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Beyond the Executive Toolbox: Regime Continuity in Indonesia's Multiparty Presidential Democracy

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Abstract

Indonesia is often regarded as a successful multiparty presidential democracy. Under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono the country enjoyed ten years of political stability and in 2014, the reformist Joko Widodo (Jokowi) defeated the jingoistic populist Prabowo Subianto in the presidential election. Nevertheless, this article cautions against the word 'success' when describing the development of multiparty presidential democracy in Indonesia. Building on insights from the coalitional presidentialism literature and a more ideational regime-based approach that stresses the importance of popular narratives and strategic veto groups, it argues that the election of Jokowi has not altered the configuration of the prevailing post-1998 regime which has been characterized by weak institutions, a powerful oligarchy and a strong public desire for democracy. The precarious continuity bears risks for the future of democracy in Indonesia because regime conditions have increasingly shifted from resilient to vulnerable. Should this trend continue under Jokowi, another radical populist challenge is almost inevitable.

Key words

Indonesia, Presidentialism, Parties, Democracy, Democratization

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Introduction

Once regarded as difficult and prone to systemic breakdown, the combination of presidentialism, multiparty systems and democracy has proven remarkably durable in many parts of the world. While most studies that seek to explain this 'surprising success of multiparty presidentialism' (Pereira & Melo, 2012) have focused on cases from Latin America, this article shifts the focus to Indonesia, the largest and, according to Freedom House (2015), most democratic country in Southeast Asia. Despite adopting the ostensibly difficult combination of multiparty presidentialism, Indonesia overcame a difficult transition period to experience a decade of political stability under the leadership of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014). At the end of Yudhoyono's second and last term, the country staved off a populist challenge from a potentially dangerous would-be autocrat when Jakarta Governor Joko Widodo (Jokowi) defeated the former army general Prabowo Subianto in a tightly fought presidential election. With the election of Jokowi, democratic stability was preserved but the widespread expectation that Jokowi's victory would provide a new impetus for Indonesia's stalled democratization process has remained largely unfulfilled. Such an impetus had been eagerly anticipated by democracy activists because the flipside of Indonesia's remarkable stability during the Yudhoyono years has been an utter lack of new reform initiatives and the institutionalization of parasitic informal institutions such as patronage, collusion and corruption, all of which are now just as characteristic of Indonesian democracy as its regular free and fair elections or its lively media landscape.

This article examines the reasons behind Jokowi's underwhelming performance so far, arguing that the continued democratic stagnation is not, as institutionalists might posit, an ultimately inevitable result of the institutional setup of multiparty presidentialism. Instead, this article emphasizes that the politics President Jokowi has made since taking office above all reflects the stickiness of the complex regime configuration he inherited from his predecessors. Established in the aftermath of Suharto's downfall in 1998 but only consolidated during the Yudhoyono years, this regime – usually called the *reformasi* era or *reformasi* regime – has been characterized by the contentious interplay between a public narrative of good government and democratic reform, a deeply entrenched oligarchy that uses democratic procedures only as an instrument to defend its wealth, and a constantly evolving but still inefficient set of political institutions that has largely failed to ensure accountability and transparency. The debilitating consequences of the president's need to navigate between these three regime parameters were a key feature of the Yudhoyono presidency and have continued to shape presidential politics in the Jokowi era, resulting in much more business-as-usual than many Jokowi supporters had hoped for.

In explaining why Jokowi's election was not the widely anticipated stimulus for renewed democratic reform, this article goes beyond previous works which focused on examining to what extent Jokowi's rise to power and his performance as president fit into the analytical paradigm of Robison and Hadiz's (2004) influential oligarchy thesis (Mietzner, 2015a; Muhtadi, 2015). While acknowledging the importance of Robison and Hadiz's work, this article offers a new approach to analysing Indonesian politics which builds primarily on insights from the broader comparative literature on presidentialism and, more specifically, the literature on multiparty presidentialism. In particular, the article utilizes elements of the 'coalitional presidentialism' school which seeks to explain the viability of multiparty presidentialism by focusing on institutional factors and the ability of individual presidents to make use of the so-called executive toolbox (Aleman & Tsebelis, 2011; Martinez-Gallardo, 2012; Raile, Pereira & Power, 2011). Moreover, the article borrows key conceptual ideas

from Skowronek's (1997) analysis of the US presidency and Thompson's (2014) recent adaptation of Skowronek's classic work. This regime-based approach expands the analytical scope beyond mere institutional factors to also include broader historical, ideational and discursive factors that can affect the politics presidents make.

The article begins by outlining the basic features of both coalitional presidentialism as well as the regime-based approach developed by Skowronek and modified by Thompson. It then proceeds to sketch the main characteristics of Indonesia's post-1998 regime, focusing on narratives and discourses of democracy, the influence of oligarchs and other so-called strategic groups with vested interests, and Indonesia's institutional setup. This section emphasizes that the weakness of political institutions and the specific ways in which Indonesian presidents have sought to achieve political stability through coalition-building have concurrently strengthened the entrenchment of the oligarchs *and* ensured the enduring appeal of the democratic narrative that has shaped Indonesian politics since the fall of Suharto in 1998. These parallel developments paved the way for the rise of populism in the 2014 election, but they did not (yet) lead to the unravelling of the prevailing regime. The last part of the article finally highlights the significance of Jokowi's victory in 2014 as a public endorsement of the existing regime, but also argues that unless the president succeeds in the dual task of sustaining the democratic reform narrative and strengthening key institutions, Indonesia's multiparty presidential democracy will remain vulnerable to more serious populist challenges in the coming years.

