

## Singapore Management University Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

---

Research Collection School of Social Sciences

School of Social Sciences

---

5-2018

# New forms of political activism in Indonesia: Redefining the nexus between electoral and movement politics

Dirk TOMSA  
*La Trobe University*

Charlotte SETIJADI  
*Singapore Management University, [csetijadi@smu.edu.sg](mailto:csetijadi@smu.edu.sg)*

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2018.58.3.557>

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass\\_research](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass_research)

 Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

---

### Citation

TOMSA, Dirk, & SETIJADI, Charlotte. (2018). New forms of political activism in Indonesia: Redefining the nexus between electoral and movement politics. *Asian Survey*, 58(3), 557-581.

**Available at:** [https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass\\_research/2719](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soass_research/2719)

This Journal Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Sciences at Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Collection School of Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. For more information, please email [libIR@smu.edu.sg](mailto:libIR@smu.edu.sg).

## New Forms of Political Activism in Indonesia

*Redefining the Nexus between Electoral  
and Movement Politics*

### ABSTRACT

This article argues that new personality-centric movements have redefined the nexus between activism and electoral politics in Indonesia. It illustrates how these movements have challenged the role of political parties and consultants in electoral campaigning, and how their growing prominence may affect the future trajectory of Indonesian politics.

**KEYWORDS:** elections, parties, movements, activism, Indonesia

### INTRODUCTION

Once regarded by many as inherently antagonistic arenas of contestation, formal electoral politics and the political activism of social movements are now increasingly seen as closely intertwined. In established Western democracies, for example, issue-based movements routinely form alliances with like-minded candidates or parties to complement the campaign efforts of these political actors through informal activism. Meanwhile, in countries where democratization began more recently, linkages between movements and elections also exist, even though the programmatic identities of parties and individual candidates are usually less clearly defined. In the absence of strong and enduring ideological affinities, alliances between parties and movements often take the form of short-lived, personality-driven movements that mobilize support for or against individual candidates during election campaigns.

---

DIRK TOMSA is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics and Philosophy at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, and a former Visiting Senior Fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore. CHARLOTTE SETIJADI is Visiting Fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore. The authors would like to express their gratitude to the institute for supporting fieldwork trips to Indonesia and to the anonymous reviewers for the valuable feedback on an earlier draft. Email: <d.tomsa@latrobe.edu.au>, <charlotte\_setijadi@iseas.edu.sg>.

---

*Asian Survey*, Vol. 58, Number 3, pp. 557–581. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2018 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals.php?p=reprints>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1257/AS.2018.58.3.557>.

This article examines how such personality-driven activism is shaping the nexus between electoral politics and less formalized movement politics in Indonesia. In this Southeast Asian country, free and fair elections have been held since 1999, but the first notable example of this new type of political activism did not occur before the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election, when a rigidly organized campaign for a pair of underdog candidates—Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and his running mate, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok)—morphed into a broad-based movement for political change. Subsequently, the 2014 presidential election and the 2017 election for governor of Jakarta were also shaped decisively by the activism of non-party actors, while political parties played only marginal roles.

This article conceptualizes these new forms of campaign activism as “electoral movements.” Although these movements lacked a radical social agenda and the organization of a durable grassroots network, they can nevertheless be classified as movements because they exhibited key elements of a typical movement, including a conflictual orientation toward an opponent; a collective identity based on common values, beliefs, and goals; and a repertoire of collective action.<sup>1</sup> Against this background, the article utilizes analytical tools from a conceptual framework developed by McAdam and Tarrow<sup>2</sup> and puts forward three main arguments. First, the new candidate-focused activism has added a new dimension to electoral campaigning in Indonesia, which is otherwise dominated by professional consultancies and the rampant use of money politics. Second, new electoral movements are posing a challenge to the supremacy of political parties in electoral contests, as they not only complement but often take over important functions that are conventionally regarded as the domain of political parties. Third, these electoral movements are both products of broader regime dynamics as well as potential determinants of the future trajectory of Indonesia’s current democratic regime.

Following this introduction, the article gives an overview of the growing literature that examines the nexus between movement politics and elections. It then proceeds to map the evolution of the new electoral activism in Indonesia, from its beginnings in the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election to

1. These are the key characteristics of a social movement as defined by Hanspeter Kriesi, “Social Movements,” in Daniele Caramani (ed.), *Comparative Politics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 293.

2. Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, “Ballots and Barricades: On the Reciprocal Relationship between Elections and Social Movements,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8:2 (2010): 529–42.

the 2014 presidential election and its most recent manifestations in the 2017 Jakarta election. Apart from highlighting how these movements blended top-down organization with bottom-up mobilization, these early sections of the article also trace the different motivations that prompted so-called *relawan* (volunteers) to participate in the movement's activities. In the next part, the article analyzes in detail how this new election-focused political activism has continuously redefined the nexus between movement politics and elections in Indonesia. Particular attention is paid to the impact on electoral campaigning, the relationship between movements and parties, and the implications of the new activism for broader regime dynamics. The article then investigates the reasons for the emergence of the new political activism before concluding with a critical assessment of the prospects for this new kind of activism to spread to other elections.

#### ELECTORAL VERSUS CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Electoral politics and the informal political activism of social movements have long ceased to be analytically separate fields of inquiry. According to Goldstone, "Social movements constitute an essential element of normal politics in modern societies, and . . . there is only a fuzzy and permeable boundary between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized politics."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, systematic analyses of exactly how electoral politics and social movements have linked to one another remained somewhat scarce for a long time, confined largely to links between labor unions and socialist/social-democratic parties or environmental activists and Green parties. In recent years, however, more and more scholars have turned their attention to other types of linkages that connect movement activism to the party-dominated arena of electoral competition.

In one prominent contribution to the debate, McAdam and Tarrow suggested probing the nexus between elections and social movements through a multidimensional framework comprising a range of distinctive linkage mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> According to the authors, the first of these linkage mechanisms consists of movements' development and use of innovative forms of collective

3. Jack A. Goldstone, "Bridging Institutionalized and Noninstitutionalized Politics," in Jack A. Goldstone (ed.), *States, Parties and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 2.

