1 Introduction: Jokowi's decade in power

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No president in Indonesia's history entered office with such high expectations as did President Joko Widodo (Jokowi). The final years of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency (2004–2014) were marked by stagnant economic growth, the routine arrest of corrupt politicians, growing inequality and a seemingly unshakable infrastructure deficit (Hill 2015). Jokowi's rise thus coincided with growing public dissatisfaction with the status quo. Indonesians' levels of trust in, and attachment to, political parties had tumbled in the years since democratisation, and Yudhoyono's personal approval ratings dropped to a record low of just 30 per cent the year before he left office (Aspinall et al. 2015, Chapter 1).

Against this backdrop, Jokowi seemed to offer Indonesia a new kind of political leadership. His campaign for the presidency in 2014 disrupted a national political landscape dominated by oligarchs and New Order–era holdovers, and his humble background and self-effacing style endeared him to the public. In many ways, Jokowi embodied the change that Indonesians desired. But a decade later, Jokowi left office having achieved only modest economic change and having presided over a period of democratic decline so severe that both country specialists and global experts warned Indonesia had entered a 'grey zone' between electoral democracy and electoral autocracy (Jaffrey and Warburton 2024; V-Dem Institute 2025: 15).

Reflecting on Jokowi's political evolution over the past decade, we cast him as a *disruptive* president, who reversed the course of Indonesian democracy in pursuit of fast-paced economic development and, eventually, to amass personal power. The president bent democratic institutions for accountability, and broke democratic norms around fair political competition. This change in direction becomes clear when we

compare Jokowi's legacy with that of his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Writing in 2015, Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner and Dirk Tomsa argued that Indonesia's greatest democratic achievement under Yudhoyono was that he completed two full constitutionally permitted terms in office, while keeping Indonesia's democratic system intact. We argue that under Jokowi, the country's most significant democratic accomplishment was that it survived the president's attempts to change the constitution and entrench himself in power.

There was, therefore, no authoritarian reversal under Jokowi; instead, Indonesia experienced a decade of *authoritarian revival*. Contributions to this volume from leading Indonesia scholars and policy practitioners all show the different ways in which Jokowi's presidency resurrected New Order–era ideas and practices that had faded from the political foreground since *reformasi* but had lurked below the surface. Developmentalism, repression, constrained competition, crippled accountability and the centralisation of state power are all familiar tenets of Suharto's rule that made a comeback under Jokowi.

What made it possible for someone like Jokowi to carry out a decade-long democratic heist? We argue the answer lies partly in Jokowi's background as an outsider and a businessman who ascended to national office through local politics. He brought with him a deep understanding of people's everyday needs and their hierarchy of preferences—by keeping the price of staples low and expanding welfare policies, Jokowi made ordinary Indonesians see themselves as stakeholders in his presidency. And despite the signs of democratic decline and deepening corruption within this government, Jokowi managed to maintain his personal brand as the clean, hardworking and humble outsider. For all these reasons, most Indonesians seemed willing to excuse his political overreach, and he left office with sky-high approval ratings.

The authoritarian revival of the last decade is not Jokowi's legacy alone. We emphasise that the president had many willing allies. Indonesia's political class made deep democratic concessions during the turbulent transition at the end of the 1990s. Ironically, the success of these measures and the two decades of stability that ensued prompted the reluctant democrats within that class to consider that perhaps they did not need to go so far and that they could now rein back democracy within acceptable limits. Many of the most dramatic moments of democratic regression of the past ten years, therefore, had the backing of parties across the political spectrum.

The rest of this introduction proceeds as follows. We begin by reflecting on Jokowi's rise and his disruptive style of leadership. We then outline two major features of Jokowi's presidency: the return of developmentalism

in the economic sphere, and authoritarian revival in the political sphere. Then, we consider the forces that enabled the return of New Order–era discourse and political practice during the tenure of Indonesia's first 'outsider' president. We close by outlining the contributions to the rest of the book.

A disruptive president

Jokowi's presidency generated wide-ranging analyses of his leadership and legacy. Early on, analysts cast Jokowi first and foremost as a populist, whose outsider status and new political style were changing the face of Indonesia's democracy (Mietzner 2015; Mas'udi 2014). As the president's democratic indifference and narrow economic vision became clear, scholars instead emphasised his developmental disposition (Muhtadi 2015; Warburton 2016). Some saw him as a political genius and effective economic manager (Mahbubani 2021). One journalist mused that Jokowi was a man of contradictions (Bland 2020), whose policy directions changed in sudden and inscrutable ways—one minute a protectionist, the next minute a free marketeer; one day a democratic hope, the next a neo-authoritarian.

Taking stock of these varied characterisations and reflecting on the arguments of our contributors, we offer an assessment of Jokowi's leadership style. Our analysis is necessarily anchored in a comparison with Indonesia's first directly elected president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in part because we view Jokowi's evolution as inseparable from the political moment at which he rose to power. Yudhoyono was, as Aspinall et al. (2015) put it, the 'moderating' president—a cautious insider who saw his primary role as stabilising the polity and shielding (but not further reforming) the young and fragile democratic institutions he inherited.

We see Jokowi as a disruptive president. An impatient outsider with the anti-politics ethos common to populist figures, Jokowi learned to govern around or bulldoze through the sorts of institutions that Yudhoyono felt compelled to protect. His prior careers in business and local government informed a view of both bureaucracy and many democratic checks and balances as barriers to progress. During the early years of his presidency, Jokowi also experienced the pitfalls of democracy and party politics, when friction with parties, the parliament and law enforcement bodies threatened to derail his policy agenda. The following paragraphs elaborate Jokowi's disruptive style and the approach he took to complex problems of governance.