Presidentialism and Multiparty Systems – Surprisingly Stable but Still Suboptimal?

Studies of presidentialism in new democracies have come a long way since the publication of Juan Linz's (1990) seminal article on the 'perils of presidentialism'. While Linz had warned in rather general terms that presidentialism as an executive format was a risky choice for democratizing countries because of the potential for institutional deadlock and executive abuse, subsequent studies qualified this assessment and linked problems of presidentialism more specifically to the broader set of institutions in which the executive is embedded. In a frequently cited article from the early 1990s, Mainwaring (1993) described the combination of presidentialism and multipartism as 'difficult', arguing that the risks of heightened ideological polarization, the potential for deadlock between the executive and the legislature, and especially the challenges of coalition-building would make this particular institutional arrangement exceedingly problematic for political stability and the consolidation of democracy.

Soon, however, this ostensibly difficult combination proved remarkably resilient in several third wave democracies, especially in Latin America, the region studied most intensively by Mainwaring. Although some multiparty presidential democracies have experienced recurrent political instability due to rising populism and frequent presidential impeachment processes (Perez-Linan, 2007), countries such as Brazil, Chile or Uruguay are now widely regarded as consolidated democracies (Freedom House, 2015). The somewhat unexpected success of these regimes prompted a new wave of presidentialism studies which focuses primarily on the formation and management of coalitions under presidential rule (Elgie, 2005). Central to understanding how this coalitional presidentialism works is the so-called executive or presidential 'toolbox' (Raile et al., 2011), a set of formal and informal institutional arrangements which executive leaders can utilize to maintain coalition stability in the face of fragmented party systems with poorly institutionalized parties (Chaisty, Cheeseman & Power, 2014). Where presidents combine multiple components from

this toolbox such as constitutional agenda power, partisan power or the distribution of patronage and pork, so the argument goes, they can provide compelling incentives for parties to form and maintain effective coalitions and, ultimately, sustain democratic rule.

The importance of an effective mix of presidential powers is now widely acknowledged in the literature on multiparty presidentialism, but focusing too narrowly just on the institutional powers of the presidential office and the ways presidents are using these powers may obscure other factors that can help explain the surprising longevity of this regime format. In a book-length study of the Brazilian case, for example, Melo and Pereira (2013) argue that the secret behind the success of multiparty presidential systems lies not just in the constitutional or partisan powers of the president but rather in the complex interplay between a strong presidency and an equally strong system of checks and balances that comprises not only a professional legislature formed through robust party competition, but also independent courts, an impartial media and other state and non-state institutions that can enforce horizontal accountability (for example anti-corruption commissions, audit agencies or ombudsmen). However, the authors also caution that even with well-established checks and balances, multiparty presidentialism may still only be 'a suboptimal arrangement that is functional' (Melo & Pereira, 2013: 168) yet remains dogged by the prevalence of clientelism, corruption and pork-barrelling. As a number of recent corruption scandals across Latin America have shown, such parasitic informal institutions not only undermine the quality of democracy (as measured in procedural outcomes), but also the prospects for good democratic governance (as measured in policy outcomes).

Similar conclusions could be drawn about this regime type in other parts of the world. In Africa, for example, Benin has been labelled 'free' by Freedom House since 1991, but democratic quality remains low and governing is often difficult in a system where democratically elected presidents have at times faced a parliament with up to twenty different parties (Gazibo, 2012; Lindberg, 2007). In Asia, meanwhile, countries like South Korea or the Philippines have produced remarkably viable multiparty presidential democracies, but deficits in democratic governance remain here, too (Kasuya, 2013).

All in all, the tools of the coalitional presidentialism approach, especially when applied in conjunction with an analysis of broader institutional factors, enable a comprehensive analysis of what makes presidential multipartyism work. But they seem less well-suited to explain under what circumstances democracy may survive if a president proves hesitant or inept at using the executive toolbox, checks and balances are weakly developed or parasitic informal institutions are left to grow out of control. Sometimes, in fact, all of these inauspicious conditions occur simultaneously. In the relevant literature, such a situation is usually regarded as the ideal breeding ground for radical populists who seek to overturn democratic structures, although it should be noted that neither the emergence of such crisis conditions nor the rise of populism is limited to the particular institutional format of multiparty presidentialism. Still, within the realm of multiparty presidential systems, populists with anti-democratic tendencies are regular contenders for the highest office, and the risks they pose to accountability and the rule of law could be readily observed in recent years in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

However, not every populist challenge results in democratic breakdown. Even where presidents have become very unpopular and corruption is rife, voters can withstand the temptation of endorsing populists who challenge the very foundations of an existing regime, as the Philippine case after the Arroyo presidency demonstrates (Thompson, 2014). In other words, the longevity of multiparty presidential democracy may not simply depend on a president's smart usage of the executive toolbox and a functioning system of checks

and balances. Instead, this article argues that the question of what ultimately defines the survival chances for young democracies with multiparty presidential systems may be better answered by extending the analysis to look at the key characteristics of the overarching political regime in which a country’s presidency is embedded.

Such an analysis builds on Skowronek’s (1997) pioneering work on the US presidency and Thompson’s (2014) recent adaptation of Skowronek’s regime-based approach. Both of these studies define a regime as a prevailing set of ideas, interests and institutional arrangements which constrain a president and his repertoire of political strategies. Depending on whether existing regimes are vulnerable or resilient at the time a president assumes office and whether new presidents are opposed or affiliated with the key tenets of this regime, presidents make different politics.

Table 1: Recurrent Structures of Presidential Authority

Previously established commitments	Presidential political identity	
	Opposed	Affiliated
Vulnerable	Politics of reconstruction	Politics of disjunction
Resilient	Politics of preemption	Politics of articulation

Source: Skowronek (1997: 36).