4. McAdam and Tarrow, "Ballots and Barricades."

action that might later be adopted as campaign strategies by political parties and candidates. Second, movements can influence electoral contests through direct participation in elections, in the form of membership in existing electoral coalitions, by nominating movement figures for political office, or by forming their own parties. Movements can also mobilize voters into various election-related activities, such as voter registration or election monitoring, as well as post-election protests and demonstrations. Beyond the immediate electoral process, movements can cause or exacerbate fissures within parties that compete in elections. Finally, the nature of movement activism and its potential to have an impact on electoral politics can also be linked to broader shifts in overarching regime structures, which at times play a prominent role in electoral campaigns.<sup>5</sup>

McAdam and Tarrow use an example of American politics to apply their approach empirically, and indeed many other works in this growing literature focus on the United States and other established Western democracies.<sup>6</sup> Gradually, though, comparative and single-case studies from democracies in other regions have begun to enrich the debate. Authors like Van Cott and Becker, for example, traced the transformation of Latin American indigenous movements into ethnic parties,<sup>7</sup> while Thachil explored how Indian parties use grassroots activists and social movements to mobilize voters from unlikely constituencies.<sup>8</sup> Another prominent strand of this new literature has emerged in the study of competitive authoritarian regimes. Bunce and Wolchik, for instance, examined electoral outcomes in several Central and Eastern European states, arguing that the crucial variable that defined whether incumbent leaders (or their handpicked candidates for succession) could be defeated at the ballot box was the willingness and ability of opposition parties to

5. Ibid.: 533.

6. Edwin Amenta, Neal Caren, Elizabeth Chiarello, and Yang Su, "The Political Consequences of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 287–307; Dana R. Fisher, "Youth Political Participation: Bridging Activism and Electoral Politics," *Annual Review of Sociology* 38 (2012): 119–37; Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back: The Crafting of Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Daniel Schlozman, *When Movements Anchor Parties: Electoral Alignments in American History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

7. Donna Lee van Cott, *From Movements to Parties in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Marc Becker, *Pachakutik: Indigenous Movements and Electoral Politics in Ecuador* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011).

8. Tariq Thachil, "Embedded Mobilization: Nonstate Service Provision as Electoral Strategy in India," *World Politics* 63:3 (2011): 434–69.

collaborate with political activists, both domestic and from abroad, in devising innovative campaign strategies and, if necessary, to support public protests.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, LeBas' analysis of party-building in three competitive authoritarian states in Africa highlights the significance of linkages between labor movements and opposition parties in determining prospects for electoral success.<sup>10</sup>

This article builds on many insights from the literature, but shifts the focus to Indonesia, a country that is neither a consolidated democracy nor a competitive authoritarian regime. As a relatively new electoral democracy, Indonesia's current regime is characterized by the often contentious interplay among a frequently reiterated public narrative of good government and democratic reform, a deeply entrenched group of oligarchic elites who use democratic procedures only as an instrument to defend their wealth, and a constantly evolving but still inefficient set of political institutions that have largely failed to ensure accountability and transparency. In this regime, democracy and oligarchy coexist; elections are held regularly and are generally free and fair, but many of the participating parties are controlled by extremely wealthy elites, so that social movements and other political activists have long found it difficult to influence campaign agendas and electoral outcomes from outside the party system.<sup>11</sup>

A number of activists, including human rights advocates, women's rights campaigners, and labor activists, have responded to this situation by running for parliament in the hope of achieving their political objectives from within established institutional channels.<sup>12</sup> Others have chosen to remain outside formal party politics but routinely get involved in elections as members of

9. Valerie Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Defeating Dictators: Electoral Change and Stability in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes," *World Politics* 62:1 (2010): 43–86.

10. Adrienne LeBas, *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

11. For competing views on to what extent oligarchic elites dominate Indonesian politics, see the various contributions in Michele Ford and Thomas B. Pepinsky (eds.), *Beyond Oligarchy: Critical Exchanges on Political Power and Material Inequality in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

12. Teri L. Caraway, Michele Ford, and Hari Nugroho, "Translating Membership into Power at the Ballot Box? Trade Union Candidates and Worker Voting Patterns in Indonesia's National Elections," *Democratization* 22:7 (2015): 1296–1316; Amalinda Savirani, "Bekasi, West Java: From Patronage to Interest Group Politics?" in Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati (eds.), *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia: Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016): 184–202.

“success teams,” the ubiquitous groupings of campaign advisors, patronage dispensers, and brokers that assemble around candidates in the run-up to elections. Linkages between movement politics and elections therefore do exist, but like many other facets of Indonesia’s political and associational landscape, these linkages tend to be fragmented, ad hoc, and often aimed at material rewards rather than political goals.

## NEW ELECTORAL MOVEMENTS IN INDONESIA

Against this background, the recent surge in volunteerism, creative activism, and mass mobilization during election campaigns marks a significant shift from the prevalent patterns in the linkages between movement politics and elections. It is closely related to the rise of populism in Indonesian politics, which has become manifest in both national and local elections in recent years.<sup>13</sup> As public frustration about political parties and the ineffectiveness of existing institutions continues to spread, activists and ordinary citizens alike are increasingly throwing their support behind candidates who are perceived as political outsiders and whose mere candidacy already poses a challenge to entrenched elites. Thus, beginning in 2012, a new form of political activism emerged in Indonesia, an activism that has since repeatedly constituted itself in the form of *electoral* movements created with the distinct goal of supporting an individual candidate to win an election, especially for executive offices such as governor or president. In 2017, this focus on individual candidates took a new turn as some activists—in this case Islamist activists—mobilized not in support of but in opposition to a certain candidate.

Movements that emerge to push for or against the election of individual politicians are of course common in populist politics. More often than not, they pursue an agenda of radical change and challenge existing norms and values in a prevailing regime. In Latin America, for example, the wave of leftist populism that inspired the electoral campaigns of Evo Morales in Bolivia and Hugo Chávez in Venezuela emerged directly out of the contentious politics of social movements. In Indonesia, however, the first instances

13. Vedi R. Hadiz, “A New Islamic Populism and the Contradictions of Development,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 44:1 (2014): 125–43; Abdul Hamid, “Jokowi’s Populism in the 2012 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election,” *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 33:1 (2014): 85–109; Marcus Mietzner, *Reinventing Asian Populism: Jokowi’s Rise, Democracy and Political Contestation*, Policy Studies No. 72 (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2015).

of these new electoral movements were somewhat different. Neither the Jakarta Baru (New Jakarta) movement that supported Jokowi and his running mate Ahok in the 2012 Jakarta election, nor the various volunteer groups that formed the backbone of the pro-Jokowi movement in the 2014 presidential election advocated radical change. In fact, these first two electoral movements could be seen as attempts to salvage rather than challenge the prevailing regime, as Jokowi was widely seen as a “new hope” for Indonesia’s fading reform narrative.

