and ecological cost for these extractive industry developments has been very high. The new top-down policy, the so-called Proyek Strategis Nasional (National Strategic Project) programme, allows minimum consideration for the participation of local communities. At the same time as giving legal sanction to such extractive projects, it permits them to ride roughshod over local communities. The IMIP project in Morowali, for example, created a furore given China's notorious policy of bringing in their own workers. This sparked protests from several local organizations. In some cases, projects have been implemented in a heavy-handed manner.

Two recent cases have highlighted how National Strategic Projects damage local interests. The first involved the inhabitants of Wadas village in Purworejo regency in Central Java. Since 2021, attempts have been made to move them off their land to allow the extraction of andesite stone for the construction of a nearby dam. These attempts have been met with widespread public resistance involving law students from several of the top universities in Java. But as a National Strategic Project there was little the law-

yers and the courts could do to overturn the original government decision [*Amicus Curiae* 2021].

The second case involved Rempang Island in Indonesia's Riau Province, just an hour's ferry ride from Singapore. The local inhabitants have been ordered to move off 7,000 hectares of non-forested land to make way for a Chinese-built US$ 11.5 billion Eco-City project. Signed off as recently as late July 2024 in a meeting between Jokowi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, the project – which created a new special industrial zone and was labelled as a National Strategic Project – was obviously being implemented with minimal popular consultation and impact surveys [Arshad 2024, 13 November]. The way Jokowi handled these two cases shows how little real respect he has for communities who stand in the way of his ambitious development goals.

2.7. *The failure of education reform*

Under Jokowi, education policies were designed to produce a labour force capable of meeting the demands of industry, trade and finance. His choice of Nadiem Makarim, founder CEO of the successful online Gojek taxi-hiring firm, as minister of Education (in office 2021-2024), reflected the President's dream about Indonesia's future as a global player in digital industries. What happened, however, was very far from the realization of these dreams. Far from liberating Indonesian schoolchildren to embrace a digital future in the workplace, education became increasingly commercialized and bureaucratized. Under Jokowi the long-standing problem of the mismatch between school curricula and the demands of the digitalised world of work was not resolved. In fact, it got steadily worse as demographically Indonesia entered the so-called «bonus era» in which a nation's population in the productive age is substantially more numerous than its non-productive cohort. But this demographic bonus can only be realised if the younger generation, reaching the age of employment, has obtained the right education and intellectual skills. Such skills are imparted by creative teaching where pupils are encouraged to question everything they are taught. This leads over time to a facility with what the Ancient Greeks knew as «Socratic dialogue». Unfortunately, Indonesian schoolchildren, at least in government schools, are never introduced to such a dialogue. Instead, rote learning and mindless memorisation are the order of the day. This does not create critical minds. It is no surprise then that Indonesia, nearly alone of all the top ten most populous countries in the world (Brazil is a partial exception here), has never won a Nobel Prize in any field [Carey 2023]. The rider here is that both capitalists and political regimes are averse to populations made up of individuals with critical minds, needing only a small minority of critically empowered individuals to support the intellectual life of the nation. The bulk of these critical thinkers will be co-opted, while the remainder will be marginalized or repressed.

2.8. *The persistence of a deeply unequal society*

In the past decades, the income gap between the few rich and the poor in Indonesia has been increasing. In the years under review, Indonesia remains a deeply unequal society, where 1% of the 280-million population owns over 50% of the wealth – making Indonesia the fourth most unequal society after Russia, India and Thailand. Also, social classes remain segregated, and an invidious class system based on an unequal access to education, wealth and resources prevails [World Bank 2016]. This interestingly follows the trend at the global level, charted by the World Bank [World Bank 2022].

By the end of the Jokowi presidency, gross national income per-capita continued to be stuck below US$ 4,000 (US$ 3,953 in 2023). This was just a third of neighbouring Malaysia (US$ 12,500), and in a different league to developed countries like Singapore (US$ 62,364). According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS), the percentage of the 280 million Indonesian population living below the International Poverty Line (henceforth: IPL) of US$ 1.90 per day, as of September 2024, was just under 9% (8.56) [*Kompas* 2025, 17 January]. Yet these statistics have recently been questioned. The US$ 1.90 IPL is deemed to be unrealistic as a cut-off point. Many more Indonesian families struggle to survive just over that per diem figure. If the more realistic cut-off point of US$ 2.15 per day is used, as in neighbouring Timor-Leste,[5] then the figure for Indonesia population below IPL would be more like 30% [*Kompas* 2025, 17 January]. This indicates a failure at the national level to reduce the number of people living on less than 1,400 calories (Kcal)[6] per day, an intake regarded as the minimum to sustain healthy life [BPS 2024, 28 November].

The percentage of people living below the IPL is higher in rural areas, 12.22%, compared to urban communities, 7.29%. At the same time, the gap between the richest 10% of the population and the majority 90% has increased. This was mirrored in Indonesia's Gini-coefficient ratio[7] which deteriorated from 0.341 in 2000 to 0.388 in March 2023 [BPS 2023, 17 July]. Again, there was a marked difference between urban and rural areas, only this time the income gap was markedly higher in the cities than in the countryside.

5. In 2023, nearly 50% of Timor-Leste's 1,36 million population were deemed to be living in poverty on the basis of the US$ 2.15 PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) figure, see *Kompas* 2025, 17 January.

6. Abbreviation for kilocalorie, the unit used to measure the amount of energy in food, also frequently given as kJ (kilojoules). As a rough guide an average man needs 2,500 Kcal per day and an average woman 2,000 Kcal, see NHS 2023, 17 April.

7. The Gini coefficient - developed by Italian statistician Corrado Gini in 1912 – ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 represent absolute income equality and 1 absolute income inequality. Differently put, the higher is the value indicated by the Gini coefficient, the higher is income inequality.

Since the fall of Suharto in May 1998, annual GDP growth in Indonesia has averaged 4.89%. This is far below the 7% needed to keep the domestic economy growing fast enough to provide jobs for the estimated two million school leavers coming into the job market each year. In the past decade of Jokowi's administration (2014-2024), GDP growth has hovered around 5% (2022-5.31%; and 2023-5.05%) with the economic fundamentals – capital investment and domestic consumption – continuing to weaken. This situation is reflected in the US$-IDR exchange rate which averaged IDR 11,882 to the US dollar in the year when Jokowi took office (2014) but declined by a full third to IDR 15,866 in the final ten months of his presidency (January-October 2024).

During the last five years of the Jokowi era, some 9.5 million Indonesians are estimated to have fallen out of the Indonesian middle class (defined as families with a monthly expenditure of between US$ 150 to US$ 650) because of the weakening domestic economy. In this period, this class shrunk from 57.33 million to 47.85 million, a decline from 21.45% to 17.13% of Indonesia's total population [BPS 2024, 25 October]. In terms of Indonesia's political stability, such a steadily shrinking middle class is not a good omen as far as the future of the country is concerned.

The volatile international situation – with the ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and the residual effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) – slowed domestic growth in the Indonesian economy. This created negative stimulus to its laggard manufacturing sector. A comparative study conducted by the Center of Economic and Law Studies (CELIOS), a private Jakarta-based economic think tank, showed that the performance of the Indonesian manufacturing sector was substantially lower than in three other major ASEAN economies: Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. This situation has resulted in a poor level of foreign direct investment in Indonesia by comparison with the three other major ASEAN economies [CELIOS 2024, 10 September]. The CELIOS study also showed that Indonesia's ranking in the economic efficiency index (ICOR)[8] had worsened during the second Jokowi administration (2010-2024). By mid-2024, Indonesia occupied the lowest position (3.4) in ASEAN behind the Philippines (3.7), Thailand (4.5), Malaysia (4.6) and Vietnam (5.2). One of the problems identified by the CELIOS study is Indonesia's strikingly low Logistic Performance Index (LPI), which measures how well a country performs in trade logistics, considering the speed and efficiency of customs clearance, infrastructure, international shipments, logistics services, tracking/tracing and timeliness [CELIOS 2024, 10 September].

Another major issue impeding Indonesia's comparative advantage internationally is its rampant corruption. Indonesian corruption specialists

8. ICOR = Incremental Capital Output Ratio. This measures the relationship between the level of capital investment made in any given economy, and the output in terms of GDP.

like Mochtar [2024, 4 August] note that the phenomenon is closely linked with politics. In fact, political corruption has been the crucial problem in Indonesia since independence. It cannot be isolated from the issues which have bedevilled Jokowi's last two years in power. The adage «bad politics make for a bad economy» is nowhere truer than in Indonesia.

2.9. *Human capital and higher education*

As we have seen, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) score [PISA 2023, 5 December] has charted a steady decline in the capacity and quality of Indonesia's human resources during Jokowi's second administration.[9] The low level of education contributes to deficient human resources. These in turn compromise Indonesia's future.

This weakness is also reflected in Indonesia's Human Capital Index ranking, which has been stagnant during the past five years. Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and China are all ahead of Indonesia.

Apart from the low quality of its human resources, Indonesia also suffers from high unemployment amongst its university graduates, one of the reasons for the steady decline in the size of the country's middle class. This underscores the mismatch between supply and demand in the finance and trade sectors. Unsurprisingly, Indonesia ranks low on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), a situation highlighted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), whose latest report shows that Indonesia's GCI score is still the lowest in the ASEAN-6.[10] Vietnam, a socialist state and far less developed than Indonesia 50 years ago, posted a higher rate of innovation and industrial patent registration than Indonesia, where the number of patents showed no significant increase during Jokowi's second term [CELIOS 2024, 10 September].