In 2014, Jokowi seized upon the widespread, if diffuse, sense of popular disillusionment that Yudhoyono left behind. His presidential

campaign was a classic example of populist politics—he used direct and personalist appeals to voters, captured in his campaign slogans: '*Jokowi adalah kita*' ('Jokowi is us') and '*sederhana, merakyat, bersih*' ('humble, of the people, and clean'). The campaign represented a break from the past, not just in the folksy messaging but also in its unprecedented level of public involvement. For the first time, an Indonesian presidential candidate ran a truly grassroots campaign, with volunteers across the country working for little or no cash, wanting nothing but to rally support for a new political messiah. To be sure, Yudhoyono's campaign in 2004 for the country's first-ever direct presidential elections was a momentous political event. But 2014 was different. The notion that an 'ordinary' Indonesian without dynastic roots or immense personal wealth could occupy the highest office in the country was intoxicating. This outsider status was and remained the essence of Jokowi's personal appeal.

Jokowi's rise drew international attention, too. His grassroots electioneering and direct interactions with voters reflected the anti-politics Zeitgeist taking hold in both established and developing democracies at the time, from Brazil to the Philippines, from India to the United States (Gammon 2023). For analysts back in 2014, Jokowi represented a 'technocratic' or even 'polite' form of populism without xenophobic inflections or illiberal agendas (Mietzner 2015). Indeed, he was credited with saving Indonesia's democracy from a neo-authoritarian rival, Prabowo Subianto, a military figure whose politics at the time more closely resembled right-wing populists like Bolsonaro, Modi or Duterte (Aspinall and Mietzner 2014). Jokowi's narrow victory in 2014 thus motivated a collective sigh of relief from pro-democracy activists, and from international observers too. *TIME* magazine's (now infamous) 2014 cover story described Jokowi as 'A New Hope' and 'Force for Democracy'.

Once in power, Indonesia's democratic hope became an authoritarian threat. Rather than continuing down the path of democratic consolidation that he had inherited from his predecessor, Jokowi began dismantling the very system that had made it possible for him to rise to power. Jokowi's 'authoritarian turn' (Power 2018) initially appeared to be an act of political survival—during his first term, the president was beset by an unruly coalition and growing Islamist opposition, and his government adopted a coercive approach to containing these threats.

This early experience of sabotage by establishment elites revealed and perhaps entrenched Jokowi's distinctly anti-politics approach and the populist style with which he came to govern. He understood there was broad public distrust of political parties and parliament and knew that taking a heavy-handed approach to coalition partners and party leaders—threatening and coercing them to bring them into line—would

cause no popular backlash. Indeed, the president was obsessed with his own popular support, and he felt he could use his personal popularity as leverage against the pressures of party elites, including (perhaps especially) against Megawati Sukarnoputri, the chair of the party to which he belonged, PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) (see Mietzner, this volume).

Jokowi's second term was a critical turning point in his political transformation. The religiously polarised election in 2019 followed by violent protests against Jokowi's re-election deepened his aversion towards ideology and reinforced his affinity for pragmatism in politics. Shortly after winning re-election, he declared his intention to do whatever it took to implement his governance agenda, stating that he was no longer constrained by any burden.[1] Reformists in Jokowi's circle initially took this as a sign that the newly re-elected president would not be beholden to vested elite interests in his coalition and would therefore be free to finally deliver on the change he had promised when he first took office (Afiff, this volume). But reformists were in fact part of the burden he was looking to shed. He abandoned his progressive allies and joined forces with Prabowo by offering him the Ministry of Defence. The result was a huge governing coalition in parliament and the consolidation of Jokowi's power over almost all political parties.

With the parliament firmly in his grip, Jokowi's government began rolling out a legislative agenda that would undermine major democratic gains of the previous two decades. These include the weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK); a new Criminal Code that made criticism of public officials a punishable offence; and the Omnibus Law on Job Creation that dismantled labour protections and environmental safeguards.

Widespread protests initially forced Jokowi to pause some of these measures, but the COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to push them through with less resistance. The massive expansion of social welfare programs during the pandemic boosted Jokowi's popularity and gave him the political currency to pursue his economic agenda. He also strengthened his personal grip on law-enforcement institutions and began targeting an ever-growing range of oppositional actors, including political party leaders, Islamists, student activists, critical journalists, environmental groups and labour unions, to pave the path for his

1 '*Saya sudah enggak ada beban apa-apa*'. For full statement, see Kuwado and Gatra (2019).

industrial agenda and strategic infrastructure projects (Setiawan 2020; Baker 2023; Aspinall and Mayangsari, this volume).

Nearing the end of his decade in office, Jokowi turned into the cliché establishment politician against whom he once distinguished himself. Unwilling to relinquish power, and uncommitted to the country's democratic institutions, the president sought ways to maintain his political influence and protect his legacy. He first flirted with the idea of delaying the 2024 elections, and then sought to change the constitution to seek a third term. These machinations failed, mostly due to a lack of elite support (Mietzner and Honna 2023). Jokowi then turned to the political dynasty he had been building for years—he paired his son Gibran Rakabuming Raka with Prabowo in the 2024 presidential elections. Gibran was legally too young to run as Prabowo's vice-presidential candidate. So Jokowi used his family connections to a judge on the Constitutional Court to engineer a favourable ruling, allowing Gibran to enter the race. Jokowi then meddled in the presidential race in unprecedented ways to ensure a quick win for his son and Prabowo, mobilising welfare handouts and using the police to coerce support from local officials (Jaffrey and Warburton 2024). Jokowi's efforts to entrench himself in power left Indonesia's democracy at its weakest since *reformasi*.