In 2017, remnants of these movements tried to mobilize again when Jokowi’s former deputy and by then incumbent governor of Jakarta, Ahok, began to prepare his re-election bid. But the Ahok campaign struggled to spread beyond a small core of activists. Instead, the nexus between electoral and movement politics was redefined by Ahok’s opponents, who successfully shifted the epicenter of the campaign to the streets and mosques of Jakarta, where they eventually spawned a movement of their own. Defined by racially and religiously motivated opposition to Ahok, this movement eventually paved the way for the election of Anies Baswedan, an Islamic intellectual who once enjoyed a reputation as a moderate but in this election openly courted radical Islamists and their elite backers.

Taken together, the two Jakarta elections and the presidential election sandwiched between them had a significant impact on the relationship between electoral and movement politics in Indonesia. Before analyzing this impact in more detail, however, it is necessary to outline the basic characteristics of the various movements.

#### THE JOKOWI VOLUNTEERS: TWO ELECTIONS, ONE MOVEMENT?

In 2012, the Jakarta gubernatorial election made international headlines when incumbent governor and poll favorite Fauzi Bowo was defeated in a second-round run-off by his challenger Jokowi, the then relatively unknown mayor of Solo. Once inaugurated, the new governor and his ethnic Chinese deputy, Ahok, devoted substantial efforts to sharpening their public image. Within a year, Jokowi had become a media sensation and the firm favorite for the 2014 presidential election.<sup>14</sup> In that election, Jokowi faced off against

14. Ross Tapsell, “Indonesia’s Media Oligarchy and the ‘Jokowi Phenomenon,’” *Indonesia* 99 (April 2015): 29–50.



controversial former army general Prabowo Subianto, an “oligarchic populist”<sup>15</sup> whose campaign revolved around aggressive nationalist and at times anti-democratic rhetoric. When Jokowi won the election, on July 9, 2014, he became the first president of the democratic era who came from outside Jakarta’s established elite. His victory also meant that Ahok became the first ethnic Chinese governor of Jakarta, as he automatically succeeded the departing Jokowi.

There were a range of similarities between Jokowi’s campaign for Jakarta governor in 2012 and his presidential campaign in 2014. In both elections Jokowi took on an opponent with far better connections to Jakarta’s elite, and in both he relied primarily on his carefully constructed image as a humble man of the people to defeat his opponents. Moreover, in both elections Jokowi was able to overcome the problem of an ineffective party machinery thanks to the combined help of dedicated volunteer groups, political consultants, and selected donors.<sup>16</sup> Such reliance on non-party support networks may not be unusual in Indonesian elections, but the sheer magnitude of volunteer activism that complemented the official campaigns in both elections was unprecedented. It is therefore fair to say that even though Jokowi was by no means averse to conventional means of campaign support from consultants and oligarchs, he would not have won either of the two elections without the help of a huge armada of volunteers who dedicated enormous time and resources to the campaign.

According to Hasan Nasbi, the political consultant who organized the 2012 campaign for Jokowi, there were a number of reasons why volunteers became a central feature of that campaign.<sup>17</sup> First, momentum for the fairly unknown Jokowi needed to be created in Jakarta long before the official campaign period began, but Jokowi himself could do little to provide that momentum because he spent most of his time in Solo, where he had to fulfill duties as the city’s mayor. Second, Jokowi’s status as a rank outsider precluded him from mobilizing large funds from Jakarta’s entrenched oligarchs, so he was unable

15. Edward Aspinall, “Oligarchic Populism: Prabowo Subianto’s Challenge to Indonesian Democracy,” *Indonesia* 99 (2015): 1–28.

16. Ironically, his gubernatorial campaign was financed to a large degree by the very forces he would later compete against in the presidential election, namely Prabowo Subianto and his billionaire brother Hasyim Djojohadikusumo. Jeffrey Winters, “Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia,” *Indonesia* 96 (October 2013): 24.

17. Hasan Nasbi interview, Jakarta, May 16, 2016.

to build and maintain an expensive campaign machine. Third, Jokowi initially received fairly little airtime in the mainstream media, because incumbent Governor Fauzi Bowo controlled access to most media outlets.<sup>18</sup> An innovative grassroots campaign driven by volunteers and social media activism therefore not only gave meaning to the campaign theme of Jakarta Baru but was also born out of necessity.

And so, volunteers were recruited from a broad cross-section of society, comprising people from very different socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Some were trained by Nasbi's consultancy to work effectively for the campaign, while others became involved without having any connections to the formal campaign. At last, a potpourri of volunteer groups emerged that engaged in a wide range of activities, including door-to-door community visits, organization of media events, countering smear campaigns, and using social media to communicate with voters. Two years later, during the presidential campaign, there were echoes of this diversity in the new pro-Jokowi movement, but there were also some major differences from the Jakarta Baru campaign.

For example, in 2012 the broad support movement that eventually helped Jokowi get elected emerged only toward the end of the campaign, as an effective by-product of an immaculately executed campaign strategy devised by a professional consultancy firm. It was therefore reminiscent of the famous first presidential campaign of Barack Obama in 2008, in which, as Ganz put it, "a movement took shape within a political campaign, the 'movement to elect Barack Obama'."<sup>19</sup> The dynamics of the Jakarta 2012 campaign were remarkably similar, as the movement to elect Jokowi and his deputy Ahok also only took shape as their professionally planned campaign unfolded.

In 2014, by contrast, Jokowi already enjoyed broad public support before he was nominated; in fact he was nominated precisely because he had such broad public support. Volunteer groups to support Jokowi had therefore already emerged long before the presidential election. Moreover, in another departure from the 2012 campaign, many of the new groups did not originate at the grassroots or in the headquarters of a centrally planned campaign, but were founded by well-connected political operators who only jumped on the

18. Ibid.

19. Marshall Ganz, "Organizing Obama: Campaign, Organizing, Movement," paper prepared for the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, August 2009.