The bleak outlook for the quality of human resources in Indonesia reflects the failure of government education policies under Jokowi. Nowhere was this more evident than in the Indonesian university and tertiary education sectors, which were rocked by several scandals in in the last years of Jokowi's presidency, underscoring Gojek CEO Nadiem Makarim's lack of capacity as minister of Education (in office 2021-2024). Jokowi's assumption that a successful young business entrepreneur could transform Indonesian higher education and ensure that the country's university graduates could compete in the global market was gravely misplaced. On 11 February 2023, Indonesia's *Kompas Daily* reported its investigation into professional mal-

9. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is managed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organization founded in 1961 and headquartered in Paris to advise governments on how to implement policies which improve the lives of their citizens.

10. The ASEAN-6 represent the six largest economies within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations grouping, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, The Philippines and Vietnam.

practice in Indonesia's leading government universities. Focusing on the way in which academic articles were placed by university professors in international Scopus accredited journals, its report described numerous manipulative practices [*Kompas* 2023, 11 February]. These usually involved an agent, known as a «jockey» (*joki* in Indonesian), who brokered arrangements between academicians and international journal editors, some of whom ran «predatory journals».[11] An estimated 17% of all articles published by Indonesian academics in 2016-17 were placed in such journals. This makes Indonesia the worst offender, after Kazakhstan, of any country in the world in terms of publications in such dubious academic outlets [Machaček and Srholec 2022].

Such behaviour among Indonesian academics at leading government universities underscores a widespread lack of scientific principles and integrity in the country's *civitas academica*. Many university professors, however, feel compelled to engage in these unethical academic practices because of recent changes in higher education policy which require professors and lecturers to publish in international journals to maintain or upgrade their professional status. In Indonesia such status is determined by bureaucratic rank; all Indonesian academics are government employees or PNS (*Pegawai Negeri Sipil* = Civil Servants), and as is the case the world over, higher status means higher financial remuneration.

Related to these scandals involving university professors is the ever more ubiquitous habit of giving top bureaucrats and politicians, particularly those of ministerial rank, honorary doctorates (*doctor honoris causa*). Although such practices are common in global academia worldwide, what has recently happened in several leading Indonesian universities is the sale of such degrees for political favours. This was recently highlighted by *Tempo* magazine in a special number entitled *Obral Guru Besar* («Flogging off Professorships») [*Tempo* 2024, 4 August]. Such scandals reflect the further erosion of academic principles. The debasing of the coinage of honorary doctorates indicates just how far universities as learning institutions must go to secure support and political patronage at the highest levels of the Indonesian state bureaucracy to guarantee their future.

Another symptom of Jokowi's failure to create a conducive research environment has been his creation of a single national institution for research and development, already discussed in our 2022 article [Tirtosudar-

11. Predatory journals are publications that claim to be legitimate scholarly journals but misrepresent their publishing practices. They often: (1) charge publication fees without providing standard peer-review or editing services; (2) solicit and easily accept manuscripts; (3) offer rapid publication; (4) use journal names and branding which mimic well-established journals; (5) fabricate indexing and citation metrics; (6) hide information about Article Processing Charges (APCs); (7) misrepresent members of the journal's editorial board; and (9) violate copyright and scholarly ethics.

mo and Carey 2022, p. 201]. This is BRIN (*Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional*), the National Research and Innovation Agency. Planned since the beginning of Jokowi's second term in 2019, it was formally established by presidential decree on 28 April 2021, superseding the previous Indonesian Institute of Sciences (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, LIPI, established 1967) and its associated research bodies. The establishment of one super institution as the sole government research body smacks of politics. It also flies in the face of the experience of research institutes and innovation bodies in developed countries the world over, where «small is beautiful» is the order of the day. Time and again, decentralised research teams and flexible working methods have proven more effective in cutting-edge research than government research agendas. So, it has proven with BRIN. After three years in existence, this heavily centralised national scientific body continued to be plagued by bureaucracy and had been unable to produce even one significant research finding or innovation [Noer 2024, 20 September]. Meanwhile, Jokowi himself also seemed to have lost interest in the institution. With his own development project agendas, especially regarding infrastructure development and the new national capital, he appeared to have placed more trust in private consultants. As a businessman, he set little store by BRIN's modest research findings.

2.10. *Papua's looming ecological disaster*

One area where BRIN has taken over from its predecessor, LIPI, in continuing important field research on the economic impact of development projects is Papua [BRIN 2024]. Here the expansion of food estates in Merauke (an administrative district of South Papua) triggered public protests involving local communities with claims to customary lands. The food estate developments were one of Jokowi's major economic projects. Unfortunately, all too often they were situated in ecologically vulnerable areas. In the case of Merauke, the development involved two million hectares of wetlands, savannah and pockets of tropical rainforest which the World Wildlife Fund (WFF) has called a «global treasure» on account of its biodiversity [Wright 2024, 2 September]. Merauke is home to half the bird species found in Papua and neighbouring PNG (Papua New Guinea), including 80 that exist nowhere else. Among these endemic species, some, like the pig-nose turtle and cat-like carnivorous marsupials, are classified as endangered species. This unique habitat is slated to be turned into sugarcane plantations and rice fields. As of early September 2024, work had already begun with heavy diggers moving onto the site. The fear was that once the trees were removed from these wetlands, the salt would rise so that in a decade what was once an ecological jewel would be turned into a wasteland.

Civil society organisations and informed observers have consistently warned about the ecologically destructive impact of this project. They have pointed to land-use maps which show areas designated for rice cultivation

overlapping with protected conservation areas, indigenous sacred places, and ancestral trails and hunting grounds [Wright 2024, 2 September]. The fact that the Indonesian army is taking a leading role in this controversial development has also raised alarm bells. If the creation of a food estate in Merauke was aimed at food production only, one would have expected the Ministry of Agriculture to be in charge. Instead, it is the Ministry of Defence. Some have even suggested that there is a hidden agenda behind this «food security» project, namely the construction of a huge military base close the Fly River border with Papua New Guinea.[12] The stakes are high. Hitherto this easternmost part of Indonesia's most easterly province had largely avoided violence during the decades-long armed conflict between Indonesia and indigenous Papuans seeking their own state. Maybe this was about to change.

2.11. *Jokowi's enduring popularity*

Despite the human cost involved in the pursuit of the above remembered bungled developmental policies, Joko Widodo's popularity remained high. How the President was able to do that has been explained by Siti Maimunah, a senior researcher at the Sajogyo Institute, Indonesia's leading agrarian studies research centre [*Tempo* 2024, 24 August, p. 141]. In her view, Jokowi's «neo-extractionism», a shorthand term she coined to describe Jokowi's «plunder» of natural resources, was coupled with the implementation of a carefully crafted campaign of political messaging, emphasising the Jokowi administration's supposed «generosity» to the poor. This generosity found expression in the implementation of development projects under the umbrella of the NSP. These development projects pursued such worth-while objectives as the creation of social safety nets, cash transfers, healthcare packages, and education and pro-labour policies. Their only problem, however, was that they only partially materialised.

Such substantial failure in reaching the proclaimed objectives in favour of the poor was largely hidden by Jokowi's political messaging campaign. The effectiveness of this campaign can be seen in the public approval rating of Jokowi's government, which, according to surveys in *Kompas*'s Research Department, published in May 2023, was always above 70% [Ramadhan and Setuningsih 2023, 22 May].

This was in part due to the legacy of the New Order with its so-called «floating mass» politics in which voters were treated merely as objects of political mobilisation. In turn, these voters remained disconnected politically from weak and marginalised civil society organisations. They continued to be largely disinterested in the reformist agenda of progressive civil society advocates. The era of political reform from May 1998 failed to change this

12. Personal communication to Peter Carey from Dr Greg Poulgrain, University of the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, 23 December 2024.

elitist political landscape. Political parties continued to be the vehicle for powerful patrons with deep pockets and access to political influence. This enabled Jokowi to increase his popularity through his various populist programmes, strongly supported by his so-called «cyber troops», who portrayed him as truly a president of the ordinary people.

3. *Foreign policy and the Papua problem*

3.1. *Jokowi's «pragmatic» diplomacy: grand-standing, infrastructure and investment*

Pragmatic diplomacy has been the watchword of Jokowi's foreign policy. After his inauguration as president on 20 October 2014, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were the first two countries he visited. Since then, almost without fail, Jokowi has visited the UAE every year to seek investment. Jokowi's foreign policy was strongly driven by his ambition to develop the country's infrastructure. During his first presidential campaign in early 2014, he promised to revive the glories of Indonesia's maritime past by creating a sea toll road (*tol laut*) to connect the archipelago's different islands through the construction and renovation of seaports. This promise remained largely unfulfilled mainly because foreign investors were reluctant to put up the massive investment needed given the less than promising returns [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, p. 181].

Jokowi, nonetheless, had more success in his land-based projects. He constructed new airports and greatly extended the network of toll roads, particularly in Java and Sumatra. After many failed promises by previous presidents, Jokowi was the first head of state since Marshal Herman Willem Daendels (in office as governor-general 1808-1811), famous for his post road (*postweg*) linking Merak (Sunda Strait) to Panarukan in Java's eastern salient, to join Jakarta and Surabaya by a fast land corridor. The 784 kilometres of Jokowi's Trans-Java Toll Road, with its 13 separate sections, will likely stand as his legacy as long as the new national capital in the distant jungles of East Kalimantan remains unbuilt [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, pp. 181-182].

Jokowi's strong commitment to boost Indonesia's infrastructure during his decade in power brought him ever closer to China. This was especially the case after his long negotiations with Japan failed to result in the construction of the long-planned Jakarta-Bandung bullet train [Harding *et al.* 2015, 1 October]. With its 142 kilometres of special track and its 350-kph «Whoosh» locomotive making 24 return journeys to Bandung every day, the project was eventually completed in May 2023, after a lengthy seven-year construction process (2016-2023). This was largely thanks to investments from the China Development Bank and a 40% stake taken in the KCIC (Kereta Api Cepat Indonesia China / Indonesia China Bullet Train) company by the China Railway International Company.