Though developed for categorizing types of presidential authority in the United States, Skowronek’s typology can be useful for examining other presidential systems as well. However, as Thompson (2014: 444) points out in his analysis of the Philippine case, an adaptation of Skowronek’s model for presidential systems outside the US needs to acknowledge that regime conditions in other parts of the world, especially in many developing countries, are shaped by very different factors from those that characterize an established democracy like the US. For instance, whereas Skowronek emphasized the importance of ideology, organized interest groups and historically shaped institutional settings for evaluating the performance of American presidents, Thompson (2014: 445-50) argues convincingly that especially the first two of these analytical factors are largely irrelevant in the context of many developing countries. Thus, rather than focusing on elaborate ideologies and organized interest groups, he suggests to examine the influence of somewhat less clearly articulated discursive narratives that shape public perceptions of politics as well as a president’s relations with powerful veto actors or what he calls ‘extra-electoral strategic groups’ such as the military, religious groups, business elites and civil society.

With reference to Schmidt’s (2010) work on ‘discursive institutionalism’, Thompson uses the Philippines as a case study to demonstrate how dominant regimes in new democracies are often shaped by narratives of good governance and democratization while political institutions remain weakly developed. In the Philippines, this kind of reformist regime emerged in 1986 when the People’s Power movement toppled authoritarian president Marcos (Thompson, 1995). Since then, most strategic groups have embraced the good government narrative, but without strengthening democratic institutions. Presidents, too, have sought to adapt their rhetoric – but not their policies – to the basic pillars of the new regime, using ever more sophisticated media campaigns to present themselves as humble defenders of ordinary people and, more broadly, the democratic path chosen in 1986. Though the good governance narrative was challenged at times (for example by Joseph

Estrada or a number of failed coup attempts), its appeal persists, both with ordinary Filipinos as well as the most important strategic groups who benefit from its continuation. Accordingly, basic electoral democracy has survived in the Philippines, despite a dysfunctional party system, patronage-driven clan politics and poorly developed checks and balances (Teehankee, 2013).

Thompson's analysis of the Philippine case focuses primarily on the power of narratives and the importance of the strategic groups. By contrast, the institutional setting including the 'labyrinthine' (Ufen, 2008: 334) multiparty system receives rather scant attention. By playing down the importance of institutional factors, however, Thompson overlooks how the weak institutional arrangements are directly contributing to the immense significance of the good governance narrative in the Philippines. Like in other new democracies where institutional deficits abound, populist challenges have been almost inevitable (Roberts, 2003), yet in the Philippines the publicly imagined ideal of a reformist president who adheres to practices of good governance has, so far, kept the spirit of democracy alive. The following analysis of the Indonesian case not only reinforces this point that public narratives are important factors in deciding electoral outcomes, but also emphasizes the mobilizational capacity of such narratives. It will begin by outlining key characteristics of Indonesia's post-1998 regime and then link these characteristics to the emergence of the populist challenge by Prabowo Subianto in 2014.

The Contested Nature of Indonesia's post-1998 Regime: Democratic Narratives vs. Entrenched Oligarchs

The establishment of a new regime is usually associated with political upheaval and a reconfiguration of the dominant ideas, interests and institutions. Where such a regime change occurs within the confines of an established democratic framework, foundational presidents are well-positioned to commence the 'politics of reconstruction' (Skowronek, 1997: 36) and reshape the regime according to their agenda. However, where the regime change involves a transition from authoritarianism to democracy with a prolonged period of political uncertainty, the ability of foundational presidents to assert their authority is often much more limited. In particular, where threats of armed insurgencies, coups and impeachment are realistic possibilities, foundational presidents are often weak, transitional figures whose capabilities do not necessarily fit well into Skowronek's typology of presidential authority.

In Indonesia, the current democratic regime emerged in 1998 when authoritarian President Suharto stepped down in the wake of a severe financial crisis and massive student protests demanding democratic reforms. The defining features of the post-1998 regime were then shaped during a protracted transition that included some drastic crisis-ridden reforms in the early phase, founding elections in 1999, and four protracted rounds of constitutional reforms between 1999 and 2002 (Crouch, 2010; Horowitz, 2013). By 2004 the formative years were over, but by this time, the new regime had already expended three weak presidents – B.J. Habibie (1998-99), Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001) and Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-4). It was not before Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected in 2004 that the new democratic regime eventually stabilized. Following Skowronek and Thompson, we can distinguish three key features of this post-1998 regime, based on ideas, interests and institutions.

The most drastic change to the Suharto regime became manifest in the realm of ideas where the New Order doctrines of *pembangunan* and Pancasila democracy were replaced by a popular narrative of democratic reform (*reformasi*). Though other political ideas,

especially Islamism, also resonated with sizeable segments of the population, it was the promise of democracy and good governance that captured the public imagination most forcefully and became the new dominant political narrative in 1998. Driven by students, non-governmental organizations and the media, the power of this new narrative first compelled interim president B.J. Habibie to instigate some quick reforms and then prompted parliament to elect the liberal Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid as president in the indirect presidential election in 1999. When Wahid lost the support of those who had elected him, he was impeached and replaced by his vice-president Megawati Sukarnoputri, another symbolic figure of the reform movement. In 2004, direct presidential elections were held for the first time and by now the general public had fully embraced its new freedoms. As Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono became the first directly elected president of Indonesia, public support for democracy as the best form of government had surged from a respectable 55% before the 1999 election to an enthusiastic 87.9% by mid-2004 (Mujani & Liddle, 2015: 215). By the time Yudhoyono was re-elected in 2009, it was still extremely high (82% in July 2009), but subsequently the numbers dropped back to more modest figures. Despite growing dissatisfaction with democracy during Yudhoyono’s second term, however, public endorsement of democracy as the best system of government never dropped below 50%, indicating ongoing solid public support for the democratic ideals of the reform movement.