*relawan* bandwagon because of Jokowi's leading position in the polls. If in 2012 no volunteers except formal witnesses at polling stations on election day were paid,<sup>20</sup> the 2014 campaign involved many "volunteers" who did receive material rewards for their activism.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, spontaneity, enthusiasm, and idealistic commitment were still crucial components of the volunteerism that marked the 2014 campaign. In particular, despite the presence of many pragmatic opportunists in the movement, there was still a strong element of pro-democracy activism, inspired partly by Jokowi's reform-oriented track record and partly by the authoritarian tendencies of his opponent. Several volunteer organizations, including Almisbat, Projo, Duta Jokowi, and Seknas Jokowi, were formed or supported by democracy, human rights, and women's activists. In the final weeks before the election, when Prabowo was rapidly closing the gap in the polls, these activists repeatedly reminded the public of what was at stake in this election, for example by recalling the sacrifices that were made in 1998 to bring democratization to Indonesia.

One such volunteer was Ririn Sefsani, a long-time pro-democracy activist who is now program manager for Kemitraan (Partnership), a not-for-profit organization that advocates government reform. Hailing from Solo herself, she had personally known and supported Jokowi since he was the mayor of Solo. For Ririn, the honest and hard-working figure she had seen in Jokowi since his mayoral days was exactly what Indonesia needed to further its reform, and that was why she supported him in 2014:

I first met Jokowi when my organization at the time organized a public debate, and when he [Jokowi] arrived, I didn't recognize that he was the mayor, because he was this skinny guy who just looked so ordinary! Since then I have followed his work, policies, and character, and I felt strongly that this was the figure that we activist groups have been waiting for. . . . Jokowi is of course not perfect, and his policies are imperfect too, but he at least embodies the kind of reform spirit that we [activists] have been campaigning for since 1998. . . . Jokowi was a contrast to Foke [Fauzi Bowo] in Jakarta in 2012, and he was even

20. Ahmad Suaedy, "The Role of Volunteers and Political Participation in the 2012 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 33:1 (2014): 122–23.

21. For example, a number of the "elite volunteers" were later rewarded for their support with appointments in state-owned enterprises and other influential posts. "16 Politisi dan Relawan Jokowi jadi Komisaris, Bahaya Menanti BUMN" [16 politicians and Jokowi volunteers become commissioners, danger awaits state-owned enterprises], *Kompas*, April 12, 2015.

more of a contrast to Prabowo in 2014, so it was very important for me and other activist friends to go all out to support him then.<sup>22</sup>

## PRO- AND ANTI-AHOK MOVEMENTS IN THE 2017 JAKARTA ELECTION

Significantly, this underlying current of pro-democracy activism was far less pronounced in the run-up to the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, when former members of the Jakarta Baru movement once again sought to mobilize an electoral movement, this time in support of Jokowi's former deputy in Jakarta, Ahok. Calling themselves Teman Ahok (Friends of Ahok), these young activists did not support Ahok's re-election bid because they regarded him as an icon of democratic reform, but rather because of his reputation as an independent maverick politician who was not afraid to take on entrenched bureaucrats and party elites. According to Teman Ahok spokesperson Amalia Ayuningtyas, the volunteer group decided to mobilize because they wanted Ahok to take his independent status to the next level by contesting the Jakarta election as a formally independent candidate:

We started Teman Ahok because we believed that Ahok was the right person for Jakarta. We have had many governors in the past who did not do much for Jakartans because they were either corrupt or beholden to party interests. . . . But Ahok quit political parties that he could not agree with, and as an independent, we believed that he has done many things for Jakarta, making hard decisions that would have been difficult if he was with a party. . . . So we wanted him to stay independent, so he can keep making Jakarta better. At a meeting with Ahok, we told him that we'd get him the 1 million identity cards [*kartu tanda penduduk*, KTP] he needed to go forward as an independent candidate. Ahok at the time said "go ahead, do it cleanly," and so that was how we began.<sup>23</sup>

By June 2016, Teman Ahok had successfully collected a million KTPs, and for several weeks, Ahok seemed poised to become an independent candidate. However, Teman Ahok's hopes to mobilize a broader movement suffered a major blow when Ahok eventually declared that he would run as a party candidate after all. This change of mind disappointed many Ahok supporters, especially those who had volunteered their time during Teman Ahok's KTP

22. Ririn Sefsani interview, Jakarta, July 4, 2017.

23. Amalia Ayuningtyas interview, Jakarta, May 13, 2016.

drive. Many even accused the governor of taking advantage of Teman Ahok's efforts and using their successful KTP collection as a bargaining chip to eventually secure political-party support. However, at least in public, Teman Ahok leaders such as Aditya Yogi Prabowo (Bowo) said that they had not lost faith in Ahok and would continue to support his campaign, even after he abandoned his independent candidacy:

Of course, we were disappointed when we first heard that Ahok had decided to go with the political parties. We put so much effort into the KTP collection so that Ahok could go independent. . . . But in the end, what we wanted was for him to run, so he could be our governor again for a second term, and the 1 million KTPs we collected proved that he had the people's mandate, so from this perspective, it wasn't all for nothing.<sup>24</sup>

If Ahok's decision to run as a party candidate was a blow to the fledgling pro-Ahok movement, the knockout came shortly afterwards, when an edited video of Ahok allegedly insulting Al-Maidah verse 51 of the Qur'an, emerged and was widely circulated on social media. The video showed Ahok during a campaign event on September 27, 2016, where he told a group of civil servants that they should not be fooled by people who referred to Al-Maidah 51 when urging them not to vote for him.<sup>25</sup> The footage caused outrage among many Muslims and soon led to mass anti-Ahok demonstrations and formal charges of blasphemy against the Christian governor.<sup>26</sup>

The blasphemy allegations completely changed the tone and atmosphere of Ahok's campaign. With Ahok distracted by the trial, the campaign went into damage-control mode and became increasingly disorganized and reactionary. Ahok's volunteers, including Teman Ahok, tried to defend him on social media and through grassroots door-knocking campaigns that emphasized the governor's track record of building mosques, and other pro-Islam social activities. However, their campaigns failed, because they did not gain traction outside of Ahok's existing supporter groups. And while Teman Ahok failed to mobilize a new movement, Ahok's detractors seized the momentum

24. Aditya Yogi Prabowo interview, Jakarta, September 21, 2017.

25. The verse is often interpreted by Indonesian Muslim leaders as a call to prevent the rule of non-Muslims over Muslims. During the Jakarta election campaign, it was used by Ahok's political opponents to encourage people not to vote for him.