Another characteristic of Jokowi's foreign policy is his effort at image building. One thinks here of his carefully choreographed showcasing of Indonesia as an important player in global politics when he hosted the G-20 Summit Meeting on 15-16 November 2022 in Bali. A grand event, which brought world leaders to the exclusive Apurva Kempinski Bali resort in Nusa Dua, this was a no-expense-spared spectacular event. But what lay behind all this grandstanding and hobnobbing with the great and the good is moot [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, pp.179, 197, 204].

It was the same two years earlier, when, following the 24 February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Jokowi was one of the first leaders from the Global South to make the long train journey from Przemysl (Poland) to Kyiv, on 28-29 June 2022, before flying on to Moscow [Susilo 2022, 29 June]. With headlines in the Indonesian press speaking of Indonesia «contributing to Russia-Ukraine peace efforts» and «showing solidarity with humanity», Jokowi made himself look brave and important. He even had photographs taken of himself meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the latter's underground bunker and of his cosy tête-à-tête with President Putin in the Kremlin (just two well upholstered chairs side by side, no long table here) [*Tempo* 2024a, 28 July]. Yet, as Dian Wirengjurit, a retired senior diplomat of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Indonesian ambassador to Tehran (2011-2016), put it, to be an effective mediator in international conflicts, one not only needs courage but also a plausible proposal to put forward to end ongoing hostilities [*Tempo* 2024b, 28 July]. And this Jokowi palpably did not have.

In fact, Jokowi's foreign policy has been seen by the Indonesian public as more show than substance. Compared to his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), Jokowi could boast few successes to match SBY's mediation of internal communal conflicts in Cambodia (border dispute with Thailand) [Seruni 2013] and Southern Mindanao [CAB 2014], both embarked on initially during Indonesia's 2011 ASEAN chairmanship. By contrast, Jokowi's interventions in Myanmar, targeted at finding a resolution to the political turmoil following the 1 February 2021 military *coup* and subsequent civil war (5 May 2021-present), proved fruitless [Bland 2021, 26 April; Strangio 2023, 2 February].

3.2. *The Papua problem and the challenge of separatism*

Although not a foreign policy issue *per se*, the stubbornly unresolved conflict in West Papua became increasingly internationalised in the two years under review. During this time, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Movement, OPM) stepped up its armed struggle for their territory's independence from Indonesia, which dates back to the 1969 through the UN's Act of Free Choice. Dubbed by critics the «Act of No Choice» [Saltford 2003], Papua, remains to this day a deeply troubled region with violent conflict occurring on an almost daily basis [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, pp. 199, 206-8].

Jokowi's election in 2014, with his promise of prioritizing a solution for the Papua problem, raised hopes amongst Papuans. The new President's former hallmark strategy as governor of Jakarta (2012-2014) of *blusukan* (literally: going into small and narrow streets and appearing incognito in the most unexpected places) had made him extremely popular [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, p. 180]. But, in his last two years in office, Jokowi's story seemed to go in a completely different direction. His initial promise of approaching the Papuan problem in a more humane manner was replaced by a more security-based approach with the police and army given the green light to intensify their military operations. Tight controls were also placed on news of gross violation of human rights and reports of the number of civilian deaths from the clashes between the OPM and the Indonesian security forces.

Despite this clampdown, Papua's dire situation could not be kept entirely hidden from the world. Human Rights Watch continued to release its Human Rights Monitor Newsletter reporting the repression of Papuans by the state security apparatus. The report released in September 2024 revealed the constant discrimination against Papuans and deep-seated racism by the Indonesian civil and military authorities towards the local indigenous population [Human Rights Watch 2024, 18 September].

Another report along similar lines and focussed on forced displacement, was released in Sydney by the DTP (Diplomacy Training Program), founded by current Timor-Leste President, José Ramos-Horta (2008-12, 2022-present), and based on research by a group of independent researchers supported by the Bishops' Conference of Indonesia (Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia), the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (Persekutuan Gereja Indonesia) and the West Papuan Council of Churches (Dewan Gereja Papua Barat). The report showed the critical conditions of indigenous Papuans caught in the ongoing armed conflict between the Indonesian security apparatus and the OPM [DTP 2024, 1 September]. Between July and August 2024, the research group interviewed some 70 displaced persons in Papua as well as collecting data from affected communities through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).[13] Based on these interviews and FGDs, the internal displacement of the indigenous population in Papua had been gathering pace during Jokowi's second administration (2019-2024). An estimated 45,000 to 100,000 people had been forced to move from their homes to temporary shelters during these the years of Jokowi's second administration. On average these displaced persons had been living in these shelters for around three years. Nearly all (99%) of the displaced persons were indigenous Papuans. Most suffered from a scarcity of food (97%), minimum health services (87%), lack of economic resources (81%) and zero education-

13. The DTP research team visited major concentrations of refugees in the towns of Nabire, Sorong, Maybrat and Wamena, in Central, West and Mountain Papua provinces respectively.

al opportunities for their children (90%). Their day-to-day support comes mainly from donations from various non-government/Church organisations and their own close relatives, with the Indonesian local and central governments providing very little. The high number of forcibly displaced Papuans in the last five years reflects the dire living conditions of the local population who must survive in unsafe areas riven by conflict with the constant feeling of insecurity and daily threats to themselves and their families.

The rapidly growing number of migrants coming from other Indonesian islands, particularly Java, to settle in Papua meant that indigenous Papuans would soon become a minority in their own rich half island. The food estate in Merauke, mentioned in the previous section, is just one example of how Papua has become the location for foreign and domestic investment focussed on extractive agribusiness industries. The Papuan population was thus facing multiple threats – economic, demographic and political. If these are not addressed, Papuans will be looking at a future where they are a marginalised minority in their own homeland. Now divided into four separate provinces, with governors and deputy governors of ethnic Papuan origin as a gesture to local sensitivities, the politics of these new provinces are nonetheless run by local parliaments dominated by an increasing number of non-Papuan politicians. This needs to change. One way of addressing this issue would be to allow Papuans to form their own political party based on ethnicity, religion and culture. This was one of the ways forward in Aceh after the signing of the 15 August 2005 Helsinki Peace Agreement. Indeed, with Acehnese now in charge of their own political destiny, peace has been preserved in the fiercely independent province until the present day. So, one must ask the question to the Indonesian authorities, if Aceh is allowed such a local political party, the Partai Aceh, why not Papua? Given current levels of violence, such a party might be one of the best ways of ensuring a non-violent solution to mounting calls for Papuan independence.

That said, it is worth remembering that West Papua was the theatre of one of Jokowi's few «success» stories, namely his patient one-and-a-half-year-long negotiation for the release of a New Zealand pilot, Philip Mark Mehrtens. Mehrtens had been kidnapped on 7 February 2023 by one the armed groups included in the OPM. This group, active in the Nduga District (Papua Mountain Province), was under the leadership of the 24-year-old Egianus Kogoya. Mehrtens, a pilot of the private Indonesian airline Susi Air, was held by the OPM for a total of 19 months before painstaking negotiations between the Indonesian government and the OPM, carried out through church organizations and local government representatives, secured his safe release. On 21 September 2024, Mehrtens was brought to Jakarta and handed over to a representative of the New Zealand government amidst much positive coverage in the Indonesian press [e.g., *Tempo* 2024, 22 September]. Given that most Papuans are Christian, it was perhaps no coincidence that the release occurred just a fortnight after the historic visit

of the late Pope Francis to Indonesia (3-6 September 2024), which began his 12-day tour of Southeast Asia, including Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and Singapore.[14]

4. *Domestic politics*

4.1. *The General Election Commission and the political parties*

In January 2023, after several false starts occasioned by cases arising from the data submitted by prospective political parties, Indonesia's General Election Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, KPU) announced its verification results: 23 political parties had met the minimum requirements. They could thus participate in the 2024 general election. According to a well-known weekly magazine [*Tempo* 2023, 1 January, pp. 32-37], there were strong suspicions that corruption and political pressure had influenced the KPU decision. According to *Tempo's* special report, there was evidence of data manipulation related to the new political parties and inappropriate interventions by KPU Commissioners at the national level.[15]

In the end, there were just eight major political parties participating in the presidential election, with three official pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The first pair, backed by the PDI-P and the United Development Party (PPP, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan), the

14. The way the Jokowi administration handled this negotiation by playing the long game and working through trusted Church bodies rather than involving the Indonesian army (TNI) stands in sharp contrast to an earlier kidnapping of foreign citizens by the OPM. This occurred in January 1996 when six foreigners (four of them British biology students from Cambridge University), conducting biodiversity research at Lorenz National Park, were kidnapped in Mapenduma, also in Nduga District. It took five months to free the hostages, who were only released as the result of a military operation (15 May 1996) following the breakdown of negotiations through the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). Two of the eleven hostages (both Indonesians) were killed [Start 1997]. The fact that current President Prabowo, then Special Forces (Kopassus) head, commanded the Indonesian military operation, is significant. Given the privileged role of the military in Prabowo's administration, there were fears that the 1996 example may well become the norm rather than the Church brokered long-game preferred by Jokowi.

15. The validation of four new political parties was singled out as being distinctly dubious. They were: 1) *Partai Gelora* (Indonesian People's Wave Party), a splinter of the Islamist Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sosial, PKS); 2) *Partai Kebangkitan Nusantara* (Nusantara Awakening Party, PKN), a splinter of former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (in office, 2004-2014)'s Partai Demokrat (Democratic Party, PD, founded 2001); 3) *Partai Garuda* (Garda Perubahan Indonesia, Indonesian Guard for Change Party), indicated as close to former President Jokowi; and, 4) *Partai Ummat* (Ummat Party, literally Islamic Community Party), an Islamic party lead by Amin Rais, an aging octogenarian Islamic politician, who was instrumental in Suharto's ouster on 21 May 1998.

umbrella party for Muslims, was represented by Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo (2013-2023), and former Coordinating Minister for Law, Politics and Security Mahmud MD (2019 – 1 February 2024). The second pair, supported by Gerindra, Golkar and SBY's Partai Demokrat included the Prabowo-Gibran duo. The third pair included Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin). The former was a Muslim intellectual, academic, and activist, previously a Jokowi ally, who had served as Governor of Jakarta from 2017 to 2022; the latter was the head of the National Awakening Party (PKB, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa). The Anies-Cak Imin duo was supported not only by Cak Imin's PKB, but also by the conservative Muslim Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sosial, PKS), and by the Nasdem Party, headed by Achenese media mogul Surya Paloh. However, neither the first nor the third duo had any chance against the «Jokowi factor», which mobilized voters so effectively at the ballot box to back the Prabowo-Gibran winning combination. Why was this the case?