Table 2: Public Support for Democracy in Indonesia (2004-2014)

April 2004	July 2004	April 2009	July 2009	December 2010	June 2012	December 2012	April 2013	April 2014	Juli 2014
70.6	87.9	77.5	81.7	74.3	56.0	55.0	57.7	58.0	57.3

Sources: Assyaukanie (2014), Muhtadi (2011), Mujani & Liddle (2015).

While the general public has been largely supportive of democracy, large parts of the political and business elite embraced the new regime only grudgingly. Along with other strategic groups such as the military, conservative Islamic organizations and local leaders empowered by the newly introduced decentralization program, these elites sought to shape the new regime according to their own needs and interests. As Aspinal (2010) noted, the accommodation of these potential spoilers into the new regime became a characteristic feature of Indonesia’s democratization process. Yet, while this process helped prevent the disintegration of the state in the early post-Suharto era, it also paved the way for patronage and corruption to take centre stage – again – as a defining element of the new regime. The collective embodiment of this patronage democracy has become known simply as ‘the oligarchy’, a somewhat amorphous assemblage of old regime elites and new upstarts including business tycoons, bureaucrats and politicians who quickly captured the new democratic institutions and continued the New Order practice of fusing the bases of economic and political power (Hadiz & Robison, 2013: 38).

The extent to which these oligarchs dictate the process of interest articulation in contemporary Indonesia is contested (Ford & Pepinsky, 2014). While proponents of the oligarchy thesis such as Winters (2013: 12) argue that ‘the wealth power of oligarchs shapes and constrains Indonesia’s democracy far more than democracy constrains the power of wealth’, other observers have painted a more differentiated picture, highlighting with some justification that the new regime is not simply dominated by an unassailable oligarchy but is rather shaped by a fragmented potpourri of conflicting interests and ideas which are in

constant competition with each other (Aspinall, 2013). To be sure, much of this competition occurs over material interests and can thus be traced back to the oligarchy in one way or another, but there are also many new voices in Indonesian politics that have repeatedly and, at times, successfully challenged the dominance of the superrich. Most prominent in this regard, of course, have been the democracy activists who back in 1998 had helped topple Suharto and subsequently kept the narrative of democracy and good government alive through a multitude of channels ranging from civil society organizations to think tanks, trade unions, the media and, in some rare cases, even parliament.

The Institutional Framework: Multiparty Presidentialism

The tensions between the public desire for democracy and the entrenched interests of oligarchs and other strategic groups are also reflected in the institutional arrangements that have underpinned the post-1998 regime and, in particular, in the ways these institutions have operated in practice. Indonesia’s current multiparty system, for example, has its origins in the rather hastily concluded ‘half-hearted’ electoral reforms of the Habibie interregnum (King, 2003). Back in 1998/1999, these reforms were negotiated by old regime elites inside parliament, but they were heavily influenced by public pressure for democracy outside parliament. One of the key institutional outcomes of these early crisis-driven reforms was the adoption of Proportional Representation (PR) as the electoral system for parliamentary elections. Predictably, this electoral system produced an extremely fragmented party system which, despite some adjustments to the electoral rules in the years that followed, has remained a key characteristic of Indonesia’s institutional landscape (Tomsa, 2014).

Table 3: Party System Fragmentation in Indonesia’s House of Representatives, 1999-2014

	1999-2004	2004-2009	2009-2014	2014-2019
Absolute Number of Legislative Parties	21	16	9	10
Effective Number of Legislative Parties	4.7	7.1	6.2	8.2

Source: Higashikata & Kawamura (2015: 8).

Beyond the party system, the other institutional pillars of Indonesia’s democratic regime, including a strengthened presidency, were shaped in four rounds of constitutional amendments that took place between 1999 and 2002 (Horowitz, 2013). As mentioned above, Melo and Pereira (2013) argue that a multiparty presidential system functions most effectively if both the president *and* the legislature are endowed with strong constitutional powers. Furthermore, other checks and balances need to be established to monitor the relations between the executive and the legislature. If, however, the balance of power is clearly tilted in favour of one of the two institutions and other mechanisms of checks and balances are weak, multiparty presidentialism may very well be perilous for the survival of democracy.

The Indonesian system appears to have struck the balance reasonably well. In fact, balance appeared to have been a key consideration during the constitutional reform process, as epitomized in the stipulation (Article 20 (2)) that legislation must be passed by ‘joint agreement’ between the president and the House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR).

Overall, parliament enjoys some notable powers in its relations with the executive, not only through its participation in legislation, but also through budget approval powers, the right to question cabinet members and its involvement in the appointment of key state officials (Sherlock, 2010: 163). But the president also has substantial leverage over the legislature. Apart from the effective veto power provided by the 'joint agreement' provision, the executive also has the exclusive right to issue a range of presidential regulations and decrees (Kawamura, 2010: 14) as well as implementing regulations for legislation that has been passed in parliament. The latter can be delayed almost indefinitely, giving the president or cabinet ministers the option of foiling the implementation of legislation they may not fully approve.