Looking back, Jokowi spent much of his decade in power, and especially his second term, building up the institutions he needed for his economic agenda—state-owned enterprises, for example—and assailing or hollowing out those that got in his way—like anti-corruption organisations and courts. Jokowi excluded or coerced the people and organisations that criticised him or his brand of developmentalism—like progressive non-government organisations, intellectuals, human rights activists or Islamists—and delivered patronage and privilege to the tycoons and political elites that could enable, capitalise and speed up his economic projects. Indonesia's populist outsider and democratic hope had thus transformed into an authoritarian threat. In this process he came to resemble an 'insider' politician, cutting deals with oligarchs, pursuing dynastic ambitions and attempting to entrench himself in power. In what follows we draw on contributions to this volume to detail the mark Jokowi's leadership left on Indonesia's economic and political landscape.

The return of developmentalism

Jokowi perceived his job to be ultimately, and perhaps even solely, about delivering economic outcomes. Throughout his presidency, he maintained a keen focus on improving physical infrastructure. Democracy, good governance, human rights and even foreign diplomacy became secondary

to the goal of achieving fast economic growth (see Rizal Sukma, this volume). Many observers likened him to a mini-Suharto. Jokowi shared the autocrat's focus on pragmatic developmental programming and a desire to 'modernise' Indonesia through infrastructure and investment. Jokowi also came to echo the tropes of New Order–era political elites, stating publicly that the country's democracy had become '*terlalu bebas dan sudah kebablasan*' (too free and gone too far), and he implored that democracy and elections should be 'polite' and 'must not interrupt national development programs' (Cabinet Secretariat 2018). Thus, in both his economic ambitions and their discursive framing, Jokowi revived New Order–era developmentalism.

Just how far-reaching was Jokowi's developmental impact? Reflecting on the arguments put forward by contributors, we argue that despite Jokowi's razor-sharp focus on development and his willingness to bulldoze through democratic checks and balances to achieve these goals, his overall economic impact was both limited and highly uneven. Beyond a relatively impressive expansion of public infrastructure and increased private investment, Jokowi's term in office was marked by no major economic achievement other than stability. Poverty alleviation programs expanded, but education and job creation for middle-class Indonesians were neglected and thus stagnated. To an extent, these outcomes reflect the structural constraints on deep economic reforms in middle-income countries such as Indonesia (Doner and Schneider 2016). But Jokowi's emphasis on infrastructure and investment, over education and redistribution for example, also reflect how a background in business shaped his particular brand of developmentalism. Indeed, businesspersons in politics around the world tend to focus on precisely these areas of governance (Warburton 2024).

When it comes to Jokowi's social and economic policies, a theme that emerges in this volume is one of rebranding and fast-tracking. While on the surface Jokowi appeared to offer a different type of development to that pursued by President Yudhoyono, the difference was mostly stylistic, and in the fast-paced nature of the delivery, rather than substance, of economic policy. Two long-time observers of Indonesia's economy, Arianto Patunru and the late Faisal Basri (Chapter 4, this volume), express deep scepticism towards the oft-used concept of 'Jokowinomics', pointing out that the president's economic policies were not especially unique or innovative, and instead built on his predecessor's interventions.

For example, the Jokowi administration's core social assistance programs were all designed and first implemented by Yudhoyono-era technocrats and politicians. In Chapter 5, Merdikawati, Izzati and Suryahadi describe how, once in power, Jokowi renamed and rebranded

Yudhoyono's social welfare programs, making sure the public associated these programs with his tenure. To be sure, his government oversaw a significant expansion in the number of households receiving various forms of welfare—in part a response to the COVID-19 pandemic—that in turn helped to bring the proportion of Indonesians living below the poverty line to under 10 per cent. But these programs were not Jokowi-era innovations.

Jokowi also built on the work of his predecessor to expand the industrial footprint of Indonesia's natural resource sectors. Downstreaming, or '*hilirisasi*', of the mining sector became one of the Jokowi government's most (self-) celebrated economic achievements. The government introduced a tight ban on raw nickel exports in 2020, unleashing a wave of foreign investment into the downstream nickel smelting industry, and new nickel-based industrial parks grew at an eye-watering pace in parts of Sulawesi and Maluku (Wijaya and Sinclair 2025). As a result, export revenues from nickel skyrocketed from US$6 billion to US$30 billion between 2013 and 2022 (Abdurrachman 2023). But the vision and legal framework that formed the basis of this mining boom was designed and first implemented under Yudhoyono in 2014 (Warburton 2018).

The Jokowi government's contribution here and in other sectors was to fast-track investment by introducing attractive terms for companies and removing regulatory red tape. The 2020 Omnibus Law on Job Creation, for instance, introduced deeply controversial changes to labour protections and environmental permitting, all with a view to speeding up progress on a range of strategic industrial projects, including in the mining sector (Sholikin 2020). The economic impact of this law remains a subject of debate (see Patunru and Basri, this volume); but critical scholarship and media analysis emerged towards the end of Jokowi's presidency demonstrating the negative impact of this deregulation drive on workers, the environment, and communities living on land earmarked for strategic projects (see Afiff, this volume).