4.2. *Prabowo's lineage, career and relationship with Jokowi*

In our 2022 article we identified retired general Prabowo Subianto, as the most likely candidate to take over from Jokowi and carry on his unfinished projects [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, p.210]. So, who exactly is this man? Prabowo Subianto (born Jakarta 1951) hails from a prominent political family of Javanese *ningrat* (nobility) in Banyumas. Both his grandfather, Raden Mas Margono (1894-1978), founder of the Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI, 1946), and father, Professor Sumitro (1917-2001), a Rotterdam-trained economist, known as the «Begawan Pejuang» (Sage of the Struggle), were at the heart of Indonesia's fight for independence helping to ensure its financial survival. Brought up and educated largely abroad in the period 1957-68,[16] when his family were in exile,[17] Prabowo graduated from the Indonesian military academy in Magelang in 1974 and later underwent special forces training at Fort Benning (now Fort Moore) in Georgia in 1985 [Volle 2025, 5 March] where he was a classmate and close friend of Prince

16. Prabowo was educated at five successive schools outside Indonesia: (1) Dean's Primary School in Singapore, 1957-60; (2) an international Junior High School in Hong Kong, 1961-1962; (3) Victoria Institute, Kuala Lumpur, 1962-64; (4) the American International School, Zurich, 1964-66; and (5) the American School, London, 1966-68, AFP Indonesia 2019; Djojohadikusumo 2021, pp. xlv-xlvi.

17. Prabowo's father, Sumitro, facing trumped-up corruption charges, joined the ill-fated PRRI (Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia, Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) in West Sumatra in May 1957 during the regional rebellion against Sukarno known as the PRRI-Permesta (1957-1963). He took his wife and four young children with him. After six months of the family being hidden in a secret location in Padang (West Sumatra), Sumitro brought them to Singapore by cargo boat (late October/early November 1957), where Margono, who had exiled himself earlier to the same city, was waiting for them [Djojohadikusumo 2021, pp. xxxviii-xlv].

Abdullah bin Al-Hussein Al-Hashemi, whom, in 1999, would ascend the throne of Jordan as King Abdullah II.

Prabowo made a stellar career as a special forces officer under Suharto's «New Order», ending up marrying the Indonesian strongman's second daughter (and fourth child), Siti Hediati Hariyadi (born 1959), popularly known as Titiek, in 1983, and commanding the Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus, 1995-1998) and, briefly, the Strategic Army Reserve (KOSTRAD, March-May 1998). But like Icarus, Prabowo flew too close to the sun, and during the turbulent months of Suharto's fall from power (in March-May 1998), his career fell apart – he was accused of abducting and torturing 23 democracy activists, one of whom died and 13 remained missing [Volle 2025, 5 March]. This, along with allegations of insubordination – he was reported to have brought two truckloads of special force soldiers to the presidential palace on 24 May 1998, three days after President Habibie's installation, to try to force the newly installed head of state to appoint him army chief of Staff replacing General Wiranto [Colmey 1998, 31 May] – resulted in his dismissal from the army. In 1999-2004, already divorced from his wife (1998), he went into exile in Jordan where he stayed with his friend King Abdullah.

Since returning to Indonesia in early 2004 and still intensely ambitious, Prabowo made a fortune[18] with the help of his banker younger brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo (born 1954), but he struggled to make headway politically. His first attempt (in 2004) to become the presidential candidate of Golkar, the former New Order state party, failed. Four years later, he created his own political party, Gerindra (2008). A right-wing nationalist populist party, Gerindra started in 2009 with a modest 4.5% of the popular vote in that year's legislative election. However, its support more than double to 11.8% in 2014, making it the third most popular party after PDI-P and Golkar. In the 2014 presidential election, Prabowo lost to Jokowi, and again in 2019, but he was given an opportunity to have another shot at the presidency when he reconciled with Jokowi and was appointed minister of Defence during Jokowi's second presidential term (2019-2024). It became clear during Jokowi's second term that Prabowo had become the incumbent President's candidate of choice for the 2024 contest. With Jokowi's full support, Prabowo and Jokowi's eldest son, Gi-

18. In 2009, at the time he contended the presidential election as Megawati Sukarnoputri's running mate, Prabowo's net worth was reported to be US$ 150,000,000 with assets in palm-oil plantations (Tidar Kerinci Agung), pulp-&-paper in East Kalimantan (Kiani Kertas, later Kertas Nusantara), mining (oil, natural gas and coal, Nusantara Energy) and fisheries (Jaladri Nusantara), as well as US$ 7,500,000 in cash, time deposits and current accounts [*Jakarta Post* 2014, 1 July] a sum which had declined to US$ 121,914,00 when Prabowo ran as a presidential candidate in 2024 because of the sharp fall in the Rupiah-US$ exchange rate since 2009 [*Statista* 2024, 21 October].

bran Rakabuming Raka, became the favoured candidates in the 2024 presidential election.

So just how did Jokowi prepare the ground so astutely to secure this desired transition and what does this tell us about his skill as a king maker?

4.3. *Jokowi as king maker*

Up to the 13 November 2023 deadline for names of proposed presidential and vice-presidential candidates to be registered, Jokowi had already been acting the king maker. With Surya Paloh and his Nasdem (National Democrats) Party having already nominated former Jakarta Governor (2017-2022) Anis Baswedan[19] and, after some wheeling and dealing, Muhaimin Iskandar (colloquially known as Cak Imin or Gus Imin), the long-time head of the conservative Islamic National Awakening Party (PKB, 2005-present), as his running mate, it was still not clear who would be Prabowo's vice presidential running mate. Former President (2001-2004) and head of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, PDI-P), Megawati Sukarnoputri had her own views – she was backing Ganjar Pranowo as the PDI-P candidate.

In Indonesian elite politics, money talks. Major political donors, many of them from the wealthy *peranakan* (mixed race) Indonesian Chinese community, play a crucial role here. But this political horse trading is usually screened from public view.

As a wheeler-and-dealer himself, Jokowi feels at home in the deeply transactional world of Indonesian politics. By early 2023, it was already clear to the Indonesian public that Jokowi was establishing his own family dynasty; he had groomed his eldest son, Gibran, to become mayor (2021-2024) of Jokowi's home town of Surakarta (also known as Solo) in Central Java, and his son-in-law, Bobby Nasution, as mayor of Indonesia's fourth largest city, Medan, in North Sumatra. Meanwhile, the relationship between Jokowi and Megawati had soured following Megawati's refusal to grant Jokowi's request to extend his presidential tenure for an unprecedented and unconstitutional third term. Thwarted in this initiative Jokowi then further undermined his relationship with the PDI-P leader by securing a Constitutional Court (MK) amendment changing the rules on the age threshold (40 years) for vice-presidential candidates. This was

19. It is unclear why Surya Paloh and his Nasdem party made this decision to back Baswedan rather than Prabowo. They must have known full well that it would sour their relationship with Jokowi, which had hitherto been cordial: witness Nasdem's support for Jokowi in January 2023 when they helped him pass both the National Job Creation Law [*Tempo* 2023, 8 January], and the revision of the laws governing the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). A bare nine months later (October 2023), however, following Nasdem's decision to back Baswedan, this relationship between Jokowi and Nasdem's founder, Surya Paloh, had not only soured but was reported to be close to collapse.

done to allow his son (then aged 36) to put his name forward. The fact that the serving Constitutional Court Chief Justice, Anwar Usman (in office, 2018-2023), was Jokowi's brother-in-law (he was married to Jokowi's younger sister) was not immaterial to this case. In fact, it cost Usman his job [Vasudewa dan Melania 2023].

Megawati was also said to be unhappy with Jokowi's tendency to give government contracts and business opportunities to non-PDI-P figures, such as former general, Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, with whom Jokowi had enjoyed a long business relationship dating back to 2008 when Jokowi was Mayor of Solo (2005-2012) [Mulholland 2024, 4 April]. According to Mulholland, Luhut had acted as one Jokowi's political fixers and had successfully coordinated support for Jokowi against his political opponents like former Vice-President Jusuf Kalla (born 1942, in office 2004-2009, 2014-19), Megawati and Surya Paloh.

In its 'Ten Years of Jokowi' investigative report No. 4, *Tempo* revealed some of the behind-the-scenes work of Luhut and Andi Widjajanto [*Tempo* 2024, 29 July]. The latter, then serving as head of the National Defence Agency (Lembaga Pertahanan Nasional, Lemhanas, had been tasked, along with Luhut, with exploring the possibility of creating a political scenario whereby the February 2024 election might be postponed. This would ensure a de facto extension of Jokowi's presidential term. As Jokowi's political fixer, Luhut had apparently persuaded Airlangga Hartarto, head of the still highly influential Suharto-era «New Order» (1966-1998) government party, Golkar (Golongan Karya, Functional Group), and his fellow Golkar member and rising political star, Bahlil Lahadalia, then minister of Investment, to support Jokowi's attempt at extending his term. Luhut also recruited the National Awakening Party (PKB) Head, Muhaimin Iskandar, to join the caucus. Among the suggested reasons for extending the presidential term were the recent severe impact of the 2020-2022 COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and the subsequent slowdown in the implementation of various key development projects, the most important being the new IKN (Ibu Kota Nusantara) national capital in East Kalimantan, although Jokowi's personal political ambition was the main driving force here.