26. Charlotte Setijadi, "Religious Freedom on Trial in Indonesia," *East Asia Forum*, January 5, 2017.

generated by the blasphemy case to galvanize unprecedented support for a new type of electoral movement that was aimed not at backing but at opposing a certain candidate.

Led by hardline Muslim groups such as the Islamic Defenders' Front (Front Pembela Islam) and the Indonesian branch of the pan-Islamist Hizbut Tahrir (Party of Liberation) and tacitly condoned by Ahok's opponents in the gubernatorial race, the anti-Ahok movement grew rapidly, mobilizing immense support by means of anti-Chinese and anti-Christian rhetoric. As Sigit Widiyastono of Teman Ahok explains, although many of Ahok's volunteers tried to defend their candidate, they were no match for the extent of the anti-Ahok Islamic mobilization that went on during campaign season:

We were completely defeated in terms of volunteer mobilization, especially during the second round of the election. Teman Ahok and other volunteers went door-knocking around neighborhoods and went on social media campaigns, but the other side had a presence at pretty much every mosque, *musholla* [small Islamic prayer space], and Qur'an reading group in Jakarta. Do you know how many mosques there are in Jakarta? It was impossible to match them.<sup>27</sup>

The main beneficiary of the groundswell in anti-Ahok protests was Anies Baswedan, who eventually won the gubernatorial election after forging an alliance with the hardline Muslim organizations that had organized the mass demonstrations against Ahok. In the end, Ahok not only lost the election but was also convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in jail. But while his demise was sealed at the ballot box and in the courts, it is important to note that the main driver behind it was the unprecedented mass mobilization in the streets. The anti-Ahok movement may have differed from the pro-Jokowi movements and the abortive pro-Ahok movement in the sense that its main goal was to prevent rather than achieve the election of a certain candidate, but there were nevertheless important parallels between all these movements, as the following section will illustrate.

## REDEFINING THE MOVEMENT-ELECTION NEXUS IN INDONESIA

Although the exact extent of the various movements' impact on the eventual election results may not be measurable in numbers, most observers agree that

27. Sigit Widiyastono interview, Jakarta, July 5, 2017.

political activism and mass mobilization did play a significant role in determining the outcomes of the polls.<sup>28</sup> It is not the objective of this article to confirm or refute such assessments, for example through a quantitative measurement of the movements' influence. Rather, the contention here is that the emergence of this new form of activism has reshaped the nature of electoral competition in Indonesia more generally, especially in regard to campaigning, the relations between political parties and non-party actors, and the interplay between broader regime dynamics and electoral politics.

### **New Forms of Collective Action and Mass Mobilization**

Perhaps the most significant contribution the new electoral movements have made to redefining the nexus between political activism and electoral politics in Indonesia has been the extensive use of online resources and social media. Until the 2012 Jakarta election, the Internet had been poorly utilized by Indonesian parties and candidates, but Jokowi's volunteers quickly realized the potential for political mobilization through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Thus, in both the 2012 Jakarta campaign and the 2014 presidential campaign, large numbers of dedicated netizens and "producers" (media users who both consume and produce content) waged an effective cyberwar against Jokowi's opponents, often through ingenious references to popular culture.<sup>29</sup> An umbrella organization called *jasmev.com* was formed in 2012 (and renamed *jasmev2014.com* for the presidential election) to coordinate many of these online activities, reaching thousands of registered members in 2014.<sup>30</sup> Numerous other ad hoc groups that did not register with *jasmev.com* also spread news about Jokowi and his campaign through new websites, Twitter and Facebook postings, and WhatsApp groups. Toward the end of the campaign, a range of prominent public figures made a last-minute appeal to undecided voters through YouTube clips titled "60 detik buat kamu yang masih bingung" ("60 seconds for those of you who are still confused").

Significantly, online activism did not end on election day, at least not in 2014. Once the ballots were cast in the presidential election, fears about fraud

28. Mietzner, *Reinventing Asian Populism*; Suaedy, "Role of Volunteers"; Tim Lindsey, "Ahok's Defeat Bodes Ill for the Future," *Indonesia at Melbourne*, April 20, 2017.

29. Tapsell, "Indonesia's Media Oligarchy": 38.

30. Ririn Sefyani and Patrick Ziegenhain, "Civil-Society Support: A Decisive Factor in the Indonesian Presidential Elections in 2014," *Asien* 136 (July 2015): 26.

quickly spread, prompting an unprecedented wave of crowdsourcing projects to ensure transparency during the vote count. The most prominent of these projects was KawalPemilu.org (Guard the Election), a website set up by tech-savvy Indonesians living abroad who were concerned about the accuracy of the ballot counting by the General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum). Within just a few days, KawalPemilu had used Facebook to mobilize around 700 volunteers to manually tally the commission's tabulation forms from all over the country—a huge exercise involving forms from 486,000 polling stations across the archipelago. Thus, in a final demonstration of strength and wit, pro-Jokowi volunteers once again utilized the new opportunities of the Internet to leave their mark on the electoral process.

While netizens and *producers* formed the most creative and innovative part of the pro-Jokowi movement, they were assisted by a large number of devoted volunteers who complemented the cyberwar on the ground. By organizing local campaign events, engaging citizens in neighborhood discussions, and collecting donations for the campaign, these volunteers were often more effective in mobilizing grassroots support for Jokowi than the political parties that had backed his nomination. Especially, the large number of individual donations collected from more than 40,000 individual donors in the 2014 presidential campaign stood out as a major achievement. According to Snyder, “This ‘Obama-style’ fundraising campaign, to collect small donations from a broad swath of everyday citizens, is a novel concept in national-level Indonesian politics and one that has struggled to gain popularity . . . until now.”<sup>31</sup> While his opponents Fauzi Bowo (in 2012) and Prabowo (in 2014) financed their campaigns primarily through large business donations from oligarchic elites, Jokowi's volunteers successfully introduced crowdsourcing to Indonesian elections.