One area where Jokowi's government clearly outperformed and improved upon its predecessors was infrastructure. In Chapter 6, James Guild provides an expert assessment of Jokowi's record and, leveraging a range of data, concludes that, 'the pace and scale of infrastructure investment accelerated substantially during the ten years of Jokowi's leadership'. Marcus Mietzner (Chapter 2, this volume) explains Jokowi's near-obsession with infrastructure as having emerged in part from interactions with and advice from other world leaders, in particular China's Xi Jinping. But a focus on infrastructure also suited Jokowi's personal preference for identifying and investing in concrete things that can be 'checked' and 'controlled', as the president told Mietzner in an

interview. At the same time, Guild rightly points out that Jokowi took a broad view of the developmental benefits of infrastructure, emphasising the president's appreciation for how major investments in roads or public transport are 'longer-term political and social projects' that will not bring profits in the short term, but that will have a tangible impact on the everyday lives of Indonesian voters.

Jokowi also diverged from Yudhoyono by making major investments in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Jokowi viewed SOEs as his 'agents of development' that could be controlled and directed towards priority projects like toll roads or industrial parks (Kim 2021). The Yudhoyono government's experience demonstrated to Jokowi that the private sector could not be relied upon to drive these sorts of initiatives (Davidson 2015; Kim 2021). One of Jokowi's economic and institutional legacies, therefore, was an expanded state sector: during Yudhoyono's decade, SOE assets made an average contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) of just under 40 per cent; between 2014 and 2019, that figure rose to 54 per cent (Kim 2021). The effect was to reverse the Yudhoyono-era trend of privatising and shrinking state-owned firms.

These developmental achievements were caveated—even overshadowed—by a long list of deficits. For example, foreign investment increased in the latter half of Jokowi's presidency, but money was flowing mostly into the extractive industries, and the government's story of increasing foreign direct investment masked the reality that almost all of this new capital was coming from one source—Chinese firms (Warburton 2024). That Indonesia managed to maintain 4 to 5 per cent GDP growth over the course of Jokowi's decade was viewed by some as a positive achievement in the context of a struggling global economy; but despite all the talk of an industrial boom, the contribution of manufacturing to the economy continued to decline over the course of Jokowi's presidency (Patunru and Basri, this volume).

Instead, under the Jokowi government, Indonesia became more reliant on mineral and coal mining for growth and export revenue than ever before. These are capital, not labour-intensive industries, and their negative effects on Indonesia's environment have been well documented. By 2024, data revealed that youth unemployment was growing, as was the percentage of Indonesians working in the informal sector, and Indonesia's middle class was shrinking (Mariska and Lakshmi 2025). The pace of poverty reduction under Jokowi was ultimately slower than under Yudhoyono, and tax revenue to GDP (an important indicator of the state's capacity to generate revenue) shrank to below its already very low levels during Jokowi's decade in office.

So, when Jokowi stepped down, Indonesia's economy looked on many indicators to be in a more, not less, precarious state. His government's economic model was based on short-term welfare handouts for the poorest citizens and opportunities for wealth accumulation for the richest. Meanwhile, education and job creation for middle-class Indonesians were neglected. Jokowi's developmental legacy is thus decidedly mixed, and more problematic than mainstream and state-sponsored narratives often suggest.

A decade of authoritarian revival

Unlike his economic legacy, Jokowi's political legacy is less disputed. Over the course of Jokowi's two terms, a scholarly consensus emerged that Indonesia's democracy was in retreat (Mujani and Liddle 2021; Power 2018; Warburton and Aspinall 2019).[2] At the same time, elite rivalry placed important limits on democratic derailment (Mietzner 2025). Indonesia's historical inheritances of egalitarian nationalism and institutional development also served as guardrails, preventing democratic backsliding from turning into a breakdown (Slater 2022).

While we agree that Indonesia managed to avoid authoritarian reversal under Jokowi, we argue that it nevertheless experienced an authoritarian revival. Contributions to this volume show that what took place over the past decade is not just a generic decline of democracy or a series of setbacks, but instead Jokowi's presidency marks the resurrection of New Order–era ideas and tactics that had faded from the political foreground since *reformasi*. This section documents how familiar authoritarian tropes found their way back into political discourse and practice, all under the leadership of a man who was elected as an antidote to the Suharto-era elite.

Coercion makes a comeback

Jokowi disrupted the course of Indonesian politics by reintroducing a level of coercion not seen since the collapse of the New Order. Scholars have long described patronage as a defining feature of post-*reformasi* politics that helped grease Indonesia's clunky democratic transition (Aspinall 2010). Successive democratically elected presidents then ruled

2 For example, on increasing cartelisation of politics see Slater (2018); on oligarchic control Hadiz (2017); on politicisation of legal institutions see Power (2020); on the impact of religious polarisation see Warburton (2020); on violent repression of protests see Siregar et al. (2022); on criminalisation of critics see Setiawan (2020).

through broad parliamentary coalitions, held together with promises of lucrative ministerial appointments and illicit sharing of state resources. This collusive system rewarded allies with carrots and disciplined dissenters with the threat to withdraw the same carrots. But come election time, allies were free to become rivals and compete against each other in national and local races. Post-election, power-sharing arrangements were renegotiated in a way that accommodated demands from both winners and losers. These fluid arrangements undermined the role of parliamentary opposition and compromised accountability (Slater 2004). But they also reduced friction in politics and neutralised the kind of inter-elite conflict that had plagued Indonesia's first experiment with democracy under Sukarno.

Jokowi upended this predictable pattern of collusion by augmenting the carrots with a wide-ranging mix of coercive sticks. His early struggles to exercise power over his coalition taught him that having pliable party leaders was crucial for political stability. Again, drawing on Suharto-era tactics, the palace began interfering in the election of political party leadership (Mietzner 2016). Party leaders who signalled an independent stance to that of Jokowi and his coalition ran the risk of becoming the subject of a corruption investigation (Baker 2023; Mietzner 2016). Marcus Mietzner's chapter in this volume shows how Jokowi learned to soak 'greedy' politicians in patronage and then use their corruption against them with threats of investigation and arrest.