4.4. *The «Jokowi» factor and the February 2024 presidential election*

By August 2023, when it was evident that Jokowi had moved his support to Prabowo, Megawati finally announced that she had chosen Ganjar Pranowo and Professor Mahfud MD (born 1957), Jokowi's former coordinating minister for Law, Politics and Security, as PDI-P presidential and vice-presidential candidates. She understood that the public steadfastly opposed any suggestion that Jokowi might be allowed to extend his term in office, especially now that his political dynasty agenda had become

clear. However, once Jokowi's son, Gibran, came on board as Prabowo's running mate, as predicted by pollsters the pair went on to triumph at the first round of the polls with nearly 60% of the popular vote. So how did this happen?

As a former general with powerful family and business connections stemming back to the very birth of the Republic, Prabowo wields political clout both in military and business circles. His stellar military career and marriage into Indonesia's first family during Suharto's New Order, albeit both later aborted, links him in the mind of many older-generation Indonesian voters to a more stable age. With the strong backing of his younger brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, a banker by training, once one of Indonesia's richest businessmen with a reported net worth of US$ 685 million in 2020 [*Okezone* 2024, 27 August], Prabowo's Gerindra has been able to draw on generous funding to gather popular mass support. Since 2014, it has been amongst the three top political parties in Indonesia in terms of votes. However, the most crucial element in Prabowo's landslide 2024 victory was the so-called «Jokowi factor».

Since his tenure as mayor of the Central Java court city of Surakarta (also known as «Solo», 2005-2012), Jokowi has been very successful in crafting a mass political following. He has done this through a handful of loyalists who have created a broad non-party political base. Known as «*kelompok relawan*», voluntary mass organisations, these owe loyalty primarily to Jokowi in person rather than to any particular party (which Jokowi, unlike his two predecessors – Megawati and SBY– and successor, Prabowo, does not have). Jokowi is also very aware of the importance of social media and online apps as critical tools in honing his image as a leader of the people. Jokowi employs so-called «buzzers» (cyber troops, a name derived from their skilful use of electronic communications) and paid election pollsters to boost his popular ratings.

As a businessman Jokowi is extremely shrewd in calculating the cost-benefit of every political decision he makes. This means that during his decade in office, Jokowi ensured that trusted political loyalists were appointed to strategic cabinet posts. Central here were Pratikno (State Secretary, *Sekretaris Negara*), Sri Mulyani (Finance), Tito Karnavian (Interior), and Hadimulyo (Public Works). Jokowi also exercised effective control over the top ranks of the army and the police where again key allies like Tito Karnavian (in post as police chief, 2016-2019), General Moeldoko and Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto (in post as Army Heads, 2013-2015, 2017-2021) were tasked with ensuring the loyalty of the police and armed forces before joining Jokowi's government as ministers (Karnavian, 2019-2024; Tjahjanto, 2022-2024) or chief of staff (Moeldoko, 2018-2024). One example of Jokowi's success was his ability to cut the ground from under the feet of hardline Muslim mass organisations such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI, The Party of Liberation Indonesia) and the Front Pembela

Islam (FPI, Islamic Defenders Front, founded 1998), both of which ended up being banned in 2017 and 2019 respectively.[20]

It was through these networks of buzzers and voluntary mass organisations (*relawan*) that Jokowi was able to deploy maximum pressure on Indonesian voters to back the Prabowo-Gibran ticket. Such influence manifested in multiple ways: through official and non-official channels, open and clandestine suasion, as well as outright manipulation and intimidation of voters at the grassroots. This last took the form of direct free social welfare handouts or «bansos» (*bantuan sosial*) through the local village (*desa*) and urban ward (*kampung*) heads. Even more effective, however, was the constant bombardment of social media and public pollsters. Voters from the Millennial and Gen Z cohorts, born between 1980-94 and 1995-2010 respectively, many casting their ballots for the first time, were persuaded to back Prabowo, who was presented by the buzzers as a sweet (*gemoy*) grandad, dancing (*joget*) his way across the stage. With over half the 202,807,222 (fn.22) registered voters below the age of 40, these cohorts knew next to nothing about the four-star general's dark past in East Timor (1975-1999) and Suharto's Indonesia (1966-98) and the buzzers ensured it remained that way. Meanwhile, in Gibran, a young thirty something who boasted of his disinterest in reading and busied himself with his «collections» of toys and cartoons, they found a kindred spirit who resonated their own rootless *anomie*. With many of the older generation remembering Suharto's New Order in roseate hindsight and the 30% of the population living on or below the poverty line beguiled by promises of free school meals and other benefits in kind, securing a clear-cut first-round victory for Prabowo and Gibran at the ballot box proved a synch. They were sworn in nine months later, on 20 October 2024, as president and vice president respectively. The curse of Prabowo's New Order shadow seemed to have been exorcised, and Jokowi's heir and his spare identified. Indonesia had now entered a new dynastic age.

4.5. *The legislative elections of February 2024 and Jokowi's manoeuvres*

The presidential elections, decisive though they were for Jokowi's long-term position, were not the only show in town in that political month of February 2024. Running parallel were the legislative elections. These were held for the 580-seat Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR, Dewan Permusy-

20. These groups had organised huge mass protests in late 2016 against the Christian Chinese Jakarta Governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok, in office 2014-2017). Known as the «*Aksi Damai Bela Islam* [Peaceful Action in Defence of Islam]», this had brought over a million people onto the streets of the national capital on 2 December 2016 to demand the governor's resignation on alleged blasphemy charges related to a speech he had made on 27 September 2016 quoting an *ayat* from the Qur'an (Al-Maidah verse 51, «Oh you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies […]») see Carey and Suhardiyoto Haryadi 2017, p.163.

awaratan Rakyat) or Parliament, and the Regional Consultative Assemblies (DPRD, Dewan Permusyawaratan Rakyat Daerah).[21]

The dynamics of local politics in Indonesia depend on several local factors. These include the dominance or strategic influence of a local political party, the presence of a charismatic local leader, such as the current Governor of West Java, Dedi Mulyadi (term of office, 2025-30), or, during Jokowi's first administration, the Christian Chinese Governor of Jakarta (DKI), Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) (in office 2014-2017), and the role of mass organisations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah (fn.24). As we have just seen, Jokowi, through his access to national and local bureaucratic apparatuses, military and police institutions, as well as his «bansos» populist programmes, could ensure the large-scale mobilisation of voters across Indonesia during such legislative elections.

Despite these substantial advantages, however, the results did not go all Jokowi's way: while PDI-P failed in the presidential election (the Ganjar-Mahfud ticket came in a poor third with just 16% of the popular vote after Prabowo-Gibran and Baswedan-Iskandar), the party led by Megawati won the highest number of seats (110 out of 580), or 19% of the seats contested, in the Indonesian parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR). It also garnered the largest percentage (15%) of the popular vote (25,000,000)[22] with the lion's share coming from its traditional voter heartlands of Central Java and Bali. Golkar, well represented in Jakarta, West Java and the Outer Islands, and Gerindra (Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya), Prabowo's political party, with strong showings in West Java and East Java, came in second and third place with 102 and 86 seats respectively.

The results of the 2024 general election were a wakeup call for Jokowi. They showed just how politically powerful PDI-P remained at the grass roots, particularly in its traditional stronghold—known as the *kandang banteng* (bull pen)—of Central Java. This spelt bad news for Jokowi's political future given the sharp deterioration in his relationship with the PDI-P leader, Megawati. This would become even worse if the upcoming local elections on 27 November 2024[23] proved beyond Jokowi's control. To prevent any

21. Technically the legislative elections were for the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat). This consists of the DPR, and the much smaller Regional Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah), which functions as Indonesia's upper house or Senate. However, while the DPR legislates nationally, the DPD's authority is limited to areas related to regional governments and can only propose and give advice on bills under consideration in the DPR. It thus has no independent law-making powers.

22. Out of 204,807,222 registered voters, 162,227,475 actually voted in the 14 February 2024 elections, a remarkably high 80.2% voter turn-out, see IPU Parline 2024.

23. These local elections took place across 548 regions, 37 provinces, 415 regencies (*kabupaten*) and 93 cities (*kota*), including the Jakarta Special Capital Territory (Daerah Khusus Ibukota), with the exception of the Yogyakarta Special Region (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, DIY), where the current Sultan (Hamengku Buwono X, r.

further decline in his political influence, Jokowi signed Presidential Regulation (*Peraturan Presiden*) No 76/2024 on 22 July 2024, instructing Investment Minister, Bahlil, to provide permits to faith-based mass organisations allowing them to extract natural resources. Several Christian faith groups. such as the Protestant PGI (Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia, The Communion of Churches in Indonesia), and the Catholic KWI (Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia, Bishops' Conference of Indonesia) rejected this offer, but the two largest grassroots Muslim organisations Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, The Renaissance of the Ulama) and the Modernist Muslim, Muhammadiyah, after lengthy internal discussions, accepted.

What was Jokowi up to? Jokowi's principal aim was to exercise some control over faith-based mass organisations, particularly NU and Muhammadiyah. This was both because of their sheer size[24] and local clout in their regional heartlands: East Java for NU and Yogyakarta and other urban areas for Muhammadiyah. This was an intrinsic part of his strategy for securing his political future when he ceased to be president. Jokowi's next move (11 August 2024), which he executed through his political fixer, Bahlil,[25] was to launch a takeover of the Golkar leadership. Golkar's long-serving head, Airlangga Hartarto, then Coordinating Minister for Economic Development (2019-2024), suddenly announced his resignation allegedly after pressure from Jokowi, who threatened the Golkar head with a court case on corruption charges. This political skulduggery ended with Golkar organising an extraordinary meeting to elect the new head, which, as the public had long predicted, was none other than Jokowi's trusted hatchet man, Bahlil. When the news broke, public criticism of Jokowi in the media, particularly the social media, reached a crescendo. But he shrugged it off.