Moreover, the executive often dominates the law-making process because of its vastly superior human and material resources. While the president and his ministers can fall back on an experienced and well-resourced apparatus of bureaucrats and advisors, the Indonesian parliament lacks comparable institutional capacity due to a small operational budget and a high proportion of unqualified members among its ranks who have little to no experience in drafting or reviewing legislation (Hanan, 2012: 164-180). Finally, and no doubt most importantly, the president controls the distribution of patronage resources that are far more attractive to the parties in parliament than those that are directly accessible through representation in the legislature. Cabinet seats are particularly sought after, but appointments to state-owned enterprises and government-controlled agencies can also be lucrative. Since Indonesian parties generate only negligible income through membership dues or state subsidies (Mietzner, 2013: 74-81), patronage, along with funds from wealthy party leaders, provides the fuel on which the parties depend for their organizational survival.

Horizontal accountability is therefore much weaker than the formal institutional setup suggests. Captured predominantly by oligarchic interests, parliament tends to assert its authority only when it suits the parties' ambitions to extract more patronage resources from the government (Case, 2011). But other institutions have proven to be more resilient than parliament towards the influence of the oligarchs. The most significant of these are the Anti-Corruption Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, KPK) and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Constitutional Court. As Butt (2015: 193) states, these two institutions have, over time, 'developed into confident institutions willing to perform their functions in ways that disrupted high-level political interests.' Moreover, the media and Indonesia's thriving NGO scene have also helped to keep the government in check through critical reporting and editorials, online petitions and discussions, demonstrations and lobbying (Mietzner, 2012). Arguably, this political activism is a direct result of the ineffectiveness of parliamentary oversight. As public opinion surveys have consistently shown very high levels of dissatisfaction with parliament and parties, many engaged citizens decided to make their own contributions to keeping the government accountable. In doing so, they have helped to sustain the broader political narrative of reform and democratic government that has been enshrined in the Indonesian public imagination since 1998.

In sum, Indonesia's post-1998 regime has been characterized by the contested relations between a deeply entrenched oligarchy that has captured many state institutions and an enduring public narrative of democratic reform and good government which has been kept alive primarily by independent oversight institutions, civil society activists and the media. Presidential politics since 1998 has been shaped decisively by these competing regime characteristics. The following section will outline how the politics Indonesian presidents have made over the years helped to shape and stabilize this regime, why this stability was insufficient to prevent increasing popular discontent, and, finally, why this growing

discontent was not strong enough to unravel the regime in 2014 when it was challenged by a radical populist.

Making the Regime Work

It took six years for the main contours of Indonesia's post-1998 regime to take shape. During those years, three presidents struggled to make the regime work, but none of them was able to hold on to power for very long. For the immediate successor of Suharto, B.J. Habibie, the quick end was arguably least surprising. As the last vice-president of the Suharto era, Habibie was faced with precisely the dilemma Skowronek (1997: 39) described so eloquently in his discussion of 'the politics of disjunction': 'To affirm established commitments is to stigmatize oneself as a symptom of the nation's problems and the premier symbol of systemic political failure; to repudiate them is to become isolated from one's most natural political allies and to be rendered impotent.' In the end, it was Habibie's most natural political allies from his own Golkar Party who toppled him in the run-up to the indirect presidential election in 1999.

If Habibie fit neatly into Skowronek's typology, the following presidencies of Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri are less straightforward to categorize. On the one hand, both appeared to be almost natural embodiments of what the *reformasi* movement had struggled to achieve. As two of the main opposition figures in the late New Order period, both had opposed Suharto and developed a reputation as proponents of democratic reform (Aspinall, 2005). But on the other hand, their opposition to the Suharto regime had never been outright confrontational and by the time Suharto resigned, both of them still maintained extensive ties to key players of the old regime. Their political identities therefore were never simply 'opposed' or 'affiliated' with the old regime. Yet it was precisely this somewhat ambiguous identity that made them acceptable as presidential choices for both the strategic groups and the public at large.

Nevertheless, neither Wahid nor Megawati were archetypical foundational presidents. Both struggled to use their peculiar political identities as a tool to help them navigate between the competing forces of democratic reform and oligarchic wealth defence. Trying to fulfil both the public desire for democracy and the patronage demands of the strategic groups proved very difficult indeed and so both of these two foundational presidents of Indonesia's post-1998 regime served rather short terms in office. Interestingly though, their presidencies ended in very contrasting fashion. While Wahid was impeached in parliament after he had alienated virtually all important strategic groups, Megawati's presidency was terminated by a disappointed electorate who voted her out of office in the 2004 election. After years of political instability, sluggish economic recovery following the Asian financial crisis and the emergence of new security threats, Megawati no longer represented what the public now yearned for the most: electoral democracy, but complemented by enhanced stability. As key strategic groups shared this public sentiment, overall political conditions in 2004 favoured the emergence of a new leader who would safeguard the democratic reforms that had already been achieved, but without pushing them any further (Sidel, 2015). In other words, the time was ripe for what Skowronek (1997: 41) called an 'orthodox-innovator', a president who could 'galvanize political action with promises to continue the good work of the past and [...] fit the existing parts of the regime together in a new and more relevant way.'

Between 2004 and 2014, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono embodied precisely this kind of leader. To the electorate and the outside world, he projected an image of a committed democrat yet he was also a risk-averse vacillator, reluctant to initiate any new reforms that might

jeopardize the vested interests of Indonesia's most important strategic groups.

Faced with the now familiar competing pressures of the reform movement and oligarchic interests, Yudhoyono not only benefitted from the conducive political conditions, but he also proved far more adept at maintaining balance between the main regime pillars than his predecessors. The result was a stable, but politically stagnant presidency that served to consolidate the existing regime, but not to consolidate or even deepen democracy (Aspinall, Mietzner & Tomsa, 2015a: 16).