The most dramatic illustration of Jokowi's coercive tactics came towards the end of his time in office. After publicly stating his intention to 'meddle' in the 2024 presidential race (Siregar 2023), Jokowi tried to block the candidacy of his long-time rival and governor of Jakarta, Anies Baswedan. The KPK, staffed by Jokowi loyalists, opened a corruption investigation against Anies and parties that supported his nomination were also called in for questioning in other graft cases (Jaffrey and Warburton 2024). Direct state harassment of senior party leaders to deter a presidential run and restrict the field of contestation has no precedent in post-*reformasi* Indonesia. Ultimately, these tactics failed to thwart Anies's candidacy. But Jokowi continued to use coercion to ensure a quick victory for Prabowo–Gibran. Intimidation of mayors, village heads and bureaucrats by law-enforcement agencies in the lead-up to the 2024 presidential election is well documented and bears an unmistakable resemblance to New Order–era elections where the playing field was firmly tilted in favour of the president's party (ibid.).

The president's intervention in the electoral process did not stop with Prabowo and Gibran's victory. He succeeded in blocking Anies Baswedan's bid for re-election as governor of Jakarta. Under normal

circumstances, political parties in Indonesia would rally behind a highly popular candidate like Anies. However, Jokowi and his allies obstructed Anies's nomination by peeling parties away from his coalition—some through threats of legal action, others with promises of patronage from the palace (Jaffrey and Warburton 2024).

Jokowi's arm-twisting tactics constitute the most severe attack on electoral competitiveness in post-*reformasi* Indonesia. Despite the growing scholarly consensus about democratic decline in Indonesia, there was agreement that elections remained mostly free, fair and competitive, and distinguished Indonesia's democracy from authoritarian regime types that have been on the rise globally. In 2024, however, Jokowi's brazen pre-electoral meddling to stack the odds in his son's favour brought Indonesia to the edge of competitive authoritarianism, a regime type in which the 'coexistence of meaningful democratic institutions and serious incumbent abuse yields electoral competition that is real but unfair' (Levitsky and Way 2020: 51).

Crippling accountability

While Jokowi coerced personal loyalty from party elites, his political goals largely aligned with theirs when it came to dismantling checks and balances. One institution that had faced open hostility from lawmakers since its establishment under Yudhoyono was the KPK. Yudhoyono's own government was repeatedly rattled by high-profile arrests of his ministers and party leaders. Despite pressure to curb the KPK's mandate, Yudhoyono used his authority to block the most aggressive attempts to undermine the KPK, preserving his public image at the cost of political expediency. In contrast, Jokowi's government believed that the KPK was an obstacle to investment in his infrastructure projects (Ihsanuddin 2019), and found common ground with other politicians who feared and wanted to weaken the KPK.

In Chapter 10, Laode Syarif, a former commissioner of the KPK, provides an insider's account of how, when and why Jokowi abandoned his early alliance with the anti-corruption institution and began seeking ways to undermine its independence. Jokowi's supporters often portrayed him as a well-meaning president held hostage by greedy party elites (CNN Indonesia 2019). In contrast, Syarif's account details Jokowi's personal role in demanding the end of KPK investigations against his political allies, expediting the passage of a revised KPK law in 2019 and then moving to staff the KPK's leadership with his personal loyalists. The new anti-corruption law not only weakened the KPK by curtailing its authority but transformed it into a weapon for persecuting political opponents.

The Constitutional Court also became a target of intervention to clear the path for Jokowi's developmentalist vision through the passage of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation. Simon Butt and Tim Lindsey's contribution to this volume shows how attacks on the court escalated under Jokowi's presidency from tinkering with judicial tenure to dismissing judges critical of government to blatant ethical violations by judges on the court itself. The most severe blow to judicial independence came through the last-minute judgement that lowered the age threshold for presidential candidates, clearing the path for Jokowi's son Gibran to run in the 2024 elections. Despite these relentless attacks, the court has issued a series of bold decisions in recent months that contravene the interests of incumbent powerholders by lowering the nomination threshold for local executive elections and eliminating it altogether for presidential elections. This suggests that independent-minded judges can impede, if not halt, authoritarian progression in Indonesia.

Institutions of accountability were never deeply embedded in post-*reformasi* politics nor were they completely independent. The KPK and the Constitutional Court were established reluctantly by political elites, largely in response to intense public pressure to break with Suharto-era politics characterised by corruption, collusion and nepotism. These institutions always faced an uphill battle but were becoming surprisingly effective under Yudhoyono. They had also acquired a symbolic sanctity that even the most unscrupulous politicians felt compelled to observe. Under Jokowi, these informal political norms of paying lip service to accountability and avoiding the appearance of an open conflict of interest were overturned for the open pursuit of personal power. The picture that emerges is one of reversion to the New Order–era collusion between the executive, the legislative and judiciary branches to make corruption and nepotism possible with impunity.

The turn to repression

Jokowi's assault on institutions did not trigger society-wide outrage but led to several rounds of civil society protests. Pro-democracy activists, students and labour groups hoped that the outpouring of public outrage against controversial policies would compel Jokowi to reverse course as Yudhoyono had done in the past. It is worth recalling that Yudhoyono faced harsh criticism for his indecisiveness in moments of crisis and when he eventually responded to public protests, he was further criticised for being overly concerned with his personal image. Jokowi's subsequent decade in power would demonstrate that a president who is excessively sensitive to public protest poses far less danger to democracy than one

who is impervious to it. Not only did Jokowi ignore protestors' demands to push ahead with his agenda, but his government also responded to critics with a level of repression unseen since the final days of Suharto's regime.