It was not long after the Golkar takeover that another political drama occurred. This involved Jokowi's attempt to revoke the Constitutional Court's 20 August 2024 ruling on regional elections. This ruling drastically reduced the percentage of the popular vote required of political parties to propose their own candidates for governor and mayor in the upcoming local election from 25% of the popular vote to 7.5% in constituencies of 6-12 million voters and just 6% in those over 12 million. At the same time, the 20% requirement for the number of seats in the local parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD) was waived entirely. This meant that smaller parties like the People's Wave Party (Partai Gelora, fn. 15) and the

1988-present) and Pakualam ruler (Paku Alam IX, r. 2016-present) are automatically reappointed as Governor and Deputy Governor respectively.

24. Muhammadiyah is reported to have between 20-30 million members (22 million is often cited) as of 2023 [Arifianto 2023, 30 May], and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) claims up to 40 million, making it the largest Muslim grassroots organisation in the world [*NU Online* 2023, 11 July].

25. *Jakarta Post*, 19 August 2024, reported that Bahlil had been appointed Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources seemingly as a reward for his services.

Labor Party, which had brought the original petition to the Constitutional Court, could put up their own candidates.

Pro-democracy activists hailed this ruling as a victory for democracy as it would stymy efforts by Jokowi's parliamentary «Onward Indonesia Coalition (*Koalisi Indonesia Maju*, KIM)» to create an even broader coalition to quash opposition candidates in the upcoming election. Hopes were thus raised that the upcoming local elections would be substantially more democratic, with independents and candidates from smaller parties having a chance to get elected for the first time.[26]

Concerned by this turn of events, Jokowi tasked his new minister of Law and Human Rights, Supratman Andi Agtas (appointed 19 August 2024), to approach the leader of the Indonesian parliament (DPR), Puan Maharani, Megawati's daughter, to change the Constitutional Court's decision. But, in taking this step, Jokowi fatally misjudged the mood of the country. Within two days of the public becoming aware of what was happening (22 August), a wave of protest swept across the country. This took the most spectacular visual form in the «Emergency Warning» on Indonesian social media. First uploaded by Indonesian journalist and TV personality Najwa Shihab on her *Mata Najwa* [«Najwa's Eye»] and Narasi TV accounts, it showed the Indonesian national symbol – the Garuda bird (avian vehicle of the Hindu god Vishnu) – coloured in dark navy blue with the words «Peringatan Darurat [Emergency Warning!]» in white letters across the top of the page [Fahmi 2024, 22 August]. It was a vivid rallying cry, designed to increase public awareness and safeguard justice and democracy in Indonesia. It sparked widespread popular demonstrations, involving large numbers of citizens, particularly students and younger Millennial and Gen-Z cohorts.

4.6. *Turn of the tide on Jokowi's dynastic politics?*

The waves of protest which engulfed Indonesia in late August 2024 reflected a root and branch rejection of Jokowi's political manoeuvrings and dynasty building. It reached as far as his eldest son, Gibran, who had been able to run as vice-president by a constitutional sleight of hand but was now seen as hopelessly unsuited for his role. From this point onwards, public perceptions of the Joko Widodo became overwhelmingly negative, a development reflected by political commentators who now began to refer to him by his distinctly common Javanese family name – «Mulyono» (equivalent of «Mr Smith») – rather than the more intimate «Jokowi».

26. *Jakarta Post*, 20 August 2024, quoted Titi Anggraini of the Perludem election monitoring NGO as saying, with reference to the work of the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi or MK): «Bravo MK! Now the requirement to nominate a candidate in local election[s] is the same with that of independent candidates. MK is great!».

This negative perception was also vividly on display when Jokowi's youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep (born 1994), a yuppy businessman-cum-YouTuber politician, took a much publicised all-expenses paid jaunt to the United States in late August 2024 [*Jakarta Post* 2024, 23 August]. Travelling on a private jet costing a reported US$ 650,000 with his heavily pregnant wife,[27] former model Erina Gudono, just as the «Emergency Warning» signs began to appear on Indonesian netizens' phones, the couple posted photographs of themselves eating lavish burgers worth over half an Indonesian day labourer's monthly wage (US$ 50) and buying a baby stroller which cost nearly the triple of an Indonesian worker's yearly income (US$ 600). Not surprisingly, viral images of Erin as a latter-day Marie Antoinette soon became a trending meme in Indonesia [*Tempo* 2024, 22 August; Priyani 2024, 23 August].

These events, coupled with the fact that Kaesang's party, Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (Indonesian Solidarity Party, PSI), into whose leadership he had been shoe-horned only three days earlier (22 September 2023), performed abysmally in the local elections, brought the curtain down on the political hopes of Jokowi's youngest son.

The humiliating defeat of Kaesang, who had once been cited as a potential Jakarta gubernatorial candidate, together with the debacle of his party at the polls, represented a net political loss for Jokowi. Unlike his immediate predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, or his successor, Prabowo, Jokowi had not founded his own political party. Instead, he had long existed in a semi-detached political limbo maintaining an uneasy relationship with Megawati's PDI-P. The weakness caused by this lack of a personal political constituency became evident when Jokowi failed in his tactic of reversing the Constitutional Court's pro-democratic local election regulation favouring smaller parties. This failure contributed to the triumph of Megawati and her PDI-P party, enabling them to secure their wafer-thin win in the Jakarta gubernatorial election on 27 November 2024.

4.7. *Civil society and «democratic decay» – real or imagined?*

In the last five years of Jokowi's incumbency, there were two nationwide waves of public protest his policies. The first was in September 2019 with the tagline «Reformation is Corrupted (*Reformasi Dikorupsi*)». This widespread protest was a response to Jokowi's policy of imposing the new Job Creation Laws (RUU Cipta Kerja) and the Draft Bill (*Rencana Undang-Undang*, RUU) regulating the workings of the Corruption Eradication Commission (RUU KPK), including the use of wiretaps. The second wave, as we have just seen

27. Erina gave birth to her first child, a daughter named Bebingah Sang Tansahayu, on 15 October 2024, so she was over seven months pregnant when she flew to the US in late August 2024, hence the need to travel by private jet as no commercial airline would have allowed her passage.

(Section 4.5), occurred in late August 2024 with the tagline «Democracy in Emergency (*Darurat Demokrasi*)». It was sparked by Jokowi's attempt to revoke the Constitutional Court's decision on the regulation of Regional Elections. These two mass demonstrations involving students, workers and civil society organisations, reflected the depth of public anger at Jokowi's authoritarian policies.

Yet, as Zainal Arifin Mochtar (born 1978), a scholar activist from the University of Gajah Mada (UGM) in Yogyakarta in Central Java, has recently pointed out, it is absurd to blame democratic decay on Jokowi alone. The process of upholding and maintaining a democracy is always a collective project [Mochtar 2024, 4 August, p. 75]. This holds as much for Indonesia as for any other country with democratic aspirations. If Indonesia is a collective project which has failed, we need to ask ourselves the question: why? Here we must enter the realm of political sociology and consider whether Indonesia even has a middle class or a civil society capable of sustaining democratic institutions. Indeed, even if there is an Indonesian middle class and civil society committed to upholding democratic values, why were they so singularly ineffective in resisting Jokowi's authoritarian policies during his second term in office?

In a recent article, the Australian Indonesianist and political economy researcher, Jeremy Mulholland, wrote the following:

> In an ideal world where the rule of law is fully applied, a far-reaching parliamentary inquiry into the 2024 election or 'independent' corruption eradication investigations, could build upon existing revelations about the flows of political slush funds pooling around Jokowi and Luhut's business empires. Such investigations could provide an invaluable lesson for future political leaders that abuse of power should not be condoned. In reality, the interests of the Jokowi-Luhut alliance now appear to be increasingly safeguarded with most 'political opposition' fragmented, the KPK reined in and Indonesia's incoming president, Prabowo, apparently determined to maintain the status quo. Overall, the discreet Jokowi-Luhut alliance has been the axis of Indonesia's political-economy over the past decade. Alas, for Indonesia, this populist, deal-making presidency has produced a decade of democratic decay. For Prabowo, as the next president, reversing that trend will not be a political priority in Indonesia's intra-elite contestation [Mulholland 2024, 4 April].

The absence of organized opposition groups and the reality of weak civil society institutions allowed Jokowi to engineer national laws and regulations to suit his needs. In today's Indonesia, this is an important issue that deserves a thorough analysis [Ford and Pepinsky 2014]. Only thus can we understand the state of democracy in Indonesia. Significantly, critiques of democratic decline are often most effectively articulated in Indonesia

by artist-activists like Butet Kartaredjasa (born 1961), the son of Indonesia's leading postwar cultural icon (dancer-choreographer, painter, actor) Bagong Kussudiardja (1928-2004). Butet's quatrain (*pantun*), *Hajatan Rakyat* («The Celebration of the People»), read aloud at a presidential rally in Wates, Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY), on 28 January 2024, created a sensation and got him reported to the police for libelling the President. It contained lines like 'I'm angry because I didn't throw my sandals / Jokowi wanted a mental revolution / but failed and fell over / […] / Manipulate the surveys to win / It's clear that you won because you cheated / […] / Millions of Jokowers [Jokowi supporters] / feel betrayed / His innocent appearance is enough / to be cunning to / outsmart the [constitutional] court / […] / But sorry we're sick of him taking sides' [*Tempo* 2024, 30 January].

In the print media, polemical debates on this matter are particularly carried forward by an urban-based younger generation of academics and social activists. These include figures like the University of Gajah Mada intellectual, Zainal Arifin Mochtar. Such polemics on Indonesian democracy remind us of the late 1950s debate between Herbert Feith and Harry Benda concerning whether or not democracy existed in Indonesia following President Sukarno's dissolution of parliament and return to the 1945 Constitution [Feith 1982a; Benda 1982]. This launched what became known as «Guided Democracy (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*)». In the early 21st century, history seems to be repeating itself.