From the perspective of coalitional presidentialism, the Yudhoyono years were instructive insofar as the president carefully utilized the powers at his disposal to ensure overall political stability and relatively smooth executive-legislative relations. Most prominent among his preferred presidential tools was the formation of huge oversized coalition cabinets, which he took over from his predecessors whose early institutional insecurity had triggered the formation of the very first post-Suharto rainbow cabinets (Slater, 2004). Significantly, Yudhoyono allowed the institutionalization of this 'promiscuous powersharing' pattern (Slater & Simmons, 2012) even though constitutional amendments put in place after the Wahid impeachment meant that he was actually much safer from being removed from office than his predecessors. Yudhoyono therefore dug much deeper into the executive toolbox than his constitutional mandate actually necessitated. But his experience as a minister in the Wahid cabinet and his own lack of partisan power in the fragmented legislature made him so fearful of power struggles with parliament that he decided to build the same kind of oversized rainbow coalitions Wahid and Megawati had assembled (Aspinall et al., 2015a: 5-7). For the parties, Yudhoyono's willingness to continue these power sharing arrangements was of course a welcome gift. Desperate to gain access to the patronage of the various ministries, most of them gladly obliged when invited to join the cabinet.

In addition to cabinet representation, oligarchic party leaders were also offered other financial perks including, for example, lax tax enforcement for their business interests. But despite this executive largesse, coalitional presidentialism in Indonesia has been fraught with problems of efficiency, an institutional design problem that was already foreseen by Mainwaring (1993). Even though major conflicts between the executive and the legislature were largely avoided, parliamentarians from the coalition parties nevertheless often refused to help the government push through its agenda. Instead, they often criticized government policies and undermined legislative initiatives. According to Sherlock (2015: 99), 'the concept of cabinet solidarity, under which ministers and affiliated DPR members would defend the administration's policies, never developed.' In parliament, this lack of coalitional coherence was often evident in committee hearings, where ministers were summoned to defend government policies, even though the logic of the rainbow coalition should have prevented precisely such critical questioning. During law-making processes, draft bills often disappeared for extended periods of time in the opaque realm of committees and special committees. To deal with these bottlenecks, Yudhoyono utilized informal consultation meetings with the DPR leadership or the chairpersons of parliamentary committees (Hanan, 2012: 182-89), but law-making nevertheless remained tediously slow (Kawamura, 2010: 33).

Despite its relative inefficiency, the regime undoubtedly stabilized during the Yudhoyono years. At no point during his ten years in power was Yudhoyono at risk of impeachment, nor were there ever serious threats of a military coup or a popular uprising. On the contrary, aided by consistent economic growth, Yudhoyono retained remarkably high approval rates throughout his two terms as he adroitly moderated the tensions inherent in

the regime setup. And yet, throughout his second term, there was a growing sentiment among democracy activists and critical observers from the media and academia that the ideals of the reform movement were being abandoned and that the balance between the popular democratic reform narrative and the predominantly material interests of key strategic groups became more and more tilted towards the latter. Indications of democratic stagnation and, in some policy fields, regression, included a never-ending stream of corruption cases, a deteriorating human rights situation, failure to overhaul the security sector, and the government's long-pursued but ultimately aborted plan to end direct local elections (Aspinall et al., 2015b). In addition, public debates on politics and the economy took on ever more nationalistic tones as Yudhoyono was accused of selling out Indonesia's natural resources (Aspinall, 2015a). It was in this increasingly tense political climate that the two contenders for the 2014 presidential election, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prabowo Subianto, began to articulate their visions for the future of Indonesian politics.

Fending off Oligarchic Populism

Given the growing sentiment of political stagnation at the end of the Yudhoyono era, it was hardly surprising that both candidates vowed to alter the way politics was conducted in Indonesia. However, their electoral campaigns revealed significant differences in both style and substance. On the one hand, there was Jokowi, the soft-spoken governor of Jakarta and former mayor of Solo who had won accolades as a reformist local leader due to his efforts to curb corruption, make bureaucracies more efficient, create a conducive business environment and introduce successful health and education policies (Von Lübke, 2014). Popular with both the rural masses and urban democracy activists, but with no partisan base and only marginal support from strategic groups, Jokowi presented himself as a humble man of the people, a campaign strategy that was epitomized by his famous *blusukan* (impromptu visits to local food stalls and markets) where he could mingle with ordinary people to discuss their concerns and needs. Nominated by a relatively small coalition of just four parties comprising PDIP, PKB, Hanura and the new National Democrats (*Nasdem*) of media mogul Surya Paloh, he pledged a new approach to presidential politics. Even though he gave little indication that he would change the basic parameters of the prevailing regime (Mietzner, 2015a: xi), his unconventional rise to prominence in Indonesian politics and his promises not to award cabinet posts purely as reward for political support, to fight corruption and to strengthen the rule of law captured the imagination of thousands of pro-democracy activists. By revitalizing the narrative of democratic reform, Jokowi was able to mobilize unprecedented numbers of volunteers for his campaign and even though many of these volunteers were no doubt pragmatic opportunists, many joined the campaign out of the conviction that Jokowi would shift the balance between the regime parameters back to the ideals of the reform movement. Victory for his rival Prabowo Subianto, by contrast, was feared to result in further democratic regression.

These fears were largely based on Prabowo's aggressive campaign rhetoric which led many to believe that he wanted to dismantle, not reform, the existing regime. Even though Prabowo was careful enough not to openly call for the abolishment of democracy (Aspinall, 2015b: 20), his solution for Indonesia's manifold problems was as simplistic as it was revealing: firm leadership, ideally concentrated in a strong presidency that is not constrained by checks and balances. To that end, he called for a return to the original constitution of 1945 and thus for a removal of the various amendments that had been made between 1999 and 2002 to make the constitution more democratic (Butt, 2014). In true populist style, Prabowo also sought to present himself as a political outsider who would take on the corrupt oligarchic elites once elected – notwithstanding the fact that he himself

was actually a prototypical member of the very oligarchy which he so vividly attacked (Aspinall, 2015b). But with the help of a savvy media machinery he was able to create an image of himself as an outcast, an image that suited his broader political objectives neatly.