Several contributors in this volume describe Jokowi's systematic turn towards repression to quash opposition from civil society actors. Nava Nuraniyah examines how identity-based polarisation between Islamists and religious pluralists during Jokowi's first term motivated a mix of repression and co-optation to neutralise opposition from conservative quarters. He banned without due process leading Islamist organisations like Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Islamic Defenders' Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI), both of which had challenged Jokowi's authority during the 212 Movement. Some members of these organisations were killed by security forces, others were threatened with violence and yet others were arrested on unsubstantiated terrorism charges.

The fact that state repression initially targeted the more radical Islamist groups meant there was debate both inside and outside Indonesia about the extent to which Jokowi and his administration truly represented a threat to liberal democracy—after all, they were going after a deeply illiberal set of actors. Edward Aspinall and Fauziah Mayangsari note in their chapter that Jokowi's crackdown on Islamists exacerbated the differences between Islamists and pluralists, weakening Indonesia's civil society. The experience also convinced Jokowi's government that it could use repressive tactics against other opponents without prompting much pushback. In 2019, massive protests in Papua against racism and nationwide demonstrations against the revision of the KPK law in Jakarta were quelled with deadly force. The COVID-19 pandemic gave the government a yet broader licence to use force against civilians as seen in the crackdown on demonstrations against the Omnibus Law in 2020. Apart from cracking down on protests, the government also suppressed dissent by deploying New Order–era tactics that included legal harassment of advocates, counter-protests by pro-government groups and low-level intimidation of activists.

While Jokowi's actions represent a return to Suharto's tactics, there is no comparison between the systematic suppression of dissent under the New Order and Jokowi's ad-hoc repression of opponents. Yet the broad definition of threats by the two presidents is similar. Suharto famously claimed that 'threats and danger to the national stability can come from forces that are extreme right or left', referring to conservative Islamic groups and communists (Soeharto 1988: 464). Jokowi's crackdown on liberal critics on one end of the ideological spectrum and Islamists on the other mimics the Suharto-era paranoia, leaving increasingly narrow room in the middle for 'legitimate' expressions of dissent. Jokowi's

intolerance for dissent was shared widely by his allies in parliament and was formalised in 2022 as part of Indonesia's new Criminal Code, which contains heavy penalties, including jail time, for criticising high-ranking public officials (Jaffrey and Warburton 2022).

One important factor that made it possible for Jokowi to repress civil society groups was his personal grip over security forces, especially the police. As Sidney Jones shows in compelling detail in this volume, during the ten years of Jokowi's rule, the police became almost an 'extension of his own personal power'. Reflecting on Jokowi's political evolution more broadly, Jones points out that Jokowi did not enter office with a preconceived agenda when it came to the security forces. Instead, he learned 'how important they could be as a political tool for protecting allies and intimidating opponents'. For a populist outsider constantly trying to contain political threats, security actors became crucial allies.

Recentralising power

Another tenet of New Order–era politics that made a remarkable comeback during Jokowi's presidency was centralisation. The imbalance of power between Jakarta and the regions became a target of reform after Suharto's fall, in large part due to widespread communal and separatist violence that swept the country at the time. The 'Big Bang' decentralisation reforms of 1999 addressed regional grievances, but the best way to achieve a balance between regional autonomy and central government direction remained far from settled. Nationalist elements in political parties, especially the PDI-P, have sought to rein in regional autonomy ever since. They found an ally in Jokowi, who was keen to push his economic agenda with minimal input from regional governments despite his own experience as a former mayor and a governor.

Papua served as an important test case for pushing back against the power of regional executives. Hipolitus Wangge's chapter in this volume shows how Jokowi's government curtailed the special autonomy provisions for Papua. Papua's special autonomy law—first enacted in 2001 at the height of *reformasi*—was a critical step towards recognising Papuans' longstanding political grievances against Jakarta and an attempt to stem demands for independence. It gave Papuans a greater share of the region's natural resource revenue and the provincial governors greater say in deciding spending priorities. In 2022, revisions to the law bypassed governors and granted the central government control over district budget allocations, introducing more stringent spending conditions. The influence of Papua's governors—some of whom had resisted Jokowi's economic policies—was further diminished by the creation

of four new provinces. These unilateral measures were implemented without meaningful consultation with Papuans, occurring alongside an unprecedented escalation in separatist violence and numerous human rights violations committed by security forces, all but extinguishing the already faint prospects for peace through dialogue.

The framework used to cut fiscal autonomy in Papua appeared on the national scale in the 2022 Fiscal Decentralisation Law. This law introduces wide-ranging changes to intergovernmental fiscal arrangements but does not explicitly revise the devolution of powers as set out in regional autonomy regulations. Instead, it tweaks the fiscal transfer rules to give regions less autonomy in deciding their spending priorities (Lewis 2023). The law imposes spending conditions on how regions use their own revenue streams, and adds an earmarked component to the general allocation grant, which constitutes the main source of the regional budget and was previously reserved for regional heads to fund their own programs. Furthermore, the law stipulates that regions with better service delivery indicators would be allowed more discretionary spending compared to those that lag behind.

Apart from these reductions of fiscal autonomy, political and regulatory power of the regions also came under attack. The Omnibus Law on Job Creation slashes the role of regional governments in screening and regulating large-scale development projects in their areas by centralising the decision-making process. Suraya Afiff's chapter in this volume shows how the conflict-ridden process of land acquisition for National Strategic Projects effectively shuts local governments out of the decision-making process while expecting them to deal with the social fallout.