Informed discussions in the media relating to the current state of democracy in Indonesia are mostly restricted to non-mainstream media outlets. These include the website of the *Jurnal IndoPROGRESS* (IndoPROGRESS Journal of the eponymous IndoPROGRESS Institute for Social Research and Education, IISRE) and Project Multatuli, established by Evi Mariani, a former *Jakarta Post* journalist. The latter focuses on the publication of investigative articles. These two online media sources are the most engaged and progressive in their views. They directly address the issues of declining or decaying democracy in Indonesia, first raised by Feith and Benda, and revisited by a number of contemporary political scientists, including Michele Ford and Thomas Pepinsky (*Beyond Oligarchy*, 2014), Edward Aspinall and Ward Berenschot (*Democracy for Sale* (2019) and Thomas Power and Eve Warburton (*Democracy in Indonesia*, 2020).

Among the most prolific contributors to this debate on the state of democracy in Indonesia is the sociologist Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir. An Honorary Fellow at the Asia Institute of the University of Melbourne and formerly Assistant Professor of Sociology, State University of Jakarta (Universitas Negeri Jakarta, UNJ), Mudhoffir wrote a provocative article on 21 December 2021, entitled 'No decline in democracy, Indonesian politics was already rotten for a long time (*Tidak Ada Kemunduran Demokrasi, Politik Indonesia Sejak Dulu Memang Busuk*)' [Mudhoffir 2021, 21 December]. In this

essay, he strongly opposed the popular discourse about the «backsliding» of Indonesian democracy, arguing instead that democracy has either been completely absent or practically non-existent in Indonesia since the early years of Sukarno's Old Order (1945-66). In Mudhoffir's view, it is pointless talking about a «decline» in democracy because there was no such thing in the first place. Prominent amongst the many responses, was one by veteran political scientist Coen Husain Pontoh, the editor of the *Jurnal Indo-PROGRESS*, who wrote 'Investigating the middle class: A response to Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir (*Menginvestigasi Kelas Menengah: Tanggapan untuk Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir*)' [Pontoh 2021, 16 June].

For more recent polemics, particularly in relation to the mass demonstrations sparked by Jokowi's attempt to change the Constitutional Court's decision on local elections on 22 August 2024, Mudhoffir was again in the forefront with his Project Multatuli op-ed, entitled 'Bourgeois Democratic Emergency (*Darurat Aktivisme Borjuis*)' [Mudhoffir 2024, 23 August]. Among the most thoughtful responses were opinion pieces by Muhamad Isyroqi Basil [Basil 2024, 23 August]; Dodi Faedlulloh [Faedlulloh 2024, 13 September]; Zulfadhli Nasution [Nasution 2024, 19 September]; and Fathimah Fildzah Izzat [Izzat 2024, 25 September]. Such passionate debates amongst the younger generation of Indonesian academics and activists are a healthy sign for the future. The stakes of democracy in Indonesia are in good hands with such engaged intellectuals.

However, the already mentioned Omnibus Law and Corruption Eradication Commission Law cases, which provoked such extensive popular demonstrations in September 2019, illustrate the limits of public protest in Indonesia. They did not change realities on the ground. Neither of these two important pieces of legislation, initiated by Jokowi's administration, were rescinded or revised, even though both were deeply inimical to the democratic health of the nation. Instead, Jokowi prioritised the interests of domestic oligarchs and foreign investors, both of whom preferred an unempowered work force and a weakened National Corruption Eradication Commission. In this process of revision, Indonesian workers and reformers were side-lined. Given that Jokowi found it so easy to ignore such massive protests and ram through his legislation, we return here to our initial question: does a civil society actually exist in Indonesia? This has now become a hot-button issue among scholars and activists alike as practically no significant opposition group has emerged in Indonesian politics in the quarter century since the fall of Suharto in May 1998.

This absence has been particularly evident during Jokowi's second administration (2019-2024) when an increasingly authoritarian government came to power [Tirtosudarmo and Carey 2022, pp.193-195]. If no «loyal» opposition has crystallised in this past quarter century, just what role has the so-called politically conscious middle class played in Indonesia? Does such a class even exist? Looking beyond Indonesia, it is relevant to read the

view of an Indian political scientist, Partha Chatterjee (born 1947), in his assessment of what constitutes civil society

> Faced with similar problems, some analysts have favoured expanding the idea of civil society to include virtually all existing social institutions that lie outside the strict domain of the state. This practice has become rampant in the recent rhetoric of international financial institutions, aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations among whom the spread of a neoliberal ideology has authorized the consecration of every non-state organization as the precious flower of the associative endeavours of free members of civil society. I have preferred to resist these unscrupulously charitable theoretical gestures, principally because I feel it important not to lose sight of the vital and continually active project that still informs many of the state institutions in countries like India to transform traditional social authorities and practices into the modular forms of bourgeois civil society. Civil society as an ideal continues to energize an interventionist political project, but as an actually existing form it is demographically limited. Both of these facts must be borne in mind when considering the relation between modernity and democracy in countries such as India [Chatterjee 2000, p. 39].

A bare month before Jokowi's handover to Prabowo (20 October 2024), another dramatic event occurred in Indonesian domestic politics. Bambang Soesatyo (born 1962), Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, MPR) and one of the chairpersons of Golkar, initiated a debate in the Assembly aimed at revoking a number of previous government decisions. One of the most politically significant was the rehabilitation of the name of Indonesia's founder President, Sukarno (in office 1945-1967). Soesatyo proposed that the earlier accusation of Sukarno's involvement in the still murky events of 1 October 1965 (Gestok), when the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) was supposedly involved in a coup attempt, should be erased from the record. The decision on Sukarno was perceived by the Indonesian public as a gesture of rapprochement between Golkar and Megawati's PDI-P, given that Indonesia's founder President is Megawati's father. It was generally welcomed.

What was much less acceptable was another decision implying a comprehensive pardon for General Suharto for his personal involvement in the system of KKN (*Korupsi, Kolusi dan Nepotisme*, «Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism») during his 32 years in power (1966-1998) when he was reported to have amassed a fortune of between US$ 15-35 billion (Transparency International 2004, p.13). Even worse, was a rumoured attempt by the Assembly (MPR) to rehabilitate General Suharto's name and instal him as a national hero (*pahlawan nasional*). As of the time of writing (December 2024) this debate was ongoing.

Is impunity becoming a culture? This is something that is currently much debated among foreign scholars such as Elizabeth Drexler who has recently argued that impunity is more structural than cultural [Drexler 2023].[28] Linked with this debate about whether Indonesia's Second President deserves elevation as a national hero is his alleged involvement in the post-1965 killings, when, as have seen (Section 2.1.), between 500,000 and a million people accused of links with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) are thought to have been murdered [Robinson 2018]. This is a subject on which there is now a growing body of literature, mostly by foreign researchers such as Geoffrey Robinson, Katharine McGregor, Annie Pohlman, Jess Melvin, John Roosa and Robert Cribb [Melvin 2024, 26 June].

5. *The post-2024 presidential election: Implications for the future*

5.1. *Inauguration and selecting the new administration*

Shortly before his inauguration on Sunday, 20 October 2024, the newly elected Indonesian president, Prabowo Subianto, invited around a hundred candidates, whom he was considering for ministerial positions, to come for two whole days to his Kertanegara residence in Kebayoran Baru, South Jakarta. One by one the invited candidates were interviewed alone by the President elect [Aditya and Prabowo 2024, 15 October]. Among the familiar faces was Sri Mulyani, Jokowi's Finance Minister (2016-2024), now slated to hold the same portfolio in Prabowo's new cabinet. Others included Airlangga Hartanto, the coordinating minister for the economy under Jokowi; Basuki Hadimulyo (born 1954), the former minister of Public Works; and Tito Karnavian (born 1964), the erstwhile police chief, who had been appointed minister of Home Affairs (in office, 2019-2024) by Jokowi, and who would now continue in post (see Section 4.4).

It was no secret that, in picking these ministers, Prabowo was influenced by Jokowi. The interest of the latter in the make-up of the new government underscored his concern to preserve his legacy, a concern already signalled when Jokowi engineered the installation of his son, Gibran, as Prabowo's vice president. Shortly after this ministerial selection process, the President elect organized what he called a «retreat» at his Hambalang (Sentul) estate, where his ministerial and vice-ministerial picks were lectured to by several international professors and experts on crucial issues such as geopolitics, AI and global economics. As if all this was not enough, the former

28. Drexler explains the complexities of what is known in Indonesia as the «culture of impunity», namely the lack of personal and professional shame involved in corrupt acts. Drexler shows that there are underlying drivers here. These involve not only «culture» broadly conceived but also bureaucratic, military and educational norms which make impunity and crimes against the state acceptable in Indonesia.

four-star general brought all his selected cabinet team to attend another two days of military training at his former military academy in Magelang, complete with the army uniforms, camp-beds and tents in an airconditioned camping ground [Guritno and Ihsanuddin 2024, 24 October]!

On the day of his presidential inauguration (20 October 2024), Prabowo Subianto gave an inaugural address which laid out his future policies [*Tempo* 2024, 20 October]. Delivered at the plenary meeting of The People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) of the Republic of Indonesia and attended by two former presidents – Yudhoyono and Jokowi – and representatives of foreign countries, the speech was replete with high-flown rhetoric. This reflected the new President's strong nationalism and his alleged determination to uplift the still economically challenged masses of the Indonesian people. After the inauguration, the celebration was followed by lengthy festivities where people enjoyed food and music on the nine-kilometre route from the parliament building to the state palace (Istana Negara). There, outgoing President Jokowi and his vice-president, Ma'ruf Amin, greeted Prabowo and Gibran. The whole inauguration was choreographed in a grand manner, aimed to highlight Indonesia's vast size and the smoothness of the democratic transfer of power [*Kompas* 2024, 20 October].