In the run-up to the 2017 Jakarta election, Teman Ahok sought to emulate many of the successful strategies of the Jokowi campaign, including the “Obama-style” grassroots fundraising. But after an auspicious start, it quickly lost momentum after Ahok decided to abandon his independent candidacy. As the parties moved to regain control of the campaign, the enthusiasm of many volunteers waned. Although Teman Ahok and other grassroots supporter groups continued to engage in social media campaigns, they were, in

31. Justin Snyder, “Campaign Finance, Strategy and Accountability,” *New Mandala*, July 18, 2014.



the words of Tapsell, “far less present, less rambunctious and less relevant in this Jakarta election of 2017.”<sup>32</sup> Their irrelevance became particularly obvious in the months after the blasphemy allegations, when attempts to bolster Ahok’s declining popularity ratings through YouTube clips and solidarity flash-mobs failed to resonate with voters.

Instead, it was the anti-Ahok campaign that used social media most effectively, especially through the spread of anti-Chinese and other inflammatory fake news. Indeed, grassroots anti-Ahok social media campaigners were extremely active and aggressive during the Jakarta election, with hardline Islamist groups allegedly engaging an Islamic “cyber-army” to discredit Ahok based on his religion and ethnicity. Reports about more allegedly blasphemous statements by the governor and allegations that the Chinese government was involved in Ahok’s campaign were widely spread on social media.<sup>33</sup> Ahok’s opponent Anies Baswedan and his running mate Sandiaga Uno denied any involvement in the creation of these online attacks:

Our team did not attack Ahok’s religion or race. But in many ways, we did not need to, even if we wanted to. There were already so many anti-Ahok materials out there on social media, our campaign decided to focus on my and Anies’ image as fun and approachable through the social media products we produced. Our campaign also had our own social media “army,” but we tried to maintain a neutral image. . . . The religious aspects were done completely outside of our formal campaign.<sup>34</sup>

While Uno’s comments must be taken with a pinch of salt, it is true that once the blasphemy allegations had surfaced, the anti-Ahok social media campaigning, particularly by Islamist groups, was far more effective than the pro-Ahok efforts. As will be outlined in the section below, much of the inefficiency and failure of the pro-Ahok campaign can be attributed to the tensions between the grassroots volunteer groups and the party campaigners who came in after Ahok abandoned plans for an independent candidacy. The disorganization, breakdown in communication, competing interests, and differing visions ended up creating more chaos in the already heavily attacked Ahok campaign.

32. Ross Tapsell, “‘Bottom-Up’ Campaigning Failed Ahok, and It Might Fail Jokowi,” *New Mandala*, April 27, 2017.

33. Merlyna Lim, “Freedom to Hate: Social Media, Algorithmic Enclaves, and the Rise of Tribal Nationalism in Indonesia,” *Critical Asian Studies* 49:3 (2017): 411–27.

34. Sandiaga Uno interview, Jakarta, July 5, 2017.

### The Movement and the Parties

Apart from introducing new forms of collective action that were unheard of in previous Indonesian elections, volunteers have also taken over many forms of rather conventional campaign activities that otherwise would have been the domain of political parties or candidate-sponsored success teams. By going door to door, disseminating campaign material, and eventually monitoring the voting process and the subsequent vote count, volunteers helped out where political parties were either unable or unwilling to support the campaign. According to Mietzner, the volunteer groups that supported Jokowi in the 2014 presidential campaign were “an effective substitute” for a party machine that did “little to campaign for Jokowi.”<sup>35</sup> By rectifying many of the shortcomings of the formal campaign, they not only proved to be the most reliable “coalition partner” for Jokowi, but also exposed deep resentments within the actual electoral coalition against the candidate they had officially nominated.

Within this coalition of four parties, the biggest and most influential was the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, PDIP), which had already supported Jokowi’s candidacy for Jakarta governor in 2012. Significantly, Jokowi was a member of PDIP, but he did not—and still does not—hold a position of influence in the party’s organizational hierarchy. In fact, many members of the party’s central board around the powerful chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri resented Jokowi’s rise from small-town mayor in Central Java to Jakarta governor and then presidential candidate, because they feared that the political newcomer from Solo might disrupt traditional power networks within and beyond the party. For those in the party who supported Jokowi, as well as several former PDIP members who had fallen out with Megawati in earlier disputes, the lackluster attitude of the party leadership was a key trigger to either join or establish volunteer groups in the run-up to the presidential election. As the pro-Jokowi movement grew in stature during the campaign, the tensions between volunteers and PDIP increased, as some party cadres deliberately tried to undermine the volunteers’ campaign efforts.

By the time Jokowi commenced his presidency, the tensions between the movement and the party were so high that some volunteer organizations,

35. Mietzner, *Reinventing Asian Populism*: 43.

including Projo, Seknas Jokowi, and Duta Jokowi, formed a so-called Joint Secretariat for a Participating Indonesia (Sekretariat Bersama Partisipasi Indonesia), whose members then floated the idea of establishing a new party dedicated purely to supporting Jokowi. But this never materialized, because Jokowi knew too well that it would have only increased hostility from an already antagonistic parliament. In fact, for many volunteers, their work was done once the election was over.

In the 2017 Jakarta election, tensions between activists and parties reached new heights when Teman Ahok pushed for their candidate to run as an independent rather than a party nominee. The group's activities and Ahok's apparent sympathy for an independent candidacy irritated Jakarta's party elites, leading to accusations that Teman Ahok sought to marginalize political parties from electoral politics.<sup>36</sup> Soon the volunteers found themselves at the receiving end of fraud allegations, and Ahok himself felt the pressure as one of his aides was implicated in a corruption scandal. In the end, the parties convinced Ahok to abandon his plans for an independent candidacy.

According to Ahok's former close advisor and volunteer coordinator, Michael Sianipar, things changed as soon as the political parties took control. Apparently, both Teman Ahok and Ahok's long-time advisers were increasingly excluded from campaign decisions once the party machinery kicked into gear. Sianipar says that many of the parties' campaign methods were at odds with Ahok's own political philosophies: "Ahok suddenly found himself among all these new people he didn't know, and no matter how much he insisted on 'no money politics,' these political party operatives continued to do it. . . . This made Ahok increasingly paranoid about how campaign funds were being distributed, and because of that, the funds were distributed inefficiently."<sup>37</sup>

If the gap between Ahok's volunteers and the parties that nominated him widened during the campaign, his opponents were far more successful in closing ranks. As the anti-Ahok movement gathered momentum in the wake of the blasphemy allegations, hardline Islamist organizations agitated in the streets and in the online sphere; powerful party figures supporting Ahok's opponents were widely believed to provide the funds for the smear campaign.