One obstacle in reducing the bargaining power of regional government heads and cutting their authority is that for two decades these officials have enjoyed strong mandates, due to their being directly elected by voters in their respective regions. In his second term, Jokowi's Minister of Home Affairs repeatedly floated the idea of eliminating direct elections of governors, mayors and district heads to revert to the New Order–era system where they were elected indirectly by local legislatures (Jaffrey 2020). One version of this proposal called for reverting to indirect regional polls uniformly across Indonesia. Another was to develop an asymmetric model to allow direct elections in developed regions where voters are competent enough to make responsible electoral choices but revert to the indirect system in underdeveloped parts of the country. Jokowi eventually shelved the proposal, citing strong public support for direct elections, revealing another important limit on autocratisation and underscoring the president's sensitivity to public popularity (Mietzner, this volume).

Despite his own rise to power through local government, Jokowi's centralised economic growth agenda made him see regional heads primarily as enforcers of his policies, not as representatives of local communities who needed to be given space to determine their own priorities. Given the widespread corruption and ineffectiveness of local government in Indonesia, it is not surprising that Jokowi's efforts to rebalance fiscal and regulatory power in favour of the central government did not generate a public backlash. On a deeper level, however, the revival of a 'Jakarta-knows-best' approach, which differentiates between wealthy and poorer regions and makes autonomy contingent upon performance, has recast regional autonomy as a concession to be earned rather than a fundamental right to be equally exercised by all regions.

Jokowi and his enablers

During his decade in power, Jokowi reversed the course of Indonesian democracy and presided over an authoritarian revival that resurrected familiar New Order–era ideas and practices. His legacy is not only one of damage to formal institutions such as the KPK, the police and the Constitutional Court but also one of upending the informal rules that had made it possible for Indonesia's unlikely democracy to continue to inch along an uneven path. By coercing personal loyalty from allies and punishing detractors, Jokowi disrupted the fluid, patronage-based alliances among the political elite that had previously helped prevent excessive centralisation of power. His open defiance of electoral neutrality—most notably in engineering his son's rise to the vice-presidency—undermined longstanding expectations that leaders at least profess public commitment to basic democratic norms.

One question we have repeatedly asked ourselves and posed to contributors to this volume is what made it possible for someone like Jokowi to disrupt established political patterns and push the country's institutions to their limits? How could someone like him unravel the democratic consensus and institutions that had been twenty years in the making?

Part of the answer, we think, lies in Jokowi's personal background as an outsider; a businessman who rose to national fame by way of local politics. No other president has had such an ordinary life nor the humbling experience of being an average citizen in the post-*reformasi* period. This grassroots knowledge of society and state in Indonesia informed Jokowi's politics in three important ways.

First, his deep sense of people's everyday needs helped him build large reserves of public approval to offset bold, even unpopular policies.

By keeping inflation low and expanding social welfare programs during the COVID-19 pandemic he maintained high public satisfaction ratings. Even though he reneged on his commitment to clamp down on corrupt elites, he understood the ways in which low-level extortion and bribes affect people's everyday lives, and his government curbed these practices by instituting sweeping electronic budgeting reforms in national and local bureaucracies (see Syarif, this volume). Jokowi's ambitious transport infrastructure plans were appreciated by the millions of rural migrants who could commute back to their villages to see their families more often, for a fraction of the cost. So, while outside political observers were, by the end, almost uniformly critical of Jokowi's record, as were many Indonesian intellectuals and democracy activists, Indonesian citizens were far kinder—throughout 2023 and leading into the 2024 presidential elections, Jokowi's approval ratings hovered at between 70 and 80 per cent (Indikator 2024).

Second, Jokowi's experience as a businessman dealing with corrupt local elites seems to have informed his view of rules and institutions as obstacles that need to be worked around or pushed aside. This business background also seems to have equipped him with a keen sense of the power of marketing. Several authors in this volume note Jokowi's penchant for performative politics. Suraya Afiff, for example, observes that while Jokowi's interest in agrarian reform and land rights was mostly opportunistic, he was very keen to speed up the process of issuing land certificates as it offered him the opportunity to hold ceremonies where he could personally hand them over to grateful recipients. Hipolitus Wangge similarly notes the contrast between Jokowi's proclivity for visits and ceremonies in Papua with his refusal to engage in any meaningful dialogue with Papuan leaders on any consequential political issue. In short, Jokowi's populist instincts and superior political marketing skills help to explain the president's enduring popularity with a large slice of the population, despite his dark political legacy. Jokowi knew that for the average Indonesian voter, democracy was less about protecting rights and liberal norms, and much more about delivering effective services and welfare. And he governed on this premise.

Third, Jokowi's age and lack of political socialisation is an important source of both his confidence and insecurity. Previous democratically elected presidents were key political players during *reformasi*, whose political sensibilities were shaped by the turmoil of the transition and who inevitably saw mass agitation and demonstrations as events that could bring down their government. Jokowi had no such prior experiences and therefore did not see street protests as a sacred expression of popular will. Instead, he relied on extensive polling data to understand public

sentiment (Mietzner, this volume) and was not averse to quelling protests with force. But Jokowi's non-elite background and lack of an institutional base also meant that unlike his predecessors, who remained influential in politics as party leaders after exiting office, Jokowi's post-presidential future was unclear. This precarity prompted him to go to extraordinary lengths to secure the vice-presidency for his son and in the process taint the integrity of Indonesia's elections. Yoes Kenawas's chapter in this volume shows how Jokowi's dynasty-making strategy at the national level followed patterns that have long existed at the subnational level and would be well known to him.