The day after the presidential inauguration, Prabowo officially installed his line-up of cabinet ministers and deputy ministers. In all there were incumbents for 54 ministries and state institutions. This was ten more in number than in Jokowi's previous cabinets. Except for the PDI-P, the largest party by number of seats in the Indonesian parliament (DPR), almost all political parties were represented in the new cabinet [*Tempo* 2024, 21 October]. While rumours circulated that the PDI-P leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri, might meet with Prabowo prior to his inauguration to come to an agreement allowing PDI-P members to participate in the new government, these never materialised. Was this an indication of Megawati's true political position as the leader of what was now a de facto opposition? The public were left with no clear statement from either Megawati or her high-ranking party officials. Yet, with the poll to elect the regional heads approaching on 27 November, it became clear that the PDI-P would be the only political party to contest Prabowo's governing coalition on election day.

5.2. *The November 2024 local elections and Megawati's PDI-P as Indonesia's «loyal opposition»*

As we have seen, on 20 August 2024 (Section 4.5.) a decision was made by the Constitutional Court to reduce the percentage of the popular vote required of political parties which wished to propose their own candidates for governor and mayor in the upcoming local elections. This allowed smaller parties to endorse their candidates regardless of whether they had over 20% of seats in their local parliaments (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD). As already noted, although Jokowi and his allies attempted to re-

voke this decision, they failed. The successful mobilisation of civil society organisations ensured the new rule remained on the statute book. This opened an opportunity for PDI-P to endorse its local candidates, both for governors and district heads.

The fierce contestation between Megawati's PDI-P and Prabowo's Jokowi-supported coalition now found a new battle ground. The National Election Commission confirmed that the regional heads' election on 27 November would take place in 37 provinces, 415 districts, and 93 cities. The real battlegrounds, however, were in Java, namely Jakarta, West, Central and East Java provinces, home to 55% of the Indonesian population. In Jakarta, PDI-P's candidates, Pramono Anung and Rano Karno, won a wafer thin (50.07%) first-round victory against former West Java governor, Ridwan Kamil (in office 2019-2024) and his running mate, conservative Islamic politician, Suswono. But this was one of PDI-P's few successes. In West Java, former district heads Dedi Mulyadi and his running mate, Erwan Setiawan, both backed by Prabowo, won a landslide victory. In Central and East Java, it was the same story. Here the PDI-P candidates lost heavily against Prabowo's coalition. The traces of Jokowi's hand were everywhere. Taking a page out of his previous presidential election playbook, sub-district (*camat*), village heads (*lurah*) and the police were all mobilised to support Prabowo's coalition candidates [*CNN Indonesia* 2024, 15 November]. Jokowi also played a significant role in securing the crushing first-round victory (62%) of his son in-law, Bobby Nasution (born 1991), as Governor of North Sumatra [*The Conversation* 2024, 25 December].

The decision made by Prabowo to accept the result of Jakarta's gubernatorial election is interesting. It can be interpreted as a sympathetic political gesture towards the PDI-P head, Megawati. Indeed, in the triangular relationship which now exists between these three central political figures – Megawati, Jokowi and Prabowo – the weakest link in terms of party politics is clearly Jokowi. He has no formal position as head of any political party as Megawati and Prabowo have with PDI-P and Gerindra respectively.

5.3. *Prabowo's key cabinet appointments*

Looking at Prabowo's key ministerial appointments, several analyses can be offered. First, in terms of fiscal policy, Prabowo's continuation of Sri Mulyani as Finance Minister showed a more cautious and nationalistic stance. Prabowo could be seen to be acting conservatively to reduce the risk of uncontrolled spending. He appears to understand all too well the volatility and unpredictability of the global economy at the present time. Second, his continuation of Tito Karnavian in the Home Affairs portfolio sent a signal to local governments, particularly Papua. As a former Papua Police Chief (in post, 2012-2014), Karnavian, has a deep knowledge of the troublesome

province. His decisive role in dividing Papua into four separate provinces when he was Jokowi's minister of Home Affairs in 2022 indicates a shrewd strategic understanding of how to weaken Papuan independence demands by undermining the unity of the Papuan people [*BBC News Indonesia* 2022, 30 June]. Third, a new approach to Islamic politics seems to have emerged with the appointment of Nasaruddin Umar (born 1959), as minister of Religious Affairs. A non-affiliated open-minded modern cleric and formerly the head (*Imam Besar*) of Istiqlal Mosque, the national mosque in central Jakarta, Umar brought a fresh wind to this politically important ministry, hitherto the fief of the conservative Nahdlatul Ulama (Renaissance of the Ulama, NU) Islamic organisation [Erianto 2024, 12 November].

Finally, given Prabowo's previous track record as head of Indonesia's elite special forces (Kopassus) in the closing months of Suharto's New Order regime, there was a strong fear, especially amongst civil society activists, that Prabowo would act more toughly and repressively towards them. The 15 December 2024 *Tempo* edition, for example, reported that Prabowo had rotated 300 top military officers, heightening public concerns about the possible return of the military to domestic politics in Indonesia [*Tempo* 2024, 15 December].

6. *Conclusions*

In his last two years in office, Jokowi's navigated his extraordinary political career in a style more like a latter-day Javanese ruler than the democratically elected president of the world's fourth most populous country.[29] The unprecedented «Black Swan» event of COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Indonesian economy and social life. The pandemic revealed the vulnerability of Indonesia's poorer 30% and exposed the ever-widening class divide as the financial security of the Indonesian middle class was eroded. It put the brakes on Jokowi's ambitions of achieving a revolution in his country's infrastructure and a geographical recentring of political power to East Kalimantan with the completion of the new national capital. Yet, even with the passing of COVID-19, Jokowi's passion for pushing forward his ambitious development programmes remained undimmed. These projects became conflated in his mind with what he imagined as «modernity».

Jokowi attempted, but failed, to extend his presidency to an unprecedented third term. He then took a wrecking ball to the Indonesian constitution by manipulating the Constitutional Court's ruling on the age requirement for vice-presidential candidates. This deeply corrupt act allowed

29. The current (2023) Indonesian population stands at 277.5 million (with 282+ million estimated in December 2024), compared to India's 1.429 billion, China (PRC's) 1.411 billion, and the USA's 334.9 million.

his son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, to become Prabowo Subianto's running mate. Once this had been achieved, Jokowi pulled out all the stops to influence the result of presidential election, which he saw as a way of securing his political future. Now with Prabowo and Gibran safely installed as the new president and vice president respectively, Jokowi's hopes for the realisation of his development dreams continue to burn bright. The biggest and most challenging of these is clearly the completion of the new Ibu Kota Nusantara national capital in East Kalimantan. Here the jury is out. Much will depend on how the Indonesian economy fares in what looks like some very turbulent times ahead with Rupiah-US dollar exchange rate at the lowest point since the Asian Financial Crisis of July 1997.

In its special issue to commemorate Jokowi's decade in power (2014-24), *Tempo*, wrote «[during] his two terms leading Indonesia, Jokowi destroyed democracy and the hopes of reformation, *nawacita* has turn into unprecedented disaster» [*Tempo* 2024, 29 July]. *Nawacita* (also spelled *Nawa Cita)* is the vision document including Jokowi's nine promises to improve the country,[30] which he made at the start of his presidency in October 2014.

Instead of celebrating Jokowi's achievements, *Tempo* exposed 20 instances of Jokowi's «sins». In fact, Jokowi's life and political career is a study in the Indonesian psyche, recalling Clifford Geertz's classic essay in *Old Societies and New States* in which he reflects on Indonesia as a country grappling with its imagined modernity [Geertz 1965, pp.105-157]. In a more recent analysis, political scientist, Partha Chatterjee, basing himself on the modern Indian historical experience, questioned the relevance to India and the world outside Europe of the generally accepted Western political science concept of «civil society» as a sign of modernity [Chatterjee 2000, pp. 35-48].

Jokowi represents a modern-day Javanese ruler. During his decade in office, he accumulated substantial power. With control over the main chan-

30. The nine promises were: (1) ensuring the state protects the nation and its citizens through an active foreign policy, an integrated defense system guaranteeing national security, and the promotion of Indonesia's identity as a maritime nation; (2) establishing clean, effective and democratic government thus restoring public trust in democratic institutions while consolidating democracy through reforms to the party system, elections and representative institutions; (3) building Indonesia from the periphery by strengthening regions and villages within the unitary state; (4) reforming the government system and enforcing the law to eradicate corruption and ensure dignified and trustworthy governance; (5) improving the quality of life of Indonesian citizens through better education, community empowerment, land reform, subsidized home ownership and universal state social welfare by 2019; (6) increasing the productivity and international competitiveness of Indonesian workers thus enabling the country to advance with other Asian nations; (7) achieving economic independence by mobilizing strategic sectors of the domestic economy; (8) carrying out a «mental revolution» through civic education and the teaching of the history of Indonesia's national struggle, thereby deepening patriotism and character building; (9) strengthening diversity through policies that encourage diversity education and dialogue between citizens.

nels of authority (government, parliament and the judiciary), he felt confident that he could achieve his goal of perpetuating his influence beyond his formal presidency. Political engineering and manipulation were his two favourite tactics. Since late 2022, as the General Election Commission commenced its work, the contest for Indonesia's future began. As we have seen, the Commission became the target for Jokowi's manipulation. His principal goal was to make Prabowo his successor, and his son, Gibran, Prabowo's running mate, despite an election which was widely seen as fraudulent. But with the former four-star general now in power the question is whether he will follow Jokowi's orders. Is it possible that Gibran as Prabowo's stripling vice president can act as the extension of his father's hand in the new administration? This may be fanciful. But Gibran will certainly keep the seat warm for his father's potential return to the top table.

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