Seen through the lens of Skowronek's presidential typology, Prabowo appeared to be a classic would-be reconstructionist. Both his campaign rhetoric as well as the finer details of his biography indicated that he favoured a regime change. His carefully constructed image as a political outsider further intensified the impression that he stood in opposition to the prevailing regime which, in his own characterization, was in urgent need of a complete overhaul. In terms of ideas, Prabowo believed that the dominant democratic discourse was a Western import that is unsuitable for Indonesia. In terms of interests, he repeatedly maintained that too much power was concentrated in the hands of corrupt oligarchs who drained the country of its wealth. That he and his family are key representatives of this oligarchy was, of course, not part of the campaign script. Finally, in terms of institutions, Prabowo deemed the existing arrangements to be flawed because they prevented the kind of firm leadership he envisaged. In the end though, it was precisely this gloomy interpretation of the state of Indonesia's *reformasi* regime that cost Prabowo the election.

Of course, there is not just one reason why Prabowo lost, but in the context of this study, his apparent misjudgement of the level of public dissatisfaction with the prevailing regime was paramount. Although survey data had repeatedly shown that Indonesians hold certain political institutions, especially parliaments and political parties, in very low esteem and although public frustration with the government's inability and/or unwillingness to tackle corruption is well-documented, Prabowo's depiction of Indonesia as a country on the brink of collapse was exaggerated and ultimately not credible for a majority of voters (Mietzner, 2015a: 55). The regime, in other words, was more resilient than Prabowo had made it out to be. That is not to say that it had not shown signs of vulnerability in the run-up to the election. But as public awareness of this vulnerability spread, both pro-democracy activists and at least some parts of the strategic groups decided to support the candidate who stood for regime continuity, not regime change. Perhaps most importantly, several well-known democracy activists took a leading role in the Jokowi campaign. They became focal points in a campaign that was driven not by the parties in Jokowi's coalition, but by the unprecedented mass mobilization of ordinary citizens as volunteers. This political activism highlighted the determination of the pro-democracy forces to sustain the reform narrative and defend the achievements of the democratization process. At the same time, some prominent oligarchs also supported Jokowi. Motivated perhaps by the looming spectre of a major shakeup of existing patronage structures under a Prabowo presidency, prominent businesspeople and party figures such as Jusuf Kalla, Surya Paloh and Luhut Panjaitan all joined the Jokowi campaign and helped it over the line with their financial contributions.

The Jokowi Presidency: The Perils of Continued Stagnation

Jokowi was elected with a mandate for change; moderate, but noticeable change, within the boundaries of the prevailing regime. More specifically, public sentiment was shaped strongly by the expectation that Jokowi would alter the balance between the main regime pillars in favour of greater democratic reforms. His first year in office, however, poured cold water on these expectations. Rather than strengthening democratic institutions, tackling corruption and addressing past and present human rights violations, Jokowi presided over yet another year of democratic stagnation, if not regression. Especially his reluctance to defend the Anti-Corruption Commission in its protracted power struggle with the national police (Muhtadi, 2015: 360), his conservative and ill-informed determination to execute

drug smugglers (Stoicescu, 2015), and his apparent attempt to deflect growing public pressure to issue a government apology for the 1965 mass killings by setting up a toothless reconciliation committee (Setiawan, 2016) raised questions about the democratic credentials of the new president.

The sense of disappointment among pro-democracy activists was further compounded by Jokowi's submissive behaviour vis-à-vis the party elites who had backed his nomination. In the run-up to the presidential election, Jokowi's past as a technocratic, outcome-oriented leader of local governments and his refusal to promise party leaders cabinet posts in return for political support had raised expectations among his supporters that he would emancipate the highest political office from the patronage demands of the oligarchs and other strategic groups. But critics were quick to point out that even though Jokowi's comparatively small 'Awesome Indonesia Coalition' had snubbed some of Indonesia's most notorious party oligarchs, it still represented a significant concentration of entrenched elites. More importantly, Jokowi was not actually in charge of any of the parties that had nominated him. While he was a member of PDI-P, the biggest party in his coalition and the winner of the 2014 parliamentary election, he held no influential position in the party's organizational hierarchy and his nomination was by no means universally welcomed within the party.

On the contrary, many entrenched party stalwarts around PDI-P's Chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri actually resented Jokowi because they feared that the political newcomer from Solo would disrupt traditional power networks within and beyond the party. To preempt this, Megawati and her allies consistently undermined Jokowi's authority, for example by imposing controversial ministers on the president during cabinet formation, pushing for other controversial appointments such as the national police chief or by publicly belittling him as a mere party functionary who is subordinate to the directives of the party. Following the PDI-P congress in April 2015, where Jokowi was denied the right to address the party delegates, Gammon (2015) wrote that 'it might be an exaggeration to describe the relationship between Jokowi and PDI-P as dysfunctional – but not a very big one.'