36. "Tanggapi Teman Ahok, PDI-P Akan Lawan Deparpolisasi" [Responding to Teman Ahok, PDIP will oppose marginalization of political parties], *Kompas*, March 8, 2016.

37. Michael Sianipar interview, Jakarta, July 4, 2017.

Significantly, however, even in this highly effective alliance between street-level mobilization and elite machinations, it was the movement in the streets, not the parties on the campaign trail, that most decisively influenced the election result.

### **Elections, Movements and Regimes: Activists as Saviors and Challengers of Indonesia's Post-1998 Regime**

Apart from introducing new campaign strategies to electoral politics and taking over important functions that political parties were unable or unwilling to fulfill, the volunteers and their new political activism were also a reflection of broader regime dynamics in Indonesia. In 2012 and 2014, they epitomized a growing public discontent with the trajectory of the country's prevailing democratic regime, which since its inception in 1998 had been shaped by the antagonistic relationship between public support for the reform narrative of the pro-democracy movement and the predatory material interests of a powerful oligarchy with deep roots in the preceding authoritarian regime. During the second presidential term of Jokowi's predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, this regime appeared increasingly vulnerable, and many Indonesians felt that the balance between the pro-democracy narrative and the material interests of the oligarchs was becoming more and more tilted toward the latter.<sup>38</sup>

Against this background, the 2012 Jakarta election was a first indication that, if given the chance, the majority of voters were no longer prepared to simply perpetuate the dominance of oligarchic apparatchiks such as Fauzi Bowo. Nor were these voters willing to embrace the kind of neo-authoritarian tendencies flaunted by Prabowo Subianto in 2014 as an alternative to the prevailing mix of oligarchy and democracy. What the volunteer activism in support of Jokowi in 2012 and 2014 demonstrated was that while many Indonesians wanted change, they only wanted moderate change, within the parameters of the existing democratic structure.

Jokowi's presidency, however, failed to deliver the kind of changes many of his volunteers had hoped for. Instead, Indonesia's democracy has become even more fragile under his presidency, with the 2017 Jakarta election being

38. For a detailed analysis of the Yudhoyono years, see Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, and Dirk Tomsa (eds.), *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2015).

one, but certainly not the only, manifestation of this growing fragility. Ahok's political demise at the hands of an openly racist smear campaign signaled a shift in successful mobilization patterns from creative pro-reform activism to aggressive Islamist agitation. This growing Islamist influence in itself poses a significant challenge to the pluralist foundations of Indonesia's democratic regime, but arguably an even bigger threat lies in the fact that oligarchic elites have readily embraced the Islamists and actively supported their contentious politics in the streets. Should this alliance last until the 2019 election, it will present another serious test for Indonesia's now highly vulnerable democratic regime.

### REASONS FOR THE RISE OF ELECTORAL MOVEMENTS IN INDONESIA

Having outlined how new forms of political activism have shaped the contours of electoral politics in recent years, we will now analyze the reasons behind this trend. This section traces the roots of the new electoral movements in long-term factors such as the ever-increasing personalization of electoral competition and the concurrent public dissatisfaction with rampant money politics, but also argues that in order for these movements to trigger genuine mass mobilization, a number of contingencies need to be in place.

The personalization of electoral politics in Indonesia has been well documented over the years.<sup>39</sup> Two main features stand out. In parliamentary elections, the progressive switch from a closed-list proportional-representation system (applied in 1999), to a partially open proportional-representation system (applied in 2004), to a fully open-list proportional-representation system (applied in 2009 and 2014) has facilitated money politics, intra-party competition, high party system fragmentation, and a public perception that individual candidates matter more than party affiliation. In executive elections, meanwhile, the introduction of direct elections for president (in 2004), governors, mayors, and district heads (in 2005) further intensified the focus on individual

39. Michael Buehler and Paige Johnson Tan, "Party-Candidate Relationships in Indonesian Local Politics: A Case Study of the 2005 Regional Elections in Gowa, South Sulawesi Province," 84 (2007): 41–69; Dirk Tomsa, "The Indonesian Party System after the 2009 Elections: Towards Stability?" in Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner (eds.), *Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010): 141–59; Andreas Ufen, "From Aliran to Dealignment: Political Parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 16:1 (2008): 5–41.

politicians. The role of political parties quickly degenerated into little more than gatekeeping in the nomination processes, as candidates were required to be nominated by political parties or party coalitions. This situation has changed little over the years, even though independent candidates have been allowed to compete in local elections since 2007 (but not in presidential elections).

The personalization of electoral politics has gone hand in hand with immense public dissatisfaction with political parties. Numerous public opinion surveys over the years have shown that political parties are among the least trusted political organizations in Indonesia. Widely perceived as self-interested and unprofessional in conducting their legislative duties, parties stand as representative of the more general pathologies of Indonesia's post-1998 regime, especially corruption and predatory capture by super-rich oligarchs. Their tendency to collude over patronage rather than compete over policies has earned them the reputation as a cartel, both in academic discourse and in public debate in the Indonesian media.<sup>40</sup> Beyond the national level, most parties have only shallow organizational infrastructure, and especially in the more remote parts of the Indonesian archipelago, their cohesion as an organization is often dependent on clientelistic networks rather than party identification based on programmatic values.<sup>41</sup> During election times, nominations for local executive posts or party lists in legislative elections are routinely auctioned off to the highest bidder. And while some of these characterizations have recently been challenged by scholars like Mietzner,<sup>42</sup> public opinion of political parties in Indonesia remains overwhelmingly negative.

Taken together, the personalization of electoral politics and the consistently bad image of political parties have certainly facilitated the rise of ostensibly non-mainstream politicians like Jokowi. But Prabowo—and numerous other candidates in local elections—have also tried to present themselves as political outsiders (some of them successfully). Yet practically all of them, including Ahok in the 2017 Jakarta election, failed to mobilize

40. Dan Slater, "Indonesia's Accountability Trap: Party Cartels and Presidential Power after Democratic Transition," *Indonesia* 78 (2004): 61–92.

41. Dirk Tomsa, *Party Politics and Democratization in Indonesia: Golkar in the Post-Suharto Era* (London: Routledge, 2008).