Despite these personal qualities, Jokowi did not and could not have accomplished a decade-long democratic heist on his own. He had willing allies in parliament who not only failed to check his power but also went to extraordinary lengths to enable him. Contributions to this volume point to a pattern of complicity between the president and lawmakers that involved flouting lawmaking rules and evading judicial oversight. In Chapter 10 Laode Syarif argues that the rushed revision of the KPK law in 2019 created a blueprint for evading public scrutiny of unpopular legislation. The most striking example is the 2020 Omnibus Law on Job Creation, which was expedited through parliament with glaring procedural flaws and an unprecedented lack of transparency (Argama 2020). Government officials, including those with strong reformist credentials, refused to budge even in the face of nationwide protests against the law and told critics to register their grievances to the Constitutional Court (CNN Indonesia 2020). When the court reviewed the law and ordered the government to halt implementation pending corrections, lawmakers responded by recalling critical judges from the bench (Butt and Lindsey, this volume), supporting Jokowi's desire to bypass the legislative process to enact the law through a government regulation, and then amending the procedural rules they had been accused of violating in the first place.

It is important to note that the most regressive legislation passed during Jokowi's presidency had unanimous support in parliament. This near total complicity meant that civil society actors no longer had access to interlocutors in government or parliament and were as a result largely shut out of the legislative process (Aspinall and Mayangsari, this volume).[3] It also meant that parliamentarians collectively disarmed themselves and the judiciary of powers needed to curb executive

3 One important exception is the passage of the 2022 Law on Sexual Violence Crimes, which was steered by a broad coalition of women's rights groups despite strong opposition from conservative Islamic groups, most notably the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS).

overreach, effectively handing Jokowi the weapons he would routinely use to whip them into line (Meitzner, this volume). The repercussions of this short-sighted approach can be seen most clearly in the fate of the PDI-P, Jokowi's own party, which had played a key role in steamrolling his agenda through parliament. When Jokowi broke ranks with PDI-P after deciding to support Prabowo's presidential campaign, the party's senior officials became targets of investigation by the KPK, the very agency they had helped weaken. Despite ample evidence of Jokowi's meddling in the 2024 presidential race to peel away support from PDI-P candidates in its traditional strongholds, PDI-P leaders threatened but ultimately failed to hold a parliamentary inquiry.

Why did Indonesia's political elite willingly undo two decades of democratic reform they had themselves enacted—reforms that have made it possible for them to prosper in ways that were not possible under authoritarianism? One factor that explains this complicity is the timing of Jokowi's rise, which coincided not just with public frustration with governance under Yudhoyono but also with elite disenchantment with democracy. Indonesia's democracy was born amid a devastating economic crisis and widespread social unrest. With the survival of the country under threat, political elites at the time made deep democratic concessions (Horowitz 2013). These measures led to a remarkable reduction in social conflict and have contributed to two decades of political stability (Barron et al. 2016). Ironically, this success has perhaps encouraged Indonesia's political elite to consider that they can now reclaim the power they had given away in a moment of crisis.

Conclusion and outline of the book

Jokowi's clash with democracy was not driven by an ideological aversion to liberal freedoms, but by a perception that accountability and rights can impede a fast path to economic growth and his legacy projects. So, like in almost all declining democracies around the world, many of the Jokowi government's attacks on democratic institutions were opportunistic rather than methodical. He mostly succeeded in getting his way but also suffered losses: most importantly, he failed to extend his time in office. Jokowi also stood against the undemocratic ambitions of some elites in his coalition by not entertaining their calls to roll back direct regional elections. As a result, there was no full-scale authoritarian reversal in Indonesia. But Jokowi showed the country's political elite how to chip away at democracy while maintaining the approval and trust of the citizenry.

This book documents Jokowi's two terms in the presidential palace, which we characterise as a decade marked by developmental ambition

and authoritarian revival. Our contributors provide a long view of Jokowi's impact on a range of governmental arenas, from infrastructure to the environment, from human rights to security. Their analyses document the hopes and expectations that accompanied Jokowi's rise, and the mark he ultimately left on Indonesia. The authors each come to their own conclusions about what Jokowi achieved and why, informed by the particularities of the cases they study. But, as we have laid out in this introduction, the common picture that emerges is of a disruptive president with an anti-politics ethos, whose ambitious developmental agenda came at a high cost for Indonesia's democracy.

The volume proceeds in six parts. Part 1 examines Jokowi's worldview with respect to domestic politics and foreign policy with contributions from Marcus Mietzner and Rizal Sukma. In Part 2, Arianto Patunru and the late Faisal Basri evaluate Jokowi's economic legacy and Nurina Merdikawati, Ridho Al Izzati and Asep Suryahadi explain how Jokowi expanded and rebranded welfare programs during his tenure. Part 3 contains two chapters, one by James Guild and one by Suraya Afiff, which respectively assess Jokowi's infrastructure programs and their impact on local communities. Part 4 takes stock of the damage to institutions of accountability with chapters from Simon Butt and Tim Lindsey on the Constitutional Court, the politicisation of security forces by Sidney Jones and the dismantling of the KPK by Laode M. Syarif. In Part 5, Edward Aspinall and Fauziah Mayangsari describe Jokowi's turn to repression in dealing with civil society and Nava Nuraniyah's chapter shows how a combination of coercion and co-optation was used to contain opposition from Islamist groups. Finally, Part 6 turns our attention to the subnational level with a chapter from Yoes C. Kenawas showing how Jokowi's dynasty-building strategy is built on subnational patterns and the last chapter from Hipolitus Wangge on Jokowi's duplicitous dealings with Papua.

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