That a president in a multiparty presidential system has weak partisan support is not at all unusual. But it is ironic that Jokowi's most troublesome detractors were not sitting in the fragmented parliament, as conventional theories of multiparty presidentialism would have expected, but rather in his own cabinet and the leadership boards of the parties represented in this cabinet. By contrast, parliament as an institution has been remarkably tame. This was particularly surprising in the early months of the Jokowi administration when the House of Representatives was, on paper at least, dominated by Jokowi's adversary Prabowo Subianto and his so-called 'Red and White Coalition'. The six parties in this coalition controlled around 63 percent of parliamentary seats when Jokowi was inaugurated and for a short while in late 2014, this coalition seemed determined to obstruct the government's agenda whenever possible (Mietzner, 2015b). But the appearance of a genuine government-opposition divide soon crumbled as parliament meekly approved practically all of Jokowi's big ticket items including the retention of direct local elections, a reduction in fuel subsidies and reforms to the health and education sectors.

To achieve this parliamentary acquiescence, Jokowi used his presidential powers in remarkably adroit fashion, avoiding open hostility by offering positions in state institutions in return for parliamentary support, taming party leaders with financial perks, and using divide and rule strategies to exacerbate existing tensions in factionalized parties (Muhtadi, 2015: 365). At the end of Jokowi's first year, relations between the executive and the legislature were running fairly smoothly. By early 2016, three members of the 'Red and

White Coalition' had broken ranks with Prabowo and more or less openly supported the president. Though Jokowi hesitated to reward these parties with cabinet posts, the spectre of promiscuous powersharing had returned sooner than Jokowi's supporters would have imagined in 2014.

From the perspective of Skowronek's typology, Jokowi's track record so far should not be surprising. Despite his carefully crafted image as an outsider, Jokowi came to power as an effective affiliate of a relatively resilient regime. Accordingly, there are important similarities between him and his predecessor. Like Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, for example, Jokowi also used public occasions to pay lip service to the virtues of democracy, but without actually strengthening its foundations. At the same time, he has also bolstered his ties to key strategic groups including some oligarchs and the military (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2015), while defending existing institutional arrangements that had come under threat such as direct local elections. All in all, Jokowi's political identity resembles that of Yudhoyono much more than his unconventional rise to the top seemed to foretell. These similarities suggest that a continuation of Yudhoyono's 'politics of articulation' is the most likely trajectory for Indonesia under Jokowi.

For the future of the existing post-1998 regime, however, such continuity may spell trouble ahead because Jokowi was elected under rather different circumstances than his predecessor. When Yudhoyono was elected in 2004, he was expected primarily to stabilize the prevailing post-1998 regime and he largely succeeded in fulfilling this expectation. Accordingly, he was re-elected quite comfortably in 2009. For his second term though, the expectations shifted as many people hoped for a tangible new impetus for the democratization process. In this, Yudhoyono largely failed, though not dramatically enough for Indonesians to endorse radical changes to the existing regime structure in 2014. But moderate changes they did demand. Of the two presidential candidates in 2014, Jokowi personified this public desire for moderate change much better than Prabowo. Political conditions favoured another orthodox-innovator, not a reconstructionist. But within the broad spectrum of orthodox-innovators, Jokowi was, in contrast to Yudhoyono, expected to be more innovative than orthodox. So far, he has largely failed to fulfil this desire. Should he continue to do so in the remainder of his first term, the regime is likely to become more vulnerable ahead of the next election in 2019. Jokowi's politics would shift from articulation to disjuncture and the most likely beneficiary of such a shift would be Prabowo Subianto or any other radical populist keen to contest that election.

Conclusions

Multiparty presidentialism works in Indonesia, but it does not work particularly well. Like in many of the Latin American countries that have adopted this institutional format, the perennial quest for political stability has led Indonesian presidents to routinely prioritize patronage over policy. Once a modus operandi between the executive and the legislature was established and consolidated, democratic governance quickly stalled. Despite initial trends to the contrary, Slater and Simmons' (2012) depiction of this modus operandi as 'promiscuous powersharing' remains as accurate under the current president Jokowi as it was under his predecessors, even though Jokowi initially tried to end the practice of horse trading and political rewards.

The continuity in the relations between the president and the parties reflects a broader trend of continuity in the overall configuration of the existing regime, which since its establishment in 1998 has been characterized not only by the collusive interplay between key institutions, but also by the conflicting dynamics between a popular narrative of

democratic reform and the political and economic dominance of oligarchic elites. Nearly twenty years after the end of the New Order, the public desire for democracy remains strong and all presidents since Abdurrahman Wahid have felt the need to pledge allegiance to the *reformasi* narrative that has underscored Indonesian politics since 1998. Most recently, Jokowi was the latest to present himself as a champion of the people's aspirations, including local development, human rights and democratic reform. But his subsequent inability, and at times outright unwillingness, to deliver on many of his campaign promises underlines the ongoing strength of democracy's uneasy bedfellow, the oligarchy that has come to dominate the formal articulation of interests in post-1998 Indonesia. As Hadiz and Robison (2013) stress, democracy and oligarchy can co-exist, but where they do, the quality of governance and democratic institutions will be severely compromised.

Whether this coexistence between democracy and oligarchy will be viable in the long-term, however, remains to be seen. The close result of the 2014 presidential election demonstrated that both members of the elite as well as a sizeable number of ordinary voters were willing to embrace an alternative to the existing regime when they supported the radical populist Prabowo Subianto. In the end, the mobilizational power of the existing regime, driven primarily by enthusiastic volunteers and concerned democracy activists but also by oligarchs concerned about a shake-up of existing power networks, outweighed the money politics and demagoguery of the populist challenger, but the strong showing of Prabowo illustrated just how vulnerable the regime had become. More than eighteen months after the election, Jokowi is yet to address the roots of this vulnerability. Unless he changes direction in the second half of his first term, another populist challenge, possibly framed in more religious rhetoric, seems almost inevitable for the next election in 2019.

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