42. Marcus Mietzner, *Money, Power, and Ideology: Political Parties in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013).

a grassroots movement comparable to the pro-Jokowi movements. In other words, personalization of electoral politics and anti-party sentiment among the voting population may have created an enabling environment for new electoral movements, but for the pro-Jokowi campaigns to turn into effective mass movements, a number of other contingencies had to fall into place. In identifying these contingencies, Lim's work on social media activism (broadly conceived, not related to elections) provides a helpful framework.<sup>43</sup>

Lim points out that despite the high number of Facebook and Twitter users in Indonesia, online activists who try to use social media for political struggles face significant constraints when attempting to mobilize netizens into active support for their campaigns. The most important factors shaping the effectiveness of social media activism, she argues, are the simplicity of the narrative, the availability of easily recognizable and likeable icons and symbols, the level of risk associated with active involvement in the campaign, and the congruence, or lack thereof, of the campaign with broader regime narratives.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, social media campaigns that use simplistic "hero vs. villain" or "David vs. Goliath" narratives and ask for low-risk participation, like donating a coin for a popular cause such as saving the Anti-Corruption Commission (#SaveKPK), are more likely to generate widespread support than an appeal for solidarity with socially marginalized groups like religious or sexual minorities.

Activists from electoral movements who seek to mobilize large numbers of otherwise politically apathetic citizens face very similar constraints, regardless of how much of their campaign is fought online and how much on the ground. Put simply, people are unlikely to sacrifice time and resources for an uncharismatic party apparatchik with a history of vote-buying and corruption. In the case of Jokowi, the campaigns in 2012 and 2014 quickly gained momentum because the candidate was both charismatic and likeable, his campaign message was simplistic in the extreme, and his background as a political outsider from Solo predestined him for the role of David in his electoral contests against the Goliaths Fauzi Bowo and Prabowo Subianto. Moreover, the Jokowi movements supported, rather than challenged, the dominant political meta-narrative of *reformasi* [reform], which had underpinned Indonesia's

43. Merlyna Lim, "Many Clicks but Little Sticks: Social Media Activism in Indonesia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43:4 (2013): 636–57.

44. *Ibid.*

democratic regime since 1998 but was now increasingly imperiled by the maneuvers of conservative elites intent on rolling back some of Indonesia's democratic achievements. Thus, while Jokowi's opponents in the two elections threatened to either exacerbate the growing sense of democratic stagnation (Fauzi Bowo in Jakarta in 2012) or implement changes in the regime structure which many deemed too radical (Prabowo in the presidential election of 2014), the soft-spoken Jokowi offered the prospect of salvaging the existing regime from these threats without simply continuing with business as usual.

How important it can be to avoid challenging dominant meta-narratives became obvious in the 2017 Jakarta election when the activists of Teman Ahok failed to resurrect the spirit of the previous campaigns in a new movement to support Jokowi's former deputy, Ahok. Although Teman Ahok gained significant momentum in 2015 and 2016, its members struggled to get important elements of the pro-Jokowi movements to support them. Especially pro-democracy and human rights activists, who had been so prominent in the Jokowi campaigns, remained lukewarm in their support for Ahok because of his ruthless evictions of poor neighborhoods in Jakarta. But the biggest obstacles to a genuine pro-Ahok movement were the governor's Christian religion and Chinese ethnicity. Representing not one but two minorities, Ahok was simply not that easy to sell to ordinary voters. It was therefore not surprising that Teman Ahok's work was effectively undone when Ahok made insensitive remarks about the Holy Qur'an in late 2016. With many Muslims interpreting the remarks as blasphemous, Ahok very suddenly turned from a popular maverick politician to an enemy of Indonesia's hegemonic religion. This made him an easy target for hardline Islamists, who then used religious and racist narratives to build their own electoral movement.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has outlined how new forms of political activism are redefining the nexus between formal electoral politics and informal movement politics in Indonesia. Though electoral campaigning has not yet morphed into the kind of bottom-up, citizen-initiated campaigning that has become prominent in established democracies like the United States or the United Kingdom,<sup>45</sup>

45. Rachel K. Gibson, "Party Change, Social Media and the Rise of 'Citizen-Initiated' Campaigning," *Party Politics* 21:2 (2015): 183–97.



the Indonesian case demonstrates that even in countries with lower socio-economic standards and less institutionalized political systems, electoral campaigning is increasingly driven by the political activism of non-party groups. Electoral movements that form in support of or in opposition to individual candidates have not only introduced new forms of collective action that shape electoral campaigns and results; they have also emerged as an important avenue for mobilization and fundraising. However, up until now, these trends have been confined to national-level elections and local elections in the capital, Jakarta.

This article has traced the evolution of this new form of political activism through three important elections, the Jakarta gubernatorial elections in 2012 and 2017, and the presidential election in 2014. All three saw enormous levels of political activism, which not only changed the nature of campaigning in Indonesia but also challenged the role of political parties and influenced the outcomes of the electoral contests. Significantly, in the first two elections, the beneficiary of this activism—Jokowi—was a candidate who defied widespread stereotypical perceptions of Indonesian politicians as selfish, greedy, and untrustworthy. Thus, he embodied a deeply rooted public desire for a just and honest politician who would cleanse the system of its multiple pathologies and take care of the concerns of ordinary people. In short, Jokowi in 2012 and 2014 fulfilled all the contingencies that need to be in place for these kinds of campaigns to be successful. Ahok in 2017 was not the same kind of likeable outsider. The combined effects of his brash political style and his background as an ethnic-Chinese Christian proved to be a deterrent, not a drawing card, for many voters.

The success of the anti-Ahok campaign has raised fears that the presidential election in 2019 will also be marred by sectarian propaganda and mobilization, this time targeted at Jokowi. This anticipated smear campaign therefore looms as one of the main challenges for Jokowi if he does, as is widely expected, run for a second term. In tackling this challenge, however, the president is unlikely to enjoy the levels of mass mobilization he did in 2012 and 2014, because many of his activist supporters have been disappointed by his performance in office so far. Moreover, as incumbent president, Jokowi will find it far more difficult to play the outsider card.

But even if the 2019 election does not see a revival of the pro-Jokowi movement, the progressive volunteer activism that shaped the 2012 and 2014 elections is likely to leave its mark on the next presidential election.

Jokowi's campaign team for 2019, for example, may well adopt at least some of the strategies that were pioneered by pro-Jokowi volunteers in previous elections. Parties, meanwhile, will seek to regain the ground they lost to the volunteers in 2014, and Jokowi himself will do his best to ensure that the parties that nominate him in 2019 are more committed to supporting his candidacy than PDIP was in 2014.